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The Expansion and Normalization of Police Militarization in Canada

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Abstract Despite extensive analysis of police militarization in the United States (US), the case in Canada has been overlooked. Building on Kraska's (in Policing 1(4):501–513, 2007) framework of police militarization indicators, this paper examines militarization within Canadian police forces between 2007 and 2016. Drawing from data on deployments disclosed under freedom of information law, our research shows deployment of special weapons and tactics (SWAT) teams have escalated in many major Canadian cities and are even higher in some cases than those reported by Kraska on militarization of US public police. We show how SWAT teams are increasingly used by public police for routine police activities such as warrant work, traffic enforcement, community policing, and even responding to mental health crises and domestic disturbances. We also analyze data on SWAT team growth, and benchmarking between police service SWAT units. We conclude by reflecting on the implications for public policing in Canada and avenues for future research on police militarization and police violence in Canada and other countries.

Introduction

Scholars have contributed significantly to knowledge on police militarization, but have relied on empirical examples from the United States (US). Frequently referenced are the Navy Seals' training of police paramilitary units (PPUs) and special weapons and tactics (SWAT) teams (Kraska and Cubellis 1997; Kraska and Kapperler 1997), the amendments made to the *Posse Comitatus Act* (Phillips 2016; Weiss 2011), as well as the 1033 program that allows US Departments of Defense and Homeland Security to sell off decommissioned military gear that is then used by local police across the United States (Radil et al. 2017), a

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practice restricted by President Obama but then restored by President Trump. Kraska (2007: 506) did ground breaking research to reveal trends in the creation and use of PPUs in the 1980s and 1990s. There has also been research on militarization around the world, from Britain (Hills 1995) to Australia (McCulloch 2001).

Despite the importance of these contributions they do not explain the scope or the institutionalization of public police militarization in Canada. Perhaps the lack of research on police militarization in Canada is because of common assumptions that the Canadian criminal justice system is less punitive and repressive (Meyer and O'Malley 2005). There is a related, general lack of research on police violence in Canada (but see Ross 1992, 1995). Canadian literature on police violence has had a greater focus on protest or public order policing than on PPUs. Public order policing literature may be valuable for demonstrating the influence of militarism on police responses to large public conflicts (De Lint 2005; King 1997), but it mostly ignores the other ways in which militarization presents itself. As a country with over 35 million people, 11 cities with a population over 500,000, and at least 22 police services that each employ 500 or more officers (Burczycka 2013), it is time to begin examining police militarization in Canada. Using data obtained under freedom of information laws, we show evidence that militarization has been normalized within Canada's largest police services. Deployments of SWAT teams have risen in major Canadian cities and are higher in some cases than those reported by Kraska on militarization of US public police. SWAT teams are increasingly being used by public police for routine police activities such as warrant work, traffic enforcement, community policing, and even responding to mental health crises and domestic disturbances. This rise in SWAT use could have a significant impact on police violence and use of force (Jacobs 1998; Ross 1992, 1995). Our research begins to address a significant gap that exists in the publicly available data on SWAT/PPU deployments and activities in Canada. Canadian police services have largely refused to publish such data, which imposes barriers for research on police militarization, but using access to information/freedom of information (ATI/FOI) requests we make this data public for the first time. Two decades ago, Alvaro (2000) showed the average yearly number of deployments for Canadian tactical units was 60 total per unit; our FOI disclosures demonstrate that the average yearly number of deployments for Canadian tactical units is approximately 1300 per unit as of 2017.

Borrowing from Kraska's (2007) conceptualization of police militarization indicators, this paper examines the state of militarization within Canadian police forces between 2007 and 2016. First, we review literature on militarization to establish our conceptual framework. Second, using materials obtained through ATI/FOI requests we analyze Canadian police services' use of PPUs since 2007. We also analyze data on SWAT team growth, and benchmarking between police service SWAT units. In conclusion, we reflect on the implications for public policing in Canada and avenues for future research on police militarization in Canada and other countries.

Militarization and Public Police

Central to arguments about police militarization is that while public police are meant to respond to internal criminal matters, and the military is expected to combat external threats, new police strategies of response to threats has conflated these roles (Salter 2014; Kraska and Cubellis 1997; Weiss 2011; Leichtman 2008). We are aware of the critiques (McMichael 2017; Shantz 2016; den Heyer 2014) claiming that police and the military

share a repressive origin, and that the militarization of policing debate blindly assumes if police were not militarized somehow their social control efforts would be acceptable. We make no such assumptions. Our intention is to demonstrate the staggering rise of militaristic tactical unit use in Canadian policing and reflect on the conceptual, political, legal and ethical implications.

Today the literature on militarization of police has four main foci: globalization; protests; community policing; and SWAT and PPUs. We will address each literature in turn. First, some scholars suggest that police militarization is a response to the pressures of neoliberal globalization. Here it is argued that globalization has weakened the state's borders, and made way for increases in offences like drug trafficking, terrorism, and other transnational crimes and that post 9/11, the state is viewed as being at risk from numerous threats (Hill and Beger 2009). Chief among these threats is that of terrorism which is seen as unpredictable, and unlike other threats, potentially coming from within the state's borders (Dunton and Kitchen 2014: 185). What were once seen as minor domestic threats are now framed as threats to national security (Hill and Beger 2009). Militarization may result in the targeting of minority groups, the restriction of civil rights, and in greater capacity for the state to interfere with the lives of citizens and to do so with force (Weiss 2011).

Second, Kitchen and Rygiel (2014) suggest the blurring between police and military technologies, practices, and threat perception leads state agencies to view cities as sites for testing militarized weaponry, technology, and tactics. They further highlight how 'mega-events' such as the Olympics and the G20 Summit in Toronto, Canada provide opportunities for policing agencies to make enormous purchases of 'security' equipment and to use it with little public scrutiny (Kitchen and Rygiel 2014: 208). For example, after the G20 Summit in Toronto, the Toronto Police Service kept four-hundred gas masks, and four Long Range Acoustic Devices which were designed for use by the United States military. Dunton and Kitchen (2014) provide another example of how mega-events militarize the police in their consideration of the Vancouver Olympics. Prior to the Vancouver Olympics, the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) created a Military Liaison Unit (MLU) to "improve the communications and training relationships between the VPD and the military" (Dunton and Kitchen 2014: 188). The MLU was not disbanded after the Olympics and now conducts regular training sessions with the U.S. National Guard to learn "how military technologies and tactics might assist with urban policing" (Dunton and Kitchen 2014: 188). Of concern is the potential for police to criminalize non-violent political demonstration and social activism (Wood 2014).

Third, community police and militarization now overlap. As Hill et al. (2007) explain, the community policing model is based on the premise that police should foster a relationship with the communities in which they serve. The community policing model promotes crime prevention, problem solving and improving public quality of life through engagement with citizens (Chappell and Lanza-Kaduce 2010; Hill and Beger 2009). The police are expected to be accountable not only to the government, but also to citizens by reaching out to community members (Hill et al. 2007). Opposing the community policing model is the military-bureaucratic model which promotes hierarchy, the use of force, and crime fighting (Chappell and Lanza-Kaduce 2010). Unlike the community policing model, the military-bureaucratic model is dismissive of "outside help" (Murray 2005: 352). Several scholars have noted this contradiction between the community policing model and the military model employed by police paramilitary units (Chappell and Lanza-Kaduce 2010). Not only does the model's top-down orientation shut out perspectives external to the police, but the hostility it encourages has been criticized for intimidating communities

rather than fostering their cooperation (Hill et al. 2007: 305; Murray 2005). What is troubling about this finding is that such practices are likely to end up being used within already marginalized communities (Hill et al. 2007). Yet Kraska and Cubellis (1997: 624) and Kraska and Kappeler (1997: 13) found evidence of this overlap in their surveys of PPUs, as a significant number of police forces responded that they did not see any conflict between the community policing model and the use of PPUs in street-level policing. Some surveyed officers described their PPU as helping to establish order and improve "quality of life" (Kraska and Kappeler 1997: 13) by dealing with civil disturbances including noise complaints and parking violations. Kraska (2007: 509) explains that the community policing model's ideal of proactive policing has realized itself through a "zero-tolerance policing model" which emphasizes aggressive law enforcement practices.

Fourth, and most important for our focus, Kraska (2007: 506) draws specific attention to the role of PPUs and SWAT teams in police militarization. Despite the contention that PPUs are forces "confined to rare situations involving hostages, terrorism, or the maniac sniper" (Kraska and Kappeler 1997: 3), they have continued to grow in number and use. PPUs are distinguishable by the militaristic features that they adopt including equipment, training, and rhetoric (Hill and Beger 2009; Kraska and Cubellis 1997). PPUs may utilize an array of firearms, explosives, and other technology that is borrowed from the military or that is military-like. Frequently, PPUs are given names that use military terminology or that allude to the unit's "elite status" (Kraska 2007: 502). Officers assigned to PPUs undergo additional training and the PPUs themselves are structured similarly to military units, furthering the idea that they are elite teams rather than mere groups of street-level officers (Kraska 2007: 505). Emphasis is placed on the team aspect of PPUs in that they deploy with the assumption that they are responding to incidents that require "collective force" (Kraska and Kappeler 1997: 4). An additional problem created by PPUs is that they create a subculture of paramilitarism which may bleed into the rest of the police force (Kraska 2007: 506). The paramilitary subculture reinforced through military-style dress, equipment, structure, "hypermasculinity, and dangerous function" (Kraska 2007: 506) is not only appealing to PPU members, but also to the street-level officers around them (also see Dodge et al. 2010). Hill et al. (2007: 305) argue that because PPUs are given an elite status within their departments, street-level officers become all the more likely to want to adopt similar tactics. In this way the influence of paramilitarism may spread the use military-style equipment and tactics into areas of policing that PPUs are not directly involved in (Hill et al. 2007: 306).

During the 1990s, Kraska conducted two surveys; one of police forces serving rural jurisdictions with 25,000–50,000 citizens, and another of police forces serving urban jurisdictions of 50,000 or more citizens (Kraska and Cubellis 1997: 611; Kraska and Kappeler 1997: 5). Both surveys found that the number of police forces in the United States that had established a PPU was increasing and that the number of deployments of those units was also increasing. Kraska (2007: 507) found that PPUs were taking on duties formerly handled by regular street-level police officers. In jurisdictions with at least 50,000 citizens, Kraska and Kappeler (1997: 7) discovered that over 75% of PPU deployments were for the purposes of executing search warrants. Kraska and Cubbellis' (1997) survey found that although smaller jurisdictions tended to have fewer PPU deployments, the majority of deployments tended to be for the purposes of executing search warrants. In both surveys, executing search warrants represented a growing proportion of total PPU deployments, revealing that PPUs had undergone a gradual shift toward proactive functions (Kraska and Cubellis 1997: 618). As we show below, PPUs are an active part of modern police departments in Canada in similar ways.

Research Methods

We understand police militarization using Kraska's (2007: 503) "four dimensions of the military model"; material, cultural, organizational, and operational. First, the material dimension refers to the physical equipment, weapons, and other technologies used by police that are military-like (Kraska 2007: 503). Secondly, the cultural dimension encompasses the outward appearance and language used by police, as well as the values that they embrace. Thirdly, the organizational dimension looks at the kinds of PPUs or groups of police officers that are structured in ways that resemble various military units. Finally, the operational dimension is concerned with the "patterns of activity" (Kraska 2007: 503) used by police that mimic those used by the military, particularly in terms of response to high-risk incidents.

We used ATI/FOI requests to obtain information about the operational and organizational dimensions of militarization. ATI/FOI requests can be made under the federal *Access to Information Act*, as well as under legislative equivalents at provincial and municipal levels, to obtain previously undisclosed information from public bodies (see Walby and Larsen 2012). ATI/FOI requests were sent to 10 Canadian police forces identified as having a PPU through open-sources including official police websites and media articles. Police forces were chosen with the goal of generating a diverse sample representing large and medium sized police services. The selected police organizations comprised of 8 municipal police forces, 1 provincial police force, and 1 federal police force, from across 7 different provinces.

A necessary component of using ATI/FOI requests is reflexivity regarding the wording of requests and the brokering process. Both the request's scope and its terminology contribute to success in obtaining data (Brownlee and Walby 2015). The brokering that occurs between the researcher and the ATI/FOI coordinator are just as important, as the initial access request and the resulting disclosure are likely to be influenced by these interactions (Luscombe and Walby 2015). Although the academic literature is consistent in its use of the police paramilitary unit terminology (Phillips 2016; Hill and Beger 2009), the Canadian police services captured in this research largely refer to their units as 'Emergency Response Teams' or simply as 'Tactical Units' rather than PPUs. Each request referred to the subject police service's PPU by its name within the agency. This was achieved by searching each service's website for information on their PPU, and for the name used to refer to that unit. In one conversation with the FOI analyst assigned to the request made to the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), it was indicated that the OPP wanted to make sure that it was understood that their Emergency Response Team is considered by the agency to be a "containment unit, not a tactical unit" (V. Fox, personal communication, November 2, 2016). This incident would lend credence to the notion that terminology does matter to agencies responding to ATI/FOI requests. The access requests that we filed were worded as follows:

1. Requesting all records pertaining to the (name of relevant police service and PPU's name) frequency of deployment and type of deployment in each instance (e.g. executing search warrant, responding to call etc.).
2. Requesting all records pertaining to the number of officers assigned to the (name of relevant police service and PPU's name).
3. Requesting all communications between the (name of relevant police service) and other police services (municipal, provincial, and federal) pertaining to benchmarking and development of police tactical units and/or emergency response teams.

To obtain information in a timely manner, and to control the financial cost, each request was limited to include only the years of 2007, 2010, 2013, and 2016. By doing so, it was possible to accurately track and measure the growth of the PPUs and their number of deployments while largely avoiding barriers to using ATI/FOI. Going further back than a decade with FOI can prove expensive, which is one reason for the delimitation of our sample. We acknowledge this is a limit of our research. The first two sets of information were requested so that any growth in the size or use of PPUs since 2007 could be measured. These sets were requested because they would allow for comparisons to be made with provincial and municipal crime statistics over the same period of time. The third set of information was requested in hopes of providing greater insight into the inner workings of PPUs in Canada, particularly in terms of their operation and organization. This set also serves another purpose though in that it had the potential to expose policies and practices that have been developed, coordinated, or transferred between different police agencies without full public accountability. If the community policing model is meant to emphasize the public's role in shaping policing, then closed door inter-agency benchmarking arguably fails to meet that standard (Hill et al. 2007: 306).

The initial scope of the requests was made broad for two reasons. First, the hope was that by requesting 'all records' for each part of the request, the police services would disclose more data than if they had simply been asked to provide only numbers on their PPU's deployments and assigned officers, or benchmarking through only a single form of communication. Second, it prevented the requests from becoming immediately self-limiting, thereby leaving it to the ATI/FOI coordinators to raise the scope of the request as an issue. Five police departments released data pursuant to the ATI/FOI requests, two departments refused to release data entirely, and requests to the other three departments remain ongoing. For broader reflections on the number and size of police departments in Canada, see Carmichael and Kent (2015).

Militarization of Public Police in Canada

Calgary Police Service Deployments

The Calgary Police Service (CPS) was the first police service to respond in full to the FOI request. The data reveals that in 2007 the Tactical Unit was deployed an astounding 1556 times, but this number has dropped considerably over time from 1128 deployments in 2010, 857 in 2013, and 564 in 2016 (as of November 22)[1] (Access Request #16-G-1467). The number of deployments was broken down into 28 different categories that range from responding to 'major codes' and 911 calls to noise complaints and traffic incidents (Access Request #16-G-1467).

None of the categories distinguished between planned and unplanned calls so we requested additional information from the analyst assigned to the request. We were informed by the analyst that the Tactical Unit is often issued warrants 'on the fly,' making the distinction between planned and unplanned deployments difficult to determine precisely (R. Wales, personal communication, November 29, 2016). However, the analyst did

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[1] A subsequent FOI request revealed that the CPS Tactical Unit deployed about 620 times total in 2016, though it was impossible to determine how many of the additional revealed deployments were planned or unplanned. While these additional deployments are excluded from our analysis, it is unlikely that their inclusion would significantly alter our findings.

indicate that the vast majority of deployments that could reasonably be considered planned, predominantly fell under the 'assist' and 'miscellaneous' categories (R. Wales, personal communication, November 29, 2016). For the purposes of comparing data we assume that those two categories are entirely made up of planned deployments and that they represent the only categories with planned deployments. We believe that this produces a relatively accurate picture of the CPS Tactical Unit's planned deployments considering both that the descriptors given to the other categories suggest fairly reactive events, and that the combination of the 'assist' and 'miscellaneous' categories in 2016 (190 deployments) (Access Request #16-G-1467) is consistent with a recent claim by CPS Inspector Blair White who stated that the Service's armoured vehicle attends "[two-hundred] warrant calls per year" (Wood 2016, para. 4). The CPS claims on its website that the Tactical Unit was "involved in more than [three hundred] planned operations" (Calgary Police Service n.d., para. 5) in 2011, which is once again consistent with the combination of the 'assist' and 'miscellaneous' categories for 2010 (307 deployments) (Access Request #16-G-1467).
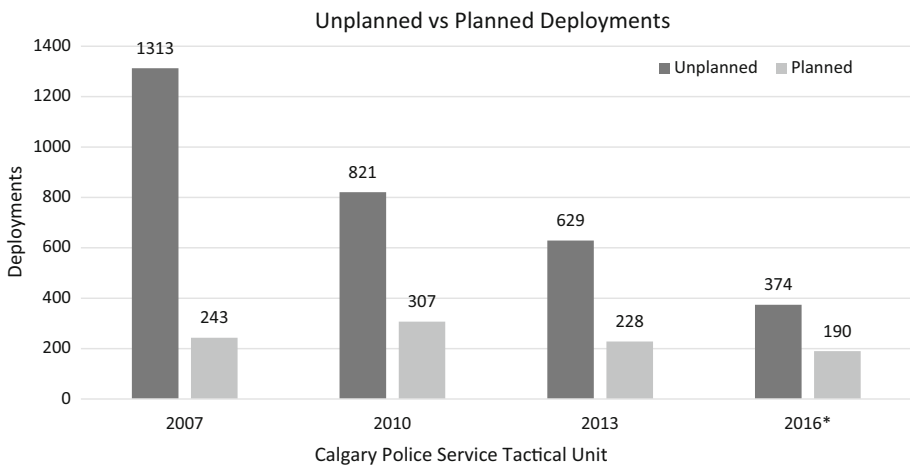

*As of November, 22, 2016

The CPS Tactical Unit's proportion of total deployments that are planned has noticeably increased from 15.6% in 2007 to 33.7% in 2016. However, they have not increased to the same extent observed by Kraska (2007: 506, 507) which was over 80%, and they have not grown as a proportion in same way. The data reveals that planned deployments have actually remained relatively stable, but that unplanned deployments have dropped significantly, whereas Kraska and Kappeler (1997: 7, 9) and Kraska and Cubellis (1997) witnessed an increasing number of total deployments wherein planned deployments rapidly overtook unplanned deployments.

While the overall number of deployments have decreased greatly since 2007, it is important to keep in mind just how large the CPS Tactical Unit's number of deployments really is. Even at its lowest point of 564 deployments in 2016 (as of Nov. 22) the CPS Tactical Unit was deployed over six times more often than the average number of deployments of American PPUs as was recorded by Kraska and Kappeler (1997: 7) in 1995. It would also seem that the CPS Tactical Unit responds to incidents that would usually be reserved for regular street-level officers such as noise complaints, collisions and other traffic incidents, drug offences, break and enters, and mental health incidents among

others (Access Request #16-G-1467). The CPS Tactical Unit is quite clearly responding to a significant number of calls that cannot be considered high-risk, and that definitely represent a degree of militarization in routine policing that opposes the community policing model. That being said, it does appear that the number of deployments in those areas is going down as the total number of deployments drops.

Ottawa Police Service Deployments

The Ottawa Police Service (OPS) responded to the FOI request made to them by releasing an Excel spreadsheet of its tactical unit's deployments. Each deployment provided a brief description of the reason for the deployment, any other units that were involved, and occasionally additional comments (Access Request #16-867). Because of the information that was specific to each individual deployment this data was somewhat easier to categorize in terms of planned and unplanned deployments than the data provided by the CPS.

Ottawa Police Service Tactical Unit
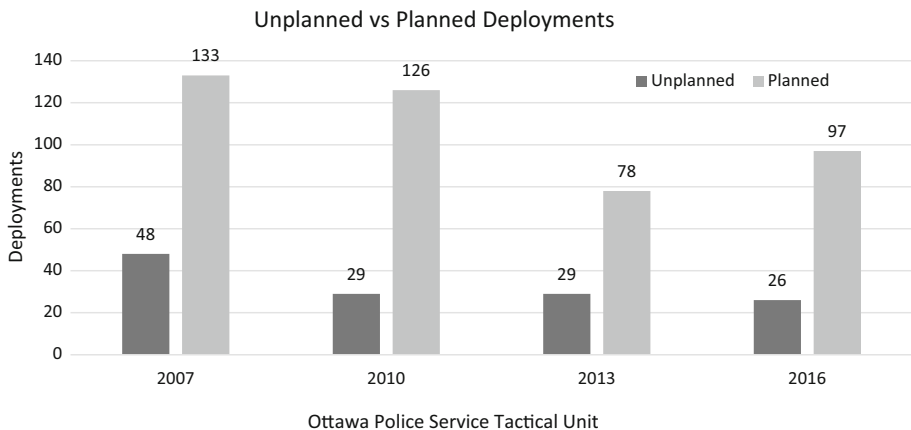
Proactive deployments accounted for over 70% of all deployments in each of the four years (Access Request #16-867). Almost all proactive deployments were for warrant work, with the largest proportion being drug warrants which fluctuated between just over 30% to almost 65% in different years. The year 2007 marked the height of drug warrant executions at 80, and 2016 marked the lowest point at 30 (Access Request #16-867). Warrant work however, has continued to represent a substantial number of the OPS tactical unit's deployments though. In recent years, warrants related to other kinds of crime such as child exploitation have increased, thus maintaining the tactical unit's warrant work deployments (Access Request #16-867).

Interestingly, the number of times that the OPS tactical unit deployed between 2007 and 2013 decreased at a rate that actually surpassed the decrease in crime (excluding traffic offences) in Ottawa during that same period (Access Request #16-867; Ottawa Police Service 2009: 1, 2011: 5, 2014: 1). However, in 2016 the number of deployments increased slightly, going against the overall downward trend in crime[2] (Access Request #16-867; Ottawa Police Service 2017: 64, 65). Unplanned deployments decreased in each of the four

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[2] The crime rate in Ottawa increased slightly in 2016 over 2015, although the violent crime rate continued to drop (Ottawa Police Service 2017). Even with this increase the 2016 crime rate remained significantly lower than in previous years.

years covered by the FOI request (Access Request #16-867). Barricaded suspects, hostage situations, and other calls appropriate for the tactical unit remained low, hitting its highest proportion at 7.5% of all deployments in 2013 (Access Request #16-867). Calls to assist other units with mental health calls consistently represented between 20 and 30% of all unplanned deployments (Access Request #16-867). In almost all of these instances the accompanying entry noted that the initial call pertained to an invoking of s. 17 of Ontario's *Mental Health Act* (Access Request #16-867). Section 17 of the *Mental Health Act* allows police officers to take individuals into custody involuntarily when they believe that the individual is suffering from a mental illness and poses a danger to themselves or others (*Mental Health Act*, s. 17). While the number of deployments related to mental health has decreased, it is concerning that they still occur given that such calls are not within the mandate of the OPS' heavily armed and armoured tactical unit (Access Request #16-867).

It is likely that the OPS tactical unit attended other calls that are not captured in the data obtained through the FOI request. In the request itself, the OPS included a disclaimer which explained that their tactical unit's deployment information is not automatically tracked by the service, and that the information provided in the request was collected by the OPS by doing a "text browse on the Records Management System using the words 'Tact' and 'Team' in the subject line" (Access Request #16-867). The OPS further explained that reports submitted by the tactical unit cannot be uniquely identified, and that not all assistance calls are necessarily captured in the released data because "it is all dependent upon how the officer, initiating the report, enters the subject line" (Access Request #16-867). Another issue with the data is that like the data provided by the CPS, the entries do not provide much in the way of description or context. It is difficult to fully understand the circumstances surrounding any given deployment, which subsequently limits the ability to evaluate the tactical unit's actions.

Winnipeg Police Service Deployments

The FOI request made to the Winnipeg Police Service (WPS) and the brokering process which followed, resulted in the release of two daily occurrence reports; one for 2013 and one for 2016 (Access Request #16-10-911). Each report listed the incidents that the WPS Tactical Support Team (TST) responded to, with notes detailing the incidents. The reports provided greater insight into the actions of the WPS' TST and allowed for a more comprehensive categorization of incidents than the table provided by the CPS or the list provided by the OPS.

Unplanned vs Planned Deployments

Winnipeg Police Service Tactical Support Team
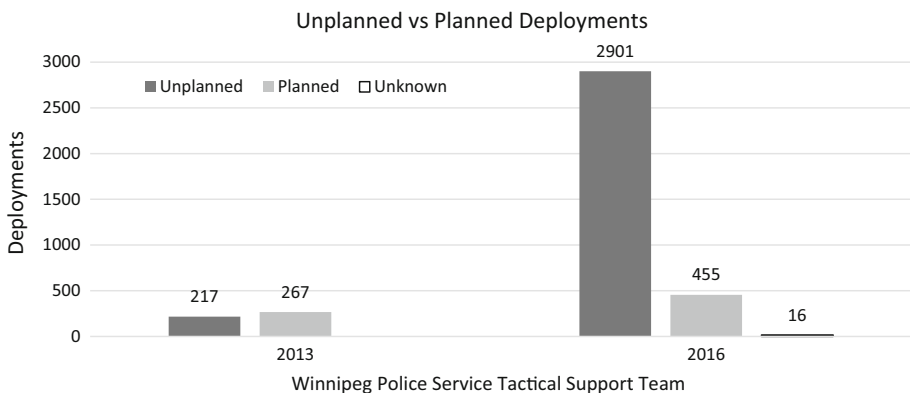
The daily occurrence report for 2016 originally included deployments only up to the date when the access request was filed (October 24, 2016), though the remainder of the 2016 report (October 23 to December 31) was obtained through a subsequent access request filed in April, 2017. Seven times as many deployments were recorded in the 2016 report as the 2013 report (Access Request #16-10-911; Access Request #17-4-295) At first glance it would appear as though the TST's number of deployments has risen dramatically over the last few years, but this finding is likely due to an underreporting of deployments in the 2013 daily occurrence report.

This conclusion is a result of two operational reviews of the WPS that were commissioned in 2013. The first review for the City of Winnipeg was conducted by Matrix Consulting Group (Matrix Consulting Group 2013: 1), while the second review was conducted by Griffiths and Pollard (2013: 1, 11) for the Canadian Police Association. Both reviews found that the TST's reporting standards at the time of review were inadequate (Griffiths and Pollard 2013: 398; Matrix Consulting Group 2013: 158). Matrix Consulting Group (2013: 158) recommended that the WPS TST "begin compiling statistical information" (Matrix Consulting Group 2013: 158) of both planned and unplanned deployments to produce monthly and annual reports. Griffiths and Pollard (2013: 398) likewise found that the TST needed better reporting of its actions to properly evaluate the unit.

Statistics from the CAD database cited in Griffiths and Pollard's (2013: 398) review revealed that the TST deployed 1922 times in 2012, with 383 of these deployments resulting from the ten most common calls for service, and 815 of these being for calls for service generally. One thousand, one hundred-seven calls were described as 'on-view'[3] deployments, the vast majority of which were categorized as either special attention or traffic stops (Griffiths and Pollard 2013: 398). Given the findings of the operational reviews and the dramatic differences in reported incidents between the two occurrence reports and the CAD statistics, it seems unlikely that the TST's number of deployments sharply dropped from 2012 to 2013, only to rebound to an even higher rate a few years later in 2016. What is more likely is that the TST's reporting standards simply increased.

It is difficult to determine what criteria if any the TST used when recording incidents in the 2013 daily occurrence report, however one possibility is that the 2013 report includes primarily incidents in which the TST was the lead unit involved, and largely excludes incidents it assisted on, as well as traffic stops and other routine patrol incidents. The rationale for considering this possibility is that in the 2016 daily occurrence report a sizeable number of incidents noted that the TST was acting to assist another unit, deploying to conduct surveillance, or to police hot spots, but by contrast very few deployments in the 2013 report gave any such indication (Access Request #16-10-911). There are no publicly available reports on the TST which could be used to verify the accuracy of the daily occurrence reports though. All things considered, the 2016 daily occurrence report is likely a relatively accurate measure of the TST's total deployments even if the 2013 report is not.

Based on the data that is available in the daily occurrence reports and supplementing it with the CAD statistics from Griffiths and Pollard's operational review, the use of the TST does appear to have grown (Access Request #16-10-911; Access Request #17-4-295; Griffiths and Pollard 2013: 398). Perhaps more interestingly though is the nature of the

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[3] Based on comparisons that were made between 'on-view' and 'caller-initiated' deployments, and several references suggesting that 'on-view' deployments are officer-initiated, 'on-view' deployments in this data most likely represents the number of deployments initiated by the TST itself, either proactively or in response to directly witnessing an activity. See Griffiths and Pollard (2013: 250, 264, 268).

increase in deployments. While other Canadian police tactical units have become increasingly proactive over time, the WPS TST is if anything becoming far more reactive. According to the CAD statistics and the daily occurrence reports, the TST responded to incidents such as assaults, firearm and weapon sightings, domestic disturbances, alarms, robberies, suspicious persons, non-firearm weapons, suicide threats, and well-being checks, far more often in 2016 than they had in either 2012, or 2013 (Access Request #16-10-911; Access Request #17-4-295; Griffiths and Pollard 2013: 398). As Goodmark (2015) has argued, there are serious problems with have a PPU respond to domestic disturbances, suicide threats, and well-being checks because these police units and aggravate these situations and traumatise victims.

Violent and potentially violent calls such as fights, assaults, firearm sightings, non-firearm weapons calls, and suspicious person calls routinely initiated a response by the TST either from the start or at the request of other units (Access Request #16-10-911; Access Request #17-4-295). One of the most significant increases was in deployments to firearm sightings which grew from 66 recorded instances in both 2012 (Griffiths and Pollard 2013: 398) and 2013 to 433 in 2016 (Access Request #16-10-911; Access Request #17-4-295). These increases are indicative of a growing aversion to risk, and as Kraska and Cubellis (1997: 619) point out reinforces paramilitary subculture by supporting an obsession with danger and the elite status of the PPU.

Meanwhile the number of incidents traditionally associated with PPUs such as hostage takings, barricaded suspects, and bomb threats that the WPS TST responded to in the observed years continued to represent only a small handful of deployments. The daily occurrence reports suggested that the TST responded to around four such incidents in 2013 and slightly under twenty-five in 2016, with over half of these being bomb threats (Access Request #16-10-911; Access Request #17-4-295). Although use of the TST in these cases would likely be seen by most as justifiable, it should be noted that in both years almost all of these calls were eventually deemed to be unfounded according to comments found within the reports (Access Request #16-10-911; Access Request #17-4-295). Even if the number of these types of calls has increased, there is nothing to suggest that the number of incidents actually taking place has as well.

Roughly 55% of the TST's deployments in the 2013 daily occurrence report were planned (Access Request #16-10-911). Warrant work made up the majority of planned deployments (87.6%), with drug warrants representing the largest proportion at about 65% of all warrants or 57% of all planned deployments (Access Request #16-10-911). While it is likely that proactive deployments such as warrant work represented a smaller proportion of all deployments given the high possibility of recording gaps, the number of warrants executed by the TST is not insignificant.[4] The daily occurrence reports include over 150 instances of the TST executing drug warrants and over 200 warrants in total (Access Request #16-10-911). The 2016 report includes 129 drug warrants and just under 250 in total (Access Request #16-10-911; Access Request #17-4-295). Although the TST executed fewer drug warrants in 2016, it slightly exceeded the number of total warrants it executed in 2013, based on the data available. Both reports make numerous references to the TST's use of 'no-knock' and 'dynamic' entries and searches of residences while

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[4] TST's deployments in 2016 represented about 1.6% of the WPS' total incidents responded to (Winnipeg Police Service 2017: 19), but the TST executed about 10% of all warrants in Manitoba, and was involved in about 15% (Access Request #16-10-911; Access Request #17-4-295; Levasseur and Nicholson 2017). The total proportion of the WPS' warrants that the TST executed is unknown, though it would obviously be higher. This is concerning given that a recent study of warrants issued in Manitoba found that 1 in 7 did not meet the legal requirements to be issued in the first place (Levasseur and Nicholson 2017).

executing warrants (Access Request #16-10-911). As Kraska (2007: 507) highlights, such tactics create dangerous situations for both the police and for citizens. Controlling for a number of variables and extraneous factors, Delehanty et al. (2017) show use of SWAT means police are much more likely to shoot and kill citizens.

Despite an apparent decrease from 2012 to 2016 in proactive hot spots and special attention deployments (Access Request #16-10-911; Access Request #17-4-295; Griffiths and Pollard 2013: 398), the TST has increasingly engaged in other community policing related tasks (Access Request #16-10-911; Access Request #17-4-295). While in other cities such as Calgary, tactical unit deployments to noise complaints, traffic incidents, domestic calls, and disturbances among other incidents have gradually decreased (Access Request #16-G-1467), the WPS TST continues to respond to more (Access Request #16-10-911; Access Request #17-4-295). The WPS does not note a contradiction between the community policing model and its use of the TST. On December 15, 2016, the WPS announced its new downtown safety strategy entitled Centreline (Winnipeg Police Service 2016). The Centreline strategy is meant to emphasize proactive policing and community engagement and to "reduce the risk, frequency and severity of crime and social disorder" (Winnipeg Police Service 2016, para 4) as wells as to reduce strain on emergency services (Winnipeg Police Service 2016). Entries in the 2016 daily occurrences report reveal that as early as June, 2016 the TST was actively attending training meetings pertaining to the Centreline strategy and even deploying to police hot spots under it (Access Request #16-10-911). The WPS' approach is reminiscent of the aggressive community policing approach taken by many American PPUs observed by Kraska and Kapperler (1997: 13). Furthermore, it suggests a normalization of the TST as part of WPS' routine patrol activities.

Vancouver Police Department Deployments

The deployment data received from the VPD was limited in a number of ways which made it difficult to interpret. First, the data provided included only deployments of its Emergency Response Team (ERT) that "met the threshold of a critical incident" (Access Request #16-2974A). Second, this data was not broken down into any discernible categories, although it was noted that the data could "include incidents such as high-risk search warrant [sic] to a barricaded person" (Access Request #16-2974A). In part the results of this disclosure are likely due to limitations with the VPD's records keeping system, and possibly with their reporting requirements. While brokering this request it was revealed that:

> The VPD does not retain a database with fields that are searchable for the parameters of your request and is therefore not able to accurately compile this information. The Emergency Response Team responds to varied incidents, including assisting VPD patrol, and it is unfortunately not currently possible to reasonably or accurately locate or compile this information from available records (D. Hurwitz, personal communication, January 10, 2017).

Similar to the findings of the other ATI/FOI requests, the VPD's records keeping system and reporting practices fail to capture data that accurately reflects the activities of their PPU.

Unplanned vs Planned Deployments
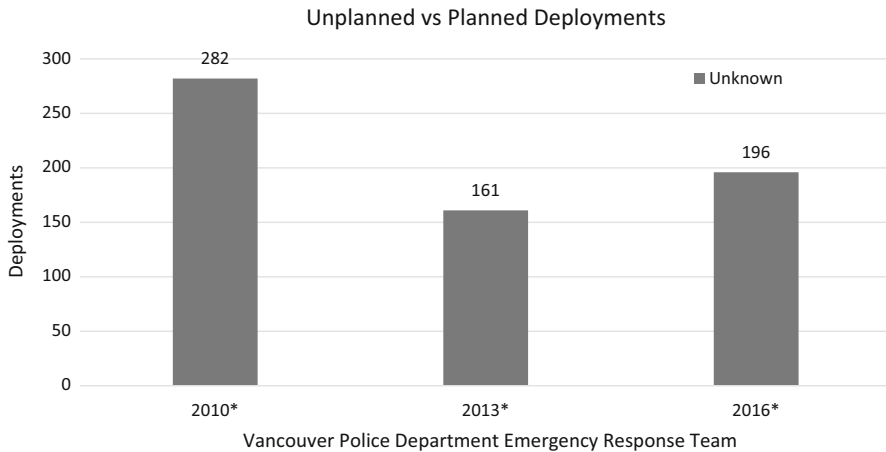
*Data for all three years includes only deployments that met the 'critical incident' threshold. It is impossible to determine from the information provided exactly how many of these deployments were unplanned vs planned or even what incidents were responded to as no further categorization was given.

Analysis of the data is severely limited by the issues noted above. From the information gathered through the brokering process it would seem that the ERT is involved in some form of routine patrol work, but nothing that was disclosed provides any way to measure this. Deployments based on the critical incident deployment data that was provided reveals little as well. From 2010 to 2016, Vancouver's violent crime rate dropped by over 25%, while overall crime remained relatively stable up until 2016 when it increased (Vancouver Police Department 2016, 2017). Comparatively, the ERT's deployments to critical incidents dropped by about 43% from 2010 to 2013, and were overall about 30.5% lower in 2016 than 2010 (Access Request #16-2974A). No obvious correlations exist between the number of ERT deployments, the crime rate, or any specific type of crime through this period. The ERT's deployments did not follow the downward trend of violent crime, nor the upward trend of property crime, and furthermore they fluctuated more wildly than did the overall crime rate (Access Request #16-2974A; Vancouver Police Department, 2017). Any similarities that exist, such as the similar increases in property crime and ERT deployments from 2013 to 2016, carry many assumptions, and fail to rule out sheer coincidence. Another challenge to interpreting the deployment numbers is that in 2010, Vancouver hosted the Olympic Games, which may have elevated the number of deployments in 2010 compared to other years (also see De Lint 2005: 180; Kitchen and Rygiel 2014: 203). Without more complete data on the ERT's deployment numbers, it is difficult to make any solid conclusions about the unit.

Ontario Provincial Police Deployments

The FOI request received from the OPP used broad categories to sort the 2013 and 2016 data, while the 2007 and 2010 data was not categorized at all. Detailed analysis is thus difficult, but general observations could be made. The OPP's ERT deployed an increasing number of times since 2007, though it is important to note that the unit has slightly

different duties than municipal PPUs. Unlike those units, the ERT is extensively involved in search and rescue, which represented about 20% of the unit's deployments in 2013 and 2016 (Access Request CSCS-A-2016-04906). However, the ERT's most active function was providing assistance to other police units. Approximately 30% of the ERT's deployments were to provide back-up to the Canine Unit (Access Request CSCS-A-2016-04906), which is involved in a range of tracking activities including evidence, explosives, and drugs searches (Ontario Provincial Police 2016). Several hundred other deployments were to assist units such as the Organized Crime Enforcement Bureau (Access Request CSCS-A-2016-04906). Other activities included prisoner escorts, and various 'security' deployments, representing under 10% of all ERT deployments in 2013, but over 15% in 2016. Warrant executions were the only type of deployment that decreased (Access Request CSCS-A-2016-04906). It is unclear why the decrease occurred, but one possibility is that it is the result of changes to how deployments were classified by the ERT between 2013 and 2016. The rationale would be that while warrant executions decreased by almost 100 instances in this time, 'evidence search' deployments simultaneously increased by a similar amount (Access Request CSCS-A-2016-04906).

Unplanned vs Planned Deployments
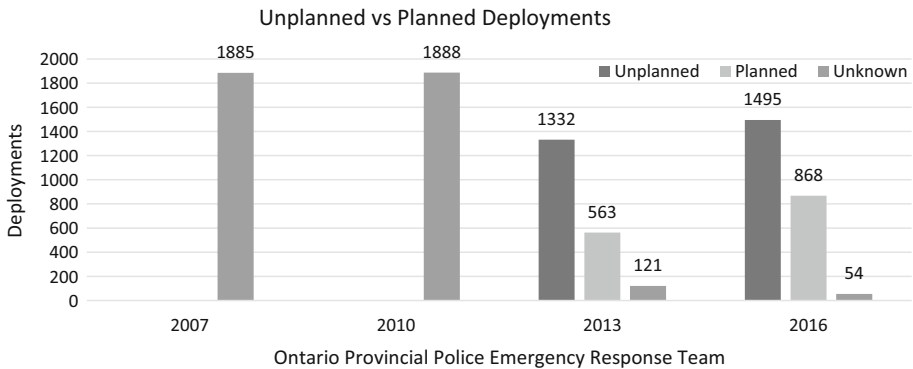
PPU Growth and Benchmarking

The deployment data revealed little consistency in terms of increases or decreases in PPU deployments. There were significant drops in the CPS' number of deployments, as well as sizable fluctuations in the OPS and VDP's deployments. Though it may be tempting to draw conclusions about the level of militarization within each police force from this data alone, it is preferable to use multiple points of measurement for the sake of accuracy. Kraska and Kappeler (1997: 6) used deployment and PPU creation data to measure the growth of militarization in the 1980s and 90s. One way to measure growth is in cost. We know that the cost of the WPS Tactical Support Team increased from $3,878,373 CAD in 2011 to $5,098,965 in 2016 CAD (Access Request #17-03-164), and other units enjoyed a similar boost in funding across the country. It was not feasible to use PPU creation as a measure of growth for our research because the police services sampled in this research were pre-selected on the basis that they already had a PPU, and because of the difficulties of obtaining data on this topic in Canada.

In place of PPU creation, as a proxy we sought information about the number of officers assigned to PPUs as this would reveal if the size of the PPUs was growing, and thus

increasing the presence of PPU style policing, and drifting further away from community policing. Based on the data collected, it appears that PPUs have either grown or maintained their size regardless of their number of deployments.

Information on the membership of the CPS Tactical Unit was initially refused by the service, citing the data's potential to interfere with law enforcement activities or facilitate crime, though it is unclear how knowledge of this information would do so. In response to a second access request for assigned officer numbers, the CPS disclosed that their tactical unit has had 31 members consistently since at least 2007, despite the fact that the unit's deployments have dropped (as of 2016) to almost one-third of what they were in 2007 (Access Request #16-G-1467; Access Request #17-G-0852). The reason why officer numbers were at first refused is unknown, but demonstrates the role that discretion plays in state responses to ATI/FOI requests. This difference is of note given that all other responding police departments provided officer numbers freely. The WPS for instance offered membership numbers for the TST, stating that the unit has maintained a size of 37 assigned officers for at least the last few years (Access Request #16-10-911). Though this number is reportedly larger than when the unit was first established in 2008 (CBC News 2008). The VPD's ERT has grown slightly, although its number of deployments are as of yet unknown (Access Request #16-2974A). In each year since 2007, the OPP ERT has maintained a size of 256 assigned officers spread across OPP detachments in Ontario (Access Request #CSCS-A-2016-04906). The data did not provide any additional details that allow for greater insights to be made into any potential changes which may have occurred in the distribution of members in the province, or to the number of officers at any given location. In comparison to the other PPUs, the OPS' tactical unit is unique in that its membership numbers indicated a decrease over time (Access Request #16-867). Still this finding requires a caveat in that the FOI disclosure suggested that the unit's membership is not as clear cut as in other police services (Access Request #16-867). The OPS notes that "annual leave, time off, temporary transfer" (Access Request #16-867) and other factors may affect the number of assigned officers throughout the year. They also provided the number of assigned officers as of January, 2017 which was 31, which is clearly an increase to its membership (Access Request #16-867).
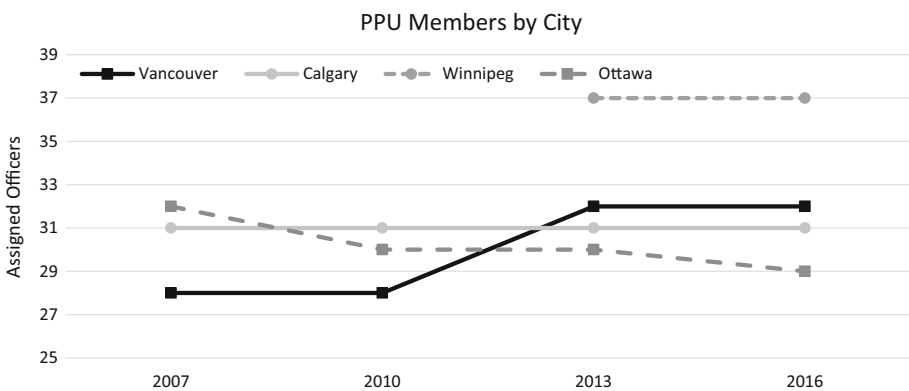
The third set of information requested pertaining to benchmarking and development of tactical units resulted in a limited amount of data. Benchmarking in this context refers to policies, practices, and procedures being standardized or defined through communications

between multiple agencies. The CPS did not provide any information in regard to the final item of the request, stating that neither their Policy Division nor the Tactical Unit had any records concerning benchmarking, and that "if benchmarking has ever been done, it would have been disposed of by now in accordance with the Calgary Police Service records retention schedule" (Access Request #16-G-1467). According to emails obtained from the WPS and the OPP, the CPS has engaged in benchmarking (Access Request #16-10-911; Access Request #CSCS-A-2016-04906). In an email with the WPS, dated March 14, 2007, the CPS requested information from other police services on policies and procedures "concerning the situations in which there would be a consideration of deployment of a tactical team to a situation" (Access Request #16-10-911). A complete list of the police services who received this email was not included, but the subject line suggests the CPS were surveying a number of different services (Access Request #16-10-911). The WPS' response is unknown as it was provided over the phone (Access Request #16-10-911). With only this single email it is impossible to know for certain why the CPS requested deployment policies and procedures. However, given that their tactical unit's number of deployments drastically decreased in proceeding years it may be that the CPS was conscious of the unit's excessive use.

Several emails obtained from the OPP reveal that the CPS has engaged in benchmarking recently as well. In a chain of emails dated September 1, 2016, a member of the CPS obtained a package of materials from the OPP about the standard operating procedures and duties of the OPP ERT, as well as an invitation to observe an upcoming ERT training course (Access Request CSCS-A-2016-04906). This material was meant to assist the CPS in exploring the possibility of creating "patrol containment teams" (CSCS-A-2016-04906) that would be deployed to situations "prior to Tactical Unit deployment" (Access Request #CSCS-A-2016-04906). According to the emails, the CPS has recently become interested in developing containment teams as a result of its tactical unit becoming increasingly involved in an "investigative and patrol capacity" (Access Request CSCS-A-2016-04906). This not only further reveals the expansion of PPUs into routine policing, but also of the possibility that the expansion may result in the creation of new layers and use of escalated force.

While the data obtained from the WPS and the OPP provided insight into benchmarking undertaken by the CPS, it did not greatly illuminate these unit's own benchmarking. The OPS denied access to the benchmarking data, but provided this statement that is in itself revealing:

> Communications between OPS and other police agencies are part of the OPS Operational SMEAC Plan for each year. The Operational Plans include presentations, briefings, instructional videos, investigative techniques and procedures, notes, emails, etc. This information is used by the OPS Tactical Unit in the development of new procedures and/or techniques, assessment of current processes, and briefings of all Tactical Unit calls for service (Access Request #16-867).

The FOI request showed that the OPS' tactical unit frequently collaborates on warrant work with other forces such as the OPP, the RCMP, and Gatineau's police service (Access Request #16-867). This statement though suggests that the OPS' relationship to these forces is likely more extensive than simply cooperating on the occasional investigation. Furthermore, the OPS unwillingness to provide any access to the requested materials flies in the face of public accountability. In the eyes of the OPS, the "assessment of current processes" (Access Request #16-867) related to their tactical unit is not up for public debate.

Discussion and Contributions

While Kraska (2007: 506) found that deployments of American PPUs in the 1980s and 90s were increasing each year, the deployment data of the Canadian PPUs shows a less steady rise. Not every PPU in Canada is deploying more now than it did 10 years ago. The deployments of some units have fluctuated. This should not be taken as an indication that PPUs do not play an active role in policing in Canada or that Canadian police forces are not becoming increasingly militarized. At the time that Kraska (2007) conducted his research, many American police forces were only beginning to create and use PPUs. Two decades later, our research is taking place during a time when most of the sampled police services have had an active PPU for decades. Despite these differences, the Canadian PPUs in this research have consistently deployed at a higher rate than was observed by Kraska and Kappeler (1997: 6) of urban PPUs at their highest point in the 1990s.

In terms of empirical findings, what is more significant about the findings is that there was strong evidence suggesting Canadian PPUs are routinely being used in both reactive and proactive work that falls outside their intended function, and frequently outside of what is revealed to the public as well. In some cases, the most notable being the WPS Tactical Support Team, the evidence shows that PPUs are actively being used in routine patrol work and as a part of their police service's community policing strategy (Access Request #16-10-911). The involvement of PPUs in such activities highlights their expanding role in policing, suggesting a high degree of normalization which is indicative of militarization (Kraska 2007). Rivera (2015) argues there is no meaningful oversight or system of checks and balances for normalization and expansion of police militarization across the United States and our findings suggest a similar trend in Canada.

In terms of methodological contributions, this paper contributes to the growing body of critical criminal justice research utilizing ATI/FOI requests. The value of ATI/FOI requests to militarization research specifically and criminal justice research more generally cannot be understated (see Walby and Larsen 2012). These data presented here would not have been possible to access without ATI/FOI, and the findings would have been less revealing if other research methods had been relied on. The police services sampled are not in the habit of releasing up to date information on the activities of their PPUs (and as we noted several police services refused to release these requested data). Moreover, the data they do release proactively is often misleading (see Luscombe and Walby 2015). We call for replication of this research design in all jurisdictions where scholars can use FOI requests for research purposes.

The implications of police militarization in Canada (and elsewhere) are significant. First, such policing practices are more likely to target already marginalized populations where police patrols and raids and more intense (Gamal 2016; Peak 2015). Thus one reason to investigate the expansion of SWAT teams and the expanded deployment of them is based on the issue of equity and fairness. Second, recent research has also shown SWAT use is more likely to lead to citizen and shooting deaths (Delehanty et al. 2017). Thus, a second to reason to investigate SWAT use is because it has become a matter of life and death for citizens. SWAT teams increase police violence, with seemingly little to no effect on actual frequency or severity of crime despite the costs and the consequences for the overall public police mission (McQuoid and Haynes 2017). There are also key concerns regarding the financial and social costs of using SWAT teams, and the issue of legitimacy and legitimacy crises as well (Roziere and Walby, forthcoming). The use of SWAT teams

in routine policing and even in warrant execution should be declared a failed public policy and scaled back immediately.

Militarization does not merely affect interactions between the state and criminal offenders, it changes what policing is by changing what police officers do (Hill and Beger 2009). The consequences of militarization is likely fall disproportionately on those from minority groups, those with mental health issues, and those exercising democratic rights associated with political expression (Weiss 2011). The questions that should be asked extend well beyond whether the police should be allowed to use one form of equipment or another, to how legally innocent individuals should be treated by police; what the purpose of the police should be in a democratic society; and to what extent we are willing to allow the state to violently intrude on our lives. Future research should also connect findings on the scope and institutionalization of police militarization in Canada to literature on and critical questions about police violence (Jacobs 1998; Ross 1992, 1995), police shootings, and oversight.

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