Auxiliary Police Volunteer Experiences and Motivations to Volunteer in Canada

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ABSTRACT

Policing has become a shared endeavour amongst a variety of community stakeholders. Citizens are expected to take on a more active role in securing their own safety. Volunteers are one particular group that has been marshalled to become an essential part of policing. In Canada, volunteers work alongside police officers as auxiliary members and assist in a wide range of activities, such as victim support, safety campaigns, community events, and patrol. Despite auxiliary members actively participating in policing duties, we know little about their experiences or motivations for volunteering. This article presents the results of a survey conducted with auxiliary police personnel at a police service in Canada and discusses their roles and tasks, perceived quality of and ways to improve their experiences, and motivations to volunteer. We conclude by discussing how police services could enhance auxiliary members' experiences and better integrate this group into regular police officer recruitment efforts.

Keywords: Auxiliary Police; Volunteer Experiences; Volunteer Police; Volunteer Motivations

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Introduction

Members of the community have long played an integral role in policing as volunteers. For example, Neighbourhood Watch programs, community patrols, and community policing are all premised on having the community take an active role in their safety (Dobrin & Wolf, 2016; Sundeen & Siegel, 1987). However, recent decades have seen the pluralization of policing emerge across several countries (Brown, 2017; van Stokkom & Terpstra, 2018). The term pluralization of policing helps to capture the

decreasing influence of police institutions over all things related to security, safety, and crime control. Policing has become a shared endeavor amongst a variety of community members and institutions (known as the 'extended police family') including private companies, not-for-profit groups, and of particular importance to this paper, volunteers (Bayley & Shearing, 1996; Boels & Verhage, 2016; Brown, 2017; Wolf & Bryer 2020).

When police pluralization is examined, the focus in the literature has often been on the privatization of traditionally sworn roles, with police volunteers being overlooked (Bullock, 2017). While their uniforms and powers differ between and within countries (Cherney & Chui, 2010; O'Connor et al. 2021), police auxiliaries are often volunteers deployed into the roles traditionally reserved for regular police officers. Although known by a variety of terminologies worldwide, including police liaison officers (Cherney & Chui, 2010), reservists (Wolf et al., 2015), and special constables (Bullock & Leeney, 2016; Chandan & Meakin, 2016; Pepper & Wolf, 2015; Wolf et al., 2017), members of the auxiliary police are generally volunteers who work alongside and provide support to regular police officers (Ayling, 2007; Dobrin, 2016; Wolf et al., 2015). Essentially, this group forms a quasi-police presence in communities extending the reach of police services through both visibility and action (e.g., patrol) (Cherney & Chui, 2010; Crawford & Lister, 2004). However, it should be noted that internationally not all auxiliary police are volunteers, as some have paid positions (Wolf et al., 2015). For this paper, when discussing the Canadian context, the term auxiliary police refers to volunteers.

Volunteers in policing have become increasingly important in recent years as the public continues to demand more of the police but at a reduced cost (Bullock & Leeney, 2016; Gravelle & Rogers, 2009; Merritt, 2009; Whittle, 2014). While police volunteers can generally be classified into two groups, those with and without police powers, they play a diversity of roles within police services. For example, volunteers can help to fill important gaps in police services related to both the enforcement of laws and non-enforcement-related activities (e.g., administrative roles, cyber, traffic management, and crowd control) (Wolf and Bryer, 2020). Relatedly, non-uniformed civilians, both volunteers and non-volunteers, make up increasing numbers of personnel within police organizations (Kang, 2021; Kiedrowski et al., 2019).

Regardless of the specific type of volunteering, members of the auxiliary police help to alleviate some of the demands placed on police services by the public, which may allow for more strategic use of limited police resources (Ayling, 2007; Doyle et al., 2016). Yet, we know little about auxiliary police members' motivations to volunteer, their

experiences volunteering, or how they are utilized by police services (Bullock & Leeney, 2016).

As such, this article adds to the literature by developing an understanding of this issue in the Canadian context. In what follows, we first examine the literature on auxiliary members' experiences volunteering and motivations to volunteer. We then discuss the survey methodology used to examine auxiliary members' perceptions before presenting our exploratory findings. To conclude, we argue that police services in Canada should explore ways to better incorporate volunteers into the 'extended police family' (Bullock, 2017; Cherney & Chui 2010; Cooke, 2005; Johnston, 2007). More specifically, we argue that existing volunteers could be better retained through enhanced experiences and that auxiliary members should be better integrated into police officer recruitment efforts.

Auxiliary Police Experiences and Motivations to Volunteer

While varying by location and police service, auxiliary police are asked to take on a multitude of tasks and roles including working with young people, crime prevention, improving police-community relations, providing an increased police presence, homeland security, patrol, emergency response, and identifying speeding motorists (Chandan & Meakin, 2016; Cheah et al., 2018; Greenberg, 2003; Millie, 2019; Phillips, 2013; Uhnou & Lofstrand, 2018). Volunteers are often viewed as key elements of a police service's community policing strategy (Phillips, 2013) as they are perceived as an important avenue for enabling community members to help shape policing in their communities (Cherney & Chui, 2010; Dorbin, 2016). Additionally, there is some evidence to suggest that volunteer police are more diverse, and thus often closer to the demographic make-up of the communities they serve, than their regular police service counterparts (Bullock, 2014). Thus, it has been argued that volunteers in policing help to enhance the public's confidence in the police, leading to more socially cohesive communities (Gravelle & Rogers, 2009).

The quality of the experiences of volunteer auxiliary police is somewhat mixed. For example, it has been found that young males tend to describe their volunteer experiences more positively than others (Smith & Lab, 1991). Also, minority auxiliary members have been found to experience conflicting obligations between the police service they volunteer for and the public they serve, which may create a sense of ambiguity with respect to whose interests they prioritize first (Cherney & Chui, 2010). Generally though, auxiliary police report having positive experiences (Millie, 2019). However, positive experiences for volunteers hinge on several factors.

One key facet to ensuring positive volunteer experiences is to find volunteers meaningful tasks to perform (Ayling, 2007; Callender et al., 2019). Volunteers want to be challenged in their work, demonstrate and improve their skills, have fun, give back to their communities, and perform interesting tasks (Ramshaw and Cosgrove, 2020; van Steden and Mehlbaum, 2019). Unfortunately, the skills brought to the police service by volunteers are often underutilized and volunteers have expressed the desire to learn new skills to assist them in their duties (Callender et al., 2019; van Steden and Mehlbaum, 2019). For example, Chandan and Meakin (2016) found that volunteer police felt that they lacked sufficient training for the tasks they were expected to undertake. When training is viewed as limited and/or there is a lack of opportunity to be involved in 'real' police work, this limits an individual's motivation to continue volunteering (Bullock & Leeney, 2016).

Inevitably, police auxiliary members must learn to navigate complex and often contradictory expectations placed upon them (Bullock & Leeney, 2016; Cherney & Chui, 2010). For example, although volunteers represent the police and may have similar statutory powers, there may be limitations to the services that they can provide (Cherney & Chui, 2010). Although, the powers that police volunteers have vary substantially by jurisdiction (Wolf and Bryer, 2020). For example, in Canada, except in the case of emergencies, auxiliary members have limited police powers. There can also be a disjuncture between the expectations of policing that auxiliary members have (e.g. crime fighting) versus the tasks that they are assigned (e.g., foot patrol) (Bullock & Leeney, 2016).

A second key facet to ensuring positive volunteer experiences for auxiliary members is to integrate them successfully into the police service. While it has been found that police leadership is generally supportive of having volunteers in policing (Phillips, 2013), integrating them into policing does not always go smoothly. In particular, issues arise with regular members having concerns about volunteers taking away paid positions, how volunteers are regulated, the oversight of volunteers, and the roles and tasks they are allowed to perform (Ayling, 2007; Bullock, 2018; Bullock & Leeney, 2016; Cherney & Chui, 2010; Dorbin, 2016; Phillips, 2013). Wolf et al. (2015) found that the more volunteers were provided similar responsibilities to regular members, the more satisfied they were with their experiences. Morale has also been linked to retaining volunteers (Callender et al., 2020).

As previously discussed, some have described auxiliary police as being a part of the 'extended police family' (Bullock, 2017, pp. 341). Therefore, explanations of

motivations for volunteering as an auxiliary member are sometimes closely tied to wanting to become a regular officer at a police service (Callender et al., 2020; Millie, 2019; Pepper, 2014) and to developing personally by acquiring new skills and knowledge about policing (Ramshaw and Cosgrove, 2020; Wolf et al., 2015). Motivations to volunteer are also driven by people wanting to give back to their communities (Millie, 2019; Wolf et al., 2015). It has also been found that rewarding auxiliary members for their efforts is important in retaining volunteers (Callender et al., 2019; Phillips, 2013). If volunteers are recognized for their efforts, appreciated for their work, and treated properly, they continue to volunteer and work hard for the police service (Callender et al., 2019).

Overall, much of the success of any auxiliary policing program hinges on the management of the program. Most importantly, the program requires a coherent overall structure, a clear rank structure, and dedicated leadership (Britton et al., 2018; Bullock & Leeney, 2016; Callender et al., 2019). Thus, focused attention on these issues is important because recruiting and retaining volunteer police is not completely without financial cost. There is a need to train volunteers on an ongoing basis, purchase uniforms and equipment, and conduct initial background investigations and screenings (Alyling, 2007; Dorbin, 2016). However, if the auxiliary program is managed well, these minor costs can reap large benefits. For example, by employing volunteers, police services not only benefit by having substantial amounts of work done for (mostly) free, but they also have access to a pool of experienced and well-trained future (potential) sworn police members (Dorbin, 2016; Wolf et al., 2015).

While the above literature helps to establish what we know about volunteer police across a range of countries, research on volunteers at Canadian police services is mostly non-existent. Given this, our research set out to examine auxiliary members' perceptions of their volunteering at a police service in Canada. The research questions examined in this article are: (1) What roles and tasks are auxiliary police volunteers expected to perform?; (2) How have auxiliary members experienced volunteering and, if needed, how can their experiences be improved?; and, (3) What motivates people to volunteer as police auxiliary members? In the next section, we discuss the methods utilized to answer these research questions.

Methodology

Similar to how Bullock and Leeney (2016) conducted their exploratory research in the UK, we set out to design an exploratory project with little existing literature to guide us within the Canadian context. To that end, we administered an online survey to

auxiliary police volunteers at a Canadian police service from September to December 2017. Our goal was to obtain a sample of participants that could offer a diverse array of experiences and motivations of people volunteering. Thus, in order to recruit participants, the police service forwarded our email request for participants to all of the auxiliary members in their database (approximately $n=820$) as well as a follow-up reminder to complete the survey. Unfortunately, we do not know if targeted participants received or viewed our email request for participants. In total, 230 auxiliary members completed at least some of the survey (approximately 28% completion rate). Given the exploratory nature of our survey, this is an acceptable completion rate considering there is little consensus as to what would be an adequate completion rate in policing research and that a wide range of completion rates have been deemed acceptable (Nix et al., 2019). Unfortunately, it was not possible to obtain a random sample of participants, and thus we were unable to generalize our results to all auxiliary members within the police service. We also know little about the demographics of the population of auxiliary members at this police service, which makes comparisons between our sample and the auxiliary member population difficult. Given the exploratory nature of this research, our results should be interpreted with caution.

Participants were assured anonymity and confidentiality and completed the survey through the computer software program Qualtrics. Survey questions were designed, with input from the police service as well as the existing research from other countries, to capture the breadth and quality of auxiliary members' experiences and their motivations to volunteer. The survey contained both closed and open-ended questions. The majority of closed-ended questions collected auxiliary members' levels of agreement using a Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) for a series of statements about their experiences, rewards, acceptance and appreciation within the organization, and motivations to volunteer. Survey responses were analyzed using the computer software program SPSS. In addition to descriptive findings on how auxiliary members perceived their participation in the auxiliary policing program, paired-samples t-tests were used to help determine whether auxiliary members' volunteer motivations changed since first joining the auxiliary program. That is, we examined whether there were significant differences between auxiliary members' initial and continued motivations to volunteer or whether observed differences were simply due to chance. The open-ended responses were analyzed using the computer software program NVivo and themes were developed through grounded theory (Charmaz, 2005). In the first reading of the responses, we sought to code broad

themes that were emerging. A second reading entailed adding more specificity and accuracy to our coding scheme. Finally, a third reading was used to refine codes as necessary and to finalize themes.

The participants in our study identified as mostly male (n=144[78%]; female, n=40[22%]), White (n=171[93%]; visible minority, n=13[7%]), having a college diploma (n=86[44%]; bachelor's degree, n=50[26%]; some college/university, n=43[22%]; graduate degree, n=9[5%]; high school, n=8[4%]), and making a household income of \$100,000 or more a year (n=76[44%]; between \$60,000 and \$99,999, n=48[28%]; less than \$60,000, n=50[29%]). The average age of the sample was 38 with participants ranging in age from 20 to 74. The majority of auxiliary members were employed full-time (n=152[78%]) with the remaining (n=43[22%]) either working part-time, being a student, retired, or some combination of these. Seventy-six percent (n=136) of participants were auxiliary constables, 16% (n=28) were auxiliary sergeants, and 9% (n=16) were auxiliary staff sergeants. Most of the participants had been auxiliary members for somewhere between 1-5 years (n=93[48%]; less than one year, n=24[12%]; 6-10 years, n=28[14%]; 11-15 years, n=24[12%]; 16 or more years, n=25[13%]). This range of volunteering times suggests that the sample provided a breadth of auxiliary members' experiences volunteering which was the goal of our sampling strategy.

Findings

In this section, we first discuss the roles and tasks that auxiliary members participated in through their volunteering as well as examine their perceptions of these experiences. Second, we examine auxiliary members' motivations to volunteer focusing specifically on how motivations changed since initially becoming auxiliary members. Finally, we conclude this section by discussing auxiliary members' perceptions of how their volunteer experiences could be improved.

Auxiliary Roles, Tasks, and Experiences

Auxiliary members' volunteering mostly took place in rural areas (n=111[57%]; urban, n=48[25%]; suburban, n=37[19%]). The time spent volunteering as auxiliary members ranged from a low of five hours to a high of 100 hours per month, but on average participants volunteered approximately 26 hours per month. The majority of participants thought that the number of hours they spent volunteering was 'about right' (n=189[85%]; 'too much', n=3[1%]; or 'too little', n=30[14%]). Although, the

majority of participants agreed or strongly agreed (n=122[58%]) that they had less time to volunteer for the auxiliary than they had in the past.

To get a sense of auxiliary members' roles and tasks, participants were asked to state all of the activities they engaged in as volunteers. The majority of participants stated that they had spent time on patrol with regular members (n=217) and assisted with community events (n=220). Participants' volunteer hours were also spent on reducing impaired driving initiatives (n=144), conducting safety displays (n=116), performing ceremonial duties (n=96), doing presentations (n=97), conducting seatbelt clinics (n=41), and assisting victims (n=32). In addition to these activities, auxiliary members participated in recruitment initiatives, crime prevention initiatives, fingerprint clinics, first aid instruction, training scenarios, search and rescue activities, workshops and conferences, and administrative tasks.

Participants rated their overall satisfaction with being an auxiliary member as very satisfied (37%) or satisfied (54%), with only approximately 9% of participants being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. In addition, 79% of participants stated they were always proud to be a member of the auxiliary for their police service and 17% stated they were usually proud. Only a minority of participants (4%) stated they were rarely or never proud to be a member of the police auxiliary. Further, the majority of participants stated that their police service always (38%) or usually (49%) worked hard to create a respectful volunteer environment for their auxiliary members. Only a small number of participants stated that their police service rarely (11%) or never (1%) worked hard at creating such an environment. Therefore, for the majority of participants, being an auxiliary member was described as a positive experience.

Participants were also asked to state their level of agreement with a range of different statements related to their personal experiences volunteering as auxiliary members (Table 1). Again, the majority of participants held very favourable views of their experiences being auxiliary police volunteers. Participants agreed or strongly agreed that they found their work rewarding (97%), that their expected time commitment to the police service was fair (92%), and felt the police service offered convenient shifts (82%) and worthwhile duties (81%). The only clearly negative experience noted by participants was the lack of equitable workload. That is, only 34% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that volunteers shared the workload equally, which might suggest a potential lack of oversight of volunteer activities.

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

There was some indication from participants that their time spent volunteering could be put to better use. For example, while most participants agreed or strongly agreed that their skills and experience were put to good use (65%) at the police service, they at the same time also agreed or strongly agreed (83%) that they should be given greater responsibility as auxiliary members. Additionally, the majority of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they would be willing to volunteer more hours if their role was more interesting (68%) and if their talents were used more effectively (66%). As we return to in the section on improving auxiliary members' experiences, there is an opportunity here to enhance volunteer experiences by providing them with an expanded role within the police service.

For the most part, auxiliary members also felt accepted and appreciated at the police service where they volunteered (Table 2). Participants strongly agreed or agreed that regular officers worked well with them as part of a team (91%), there was a high level of trust amongst the people with whom they volunteered (91%), they were treated as valued members of the police service (81%), and regular officers respected their work (79%). Similarly, participants always or usually felt that their volunteer work was appreciated by both their police service (81%) and the community (91%) and that their volunteer work was important to their police service (89%) and the community (94%). The only noticeable deviation from these positive experiences was that auxiliary members felt less strongly that their concerns were effectively dealt with by the police service. That is, while still in the clear majority, only 61% of participants strongly agreed or agreed that their concerns were dealt with effectively, again pointing to a potential for improved oversight of the auxiliary program.

[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

To better understand auxiliary members' experiences, participants were asked through an open-ended question to elaborate on the most positive aspects of being an auxiliary member. Participants' responses centered around three key themes. First, participants highlighted the importance of serving and interacting with the community. This theme included participating in community events, helping others in need, giving back to the community, meeting new people, being a role model for young people, and promoting a positive image of police. Second, participants noted that career preparation and skill development was one of the most positive aspects of being an auxiliary member given that they were able to gain valuable policing experience and training before fully committing to being a regular officer. In addition, being a member of the auxiliary allowed participants to enhance their communication skills, work as part of a team,

and build self-confidence. The final theme to emerge from participants' responses centered on the professionalism of the police service. While this was a much less discussed positive aspect than the two previously discussed themes, participants noted that they were proud to serve as an auxiliary member, thought the police service was well-respected, and the officers they worked with helped to create a positive experience for them.

Motivations for Volunteering

To examine whether volunteer motivations had changed since initially joining the auxiliary, participants were asked their level of agreement on a variety of statements about their initial reason for joining the auxiliary and why they continued to volunteer. Table 3 provides the results of the survey and the paired-samples t-test used to examine changes in motivations since first joining the auxiliary police.

The first group of statements examined participants' motivations for volunteering which centered on personal fulfillment and learning. Almost all (>80%) participants strongly agreed or agreed that they initially joined the auxiliary and continue to volunteer to be challenged, better themselves, meet new people, and learn new skills. While the majority of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they initially joined (71%) and continue to volunteer (64%) to improve their job prospects, only 47% initially joined because they had free time and continue to volunteer (51%) for the same reason. The paired-samples t-test revealed that there were only two significant differences between participants' reasons for initially joining the auxiliary and why they continue to volunteer. More specifically, participants were less likely to agree that they continued volunteering to be challenged and to improve their job prospects.

[TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

The second group of statements examined participants' altruistic motivations for volunteering in the form of giving back. The vast majority of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they initially volunteered and continue to volunteer to help others, give something back to the community, and help create a better society. However, examining the paired-samples t-test revealed that while participants initially joined the auxiliary to help others, this was less of a factor in their reasons for continuing to volunteer.

The final group of statements examined participants' interest in policing as a motivation for volunteering. Almost all participants (>80%) agreed or strongly agreed that they initially joined the auxiliary and continue to volunteer to gain insight into

policing, because they are generally interested in police work, and are concerned about law and order. To a lesser extent, participants stated that they agreed or strongly agreed that they joined the auxiliary (79%) and continue to volunteer (77%) because being associated with a police agency is exciting. Similarly, participants agreed or strongly agreed that they initially joined (61%) and continue to volunteer (64%) because being associated with a police agency is prestigious, while 69% agreed or strongly agreed that they initially joined to become regular police officers and continue to volunteer (54%) for the same reason. The paired-samples t-test revealed that while participants initially joined the auxiliary to gain insight into policing, because they were generally interested in police work, and because they eventually wanted to become a regular police officer, this became significantly less important in their motivations to continue to volunteer.

Improving Auxiliary Member Experiences

Despite the overwhelmingly positive experiences expressed by auxiliary members, there were some areas of the auxiliary experience that participants stated could be improved. This section draws primarily on participants' qualitative responses to being asked open-ended questions about areas where the auxiliary program could improve and whether their personal volunteer experiences could be enhanced. These responses are also supplemented by quantitative survey results where applicable.

The first area of improvement noted by participants had to do with how the auxiliary program operated. The largest frustration for members was organizing ride-alongs. Participants wanted greater access to officers willing to take them out on patrol and a systematic process, ideally online, for scheduling ride-alongs. Participants suggested this could be accomplished in part by incentivizing regular officers to take auxiliary members on ride-alongs and by training officers on the role of the auxiliary. The second most noted operational area for improvement was the need for better communication. Similar to the issues expressed about ride-alongs, participants noted having shift scheduling issues related to last-minute calls for auxiliary members to attend events, cancelled meetings, and a general lack of information on events (e.g., location, duties). The third area for operational improvement concerned recruitment. In part, participants wanted clearer communication about how they could advance from being an auxiliary member to a regular officer and more opportunities for advancement (e.g., a streamlined pathway to become a regular officer). Participants also felt that the auxiliary recruitment process took too long which left them without enough members. Other areas of operational improvement mentioned by only a

minority of participants included wanting more opportunities for camaraderie amongst auxiliary and regular members of the police service, respect from regular members and leadership, compensation (e.g., for fuel, days taken off work for training) or a tax break, recognition (e.g., through awards, thank-you letters), and useful feedback on their performance.

The second area of improvement discussed by participants related to wanting more responsibility. For the most part, participants thought that their skills were underutilized and that they were not trusted by the police service to handle more responsibility. Areas where participants thought their skills/abilities could be utilized more included patrol, overnight shifts, law enforcement-related tasks, driving cruisers, traffic direction, crowd control, and use of force. Overall, participants wanted to use their experiences and skills to aid the police service but felt that opportunities were lacking.

The final area of improvement noted by participants was the need for more training and better access to equipment. Participants noted several trainings that would be beneficial for them as well as the police service. These additional, or more frequent trainings, included bicycle, all-terrain vehicle, snowmobile, search and rescue, marine patrol, traffic stops, checking equipment, radio communications, use of force, firearms, and defensive tactics. Participants also stated that they would benefit from working more closely with specialized units (e.g., organized crime) and from being provided more knowledge on specific issues (e.g., mental health, suicide prevention, drug identification, and the law). The participants noted that if they were better trained this would encourage regular officers to feel more comfortable taking auxiliary members out on patrol. It was also stated that these trainings could ease the transition into becoming regular members of the police service. More flexibility on training times would also encourage more volunteering as many auxiliary members work full-time and have to take time off work to attend trainings. Finally, participants noted that radios were in short supply which made it difficult for their skills to be fully utilized by the police service and created a safety issue.

Participants were asked a series of questions that attempted to gauge the likelihood that they would continue to volunteer in the future based on their experiences. While 93% were very likely or likely to recommend serving as an auxiliary member for this police service, only 44% of auxiliary members saw themselves still volunteering for the auxiliary in five years, 16% stated they would not be, and 40% said they might be volunteering. It is the 'maybe' category that needs to be convinced to stay on as

volunteers and some of the above auxiliary members' suggestions for improvement could help retain members. Thus, finding ways to improve the volunteer experiences of auxiliary members is likely to be critical in retaining recruited members going forward.

Discussion

Our study set out to add a Canadian perspective to the volunteer police literature. Generally, our findings support what researchers have found in other countries. Similar to others (Chandan & Meakin, 2016; Cheah et al., 2018; Greenberg, 2003; Millie, 2019; Phillips, 2013; Uhnnoo & Lofstrand, 2018), auxiliary members in our study were involved in a wide range of activities as part of their volunteering. They also, for the most part, felt accepted by the police organization they volunteered for and appreciated for their volunteer work. In addition, and consistent with the literature (Millie, 2019), the auxiliary members we surveyed also reported mostly positive volunteer experiences. Despite these mostly positive experiences, there were areas identified by participants for improvement. In this section, we show how volunteer experiences could be further enhanced to the benefit of both volunteers and police services by providing more responsibility to volunteers, improving oversight and operation of the program, and better linking auxiliary volunteers to pathways for regular police officer hiring.

Our research found that auxiliary members wanted more responsibility than they currently had in their auxiliary roles. There were indications in the survey that volunteers were not being used to their full potential as auxiliary members believed they had skills that were not being utilized or wanted to acquire additional skills. However, it is not unusual for police services to underutilize their volunteers (Callender et al., 2018). Therefore, in order to ensure positive experiences and to help retain auxiliary members, it is important to continue to provide them with challenging work, training opportunities, and more responsibility (Ayling, 2007; Bullock & Leeney, 2016; Callender et al., 2019; Chandan & Meakin, 2016). Given that receiving an equitable workload was a concern expressed by some, those who are exceeding expectations could be provided with more responsibility. This would likely require providing auxiliary members with ongoing feedback (e.g., regular performance reviews) and finding ways to obtain regular feedback about the auxiliary program from members to make sure their skills are being used to their fullest effect.

There appears to be an untapped opportunity here to both provide more meaningful work to volunteers and at the same time retain more highly skilled auxiliary members. In Canada, auxiliary members' police powers are closer to that of a regular citizen

than that of a regular officer. Whereas, in other locales, auxiliary members have almost identical police powers to those of regular officers (Britton et al., 2018; Dobrin, 2017). Yet, the literature suggests that the more closely aligned volunteers consider themselves to be to the 'extended police family' (Bullock, 2017; Cherney & Chui, 2010; Cooke, 2005; Johnston, 2007), the more motivated they are to volunteer (Bullock & Leeney, 2016; Wolf et al., 2015). Therefore, in this current era of budget restraint, it would be fruitful to explore avenues where auxiliary members could be used to their fullest effect. As Kang (2021) found examining US police services, financial constraints can encourage police services that already use volunteers to increase their volunteer numbers.

Accomplishing this requires investment in the smooth operation of the auxiliary program and support from police leaders, officers, and unions (Kang, 2021). Recruiting and retaining volunteers and ensuring continued positive experiences comes with a financial cost, which is often largely offset by the benefits garnered by police services (Alyling, 2007; Dorbin, 2016; Wolf et al., 2015). As our participants noted, the smooth operation of the program requires constant attention to program management including: workload equity, the streamlining of ride-along scheduling and connections with regular officers, better and more frequent communication, and ensuring that auxiliary members have adequate equipment. Improving on these organizational aspects likely requires further research. For example, patrol officers could be incentivized to take auxiliary members on ride-alongs more frequently but how best to accomplish this likely requires an examination of why officers might be reluctant to take auxiliary members on patrol in the first place. These organizational issues, while not unusual in a bureaucracy or catastrophic to the viability of the auxiliary program, do likely inhibit members' enthusiasm and hours spent volunteering.

Moreover, auxiliary members in Canada and elsewhere are motivated to volunteer for reasons associated with personal growth, altruism, and their interests in policing (Millie, 2019; Pepper, 2014; Ramshaw and Cosgrove, 2020). In our study, auxiliary members initially volunteered and continued to volunteer to better themselves, to meet new people, because they had free time, to learn new skills, to give something back to the community, to help create a better society, because they are concerned about law and order, and because being associated with a police agency is prestigious and exciting. However, we found differences between why people were initially motivated to volunteer versus why they continued to volunteer at the police service. For example, while auxiliary members initially joined the auxiliary to be challenged, improve job prospects, help others, gain insight into policing, eventually become a regular police

officer, and because of a general interest in police work, these motivations did not sustain their ongoing volunteering to the same extent. While we did not directly examine the auxiliary recruitment process, this suggests that recruiting and retaining auxiliary members may require different ongoing strategies and that retaining members likely requires additional opportunities for skill acquisition. For example, in the UK, employers sometimes provide their employees with paid time off to volunteer for their local police service (Callender et al. 2020).

One of the more surprising findings from our study is the lack of direct connection between being an auxiliary member and transitioning to becoming a regular police officer. As others have similarly found (Millie, 2019; Pepper, 2014), many of the auxiliary members in our study were motivated to volunteer to gain direct knowledge and experience to help them prepare for a possible career in policing. Auxiliary members wanted avenues to more easily transition to become regular police officers but perceived these to be lacking. Other locales seem to be able to more directly tap into their pool of auxiliary members when recruiting regular police officers (Dorbin, 2016; Ramshaw and Cosgrove, 2020; Wolf et al., 2015). Given the amount of training and upfront investment in volunteers, it would be worthwhile to explore how the auxiliary member program could offer a pathway to becoming a regular police officer for those who are interested. As suggested above, those exceeding expectations in their auxiliary role could be provided with increasing amounts of responsibility as they demonstrate that they have the requisite skills to become regular police officers. Providing such a pathway for auxiliary members to transition to become regular officers could also help save increasingly scarce police resources. More research on this topic would help to illuminate the possibilities and pitfalls of developing such a pathway.

Conclusion

In an era of budget constraints and police pluralization, recruiting and retaining auxiliary members and other volunteers in policing has become increasingly important and will likely continue to be for the foreseeable future (Ayling, 2007; Kang, 2021; Sundeen & Siegal, 1987). Our study has begun to examine the role of auxiliary police in Canada but our findings come with important limitations. That is, we did not have a random sample of participants to generalize our results to the larger auxiliary population. The size of the sample also limited the analyses we could perform and the conclusions we could draw about associations between variables. Also, our findings are only from one police service in one particular country. Auxiliary members at other

police services of varying sizes and make-ups across Canada may have different experiences. This raises questions about the applicability of our findings to other locales. Although, the majority of our findings confirmed what others have found in several other countries. Our study also expanded on these studies by providing avenues for improving auxiliary police programs or at a minimum should raise questions for existing programs at other police services about how they might improve the experiences of their auxiliary members. Overall, we need more research on the contributions of volunteers in policing. If efforts continue to be made to curtail police budgets and police are expected to do more with fewer resources, volunteers might be the way policing tasks increasingly get done. The larger issue this raises is whether the systemic change that has been called for in policing will occur if volunteers (i.e., the community itself as auxiliary members) continue to be called upon to fill in the gaps.

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Figures and Tables

Table 1: Personal Experiences Volunteering as Auxiliary Members

	Strongly Agree n(%)	Agree n(%)	Disagree n(%)	Strongly Disagree n(%)	% in Agreement
I find the volunteer work I do for the auxiliary rewarding.	87(41)	119(56)	4(2)	1(0.5)	97
Auxiliary members' expected time commitment to the police service is fair.	76(35)	125(57)	15(7)	3(1)	92
My police service offers convenient shifts for auxiliary members.	66(31)	109(51)	26(12)	7(3)	82
My police service offers worthwhile duties for auxiliary members.	33(16)	137(65)	33(16)	6(3)	81

Auxiliary members should be given greater responsibility.	102(48)	75(35)	27(13)	0(0)	83
I would be willing to volunteer more if my role was more interesting.	32(34)	71(34)	82(40)	22(11)	68
I would be willing to volunteer more if my talents were used more effectively.	42(21)	91(45)	55(27)	14(7)	66
My skills and experience are put to good use by my police service.	24(11)	115(54)	59(28)	8(4)	65
All volunteers share the workload equally.	11(5)	62(29)	87(41)	54(25)	34

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Table 2: Perceptions of Acceptance and Appreciation of Auxiliary Members

	Strongly Agree n(%)	Agree n(%)	Disagree n(%)	Strongly Disagree n(%)	% in Agreement
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<i>Acceptance in Police Organization</i>					
Regular police officers and auxiliary members work well as a team.	64(30)	129(61)	16(8)	1(0.47)	91
There is a high level of trust among the people with whom I volunteer.	72(34)	121(57)	13(6)	3(1)	91
I am treated like a valued member of this organization.	43(20)	129(61)	30(14)	7(3)	81
Regular police officers respect my volunteer work as an auxiliary member.	45(21)	122(58)	35(17)	3(1)	79
Auxiliary member concerns are dealt with effectively.	29(14)	99(47)	51(24)	17(8)	61
<i>Appreciation of Auxiliary Volunteers' Work</i>	Always n(%)	Usually n(%)	Rarely n(%)	Never n(%)	% Always and Usually

Do you feel that the volunteer work you do as an auxiliary member is... important to the community you serve?	117(56)	79(38)	11(5)	1(0.5)	94
... appreciated by the community you serve?	78(38)	109(53)	15(7)	2(1)	91
... important to the service you volunteer for?	84(40)	102(49)	23(11)	1(0.5)	89
... appreciated by the service you volunteer for?	55(26)	115(55)	40(19)	1(0.5)	81

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Table #3: Motivations for Initially Joining Auxiliary and Continuing to Volunteer

	Strongly Agree n(%)	Agree n(%)	Disagree n(%)	Strongly Disagree n(%)	Paired Samples t-test
<i>Personal Fulfillment and Learning</i>					
I initially joined the auxiliary...to be challenged.	119(56)	93(44)	2(0.9)	0(0)	.005

I continue to be a member of the auxiliary...to be challenged.	104(49)	100(47)	6(3)	1(0.5)	
(initially) ...to better myself.	117(55)	90(42)	7(3)	0(0)	.303
(continue) ...to better myself.	111(52)	92(43)	8(4)	1(0.5)	
(initially) ...to meet new people.	62(30)	114(54)	31(15)	3(1)	.607
(continue) ...to meet new people.	60(29)	110(53)	36(17)	2(1)	
(initially) ...because I had free time.	12(6)	85(41)	84(41)	26(13)	.260
(continue) ...because I had free time.	18(9)	86(42)	79(38)	24(12)	
(initially) ...to improve my job prospects.	76(36)	73(35)	49(23)	12(6)	.010
(continue) ...to improve my job prospects.	69(34)	61(30)	56(28)	16(8)	
(initially) ...to learn new skills.	114(53)	98(45)	4(2)	0(0)	.173

(continue)... to learn new skills.	105(50)	100(47)	6(3)	1(0.5)	
<i>Giving Back</i>					
(initially)... to help others.	145(67)	70(32)	1(0.5)	0(0)	.002
(continue)... to help others.	127(60)	82(39)	3(1)	0(0)	
(initially)... to give something back to the community.	137(63)	78(36)	1(0.5)	0(0)	.370
(continue)... to give something back to the community.	131(62)	78(37)	1(0.5)	0(0)	
(initially)... to help create a better society.	98(46)	109(51)	6(3)	2(0.9)	.467
(continue)... to help create a better society.	100(47)	105(50)	7(3)	0(0)	
<i>Interest in Policing</i>					
(initially)... to gain insight into policing.	117(54)	88(41)	8(4)	2(0.9)	.000

(continue)... to gain insight into policing.	86(41)	100(48)	21(10)	2(1)	
(initially)... because I am generally interested in police work.	123(57)	88(41)	4(2)	0(0)	.001
(continue)... because I am generally interested in police work.	102(49)	100(48)	6(3)	2(1)	
(initially)... because I am concerned about law and order.	66(31)	118(56)	24(11)	2(1)	.565
(continue)... because I am concerned about law and order.	68(33)	113(54)	25(12)	2(1)	
(initially)... because being associated with a police agency is prestigious.	44(21)	83(40)	67(33)	12(6)	.363
(continue)... because being associated with a police agency is prestigious.	44(22)	83(42)	59(30)	11(6)	

(initially) ...to eventually become a regular police officer.	103(50)	40(19)	41(20)	24(12)	.000
(continue) ... to eventually become a regular police officer.	84(41)	27(13)	58(29)	34(17)	
(initially) ... because being associated with a police agency is exciting.	68(33)	95(46)	40(19)	5(2)	.146
(continue) ... because being associated with a police agency is exciting.	60(29)	97(48)	41(20)	6(3)	

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding. $p \leq 0.05$.