Factors Affecting Resistance and Receptivity to Evidence-based Policing Practices in Canada

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Abstract

Evidence-based policing (EBP) is based on the use of research for decision-making in police organizations. Although EBP helps improve the effectiveness of police organizations, it has not received the response it was expected to generate. There is a dearth of research that identifies specific reasons which lead to receptivity to EBP or the lack thereof. Based on a qualitative methodology, the present dissertation addresses this gap in literature by exploring the contextual factors which may be responsible for police resistance or receptivity to the use of evidence. Data were collected from Canadian police organizations through qualitative questions added to a survey (n = 353) as well as in-depth interviews with police leaders across Canada (n = 38).

The present dissertation is based on the institutional theory framework. It draws upon literature in sociology, management and organizational behaviour to explain the impact of organizational context on receptivity or resistance to EBP. The results suggest that a history of failed change attempts affects employee confidence in the management’s ability to successfully implement change, thereby increasing cynicism towards future initiatives. Failure of change initiatives in general was attributed to a number of factors such as the inability of top management to own a change initiative or to communicate its need down the hierarchy. Lack of direction and motivation and flexibility to pursue change, combined with inadequate resources and person-job fit were also believed to be the reasons behind failure of change implementation in police organizations. The reasons associated with resistance to EBP somewhat overlapped with general resistance to change but pointed towards factors present in the internal and external organizational context. Lack of communication and resources along with cultural resistance and lack of trust in external research emerged as the main internal organizational factors behind police reluctance to adopt research-based practices. However, the external factors leading to resistance towards EBP were believed to be political in nature. In terms of receptivity to EBP, the contextual factors present in the external environment were political pressure to improve performance and networking with external researchers and other research focused police agencies. The internal organizational factors enhancing receptivity to EBP
included the organization’s capacity to adopt new practices, as well as supportive leadership and organizational culture.

Based on the results, I recommend that resistance towards EBP can be reduced and receptivity enhanced by obtaining leadership support and communicating the need and importance of change to all hierarchical levels. An exchange of communication should also take place with external stakeholders to ensure an adequate supply of resources. In terms of creating an organizational culture receptive to change, organizational development techniques based on open communication and participation can be employed. This would not only remove uncertainties regarding EBP but would improve organizational effectiveness by creating organizations receptive to change.

**Keywords**

Evidence-based policing; Institutional theory; Planned organizational change; Failure of change implementation; Resistance to EBP; Receptivity to EBP; Canadian Police
Co-Authorship Statement

Laura Huey, Brittany Blaskovits and Craig Bennell contributed to Chapter 2, ‘If it’s not worth doing half-assed, then it’s not worth doing at all’: Police views as to why new strategy implementation fails, as second, third and fourth authors respectively.

All remaining chapters (1, 3, 4, 5) are the work of Hina Kalyal.
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Chapter 1

1 Introduction

Organizations today are faced with myriad pressures to change in order to survive. Therefore, research in organizational change and innovation occupies an important position in sociological and management literature as it provides viable solutions for change-related issues (Hage, 1999; Hage & Powers, 1992). Within the organizational context, innovation is defined as the adoption of a new idea such as a service, product or technology and is deemed to be necessary for organizational survival (Damanpour, 1991). Damanpour and Schneider (2006) have argued that organizational adoption of innovative practices is affected by several environmental or organizational factors. Environmental factors may include political, social, economic or technological factors (Spector, 2011), while organizational factors may pertain to resources, structure, culture or prior experience of change (Damanpour, 1991; Reichers et al., 1997). Together, these external and internal environmental factors constitute what has been termed organizational context, which has the capacity to impede or facilitate organizational change (Armenakis & Bedein, 1999; Barnett & Carroll, 1995; Finstad, 1998; Self et al., 2007).

Although contextual factors are relevant to change in private and public sectors alike, they have not been widely explored in research on the public sector which has faced greater pressure for transformation in the recent past due to fiscal and performance related issues (Ahmad & Cheng, 2018; Kuipers et al., 2014). Contextual studies are also highly recommended on topics such as the adoption of research and evidence based practices in organizations so as to specifically identify factors leading to such changes (Stetler et al.,
2009; Watson et al., 2018). The present dissertation is based on the following research questions:

1) How does past experience of change implementation affect future projects?

2) What are the reasons behind resistance to evidence-based policing practices in Canada?

3) What are the factors affecting police receptivity to evidence-based practices?

To further explicate the context of change, the following section will present a discussion of institutional theory to highlight the forces shaping change from a sociological perspective.

1.1 Theoretical Overview: Institutional Theory

The increasing level of environmental complexity has necessitated the adoption of radical as well as incremental changes to ensure organizational survival. As institutional theory provides a strong sociological base premised upon established theories in the field (Perrow, 1979), Greenwood and Hinings (1996) suggest that organizational change should be viewed through the lens that it offers. Over the years, institutional theory has become bifurcated into old and new institutionalism with some similarities and a few differences, which DiMaggio and Powell (1991) have highlighted in their overview. Whereas old institutionalism is more political in nature and focuses on maintaining status quo, new institutionalism highlights the importance of organizational change and agency (Bell, 2017; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996).

Institutional theory explains how organizations assume isomorphic (similar) forms to maintain their legitimacy due to the presence of three driving forces, namely mimetic,
normative and coercive (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Mimetic forces arise in response to uncertainty and push organizations towards imitating the activities of successful organizations in the field (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Such measures are generally adopted without much consideration as to the evidence of their success, thereby sometimes leading to the adoption of management fads (Ashworth et al., 2009). Normative forces are based on professional standards and their impact on organizational functions which help the organization garner support within a professional community (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Both mimetic and normative forces arise from within the organization and are thus internally driven, whereas, coercive forces are political in nature and are externally driven (Zucker, 1987). These external pressures to adopt certain organizational forms or practices may include governmental requirements to adopt standards of performance which ensure organizational survival and legitimacy through inflow of resources (Zucker, 1987). The stronger the coercive forces, the more organizations tend to move towards isomorphism to reduce external pressure (Frumkin & Galaskiewicz, 2004). However, as organizations protect their technical activities by disengaging from other activities in response to such forces, organizational efficiency is compromised (Meyer & Rowan 1977).

It appears that organizational decisions to adopt certain strategies and structures are not always related to performance but at times to the legitimacy for continuing their operations (Frumkin & Galaskiewicz, 2004). Hence, “prescribed templates” become embedded within an organization, thus creating a sense of compliance among the actors to ensure survival and well-being (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996, p.1028). Any changes that do take place are believed to reinforce existing templates, thereby preventing radical
organizational change (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). However, DiMaggio and Powell (1991) pose a valid question in this regard: "If institutions exert such a powerful influence over the ways in which people can formulate their desires and work to attain them, then how does institutional change occur?" (p. 29). The following section attempts to answer this question by explaining how radical or divergent organizational change takes place.

1.2 How Institutional Change Occurs

Institutional theory is not considered an actual theory of organizational change (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996), as some scholars believe that it does not provide a sound explanation of organizational change processes (Buchko, 1994; Ledford et al., 1989). The emphasis of institutional theory on adherence to specific templates has been questioned by theorists seeking answers as to how changes occur in organizations despite such pressures. A major critique of institutional theory is the lack of focus on human agency (Fernandez & Rainey, 2006; Oliver, 1991; Scott, 1987).

Some scholars however, argue that neo-institutional theory or the combination of old and new institutionalism provides a clear understanding of change as well as the contextual factors which lead to it (Dougherty, 1994; Leblebici et al., 1993). Although the theory is weak in identifying internal dynamics of organizational change, it nevertheless provides valuable suggestions that link the external and internal organizational factors affecting radical change (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Institutional theory is also capable of accommodating human agency and behaviours, such as resistance to socially and institutionally acceptable behavioural patterns (DiMaggio, 1988; Oliver, 1991). How institutional actors respond to external pressures depends on the level of organizational reliance on external resources and legitimacy (Oliver, 1991).
In explaining resistance to prescribed behavioural patterns, Oliver (1992) suggests that this divergence occurs due to the existence of weaker bonds with institutionalized values than what is implied by institutional theory. These bonds dissipate over time due to environmental factors and conflicting organizational values. The conflict of interest amongst various organizational groups also leads to change (Covaleski & Dirsmith, 1988) but this reflects a lack of direction unless an alternate template is available (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). An organization’s capacity for change and leadership support is also a factor that leads to radical change. This means that the organization possesses the skills and knowledge to deal with the new demands and that such actions are mobilized by the leadership (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). As the success or failure of radical changes become embedded in organizational memory, organizations with more recent and positive experience of change are likely to undertake such ventures in the future (Amburgey et al., 1993).

1.3 Resistance to Change

Greenwood and Hinings (1996) argue that organizations are deeply embedded in their institutional context and that the pace of change varies depending on the institutional sector as well as the variation in internal organizational contexts. Oliver (1991) has proposed five types of strategic responses to institutional pressures ranging in their level of agency from passive responses such as acquiescence, compromise and avoidance, to active resistance in the form of defiance and manipulation. Oliver has also suggested that the institutional factors which lead to these responses include the purpose of undertaking change, the initiator of change, the content of change (whether change is legally enforced) and the type of environment in which change is taking place. The ability of organizations to yield to or
resist institutional pressures is limited by institutional capacity or resources, conflicting organizational pressures and the level of knowledge regarding the content of change (Oliver, 1991). In the light of the previous discussion, it would be interesting to apply institutional theory to organizational changes in public sector organizations such as the police, wherein rigid structures and paramilitary culture make it difficult to implement change (Lum et al., 2012).

1.4 Change in Police Organizations

The institutional model suggests that organizations are influenced by the rational, technical and cultural aspects of their environments (Scott, 2004). Public sector organizations such as the police are included in a category of organizations that are involved in value work such as ensuring public safety and that display organizational structures and design which support this mission (Crank, 2003; Mastrofski, 1988). According to Crank and Langworthy (1992), the main reason underlying the lack of success of police reforms is the failure to consider the context of change and the environmental factors that inhibit or drive change. Police organizations engage in behaviours and adopt structures that enable them to create a perception of legitimacy for the stakeholders. Crank and Langworthy (1992) assert that police organizations operate in a value-laden environment and work processes cannot be evaluated solely in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. Agencies maintain organizational legitimacy by adopting goals and strategies favoured by influence groups who in turn ensure continued financial and resource support for departmental survival and well-being (Willis et al., 2007). That is the reason why convincing external stakeholders of conformity to cultural expectations is more important for such organizations than performance enhancement (Meyer et al., 1983).
The study of organizational change, specifically innovation adoption from an institutional theory perspective, has received attention, although somewhat limited, by police researchers in the past (Burruss & Giblin, 2014; Burruss et al., 2010; Crank, 2003; Willis et al., 2007). Several examples from policing literature provide an explanation of how mimetic, normative and coercive forces lead to the adoption of certain innovations, in turn leading to isomorphism (Burruss & Giblin, 2014).

Compared to less developed sectors, radical changes occur at a slower pace in mature sectors like public sector organizations which are faced with greater mimetic, normative and coercive pressures (Hinings & Greenwood, 1988). However, in the case of performance decline, even the rigid public sector allows for the adoption of new practices and ideas (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Frumkin and Galaskiewicz (2004) argue that public sector organizations not only generate institutional pressures but also experience the same. These organizations face tremendous budgetary and political pressures adversely affecting the capacity to adopt change (Pierson, 2000). Conversely, such pressures can also force certain types of changes to take place in public sector organizations. Bureaucratic forms emerge in the absence of stakeholder accountability for service quality and as a result of enhanced government scrutiny (Frumkin & Galaskiwicz, 2004). Interestingly the application of institutional theory to government organizations yields results that are opposite to those for other sectors. For instance, Frumkin and Galaskiewicz (2004) discovered that coercive as well as normative forces push public sector organizations to become more like for-profit or non-profit organizations. This may be due to the loosening of internal bureaucratic pressures in the presence of stronger external pressures which
subsequently enables the organization to move towards adopting more flexible structures and changes.

Mimetic forces, on the other hand, lead to the creation of bureaucratic organizational structures which are commonly found amongst public sector organizations (Frumkin & Galaskiewicz, 2004). As an example of institutional mimesis, Mastrofski and Uchida (1993) discuss the adoption of police innovations such as community policing which does not actually result in enhancing organizational effectiveness but rather helps to achieve legitimacy. Wilson (2005) suggests that strong network connections among police organizations and the drive to emulate successful peers are robust mimetic forces. In terms of the normative forces of isomorphism, the level of education and training of members of a police organization as well as access to sources of knowledge and information can lead to the adoption of new innovations and strategies (Burrus & Giblin, 2014; Roy & Seguin, 2000). Coercive forces, as mentioned earlier, arise from outside the organization and in the case of police organizations include legislation and stakeholder pressures (Tolbert & Zucker, 1983). Crank and Langworthy (1996) argue that police organizations are coerced into adopting certain practices and structures when monetary gains are associated with the change. The following sections present discussion of a particular innovation in policing and the factors that affect its adoption by police organizations.

1.5 Evidence-based Policing

Evidence-based policing (EBP) is a decision-making perspective based on the premise that police practices should be supported by rigorous research evidence (Lum et al., 2012). A more comprehensive definition of the concept has been provided by Lum and Koper (2017, p.1):
Evidence-based policing means that research, evaluation, analysis and scientific processes should have a “seat at the table” in law enforcement decision making about tactics, strategies and policies. Further, we define evidence-based policing as not just about the process or products of evaluating police practices, but also about translation of that knowledge into digestible and useable forms and the institutionalization of that knowledge into practice and policing systems.

Inspired by evidence-based medicine, Lawrence Sherman (1998) first highlighted the importance of proactively incorporating research evidence in policing. He argued that in order to be more effective, “police practices should be based on scientific evidence about what works best” (p.2). Evidence-based policing involves two types of research processes: first, conducting research on best practices and secondly, incorporating and reporting the results of applied research outcomes which form a feedback loop to inform better decision-making (Sherman 1998). Sherman (2013) explains the process as the “Triple-T” strategy of targeting, testing and tracking (p.3). Targeting means using research to focus resources on specific concentrations of crime; testing refers to choosing appropriate methods to deal with specific situations by testing their appropriateness, and tracking or monitoring the impact of chosen strategies (Sherman, 2013). The effectiveness of the research-based approach is evident from the negative correlation that exists between EBP adoption and serious crime in the United States and United Kingdom (Sherman, 2013). Some examples of EBP include hot-spots policing focusing on resource deployment in areas of high crime concentration (Weisburd & Eck, 2004), community policing based on police-public partnership for problem resolution (Mastrofski, 1998), intelligence-led policing using intelligence and surveillance based information for decision-making (Ratcliffe, 2008), and
problem-oriented policing analyzing calls for service to discover and address underlying issues (Goldstein, 1979).

Researchers and policy makers agree that lack of credible research guiding policy making and practices is likely to generate policies, training programs and even academic programs in policing that are less effective (House Standing Committee, 2014; Griffiths, 2014). With the costs of policing in Canada rising to almost 14 billion dollars in 2015 (Mazowita & Greenland, 2016), the Canadian Government and its stakeholders have expressed the need to incorporate scientific evidence in police operations to ensure more effective utilization of public funds (Public Safety Canada, 2013).

Despite empirical evidence highlighting the effectiveness of EBP in improving the quality of organizational decision-making, police organizations have been slow to adopt these practices (Lum, 2009; Mastrofski, 1999). Canadian police organizations in particular have lagged behind their counterparts in the UK, United States and Australia in adopting these strategies. In order to encourage police organizations to adopt evidence-based practices, the Canadian Society of Evidence-based Policing (CAN-SEBP) was established in 2015. The CAN-SEBP serves as an important platform for academics and practitioners to generate and disseminate research that can lead to more effective policing practices.

In terms of academic research, there has been considerable interest in EBP since Lawrence Sherman (1998) highlighted its importance for police organizations almost two decades ago. But there are only a few studies available to date that identify factors leading to openness and receptivity towards such practices. Research shows that the success of any organizational change depends on the openness and commitment of the employees to the
initiative (Armenakis et al., 1993; Bernerth, 2004). According to Miller et al. (1994) openness or receptivity is a “necessary initial condition for successful planned change” (p. 60). This means that a majority of efforts to introduce change are likely to fail if organizational resources do not align with the initiative (Brewer & Hensher, 1998; Klein, 1996). It therefore becomes important to study the individual and organizational factors affecting a change such as EBP.

In order to clearly understand the basis of police resistance to EBP, Lum and Koper (2017) suggest beginning with the traditional model of policing which is considered reactive, anecdotal and steeped in culture and tradition. This reactive model is based on quick response to calls for service and applying discretion and legal procedures to resolve issues without much supervision (Weisburd & Eck, 2004). Contrary to police perception, EBP does not replace the traditional model of policing but suggests testing experience-based strategies to provide outcomes that are easily measurable (Lum & Koper, 2017). However, since EBP increases police accountability, it is generally resisted by police organizations, and such changes are only expected to take place under coercion (Sherman 1998). Bayley (1998) argues that research based practices have not been widely adopted by the police and have not resulted in operational changes even at agencies that do accept research evidence. This is also why Mastrofski (1999) expressed concern regarding the adoption of EBP practices stating that the real challenge was “to figure out how to get police to do them more often” (p.6).

Reducing resistance and enhancing receptivity to EBP is an important first step for police agencies to realize the value of such practices and to integrate this theoretical concept into the practical realm of policing (Lum & Koper, 2017). The current literature on receptivity
to EBP is a good start in understanding the concept, but more research is needed for the identification of factors that may potentially inhibit or facilitate receptivity towards evidence based practices to devise strategies for the promotion of EBP (Lum et al., 2012; Wood et al., 2008). For this purpose, I will draw upon literature in policing and organizational behaviour, specifically in organizational change and development to understand why police officers adopt or resist research evidence. The following sections will present an overview first of the extant literature in receptivity to organizational change in general and next of EBP in particular to identify factors in internal and external organizational environment that may prevent or facilitate receptivity to these initiatives.

1.6 Receptivity to Research

Receptivity to change at the organizational and individual level is considered important for the adoption and implementation of planned change initiatives (Frahm & Brown, 2007). Wanberg and Banas (2000) believe that those receptive and open to change exhibit a willingness to support the initiative and hold positive views about it, and Miller et al. (1994) consider this openness to be the “necessary initial condition for successful planned change” (p. 60).

Previous literature on receptivity towards research has identified factors that may have an impact on the adoption of such practices. A study by Weiss and Bucuvalas (1980) suggests that decision makers, despite acknowledging the importance of research, do not anticipate its actual use in the organization. They also found that receptivity depends upon four key characteristics of research: quality and comprehensibility; clear policy implications; conformity to personal views and beliefs of the users; and research that challenges status quo. Aaron’s (2004) Evidence-Based Practice Attitude Scale covered four dimensions of
willingness to adopt evidence-based practices. These pertain to whether the practice makes sense, whether it is required by law, whether new practices are readily accepted and whether new practices are in line with existing ones. In another study, Aarons et al. (2010) also note that individuals with higher levels of education may be more open to evidence-based practices, but not to being told what to do.

Given the influence of top managers in the implementation of organizational change, it is important to understand whether personal or professional attributes of these individuals may be important. Researchers argue that the age and tenure of top managers have a negative relationship with the implementation of innovation or evidence based practices (Huber et al., 1993). Changes which are more difficult to implement and have higher levels of uncertainty associated with success are also avoided by the top management (Gopalakrishnan & Damanpour, 1994). In sum, the risks associated with a new initiative as well as the lack of managerial experience to deal with such changes may affect their receptivity towards change. However, others suggest that executives with higher levels of education can also be more receptive to new ideas and innovations and are better able to deal with the challenges associated with the adoption of a new strategy (Damanpour & Schneider, 2006). Education allows managers to develop more creative solutions to organizational issues and helps to reduce the uncertainty accompanying a change initiative (Lee et al., 2005).

There may be certain organizational factors that could also have an impact on the adoption of research in police organizations. Evidence-based practices are generally resource-intensive and may initially involve costs like training and new equipment costs (Fixsen et al., 2009). Since public managers must justify the use of funds to oversight bodies (Nutt,
the higher costs may prevent top management from committing to a new strategy (Schneider et al., 2009). The strength of communication channels within the organization leading to circulation of outside knowledge and information is also an important factor that enhances receptivity to change (Frahm & Brown, 2007). Similarly, the ability to acquire and utilize knowledge or the absorptive capacity of an organization is another factor affecting change receptivity and this depends on the knowledge and base of the organizational members (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990), especially the top management (Dewar & Dutton, 1986). Since research on officer receptivity to evidence based policing is limited, it would be quite useful to understand whether it is organizational or personal factors or a combination of the two, which affect the adoption of such practices in daily police work.

1.7 Previous Research on Receptivity to Evidence-based Policing

In terms of EBP, receptivity is defined as the ‘willingness of police officers (civilian or sworn personnel) to not only be aware of and understand research and research processes, but also to be open to the value of research and demand it’ (Lum & Koper, 2017, p. 134). There is however, a distinct lack of research effort directed towards understanding receptivity to EBP except for a few studies based in the US and UK and recently in Canada.

Introducing change in police organizations can be challenging mainly due to myriad factors ranging from the rigid organizational structure to the unique aspects of organizational culture which favour the status quo. Any effort to introduce change is likely to encounter
resistance from every level in the organization, especially if officers fail to recognize the value associated with such changes or consider it a threat to their existing status and autonomy (Skogan, 2008). Like other professionals, police officers are also reluctant to adopt unfamiliar practices that are vastly different from their usual way of work. Besides personal resistance to change by individuals, certain structural, functional and political barriers also prevent the police from readily embracing new practices (Telep, 2013). Organizational and political factors like budget controls, unions and organizational norms and culture prevent the adoption of programs that disrupt established routines and relationships (Lum, et al., 2011). Although there is a dearth of literature specifically on receptivity of police towards EBP, the few available studies provide some insight into the factors which affect the process.

Palmer’s (2011) survey of Greater Manchester Police Department in the UK showed that police executives mainly read government publications and that only those reading research publications were willing to conduct minor randomized trials. In terms of the rigor of research, Koehle et al. (2010) argue that police officers are generally more receptive to research based on simpler qualitative methods than more rigorous quantitative ones. Similarly, research by Hunter et al. (2015) suggests that mid- and upper-level police officers in the UK are more open to using research to solve issues related to crime.

In the US, Telep and Lum (2014) developed a receptivity survey which they administered in three police agencies. Their results suggest that officers rely more on experience than scientific knowledge and are reluctant to adopt more complex research designs. They argue that advanced education can help improve receptivity among police officers. While inquiring into the perspectives and knowledge of EBP evidenced by police chief executives
in Oregon, Telep and Winegar (2016) found support for evidence-based practices but a lack of clear understanding of the concepts. In another recent study, the study found that officers were more receptive to strategies they perceived as innovative, or with the potential to be innovative, such as community policing and crime mapping (Jenkins, 2016).

In the Canadian context where public expectations of better performance along with fiscal pressures are creating the need for greater organizational effectiveness, there is a surprising lack of studies on police receptivity to EBP. Therefore, to fill this gap in literature, researchers in Canada have recently undertaken studies related to evidence based practices in police agencies. Beginning with a study that replicated the findings of the Telep and Lum (2014) receptivity survey, researchers found that Canadian police officers are more open to adopting evidence based practices compared to officers in the US (Balskovtiz et al., 2018). Huey et al. (2018) also highlight the misconceptions regarding evidence-based policing amongst officers in Canadian police agencies and how these can be addressed. In a related paper examining officer views on the implementation of EBP in police agencies, Huey et al. (2017) argue that a lack of confidence in top management can be challenging for the adoption of evidence based practices.

1.8 The current study

Research utilization by police organizations is important in the adoption of evidence-based strategies. However, little empirical evidence is available on factors that lead to receptivity towards such practices (Burruss & Giblin, 2014). Keeping in view the lack of research on receptivity to EBP practices, the present research attempts to identify factors that facilitate or impede receptivity towards EBP in Canada. This research will be an important addition to the emerging literature in evidence-based policing in Canada and other parts of the
world. In terms of practical applications, it will be helpful for police organizations and policy makers in allocating resources for enhancing receptivity towards EBP, thereby improving organizational efficiency and effectiveness. The focus of the present research is on police officers at all hierarchical levels in Canada.

The present dissertation is presented in the integrated article format with three chapters examining factors affecting receptivity to evidence-based policing practices, which address the following research questions:

4) How does past experience of change implementation affect future projects?
5) What are the reasons behind resistance to evidence-based policing practices in Canada?
6) What are the factors affecting police receptivity to evidence-based practices?

In Chapter 2, “‘If it’s not worth doing half-assed, then it’s not worth doing at all’: Police views as to why new strategy implementation fails”, I highlight the importance of identifying factors leading to failure of past strategies as implementation is the most challenging aspect of strategic management. In the case of police organizations, failure to effectively carry out a strategy results in loss of organizational resources and employee commitment towards such initiatives. The paper draws upon qualitative survey responses from 353 police officers from agencies across Canada. The results reflect mostly negative sentiments towards strategy implementation efforts, with failure attributed to issues ranging from leadership incompetence to lack of organizational resources. These concerns must be taken into account by organizational leaders in order to address challenges associated with strategy implementation in their organizations.
Chapter 3, “‘One person’s evidence is another person’s nonsense’: Why police organizations resist evidence-based practices,” notes that despite the importance of Evidence-based policing (EBP) strategies, police organizations have been slow to adopt these practices. The paper aims to identify internal and external organizational factors that lead to resistance towards EBP. Qualitative data were obtained through in-depth interviews with 38 executive level police officers and members of police research organizations across Canada. Results revealed that resistance towards EBP is mainly due to organizational factors that arise from within the organization as well as external factors that are political in nature. Although the findings are helpful for police organizations to reduce resistance to EBP, they must be interpreted with caution given the limited sample size preventing the generalization of results.

In Chapter 4, “‘Well, there’s a more scientific way to do it!’: Factors influencing receptivity to evidence-based practices in police organizations”, I focus on understanding how police organizations become receptive towards such practices. Based on 38 in-depth interviews with police executives across Canada and utilizing a model of innovation adoption, the paper examines factors that motivate police organizations to consider adopting EBP. The results highlight a number of factors in the agency’s external and internal environment that enhance receptivity to the adoption of a decision-making perspective based on scientific evidence.

Chapter 5, which provides the conclusion of the dissertation, summarizes the findings of the three papers in the light of multi-disciplinary literature. In this section, I provide practical implications of my research and avenues for future research.
1.9 References


25


Chapter 2

2 “If it’s Not worth Doing Half-assed, Then it’s Not Worth Doing at all”: Police Views as to Why New Strategy Implementation Fails

Ten things cops hate:

6. Any change whatsoever...even if it's for the better.
You want to hear a room full of whiners? Tell the cops they have to (insert new policy here).
Your earholes will explode… (Volent, 2015).

It is something of a truism within policing circles that police officers hate change and their environment is always changing. Research has long supported both contentions; however, the latter is not unique to policing. Most organizations experience the phenomenon of ongoing change. Such changes are well-documented and range from transformations related to globalization, the need for economic competitiveness, the effects of demographic shifts on work personnel and new technologies and innovations (Fullan, 2010; Spector, 2011). In the case of public sector organizations, change efforts have also been driven by the need for performance improvement (Ingraham & Lynn, 2004), which in the policing world has been tied to the rise of forms of public managerialism (Garland, 2001; Reiner, 1998). The prevalence of such changes confronting contemporary organizations has led to the surfacing of at least two key challenges. The foremost challenge pertains to the need for

1 This is the authors original manuscript of an article published as the version of record in 2018©Taylor and Francis- https://doi.org/10.1080/15614263.2018.1526687
organizations not just to be aware of change but also to be sensitive to the need for change, whereas the secondary, and perhaps the most important challenge pertains to the need for organizational strategies that can lead to effective implementation of change (Self & Schraeder, 2009).

Despite the noted importance of strategy execution, most research has focused only on strategy development (Gottschalk & Gudmundsen, 2009; Hrebiniak, 2006) as issues related to implementation are often underestimated as being less problematic (Andrews et al., 2011; Atkinson, 2006). Due to the paucity of information regarding implementation of strategy in the public sector, the topic has been likened to the ‘black box’ of innovation literature (Piening, 2011, p. 128). The present study attempts to fill this gap in the literature by exploring police officer perceptions regarding the history of strategy implementation in their organizations and the reasons behind the success or failure of such initiatives. Data for the paper were drawn from a qualitative question that was included in a survey completed by members of seven of police organizations across Canada. The results, based on inductive thematic analysis, are expected to provide insight for police leaders into issues related to strategy implementation and the measures that could be taken to improve the process.

2.1 Previous Research on Strategy Failure

‘Strategy’ has previously been defined as a “broad-based formula to be applied in order to achieve a purpose” (Gottschalk & Gudmundsen, 2009, p. 173) – a definition we use in relation to the present study. To provide greater context, we can also think of strategy as the means by which an organization determines how it will achieve its goals, and what methods it will use to achieve them (Johnson & Scholes, 2002). While strategy formulation
is considered an intellectual exercise involving careful analysis and evaluation, strategy execution is also a complex process requiring considerable effort and time (Gottschalk, 2008). Literature in organizational change management suggests that most strategies, no matter how well defined, fail at the implementation stage if human and other organizational resources do not align with the objectives of the strategies (Atkinson, 2006; Brewer & Hensher, 1998; Klein, 1996).

Implementation is a management-directed procedure to enact organizational change, as well as the process whereby members of the organization can be persuaded to adopt and commit to change. It is an arduous task requiring much effort on the part of the management team in terms of introducing, monitoring and evaluating new service delivery models which are unlikely to succeed without organizational restructuring and redesign (Hill & Jones, 2008). Due to the complexities surrounding the process, Jenkins et al. (2003) consider strategy implementation to be a long and bloody battle with little chance of success. Gottschalk and Gudmundsen (2009) argue that strategy implementation is important for a number of reasons including the conservation of organizational resources, officer support for strategic planning, and establishing organizational priorities to ensure that organizational objectives are achieved. Implementation is a delicate task and may imperil the accomplishment of organizational goals if not handled appropriately (ibid). Prior literature has identified several reasons for the failure of strategy implementation including a directorial style of management, ambiguous strategic intentions, conflicted priorities, ineffectual team of managers and ineffective upward communication (Atkinson, 2006). Others have also blamed inadequate resources, a lack of responsibility for
implementation, and a lack of management support (Gottschalk, 1999; Self & Schraeder, 2009).

Failures of strategy implementation have a long term detrimental impact on organizations as they are not easily forgotten but become embedded in organizational memory. Whether experienced directly or through the narratives of other members, such incidents can lead to the development of cynical attitudes towards future change initiatives. Historical failures help construct resigned backgrounds, thereby giving rise to a discourse within organizations that pivots on the theme of ‘This probably won't work either’ (Ford et al., 2002, p.110). Such conversations reflect a lack of optimism in the potential of the change to alter the status quo, irrespective of how much the members of the organization may desire the change or seek to believe in its outcomes (Reger et al., 1994). The unresponsiveness created by resigned background resistance can be such that employees are likely to implement any introduced change half-heartedly, with little belief and commitment (Ford et al., 2002). It has been noted that employees are more likely to support future strategic initiatives if they are convinced of top management’s commitment to their plans (Gottschalk & Gudmundsen, 2009) and the alignment between organizational resources and strategy over time (Brauer & Schmidt, 2006).

In the case of police organizations, the implementation of new strategies is especially challenging given their proclivity to adhere to conventional methods and approaches (Greene et al., 1994). According to Schafer (2003), there are at least four types of issues that can obstruct strategy implementation in police organizations. These can be categorized as: (1) the reservations and qualities of the organizational members; (2) the climate of an
organization; (3) the culture of the organization, and; (4) the process whereby change is implemented within the organization.

Of no little significance are the various factors related to demographics and attitudes, as these all determine how officers experience and respond to change in their workplace. But prior research has yielded mixed results regarding the impact of variables such as gender, race or ethnicity on officer attitudes (Miller, 1999; Weisel & Eck, 1994). Another explanation of the cause of implementation failure is offered by Skogan (2008) who points out that the likelihood of resistance increases when change is perceived by the officers to entail more or unfamiliar work, or when the benefits of this change are not clearly discernible.

Organizational climate is another factor of importance that shapes employee response to change (Schafer, 2003), and refers to employee perceptions of organizational policies and practices and behavioural expectations associated with them (Schneider et al., 2011). The idea of organizational climate is of great significance as employees who are at ease with the climate of their organization may be expected to respond positively to change and to display expected behaviours. If police leaders and managers make an effort to ameliorate communication in the workplace and establish participatory management, there is likely to be support for and commitment to the planned change and implementation (Schafer, 2003).

Organizational culture can also help shape employee responses to change (Schafer, 2003). It comprises of the values and beliefs that guide employee behaviour and are based on the stories heard and leadership behaviours observed (Schneider et al., 2011) and can plays a key role in facilitating the implementation of change within the organization (Zhao et al.,
Especially in the case of police organizations, it is believed that implementation of change will fail if the organizational culture lacks congruence with the way of thinking necessitated by the planned change initiative (Mastrofski & Ritti, 1996).

A final consideration is to look at the manner in which a change initiative is planned and implemented within organizations in general and police agencies in particular (Schafer, 2003). Poor planning, lack of training and inadequate financial and material resources has been observed to be some of the major reasons behind the failure of change in police organizations (Sadd & Grinc, 1994; Skogan et al., 1999).

Employee perceptions of the efficacy of strategy implementation influences future commitment to new initiatives, however there is a paucity of research relating to the topic in police organizations. Obtaining such feedback would be valuable for top management in order to obtain ‘buy-in’ for future strategies by aligning them with the needs and expectations of those involved in strategy execution. The present paper addresses this gap in the literature by investigating police officer perceptions regarding the success or failure of strategy implementation in their organizations.

2.2 Method of Inquiry

Data for this paper were drawn from an open-ended question which was part of a survey intended to replicate Telep and Lum’s (2014) survey that examined receptivity to research among police professionals in Canada. To help us fully understand the factors that facilitate or impede receptivity to evidence-based policing practices, we included three open-ended questions in the survey. Our present paper is based on one of the questions: ‘In your view, how successful has your department been in implementing new policing strategies in the
past?’ This question was based on prior literature on organizational change and was expected to provide insights into the reasons behind strategy failure and how it impacts future strategy implementation.

2.2.1 Recruitment

The original Telep and Lum (2014) study was based on a sample of three police departments. Since the results of their online surveys yielded low response rates, we decided to survey seven organizations in hope of obtaining higher response rates. In terms of the selection criteria, we simply picked a major police service from each province that we targeted, which we felt would provide a reasonably large sample of respondents; as a result, the sampled police services tended to serve relatively large urban populations. Given the number of services that exist in each province within Canada, and the fact that these services potentially differ significantly from one another, the services we selected are not necessarily representative of other Canadian police services.

We approached senior leadership of seven municipal or regional police services across seven Canadian provinces through email. The provinces included; British Columbia (B.C.; \( n = 23 \)), Alberta \( (n = 105) \), Saskatchewan \( (n = 40) \), Manitoba \( (n = 160) \), Ontario \( (n = 74) \), Nova Scotia \( (n = 24) \), and Prince Edward Island (P.E.I.; \( n = 2 \)).\(^2\) Participating agencies

\(^2\) Since all participants did not choose to answer all the questions, the category breakdowns may not add to the total \( (N = 598) \).
forwarded our request to their officers and civilian members for participation, and followed up with reminder emails before the close of the study.

2.2.2 Data Collection

The Telep and Lum (2014) survey consisted of five parts. The first section explored officers’ knowledge of both policing evaluation research and evidence-based policing.

Section Two asked officers for their views of science and scientific research. The third part asked officers about their openness to innovation, including new techniques and strategies. Section Four explored views on higher education and its relative merits within the field of policing. The survey concluded by asking for demographic and institutional information. In our version, various adaptations were made to make the survey more applicable to a Canadian audience. Specifically, a question about ranks was changed and the three open-ended questions (described above) were added.

After receiving the consent to participate, we requested personnel at each site to review the survey questions and suggest changes if required. Two of the services requested additional minor changes. One request was to modify the rank structure to be consistent with the ranks used within that police service and another was to remove one of the survey questions. We were able to accommodate both requests as they did not affect our results and administered three versions of the survey, all including the open-ended questions.

The survey was posted online on October 18, 2016 and remained active until February 15, 2017. Respondents were informed that their participation was voluntary, that they would remain anonymous in any publications resulting from the survey, and that their personal information or responses would be kept confidential. They could also skip any questions they chose. In total, 598 individuals completed the survey. Of these, 353 answered the
open-ended question: “In your view, how successful has your department been in implementing new policing strategies in the past?” The present paper is based on the analysis of the detailed responses to this question and is discussed below.

2.2.3 Data Analysis

For analysis, we used Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis approach which is a flexible, inductive method for qualitative data analysis. The themes are derived from data instead of being dependent upon any specific or existing theories. The analysis involves repetitive reading of interview text and is therefore iterative in nature, meaning that it does not proceed in a linear fashion. For the purpose of ensuring reliability, one team member carried out the initial coding by reading and re-reading the interview transcripts. This was later verified against independently performed coding by other members of the research team and an agreement was reached regarding the final codes.

The next step involved open coding followed by organizing data into broader categories. The themes were then checked for accuracy and further refined and re-analyzed until a clear pattern began to emerge.

2.2.4 Sample Characteristics

Table 1 represents the age, gender and employment status of the participants who responded to the open-ended question ($n = 353$).
Table 1: Sample characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age (years)</th>
<th>n (%)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>n (%)</th>
<th>Employment Status</th>
<th>n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>3 (1%)</td>
<td>Male 231</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>Sworn officer 251</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>33 (9%)</td>
<td>Female 77</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>Civilian employee 52</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>72 (20%)</td>
<td>Did not answer 15</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>Did not answer 50</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>71 (20%)</td>
<td>Did not answer 15</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>Did not answer 50</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-65</td>
<td>23 (7%)</td>
<td>Did not answer 15</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>Did not answer 50</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total n</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>Total n</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>Total n</td>
<td>353</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant ages ranged from 22 to 62, with an average age of 52. As with other demographic questions, some respondents did not answer (n = 151). Most respondents were male (n = 231) with seventy-seven (n = 77) participants self-identifying as female, and forty-five (n = 45) not indicating a gender. Our respondents included both officers (n = 251) and civilian employees (n = 52). We note that fifty participants (n = 50) chose not to answer (see Table 1).

The respondents’ number of years of experience in policing ranged from less than one year to 41.5 years. The average number of total years of experience was 18. Two additional questions focused on rank or occupational role (for civilians). Although all ranks including senior managers were represented, most of our participants were Constables (n = 107). Civilian employees included planners, supervisors, and managers, as well as intelligence, policy and crime analysts.

2.3 Results

As noted above, participants included in the present study provided an answer to the open-ended question described previously. Before moving on to analyze their answers to this question in greater detail, we would like to briefly present the initial results here.
Figure 1: Responses received

Figure 1 illustrates the responses received. 45 percent of participants who responded to the open-ended question felt their police service met with limited success in relation to implementing new strategies. 28 percent felt their department was generally successful and 20 percent believed that strategy implementation in their service had been largely unsuccessful in the past. We noted that most of the participants had provided sufficient detail in their responses to allow us to cluster the responses into seven themes indicating their perceptions of the reasons behind success or failure of strategies in their organizations.

In the remainder of the results section we will identify major themes that emerged through our analysis of respondent answers to the question: ‘In your view, how successful has your department been in implementing new policing strategies in the past?’ In essence, what these themes provide are insights into why it is that some strategies implemented by police organizations are only moderately successful or fail outright.
2.3.1 Lack of Member Buy-in

Perhaps not surprisingly, given the quote from Volent (2015) cited above, predominant among the themes identified is the issue of ‘member buy-in.’ This point of view was put succinctly by one of the two officers who believed their organization had been successful in the past in terms of strategy implementation. He explained: ‘There is always push back when any new strategy comes into effect.’ In light of such initial resistance it is also hardly remarkable that police employees are often slow to embrace change once it is thrust upon them. As one participant observed of his own organization:

Most new strategies would have a standard adoption and integration cycle reflective of a bell curve from early adopters through to those that are resistive. It is my perception that the individuals within our organization have a lower likelihood to quickly adapt and embrace change.

Without deeper study of this participant’s particular agency, we cannot say for certain whether his organization truly is unique in this regard; however, we might surmise based on other responses that this is unlikely. Nor, again, is slow adoption of new strategies either a new phenomenon or somehow unique to policing, as evidenced by Rogers’ (1962) work on the Diffusion of Innovation theory. In response to organizational change, Rogers identifies five types of ‘adopters’: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority and laggards. Those who are slow to adopt changes, Rogers points out, are skeptical regarding the success of the initiative and commit to it only after success becomes evident. We saw some of this skepticism in comments obtained from our survey question (see also Mastrofski et al., 2007). Indeed, one officer candidly supported the traditional model of policing and derided newer strategies:
Nothing in my opinion has as much success as old school policing. New strategies and implements have a way of making police officer lazy and become unknowledgeable to his or her general duties.

Some participants \((n = 5)\) attributed the lack of employee support for change to the perceived motives behind the initiatives. They were not convinced of the benefits of new change programs to the police organization and/or to society as a whole. Instead, they believed these were self-serving ploys for political gain. As one officer complained:

Some programs have been clearly made promotional projects which have created programs that were not followed through properly. Some of the less effective or poorly managed projects create a sense of distrust of new initiatives amongst front line members.

Another officer who did not believe his organization had a history of successful change implementation stressed the importance of team work, effective leadership and participatory decision making to ensure the success of change:

You have to have buy in from everyone within the organization, not pockets. To be successful we have to work as a team. At every level, we have to communicate, assist and support one another. Strong and respected leadership will have greater co-operation and implementation from all the members.

Another reason cited for the lack of employee support for change by a number of officers \((n = 7)\) was the disconnect between top management and front-line officers which leads to decisions that are difficult to implement. Officers believed that little involvement from ‘boots on ground’ leads to the perception of increased workload, logistical issues and inconsistent application of strategies resulting in frustration and resistance among officers.
One officer noted the deterioration of officer morale and motivation as a result of being excluded from decisions regarding the adoption of new strategies:

> Officers are generally directed to adopt a new practice without providing the context for the change … officers often fail to perceive that benefit and therefore show a lack of interest, frustration or even opposition.

The same officer held police leadership responsible for the lack of success of intelligence led policing due to their stance on ‘political correctness’ which is seen as curtailing officer discretion.

### 2.3.2 Lack of Communication

The participants \((n = 3)\) who considered their department to be relatively successful in implementing change attributed this success to open and effective communication between organizational leaders and members. Lateral and vertical communication within the organization, information exchange across agencies, and engagement with communities, helps employees develop a sense of confidence in changes taking place. Acknowledging the fact that not all employee input could be utilized by management, one member nevertheless felt that ‘the appetite and encouragement to submit a new strategy opens members to provide ideas as well as ensures that members out on the street are always focused on applying new techniques to deal with a problem, hence think outside of the box.’

Not all of our participants viewed their agencies as being effective in communicating the rationale, necessity of, and/or strategies for effecting organizational change. Indeed, a number of them \((n = 5)\) complained their organizations were not very effective in terms of information sharing, and considered this to be a consistent problem. They felt that new
initiatives were implemented without explanation or consultation with employees on the front lines, which led to lack of officer support or enthusiasm. One officer speaking of strategy implementation in criminal intelligence units noted that ‘when these strategies are communicated to front line officers, there is often push-back and confusion.’ She believed that resistance arose from the inability of people to see the ‘big picture’, and/or to understand the reasons for implementing a new strategy. Similar concerns were expressed by officers from other departments who were convinced that change programs were unlikely to succeed without ‘proper reasoning/explanation’ and as another officer added, without ‘appropriate or adequate training or information sessions.’ An officer from a different service raised an important issue regarding lack of performance measures to gauge the effectiveness of pilot projects which he believed later resulted in ‘misunderstandings, and issues with adherence to rules of process and accountability.’ Due to the absence of feedback and communication regarding the outcomes of projects, doubts emerge regarding their effectiveness and organizational members are less inclined to support such measures in the future.

2.3.3 Leadership Resistance to Change

In analyzing responses, there seemed to be a consensus regarding the importance of police leaders’ willingness to truly embrace change as an underlying factor in success. On the positive side, we noted that at least two officers seemed satisfied with their management when it came to the issue of willingness to meaningfully adopt new strategies. To illustrate: one officer lauded his leadership’s proactive stance towards improving operations based on the results of municipal surveys. Another officer underscored the role of leadership in ‘implementing and maintaining new initiatives’ and stated that:
Within the last 5 years, our agency has pulled together and now we are much more cohesive when we roll out new initiatives. I have seen a distinct togetherness that was not there before. This was due to a very able Chief that worked hard to bring everyone on-board to a handful of key ideologies.

Conversely, other respondents cited lack of management support for change as a barrier to effectively implementing new and/or innovative strategies. Individuals within this group provided numerous examples highlighting the ‘hunch based’ and ‘old school’ style of work, which made their organizations, in the words of one respondent, ‘very slow and resistant to adopt new strategies, and accept their usefulness.’ Most officers (n = 5) complained about their leaders’ reluctance to wholeheartedly commit to a new strategy, noting that, as a result, ‘selling new strategies to front line staff is problematic.’ Another officer expressed his dismay over lack of senior management support for initiatives despite the presence of credible research evidence. Yet another officer echoed similar concerns regarding her leadership noting that ‘very few have the inclination or luxury to wait for evidence-based information to be collected or summarized from other research.’

Some of the officers (n = 4) believed that police leaders lacked the vision to appreciate the value of new policing strategies and focused only on immediate results. One officer held poor leadership and lack of introspection responsible for the increasing crime rates in his community. He felt the need to improve organizational practices instead of shifting the blame on external factors and added: ‘New strategies and even old ones would be welcomed if there was good leadership.’ An officer from another agency also stressed the need to educate the line staff regarding management’s decisions to ensure buy-in and success of new strategies.
2.3.4 Losing Motivation and Direction

The two officers who considered their department successful in implementing new strategies in the past, often attributed success to their organization’s ability to maintain a strong focus on strategies or ‘utilizing target-based goals.’ These individuals appreciated their organizations’ efforts and agreed that continuation of strategies coupled with performance evaluation and feedback to staff were necessary to ensure the success of new initiatives. Carefully charting a long term strategic plan was considered important for a police organization to maintain focus and determine future goals. One officer noted that they were successful as they had ‘implemented a “10-year strategic plan” outlining a 10-year plan to address issues faced by our department.’

But not all participants evinced satisfaction with their organization’s ability to remain focused on long term plans. A few ($n = 3$) felt that police organizations were quick to implement changes but soon lost direction and motivation to follow through on measuring the results. As one officer commented: ‘Implementation has been successful, the actions and results are less successful. We introduced Proactive Policing; however, after 2 years there haven’t been any noticeable results or impacts.’ One officer described his organization’s efforts at change implementation as “knee jerk reactions to events.” He seemed convinced that past attempts at change had failed due to lack of planning and vision by the management supporting ‘arbitrary decision making and risk management over proven long-term solutions.’ Another officer felt that new strategies receive a lot of enthusiasm from the executive level but the excitement diminishes as they reach the patrol members due to ‘the practicality of implementation.’ The officer further explained how members were over-tasked and unable to make time for new approaches noting: ‘It can be
difficult to find a balance between a new approach that “should” reduce call volumes and dealing with the fact there are 30 calls waiting to be dispatched in your division.’

2.3.5 Lack of Resources

Availability of resources was considered an important factor for the successful implementation of new strategies. Unfortunately, though, we received no positive examples of well-resourced strategies. Instead, our knowledge of police views on this is drawn entirely from examples provided of situations in which strategies were not well-resourced. To illustrate: the majority of answers \( n = 8 \) we received showed that police employees believed that new strategies had been adopted in the past without long-term commitment of appropriate resources such as manpower, leading to implementation issues. One blamed it on the ‘bandwagon’ effect where organizations are eager to join a trend but unwilling to make a long-term commitment, adding: ‘If it’s not worth doing half-assed, then it’s not worth doing at all.’ Another officer expressed her displeasure with change implementation at her agency, as follows:

In my opinion as it became straining on manpower, reducing productivity, mental well-being and physical well-being due to the additional stressors added to our patrol branch and with shifting manpower, time off has been denied etc.

Similar concerns were expressed by an officer from a different organization who suggested that police services must first address current workload demands before committing to proactive and evidence based strategies. Some officers \( n = 5 \) believed that lack of resources coupled with poor planning further exacerbate strategy implementation problems. They felt that police organizations undertake new strategies only to appear progressive, but that new initiatives eventually lose momentum and organizational support (including the
support of employees). Budgetary constraints further limit organizational ability to provide adequate training and professional development opportunities to its members involved in change which eventually results in reverting to old practices. Providing reasons for the failure of her agency’s smart policing initiative, one police officer commented:

This was and is somewhat successful because the service implemented it without proper training, without IT support for computer issues, and utilizing an archaic computer system to track and count stats. There was a lack of formal training to our members and there was and is too much emphasis on the Hotspots; however, detective offices cannot get to or investigate hundreds of cases piling up.

2.3.6 Adaptiveness

As is well understood, policing environments are constantly changing – in some cases due to new innovations; more frequently, perhaps, due to external demands driven by dynamic social factors. Policing requires flexibility and a willingness to adapt as needed. Not surprisingly then, only two participants observed that change initiatives had been successful in the past largely due to their organizations’ ability to adapt and modify strategies as and when required. The officers believed that flexibility to deal with change ensures the success of change initiatives and organizational survival in the long run. A participant stated that they had been ‘very successful in implementing new policing strategies [at his organization],’ as well as evincing a willingness to be ‘constantly changing them’ when required.

More frequently, however, participants (n = 6) argued that their agencies were slow to adapt, and, more importantly, quick to abandon a strategy when it was not immediately successful. This observation was framed as a lack of persistence in policy implementation
that made organizations appear less then committed to long-term goals, and more focused on obtaining quick results to please external stakeholders. As a result, they felt that there was often insufficient time allowed for new strategies to take root. According to one officer: ‘Knee-jerk reactions and strategies change with the revolving door executive office personnel.’ This attitude reduces senior management’s decisions to a mere ‘flavor of the year’, which one officer believed was something every new police Chief tried just to prove their leadership skills, adding: ‘The managers of our department try and try but in the end...we are just keeping the dam from bursting.’

2.3.7 Not the Right Person for the Right Job

Another theme to emerge which failed to generate any positive examples centered on the need for police agencies to select the right people to generate internal change. Conversely, a few of the participants \( n = 3 \) cited this issue as a reason as to why strategy implementations failed within their own organizations. Indeed, a repeated concern was over a lack of attention towards selecting suitable individuals to carry out specific tasks. For example: ‘Too often members, including supervisors, are chosen by seniority or political alignment and not by a member’s merit, ability, passion, or knowledge.’ This same officer noted that new projects are undertaken which have the potential to generate public and media support, but are assigned to individuals based on tenure and not on knowledge or passion for the job.

Other respondents \( n = 4 \) highlighted lack of expertise as a cause of failure in effectively implementing new strategies, which was seen as forcing police organizations to frequently repackage and present old strategies as new. In the words of one officer ‘we are currently building an “Intelligence Branch” however personal agendas, career advancement, and
terrible policy are road blocks.’ This particular individual then went on to cite specific positions within his department that were held by individuals who he felt were insufficiently skilled for the task of driving change. Another officer blamed his organization for corrupting any police strategy by assigning important tasks, like community policing initiatives, to officers in the ‘cartel’ who did not actually believe in the value of such strategies. He was highly critical of the ‘chosen group of officers, most of whom came up the ranks from the drug team, because it offers them experience for the promotional process.’ In short, he believed that the implementation of strategy was used by some to make their resumes or work history experiences look better instead of serving an organizational purpose.

2.4 Discussion

Strategy implementation poses a significant challenge to organizations. This is said to be especially true in the case of police organizations that generally have a flawed record of strategy implementation (Schafer, 2003). The present study is an attempt to highlight issues that police employees view as causes of the failure of new strategies in police organizations. Our goal was simple: to highlight these issues, so they may be taken into consideration during future strategy implementation.

Data analysis based on 353 responses from an open-ended survey question yielded seven themes, each providing a clue as to why new strategies fail in police organizations. The first theme highlighted lack of member ‘buy in’ as a major reason for the failure of strategy implementation. The views expressed by the participants are consistent with the literature on the negative impact of lack of officer buy-in on the implementation of change in police organizations (Ford et al., 2003; Choi & Ruona, 2011; Famega et al 2017; Novak, et al.,
Most of this resistance emerges from street level officers whose support for new strategies is impacted by the level of their involvement in the strategy development and implementation process (Novak, et al., 2003). Lack of ownership of change initiatives leads to superficial implementation and presents a clear challenge to the production of reliable evidence that can index what works in policing (Choi & Ruona, 2011; Famega et al. 2017). It is therefore vital to attract and retain the support of those at the frontline, and in supervisory capacities, as they are most likely to imperil the process of implementation (Lum et al., 2012; Skogan, 2008; Weissbein et al., 1999). Although resistance is expected, officer support can be secured by having their concerns addressed through leadership engagement over such issues (Coram & Burnes, 2001; Schafer & Varano, 2017). Allowing organizational members to voice their concerns, along with providing briefings and relevant training, encourages them to recognize the benefits of the new strategies and to ensure the success of change implementation (Buick et al., 2015).

A second theme was based on the lack of communication flow during change which leads to resistance to strategy implementation. The results are in line with prior literature on the failure of change implementation in police organizations due to the absence of communication and support throughout the ranks during change (Correia & Jenks, 2011; Raelin & Cataldo, 2011). An appropriate system of communication, clear plan of action and consultation along with training is vital not only for effective strategy implementation but also for motivating officer support and commitment to new initiatives (Schafer & Varno, 2017). Clarity regarding future direction and goals is important to reduce the uncertainty associated with change and to encourage employee buy-in (Buick et al., 2015; Fernandez & Rainey, 2006; Oreg et al., 2011). Such measures would prevent employee
resistance to change arising from ambiguities and insecurities regarding the purpose of the initiative and its impact on individuals (Andrews et al., 2009). For police organizations to maximize the use of restricted resources it is also important that a thorough evaluation identifying success or failures of strategies be carried out. Efforts must be made towards measuring and monitoring interventions throughout the duration of the implementation process, including regular meetings with the staff involved (Famega et al., 2017) so as to catalyze learning and ensure support for the initiatives (Gottschalk, 2008).

Another theme centered on perceived lack of commitment to change on the part of police leaders, a factor that is seen as significantly undermining successful strategy implementation. Prior literature also suggests that the implementation of change in police organizations is the primary responsibility of top management and if the support of these decision-makers is not taken into account, the trial may become imperiled in the process (Raelin & Cataldo, 2011; Schafer & Varno, 2017). Since leaders are responsible for creating an organizational vision and direction, their actions influence the attitudes and behaviours of employees during periods of strategic change (and beyond) (House, 1977). If leadership exhibits support for maintaining the status quo and discourages new ideas, it instills resistance to change among followers, which in turn guarantees the subsequent failure of strategy implementation (Oreg & Berson, 2011). To ensure the successful implementation of new strategies, key figures in the organization must act as change champions in order to gain the trust and commitment of the employees throughout the process and must be goal driven (Alarid & Montemayor, 2011; Schafer & Varano, 2017). Providing change related information to employees and convincing them of leadership’s
commitment towards change is especially important if past changes have failed due to lack of follow-through by leadership (Buick et al., 2015).

Study participants also believed that loss of motivation and sense of direction was also responsible for the failure of change implementation. Prior literature supports this finding suggesting that lack of planning and poorly defined outcomes result in confusion and derailment of the process of change in police organizations (Bradley & Nixon, 2009; Willis et al., 2007). Projects that are implemented only for the sake of following a trend or pleasing stakeholders are likely to fail, leading to wastage of precious organizational resources (McLeod, 2003). Adequate planning is therefore important as it helps avert adverse ramifications of change such as diminishment of worker enthusiasm and commitment or increase in skepticism and distrust (Gilmore et al., 1997). Change strategies must be crafted in such a manner that they focus on the achievement of specific goals while remaining flexible. Homel et al. (2004) suggest going beyond the basic planning process to ensure successful implementation of change in police organizations. This can be achieved by undertaking a detailed assessment of an organization’s implementation capacity, conducting risk assessment of various options, creating flexible support systems and incorporating feedback loops to keep the employees informed regarding the outcomes (ibid).

Lack of adequate resources was another factor believed to lead to failure of strategy implementation in police organizations. This finding also aligns with previous studies which suggest that the lack of human and financial resources during change can adversely affect the implementation process by giving rise to employee resistance (Duxbury et al., 2017; Lum et al., 2012; Telep & Lum, 2014). One of the methods to ensure compliance
with change implementation and allow change innovators to address potential pockets of resistance, is through training. Dissemination of the rationale and requirements of a change initiative can help reduce employee uncertainty, which in turn generates commitment (Drover & Ariel, 2015). Having a funding plan for strategy execution is also imperative for the success of change in police organizations (Gottschalk, 2008). Strategy implementation in police organizations is usually constrained due to budgetary issues and therefore requires careful planning and anticipation of possible issues before the launch of a new initiative.

An inability to adapt to changing environmental needs was also cited as a reason for strategy failure by the study participants which aligns with previous literature. Batts et al. (2012) argue that unlike the private sector, police leaders do not have any financial incentive to institute change and adaptiveness which challenge the established traditions. But police organizations face the growing pressure to become more adaptable to the constantly changing external environment while maintaining internal stability. These organizations must also make significant efforts to develop a culture that rewards and values adaptability. Sometimes police leaders adopt changes haphazardly and without much deliberation, just to follow a trend (Bayley, 1988; Bradley & Nixon, 2009) which loses traction either with time or change of leadership without inculcating the value of adaptiveness (McLeod, 2003). Literature on organizational change suggests that despite careful planning, change does not always unfold as anticipated (Newton, 2002). Experiencing unforeseen challenges is not unusual during the course of change implementation (Greene, 1998) but what ensures the success of change is the ability and readiness of change managers to deal with such issues. Osborne and Brown (2005) argue that in order to generate the capacity for sustaining change, an organization must
acknowledge and adjust to changes taking place in its external environment. This capacity to embrace change is referred to as an organization’s dynamic capabilities, which are patterns of activity that enable modifications in routines to achieve effectiveness (Zollo & Winter, 2002). Developing such capabilities are essential for strategy implementation especially for public sector organizations like police, as they are faced with a greater external pressure to change compared to their private sector counterparts (Bryson et al., 2007).

A final theme that emerged during data analysis was not having the right people assigned to deal with change implementation. Previous research suggests the importance of person-job fit or the congruence of an individual’s personal attributes and job characteristics (Brkich et al., 2002; Scroggins, 2008), which is related to their satisfaction and commitment to the job (Edwards, 2008; Meyer & Allen, 1997). In the case of police organizations, poor person-job fit leads to lack of motivation and has been deemed the main reason for attrition among new police recruits which may be as high as 25% (Orrick, 2008). Appropriate person-job fit becomes even more critical during the implementation of organizational change as the perceived self-efficacy to deal with new challenges greatly impacts an employee’s attitude and support towards change (Caldwell et al., 2004; Nissen et al., 2010). A lack of person-job fit is likely to lead to stress and negative attitudes during change which could impact the success of the initiative (Vakola & Nikolaou, 2005). Therefore, for the successful implementation of new strategies, police organizations need to incorporate strategic job analysis into their human resource functions to ensure that appropriate people are hired for the new, more challenging roles. While traditional job analysis focuses on person-job fit, strategic job analysis aligns current and future jobs with the organization’s strategic
direction and has important implications for the selection and staffing process (Singh, 2008). It enables the organization to select individuals with a broad skill base who are more adaptable to organizational changes and can be instrumental in successfully implementing organizational strategies (ibid).

2.5 Limitations

Although our study yielded important information regarding the reasons behind strategy failure in police organizations, certain limitations may affect the generalizability of our results. First, the overall survey response rate was low which is typical of survey research conducted with police personnel. Secondly, our sample comprises a relatively small number of police departments serving relatively urban areas, which may not be representative of other police services across Canada. We would therefore recommend that readers exercise caution in interpreting our results as they cannot necessarily be generalized across the country or beyond. Another limitation may arise from having fewer civilian members in the overall sample, which did not allow for a comparison of views with the police officers in our sample. Lastly, self-selection bias may be a limitation as officers and civilians holding grudges against their organizations may have been more vocal in sharing their opinions regarding strategy implementation, potentially biasing our results.

2.6 Conclusion

Based on qualitative survey responses of 353 Canadian police officers and civilian employees from seven police agencies across seven different Canadian provinces, the present study represents an attempt to explore officer views on the degree to which new strategy implantation had been successful in their organizations. Although the responses were largely negative, respondents identified several key factors responsible past failure of
strategy implementation which are likely to impact employee perception of the success or failure of future strategies (Ford et al., 2002). Officers believed that their organizations had been unsuccessful in implementing new strategies due to the lack of factors such as buy-in from officers; communication regarding change; leadership support; direction of change; resources; adaptiveness, and; person-job fit for change related projects.

Despite the limited sample size and geographical representation, our results have implications for police organizations as they highlight the importance of aligning human and organizational resources with the organization’s strategic direction to ensure successful implementation of new strategies. This alignment would help police organizations adapt to the constantly changing external environment and the growing demand for performance improvement. Our results also contribute to the literature on strategy implementation in police organizations which has largely been overlooked by researchers in the past and is imperative for the success of organizational goals (Gottschalk & Gudmundsen, 2009).

The results of the present study also align with the few international studies available on the topic and can be useful for police agencies outside Canada. Studies conducted in the UK describe somewhat similar factors affecting strategy implementation in police agencies, ranging from the impact of external environment to organizational capabilities and resources that lead to the success and failure of projects (Harrington, Trikha, & France, 2006; Homel, Nutley, Webb, & Tilley, 2004; Stockdale & Gresham, 1995). For example, Gottschalk and Gudmundsen’s (2010) study of intelligence strategy implementation with police officers in Norway revealed that police organizational structures based on open communication and knowledge management are more successful in implementation change than those with bureaucratic structures. Similarly, results of a longitudinal study of a police
department in Florida, United States showed that organizational flexibility along with a proactive, problem solving culture and material, as well as knowledge based resources, are instrumental in the success of strategy implementation (Santos, 2013).

Future research would benefit from surveying a larger and more representative sample of police organizations including rural, urban and suburban departments, and more civilian staff in order to improve the sample size and draw comparisons across employee types and agencies. It would also be useful to extend the research beyond Canada, enabling us to generalize our findings. Longitudinal studies observing new change initiatives from design to the implementation phase would also help confirm the findings of our present study.
2.7 References


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Chapter 3

3 “One Person’s Evidence is Another Person’s Nonsense”: Why Police Organizations Resist Evidence-based Practices³

As in other countries, police agencies in Canada are also facing tremendous pressure from external stakeholders to justify the rising cost of policing (Duxbury et al., 2017; Fantino, 2011). With police expenditure reaching almost 14 billion dollars in 2015 (Mazowita & Greenland, 2016), Canadian Government and its stakeholders have expressed the need to incorporate scientific evidence in police operations to ensure more effective utilization of public funds (Public Safety Canada, 2013). Evidence-based policing (EBP) is a philosophy that serves this purpose well as it is based on “what works best” approach (Sherman, 1998, p. 2). More specifically Lum and Koper (2017, p.2) define EBP as:

- not just about the process or products of evaluating police practices, but
- also about translation of that knowledge into digestible and useable forms
- and the institutionalization of that knowledge into practice and policing systems.

Indeed, police performance is expected to benefit from systematic use of research evidence (Tilley, 2009) as the implementation of such an approach gives rise to better policies and

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practices (Chakraborti, 2015). A notable example of the effectiveness of EBP is the reduction in crime in the US by focusing on “hot spots” or areas with heavy crime concentration (Braga and Weisburd, 2010). However, despite being recognized as the future of policing (Sherman, 1998), police organizations have not shown much enthusiasm towards EBP adoption (Lum & Koper 2014; Lumsden & Goode, 2016; Rojek et al., 2012; Sherman 2015; Stanko & Dawson 2016). Convincing the police to adopt research-based practices is a challenging task (Bayley, 1994) and such efforts have largely been unsuccessful in North American police organizations.

In terms of EBP research, there is a dearth of studies identifying specific factors which affect police receptivity or resistance to such practices (Cherney et al., 2018; Lum et al., 2012; Stanko & Dawson, 2016). The changes necessitated by EBP may also lead to police resistance to such strategies (Lum and Koper, 2017). Although resistance to change is a natural reaction to uncertainty (Oreg, 2003), it is important to effectively manage such reactions to ensure the success of new initiatives. Law enforcement agencies generally follow the traditional reactive model of policing which is procedure-based and heavily influenced by tradition and culture (Lum et al., 2012). This is in stark contrast to the evidence based approach which calls for significant structural and functional adjustments specifically in terms of human and physical resource management functions (Lum & Koper, 2017). For example, police generally disapprove of civilian interference in their work (Mastrofski & Willis, 2010), but an EBP strategy such as community-oriented policing requires officers to resolve community-related issues with their input (Mastrofski, 1988). Similarly, problem-oriented policing (Goldstein, 1979) and intelligence-led policing
(Ratcliffe, 2008) challenge the traditional model focused on calls for service and recommend focusing on problem identification and analysis instead.

Based on the foregoing discussion it may be argued that resistance to the adoption of EBP may be based on personal, as well as organizational or political factors (Lum et al., 2012). The organizational and political factors represent the internal and external environmental context of an organization (Armenakis & Bedein, 1999; George, 2007; Wanberg & Banas, 2000). The present study is an attempt to fill an important gap in literature by exploring EBP implementation from an individual and contextual perspective. Another research gap points towards the lack of methodological variation in EBP studies as most of the available literature is based on quantitative survey methodology (Lumsden, 2016). For this reason, policing scholars have called for greater focus on qualitative methods to develop a better understanding of the contextual factors which affect police receptivity to EBP (Lumsden, 2016; Veltri et al., 2014). The present study also draws on literature in sociology, organizational behaviour and policing for a more comprehensive understanding of resistance to EBP. The study is based on an emic approach to data collection based on context specific information obtained from police officers, instead of an etic approach based on the opinion of the researcher (Duxbury et al., 2017). Drawing upon in-depth interviews with 38 Police leaders across Canada, the present paper explores the reasons for resistance towards EBP despite its noted benefits.

3.1 Literature Review

3.1.1 Research on Receptivity to EBP

To understand the factors leading to resistance to EBP, it would be instructive to first review the available literature on receptivity to the initiative. The receptivity to EBP survey
developed by Telep and Lum (2014) was the first to explore officer views regarding EBP. Results suggest that officers rely more on experience than scientific knowledge and are reluctant to adopt more complex research designs. Other quantitative studies reveal that although there exists a lack of clear understanding of EBP concepts (Telep & Winegar, 2016), officers’ level of education (Blaskovtis et al., 2018; Telep, 2017), rank (Hunter et al., 2015) and race (Jenkins, 2016) and value for academic research (Palmer, 2011; Rojek et al., 2012; Steinheider et al., 2012) affect the willingness to adopt such practices. In the Canadian perspective, research on receptivity to EBP is quite recent. A study replicating the findings of the Telep and Lum (2014) receptivity survey, found that Canadian police officers are more open to adopting evidence based practices compared to officers in the US (Balskovtis et al., 2018) but further research is needed to understand the reason behind the greater receptivity.

Qualitative studies of receptivity to EBP are based mostly in the UK and provide a good starting point for understanding the context behind organizational and cultural barriers to the adoption of research (Fleming & Wingrove, 2017; Lumsden, 2016; Lumsden & Goode, 2016). However, more qualitative research is needed to further understand the barriers affecting receptivity to EBP in different cultural contexts.

### 3.1.2 Factors Affecting Resistance to EBP

As stated previously, the present study focuses on the suggestion that barriers to EBP may be individual or contextual in nature (Lum et al., 2012). Drawing upon literature in policing, organizational behaviour, and organizational change, a review of potential factors leading to police resistance to research evidence is presented below.
3.1.2.1 Individual Factors

Age and the tenure of top managers have been found to have a negative relationship with the implementation of evidence-based practices (Huber et al., 1993). Executives with higher levels of education are more receptive to new ideas and are better able to deal with new challenges in a more creative manner (Damanpour & Schneider, 2006). In their comparison of two large municipal police agencies, Mastrofski and Rosenbaum (2011) did not find any substantial evidence suggesting the impact of personal factors such as rank or level of education on receptivity towards innovation. They did however confirm an inverse relationship between age and support for innovation.

3.1.2.2 Contextual Factors: Internal Environment

Organizational environment has a significant impact on change initiatives such as research adoption by police organizations (Scott, 2004). A study by Fleming and Wingrove (2017) reveals that institutional factors such as organizational resources, culture, and general cynicism towards change create problems in embedding research in police organizations. Moreover, effectiveness of organizational communication (Mabin et al., 2001) and response to external research evidence (Sherman, 2015) could also impact organizational response to EBP.

3.1.2.3 Contextual Factors: External environment

Political pressure from stakeholders in the external environment can also act as a barrier to EBP adoption (Lum et al. 2012). Public sector organizations such as the police perform value work such as ensuring public safety and display organizational structure and design that supports this mission (Crank, 2003; Mastrofski, 1988). Agencies maintain organizational legitimacy by adopting goals and strategies favoured by influence groups
who in turn ensure continued financial and resource support (Willis et al., 2007). Public funding sources are difficult to secure as decision-makers sometimes favour initiatives that help garner political support instead of benefitting police organizations (Sheard, 2016). Political pressures can actually impede a police organization’s efforts to adopt new initiatives when cultural conformity becomes more important than performance enhancement (Meyer et al., 1983).

3.2 Methods

3.2.1 Recruitment

The present study is an attempt to identify factors that inhibit receptivity to EBP practices and is part of a larger study on EBP implementation in Canada. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with police leaders across Canada. The purpose of these interviews was to gain insight into the views of strategic decision makers regarding evidence-based strategies in their organizations. The inclusion criteria for sampling included sworn members (Inspectors to Chiefs), executive level civilian officers of police organizations and members of police research organizations based in English speaking Canadian provinces. An exception was made in a few cases (n=4) where officers below the rank of Inspector were included in the sample, given their active involvement in EBP initiatives. Another criterion for the selection of organizations was membership with the Canadian Society for Evidence-Based Policing (CAN-SEBP), which was established in

\[\text{\footnote{The rank of Inspector is considered the first level of senior administration in most Canadian police services.}}\]
2015 to provide a platform to police researchers and practitioners for the generation and dissemination of research. Membership with CAN-SEBP was considered to be an indicator of leadership’s support for EBP as well as of the ongoing EBP initiatives in those organizations.

Prior to beginning the interviews, the author received research approval from Western University’s research ethics board. Subsequently, emails were sent to the top leadership of all 24 partner organizations listed as members on the CAN-SEBP website (April, 2017). 38 officers and civilian staff members from 16 police organizations and four police research organizations across seven Canadian provinces agreed to be interviewed.

All the interviews were conducted via telephone at the convenience of the participants, and the duration of each interview was approximately 30-45 minutes. Interview questions were based on a semi-structured guide containing open ended questions along with corresponding probing questions. The interviews were audio recorded (using a recording device) with the written consent of the participants which was obtained prior to the interview. The present paper is based on one of the questions in the interview guide: “In your view, what are some of the main reasons behind resistance towards EBP in Canada?”

3.2.2 Analysis

Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis approach which is a flexible, inductive method for qualitative data analysis. The themes are derived from data instead of being dependent upon any specific or existing theories. The analysis involves repetitive reading of interview text and is therefore iterative in nature, meaning that it does not proceed in a linear fashion. This method is suitable for the current paper as there is a
paucity of academic literature regarding receptivity to evidence-based policing in general and in the Canadian perspective in particular. The analysis began with initial coding of data by two independent researchers who read and re-read the interview transcripts. The next step involved open coding followed by data being organized into broader categories. The themes were then checked for accuracy and further refined and reanalyzed till a clear pattern began to emerge. The two researchers compared their results to establish inter-rater reliability and the final themes were retained after discussion.

3.2.3 Sample Characteristics

The respondents included senior police officers \((n = 29)\), civilian executives \((n = 5)\) and members of police research organizations \((n = 4)\). Most respondents were male \((n = 34)\) with four \((n = 4)\) female participants. A total of 16 \((n=16)\) predominantly medium \((101-999\) sworn officers) and large sized \((more than 1000 sworn officers)\), urban police organizations across seven \((n = 7)\) different provinces participated in the study. (see Table 2)

Table 2: Sample Characteristics: Police Organizations by Province and Number of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>No. of agencies</th>
<th>No. of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manitoba</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newfoundland and Labrador</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Scotia</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3 Results

The various types of EBP initiatives undertaken by the participating police organizations included community policing; problem-oriented policing; Compstat; intelligence-led policing and; hot-spots policing. Analysis of interview data revealed four themes representing organizational factors and one theme indicating political factors which lead to resistance to EBP in Canadian police organizations. None of the participants highlighted any individual factors affecting resistance to EBP.

3.3.1 Organizational Factors

3.3.1.1 Lack of Communication Regarding EBP

A majority of the participants (n=20) identified lack of organizational communication as one of the main reasons underlying resistance towards EBP. They believed that the flow of information regarding such practices did not reach the frontline officers, thus leaving them unaware of the potential benefits of such strategies. As one Deputy Chief acknowledged: ‘We sometimes do a real bad job at communicating our mission’. Thus, the absence of strategies to operationalize EBP research for practical implementation relegates it to a mere ‘cool catch-phrase’ in the view of one Inspector. According to a Chief of police, resistance to EBP also occurs when officers perceive a misalignment between organizational values and EBP philosophy due to the lack of training and communication. An Inspector also
agreed that there were buy-in issues due to poor trickle-down of information to the frontline officers.

Several participants suggested sharing tangible results of EBP with organizational members to overcome resistance to EBP. A Superintendent highlighted the importance of giving feedback to the officers by explaining how his organization manages their hotspots strategy: ‘We put out what we call bulletins that there’s a hotspot or a problem area, problem solve it, and then get the results back to the members. So again, they see the value to their work.’ Another Superintendent suggested a systemic process wherein officers are taught to establish benchmarks ‘to identify data, to identify results at the end, what their goals are, determine whether or not there is a statistically significant improvement, whether the program was successful or failed’. A Superintendent from another agency firmly believed in communicating the benefits of EBP to the middle managers in particular ‘because they go to calls for service, they go to court, they fill out reports etc. and they are keen on knowing how this affects them.’ The importance of communicating results, informed risk taking and improving receptivity to EBP was also stressed by a Superintendent. He believed that demonstrating the value of new policing strategies and how they affect the public makes officers appreciate the evidence-based approach.

3.3.1.2 Cultural Resistance

Several officers (n=20) believed that resistance to EBP was due to police culture that actively rejects any attempts to depart from traditional policing practices.

3.3.1.2.1 Police Know Best

Some officers (n = 13) spoke of comfort with the status quo which helps maintain the traditional reactive mindset of policing and prevents change. One Deputy Chief commented
that despite the progressiveness of many of the police leaders, it was culture that imperiled change as it could ‘sink just about any initiative if you don’t manage the change correctly’.

A Deputy Chief believed that police agencies tend to be rigid in their practices and averse to fundamentally different ways of thinking like evidence-based policing. One Inspector attributed organizational inertia to the rhetoric of always having done things a certain way. He pointed out how ‘sometimes there’s that political flavoring to it as well that when people are used to receiving a policing service in a certain way, the removal or the change of that can often be a bit of a “political hot potato”’. Another Police Chief complained about the rejection of his ideas to add non-traditional positions to supplement police work:

> I think the resistance is cultural… and I think it’s some fear… We’re also very controlling by sheer nature. We don’t necessarily empower all of our employees well. Watch a police officer go to a community meeting. Quite often, within 30 minutes, they can be controlling the community meeting.

### 3.3.1.2.2 Risk Aversion

Risk aversion or fear of failure was also identified as a source of resistance to EBP by some officers ($n = 7$). While acknowledging the professional capability of police to deal with investigations and violent confrontations, one Superintendent observed that there were areas where police needed to ‘really broaden our horizons and open our minds up to the research in the areas that we do not have expertise in and [seek] help from the academia and from the community’. Participants complained of a culture focused largely on reactive problem-solving instead of prevention. A Superintendent believed that the urgency of change and its associated requirements are incompatible with a police culture focused
narrowly on law enforcement. A civilian officer was also critical of the police officers’ approach to learning, which affects their ability to incorporate EBP. He noted that:

In a policing operation where life and death is at stake, there’s no room for error. However, that’s 5% more or less of what we do. But we apply the ‘there’s no room for error’ to 100% of the situations. So, the challenge becomes, when people make mistakes, or when we’re fallible, or when we have weakness, we tend not to admit it… and so, there’s really no opportunity to learn from that. And really, evidence-based practices are about learning from past successes and failures.

3.3.1.2.3 Cultural Shift Through Education

The participants generally supported the need to create a cultural shift in favour of EBP through education and communication. One Superintendent believed that the present police culture prevented them from being more proactive and compelled them to provide hasty responses to political demands for service improvements. He added that evidence-based policing would gather momentum with the retirement of older officers, making way for more educated ones who would be receptive to EBP. A civilian officer believed that EBP requires a major effort and a shift in thinking for ‘a person who has been incredibly successful in the way they’ve been’. Similarly, a Police Chief also stressed the need for a cultural shift to embrace evidence-based research and begin working with academia to mutually develop effective programs most effective in today’s policing reality. A Deputy Chief felt that those resisting change must be gradually convinced without forcing any drastic changes, observing that officers did not necessarily need to have the academic qualification to comprehend the implications of research and to integrate it with their own experience, thereby allowing for better decision-making. A Staff Sergeant suggested
sharing case studies within the department that would ‘allow executive members that aren’t as forward thinking to broaden their thought processes or open them up a little more to something they’ve typically been reluctant to engage in.’

3.3.1.3 Resources

The respondents (n=16) generally agreed or partially agreed with the idea that resources were prohibitive factors in the adoption of EBP practices.

3.3.1.3.1 Time and Other Resources

Several officers (n=6) stressed the need to establish priorities to overcome time and resource constraints. A Deputy Chief explained the challenges associated with the adoption of EBP practices due to pressing calls for service and lack of resources and time:

So as much as I’d like, say 20 percent of my workforce and dedicate them specifically to the whole data gathering, data input and data analysis, and the subsequent deployment decisions that would come out of that, I can’t do that right now because I still have to answer the calls for service that are being driven by the public. You might suggest that well, you could find greater efficiencies, and that might be true. But I can’t put the world on hold for six months while I do that because that’s the challenge.

Similar views about the importance of making swift decisions without ‘ruminating’ on issues were highlighted. Speaking of an initiative undertaken by his own organization, a Superintendent shared how time was a critical factor in EBP implementation and stressed on the need for strong leadership to undertake the responsibility. Recognizing the importance of EBP, a civilian officer agreed that investing in EBP practices involving technology required significant organizational resources and that sparing time for such
change is a valuable investment. He noted that it then became a matter less of further investment than of ‘making time related to the change and making that a priority.’

### 3.3.1.3.2 Financial costs

Several officers (n=7) considered the financial costs related to hiring research specialists or additional officers or paying overtime charges to the present officers for carrying out EBP to be a problem in its implementation. Two Inspectors (from different departments) explained how the workload and calls for service prevented them from adopting EBP as it would require diverting resources from urgent matters. A Deputy Chief also complained about dealing with growing demand for services with shrinking budgets. He also felt that political decision-makers were not convinced about the effectiveness of EBP observing that ‘one person’s evidence is another person’s nonsense’.

Officers also complained about the prohibitive costs of conducting their own EBP research and lack of access to the latest research. A Police Chief pointed to the lack of coordinated efforts to make research accessible for Canadian police agencies highlighting the need for a coordinated repository of information easily accessible by police agencies. He acknowledged the efforts of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police in this regard. A few of the officers believed that although adoption of EBP is costly, the benefits justify costs. One civilian officer asserted that EBP practices provide opportunities to collaborate with other institutions thus offsetting the costs in the long run. He also felt that concerns
arise only ‘because the payback of doing evidence-based anything is a little longer term sometimes’.

3.3.1.3 Lack of Confidence in External Researchers

Several officers (n= 10) expressed doubts regarding the ability of researchers to understand policing issues. One Deputy Chief attributed resistance to EBP to the belief that it would force police organizations ‘down an academic route’. Another Inspector agreed that there is strong apprehension and skepticism regarding the extent to which academics understand policing issues as ‘there’s been years and years of reports too that have come out with kind of a very superficial understanding of the policing job and some of the intricacies of how we do what we do.’

A few of the participants provided examples of their own experiences of dealing with external researchers. One Inspector explained how foreign consultants hired to improve their intelligence-led policing program ignored cultural and organizational differences to implement an initiative that was scrapped a few years later. Participants also shared the challenges and security issues regarding the provision of confidential data to researchers. A Superintendent contended that police organizations were reluctant to share information for the fear of security breaches, but also acknowledged that hiring consultants and companies is helpful in adopting EBP. An Assistant Commissioner agreed that the clearance of researchers is a difficult process and the communication barrier is also a deterrent to research adoption:

The real frustration is having somebody come into the police world who doesn’t understand policing, who doesn’t work there, who doesn’t understand how the data is collected and why it is in certain forms. Researchers are not always open to the editorial suggestions, and so, you
find yourself with a document that may actually be misleading ‘cause the researcher still hasn’t completely understood the context. It’s seen as a misinformed report therefore why would we try to implement it? The recommendations are incomplete, or they are impractical, or they’re impossible to do.

Besides organizational issues, officers such as one staff sergeant also felt that the police were unwilling to accept input from outside the organization not only due to lack of trust but also arrogance. One civilian manager spoke of the resistance he received from the police when hired as an analyst and how he overcame it by explaining the purpose of EBP to the officers: ‘They went, “Oh, so you’re not gunna tell us what to do?”’. I said, “Of course not. I’m not here to tell what to do. I’m here to help you think through from a slightly different perspective how to deal with this”. And then they were okay.’

3.3.2 Political Factors

Some officers (n=5) believed that it not only police agencies but also the external oversight bodies also resist the adoption of EBP. Although this seems to be a small number, the fact that the respondents were from five different agencies makes it a significant theme. One Deputy Chief believed that communicating the need for EBP with stakeholders was important in order to justify the funds for such programs. He commented that:

Typically, when boards, politicians and the community want results, they look at crime stats. But crime stats don’t really depict the multitude or the variety of work that we do, so it’s a bad measure. So, I would think that one of the roles or responsibility of the police, the leadership of the police, is to do a better job at communicating to the public and to the politicians and to the boards, provide some sense and meaning as to what are our challenges, what do we do to try to meet them.
An Inspector also agreed that police organizations are not able to effectively convey the importance of such strategies to the oversight bodies resulting in lack of support for such projects. Another deputy chief highlighted the problem of focusing solely on the economics of policing and efficiencies. He agreed that the police were not successful in explaining to oversight bodies how an emphasis on being proactive and preventative would reduce the number of unnecessary demands for service and improve organizational effectiveness.

3.4 Discussion

The purpose of the present research was to explore factors affecting resistance to EBP, based on interviews with 38 police leaders and civilian officers across Canada. The results provide support for two of the three factors indicated by previous research (Bullock & Tilley, 2009; Lum et al., 2012), namely organizational and political factors or the context of change. Four themes defined organizational factors:

The first theme which emerged was the lack of organizational communication and training regarding the purpose of change which leads to resistance to EBP. This finding aligns with previous research which indicates that the manner in which information is conveyed to police officers has a strong impact on their receptivity towards EBP (Lum et al., 2014). For state-run agencies, maintaining open communication during change helps members recognize the importance and alignment of a new initiative with organizational goals (Berry & Wechsler, 1995). Southerland (1992) believes that the hierarchical structure of police organizations poses significant barriers to communication, thereby preventing employees from participating in change initiatives. As most officers receive their information through departmental channels, it is important for police organizations to carefully package and disseminate EBP related concepts during training or through official
communication to avoid uncertainty and confusion (Lum et al., 2012). Effective communication helps prevent misconceptions regarding organizational changes and garners support for managerial decisions (Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979; Mabin et al., 2001). Organizational commitment to EBP can also be communicated by aligning the incentive system with EBP-related goals (Sherman, 2015). This approach adopted by Commissioner William Bratton led to the successful institution of Compstat strategy at the New York City Police Department (Bratton & Knobbler, 1998).

Another issue related to communication raised by the study participants indexed lack of EBP training as a reason for officer resistance. This issue has been highlighted previously by Rousseau and Gunia (2016) who believe that barriers to evidence-based practices mainly arise due to the lack of training regarding the adoption of new guidelines. Martin and Mazerolle (2016) suggest that for effective EBP adoption to transpire, police leaders must dedicate at least 10% of their discretionary budget to research, ensure training and development of staff.

Cultural resistance also emerged as an important theme affecting officer disinclination towards EBP. Organizational culture, which is a set of shared norms and values held by its members has a strong impact on the success of change initiatives (Schein, 1988). Previous studies on the implementation of evidence-based practices in nursing also suggest that an organizational culture supporting status quo is the main reason behind resistance (Fleming & Wingrove, 2017; Lumsden, 2016). The militaristic and conservative culture of police has generally been resistant to employing research evidence in the decision-making process (Lum, 2009; Taylor & Boba, 2011). This conservatism also creates risk avoidance which according to Mastrofski and Willis (2010) is a means to protect police authority from
outside interference and to maintain their self-image of crime fighters. Scholars argue that police culture rewards reactive practices based on immediate results and refuses to value research-based ideas (Green, 2000; Lum et al., 2012; Taylor & Boba, 2011; Telep & Lum, 2014). The officers consider themselves capable of managing their assigned duties without external interference and regularly dismiss credible research evidence (Cullen et al., 2009; Mastrofski & Willis, 2010).

In the face of such challenges, police researchers suggest gradually managing cultural change to improve receptivity towards initiatives intended to improve organizational performance (Duxbury et al., 2017; Mastrofski & Willis, 2010). Shearing (1995) believes sharing success stories relating to new organizational initiatives would eventually make police culture more open to change.

The strained relationship between police as external researchers was also a theme related to resistance to EBP. Results suggest that police officers consider outsiders to be incapable of understanding the challenges associated with police work. These findings align with previous research which suggests that officers do not reject scientific evidence per se but believe that generalizations cannot be applied to police work which varies from case to case (Mastrofski & Willis, 2010; Sherman, 2013; Thacher, 2008). Sherman (2015) argues that police resistance to EBP is an attempt to preserve policing as a craft while preventing researchers from interfering in police affairs. Research uptake by police organizations is also slow as academics are believed to focus more on policy development and less on applied research (Greico, 2016). Disagreements exist between police organizations and researchers regarding the time required for project completion as well as the definition of problems and measurement of outputs (Barwick et al., 2008; Buerger, 2010; Lum et al
Bradley and Nixon (2009) call this type communication ‘dialogue of the deaf’ (p. 423) as it leads to resistance towards evidence-based practices.

Raising officer awareness regarding the importance of the work of crime analysts (Lum, 2013) and increasing the frequency of interaction (Chagnon et al. 2010) can be helpful in encouraging interaction between the two groups. On the other hand, researchers can also play their part in improving this relationship and obtaining buy-in for new ideas by taking practitioner views into account (Chagnon et al., 2010; Rojek et al., 2012). Given the importance of an in-house crime analyst in promoting EBP, Telep and Lum (2014) suggest that smaller agencies which do not have the capability to hire one can pool resources with other agencies of similar size to hire a regional analyst.

The study participants pointed towards the importance of human and financial resources as another set of issues, which have been identified as a source of concern during EBP adoption in previous literature (Bullock & Tilley, 2009; Gray et al., 2012; Greico, 2016; Lumsden & Goode, 2016). Evidence-based practices are generally resource-intensive and may initially involve costs for training and new equipment (Fixsen et al., 2009). Since public agencies face tremendous scrutiny for initiatives involving public funds (Nutt, 2000), higher costs could mean lower chances to receiving funds for a new strategy (Schneider et al., 2009; Telep & Lum, 2014). In the case of Canadian police organizations, Duxbury et al. (2017) have attributed low readiness for change to a lack of financial resources. However, a hot-spots experiment (Telep et al., 2014) with Sacramento Police Department revealed that leadership support and innovative use of existing resources can lead to the adoption of evidence-based practices without any significant costs or deployment of resources.
In the present study, lack of time was cited as a greater resource constraint compared to financial resources which aligns with previous literature on EBP implementation in nursing (Cherney et al., 2018; Melnyk et al. 2012). Additionally, lack of skilled staff is also a problem as political pressures keep a check on hiring, thus affecting new initiative requiring the deployment of additional officers (Cherney et al., 2018; Lum et al., 2012; Mastrofski & Willis, 2010). Officers who are already pressed to deal with calls for service face several conflicting demands and an overload of work when assigned additional tasks and consequently resist the changes.

The second major factor responsible for resistance to EBP was identified as political interference, which has been noted earlier as a significant challenge for police organizations (Weisburd & Neyroud, 2011). Due to resource dependence on external funders, police organizations are forced to adopt initiatives that may not align with organizational needs or capacity (Duxbury et al., 2017; Kaplan & Atkinson, 2015; Martin & Mazerolle, 2016; Sherman, 2015, 2011) and are strongly resisted by the officers (Fleming & Wingrove, 2017; Lum et al., 2012). Punch (2010) blames the governments for imposing measures on police organizations that are impractical instead of developing mutually beneficial programs. The inability of police agencies to clearly demonstrate the value of their own evidence-based projects is another reason for the lack of interest by oversight bodies in such initiatives (Martin & Mazerolle, 2016).

Specifically, in the Canadian context, police boards have a strong influence over provincial police services in terms of appointment of chiefs, setting strategic direction and budget control (Sheard, 2016). A study by Caul (2009) has also indicated interference in police matters by police boards who lack the capacity to make evidence-based decisions regarding
police management. The Canadian Association of Police Governance (2013) similarly indicates that members of police boards are not trained to assess police performance the absence of established metrics. Such pressures force police organizations to become over-cautious and avoid any new initiatives like EBP that may lead to failure and the subsequent withdrawal of funds by oversight bodies (Mastrofski & Willis, 2010).

3.5 Limitations

The present study was exploratory in nature and yielded important insights into the reasons behind police resistance to EBP. However, the results must be interpreted with caution due to a few limitations. Firstly, interview data were collected only from police agencies which are current members of the CAN-SEBP and already support EBP practices. Future studies could consider including agencies that have not yet implemented EBP programs to obtain a clear picture of reasons behind resistance to such initiatives. Secondly, the sample was limited to 16, mostly urban and medium or large police agencies across Canada which limits our ability to generalize the findings to other agencies within and outside Canada. Future studies should cover a larger sample of rural and small sized agencies to enable comparison between the two. Lastly, data were collected only from top level officers which may not reflect the views of frontline officers. Future studies should also try to overcome this limitation and consider the views of those responsible for the implementation of new initiatives.

3.6 Conclusion

The present study based on in-depth interviews with police leaders across Canada aimed to explore the reasons behind police resistance to EBP. Such studies are recommended as assessment of change readiness to determine whether the human and financial resources of
an organization align with the new challenges (Savignac & Dunbar, 2014). Results point towards the importance of organizational context in determining factors affecting resistance to EBP. Although similar findings have been reported by the few qualitative studies on receptivity to EBP (Fleming & Wingrove, 2017; Lumsden, 2016; Lumsden & Goode, 2016), the present study despite its limitations, adds to the literature by providing a more detailed discussion of barriers to EBP from a different cultural perspective.

With the growing pressure to adopt evidence-based practices, police organizations must focus their attention on addressing the factors responsible for resistance to such practices. Although lack of time, material and human resources are important factors leading to resistance towards EBP, ensuring effective communication with internal and external stakeholders is likely to resolve resistance related issues. Efforts must therefore be undertaken to ensure two-way vertical communication as well as horizontal communication across the organization and beyond to allay any fears or misperceptions related to EBP (Goodman & Truss, 2004). The need for change and the implementation plan must be communicated clearly by change agents to dispel any fears or negative notions regarding the initiative (Armenakis & Harris, 2002; Van der Voet, 2016; Walker et al., 2007).

Allowing employees at various hierarchical levels to participate in the change process is an empowering experience which could reduce resistance and improve the quality of change output (Herold et al., 2007). Cultural resistance can also be reduced through conveying the benefits of EBP to all ranks, and the introduction of EBP related material at the training academy level to inculcate its importance during early orientation. Similarly, efforts must be undertaken to involve police organizations in the research process to reduce the communication gap between police and researchers (Savignac & Dunbar, 2014).
In the case of external stakeholders, Martin and Mazerolle (2016) suggest that change agents should confidently provide credible evidence supporting the implementation of a new initiative when faced with challenging queries. Clearly explaining their side of the story would help the stakeholders understand the need for change and the resources required to deal with them. In conclusion, maintaining effective communication within and outside the organization will reduce misconceptions that prevent EBP from taking root in police organizations.
3.7 References


Organizational changes occur due to myriad factors that may be internal or external to the organization such as leadership changes, financial constraints or pressure from external stakeholders (Cochran et al., 2002). In the last two decades, the public sector has faced intense pressure to innovate and improve organizational performance and productivity (Lewis et al., 2018). For public sector organizations such as the police, rising operational costs have prompted the need for more effective utilization of public funds. In this context, researchers and policy makers have recommended the use of scientific evidence in police operations to ensure enhanced organizational efficiency and effectiveness (Griffiths, 2014; Public Safety Canada, 2013).

The adoption of evidence-based policing (EBP) represents a viable solution for achieving these goals. EBP is a decision-making perspective which is based on the premise that police practices should be supported by rigorous research evidence (Lum et al., 2012) or “what works best” (Sherman, 1998, p.2). Police strategies based on credible research are likely to be more justifiable and effective in reducing crime than decisions based on hunches and guesswork (Lum, 2009). Proactive strategies such as COMPSTAT, problem-oriented policing, intelligence-led policing (Ratcliffe, 2008) and hot-spots policing

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5 A version of this chapter has been submitted for publication
Evidence-based policing is a decision-making perspective that has been described as an innovation in policing literature (Weisburd & Braga, 2006). Innovation is defined as any new product, service or process adopted by an organization (Damanpour, 1991) for the purpose of improving organizational performance (Damanpour & Schneider, 2006). EBP strongly supports the use research evidence in making decisions at the strategic, tactical and operational levels of policing, and the translation of research into practice (Lum & Koper, 2017). Despite the acknowledged role of EBP in improving organizational effectiveness, police organizations have been slow to respond to this innovation (Lum, 2009). It is therefore important to identify factors which enhance organizational receptivity
towards EBP, which enables police and civilian officers to recognize and understand the importance of research in their decision-making activities (Lum & Koper, 2017). There are a few studies available that highlight the factors which lead to receptivity and openness towards EBP.

In the UK, researchers have found that mid and upper level police (Hunter et al., 2015), reading government publications (Palmer, 2011), and studies utilizing simple qualitative methods (Koehle et al., 2010) were found to be more receptive to EBP. In the US, a receptivity survey developed by Telep and Lum (2014) revealed that higher levels of officer education lead to openness towards research based practices. However, Telep and Winegar (2016) found support for but lack of clear understanding of EBP related concepts among senior officers. Jenkins (2016) has argued that police officers are more receptive to strategies they believe to be highly innovative, such as community policing and crime mapping. In the Canadian perspective, EBP research is fairly new. A replication of Telep and Lum’s receptivity survey by Blaskovits et al. (2018) has shown that Canadian police officers are more receptive to EBP compared to those in the US. Huey et al. (2017) have identified lack of confidence in top management to be the reason behind lack of receptivity towards evidence based practices.

To explore receptivity to EBP from a change management perspective, literature suggests that the phases involved in the adoption of innovation can be categorized generally as initiation, adoption and implementation (Damanpour & Schneider, 2006; Rogers, 2003). The initiation stage may be considered a combination of the knowledge and persuasion stages in the innovation-diffusion process described by Rogers (2003). It is at the first or initiation stage that organizational members become aware of an innovation and form
opinions regarding its benefits and need for the organization, based on peer evaluation (Rogers, 2003). Openness to change is therefore the first essential step in the planned change process to reflect support and confidence in the benefits of change (Miller et al., 1994). This stage reflects the motivation to proceed with a change initiative and is affected by external organizational environment as well internal organizational characteristics such as mission, structure and level of bureaucracy (Damanpour, 1991; Damanpour & Schneider, 2006).

Given the importance of the initial phase of change and paucity of literature related to EBP adoption by police organizations, I explore the factors that lead to receptivity and openness towards these initiatives. In other words, what drives EBP adoption in police organizations? For this purpose, I have based my analysis on the first phase of Aarons et al. (2011) four-phase conceptual model of evidence-based practice implementation in the public services sector. The different phases of the model are exploration, adoption, implementation, and sustainment. However, the present paper will focus only on the exploration phase. This is the initial stage of change during which organizations become aware of an issue requiring an innovative solution and is considered to be extremely challenging and complicated (Damanpour & Schneider, 2006; Grol et al., 2007). Factors influencing the exploration phase are explained in the succeeding sections:

4.1.1 The Outer Context

Several factors in the outer context are believed to impact the exploration phase or an organization’s openness to innovation in the public sector. These factors may be socio-political in nature and can include governmental policies promoting innovation, the availability or tightening of government funding, improved performance demands by
advocacy groups and interaction with other agencies employing evidence-based practices (Davies & Nutley, 2008; Frambach & Schillewaert, 2002; Greenhalgh et al., 2004).

4.1.2 The Inner Context

The inner context includes organizational and individual characteristics that are expected to affect the exploration phase.

4.1.2.1 Organizational Characteristics

Aarons et al. (2011) identify three organizational characteristics that have an impact on the exploration stage. The first is an organization’s absorptive capacity or the existing skills and knowledge possessed by an organization to identify and implement new initiatives (Greenhalgh et al., 2004; Grol et al. 2007). The second factor is readiness for change which is linked to an organization’s self-perceived ability to undertake change (Cunningham et al, 2002). Organizational context is the third factor which includes organizational culture (shared values), organizational climate (employee perception of the work environment) and strong leadership committed to encouraging change (Glisson & James, 2002).

4.1.2.2 Individual Adopter Characteristics

Aaron et al., (2011) also focus on the individuals in the organization and how their values, social networks and perceived need for change influence receptivity to EBP. Those interested in new ideas usually keep themselves updated on new academic and professional developments in their field (Berwick, 2003). They try to engage with others outside the organization to share and gain new knowledge and perceive themselves as being capable of undertaking new challenges.
4.2 Methods

4.2.1 Recruitment

The present paper is part of a larger study exploring factors that inhibit or facilitate receptivity to EBP practices in Canada. The population of interest is executive level police officers (Inspectors and above) and senior command staff across English-speaking provinces in Canada. The organizations contacted are listed as members on the Canadian Society of Evidenced-Policing (CAN-SEBP) website. Established in 2015, the CAN-SEBP has provided an important platform to academics and practitioners for the generation and dissemination of research for effective policing. Organizational membership with the CAN-SEBP was considered an indicator of leadership’s support for evidence based policing practices.

Data were collected based on in-depth interviews with the participants. The purpose of these interviews was to gain insight into the reasons behind the adoption of EBP by these organizations. I received research approval from Western University’s research ethics board prior to conducting the interviews. I contacted the top leadership of police and research organizations listed as CAN-SEBP members and interviewed 38 senior officers from 16 police organizations across seven provinces in Canada.

The interviews were conducted via telephone at the convenience of the participants. Each interview lasted approximately 30-45 minutes and the questions were based on a semi-structured guide. The interviews were audio recorded (with the help of a recording device), and written consent was obtained from all participants prior to the interview. The present paper is based on two questions: (1) What were the reasons behind your agency’s joining
the CAN-SEBP? (2) What were the motivating factors behind your agency’s adoption of EBP?

4.2.2 Analysis

I employed Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis approach for analyzing data. Analysis involved several stages of coding beginning with initial coding conducted by myself and another independent researcher as we read and re-read the interview transcripts. The results of the initial round of coding revealed key themes that were very similar to the exploration phase of Aarons et al. (2011) model. Open codes were then developed and organized into broader categories or themes. At this stage we coded the data using elements of Aarons et al. (2011) model as coding criteria. We reviewed the themes for accuracy and reanalyzed the data till a clear pattern emerged. The second researcher and I compared our results to establish inter-rater reliability and the final themes were retained after discussion.

4.2.3 Sample characteristics

Our respondents included officers \((n = 29)\) and civilian executives \((n = 5)\) and members of police research organizations in Canada \((n=4)\). Most respondents were male \((n = 34)\) with four \((n = 4)\) female participants. A total of 16 \((n = 16)\) police organizations across seven \((n = 7)\) different provinces

4.3 Results

Two main themes emerged during data analysis which align with the outer and inner organizational contexts of the exploration phase of Aaron et al. (2011) framework. However, the framework is partially represented by the current results as the participants focused mainly on organizational characteristics but did not discuss individual
characteristics included in the framework. The following section presents the results of the study.

4.3.1 Outer context

Three sub-themes represent the external environment affecting openness to EBP or the external drivers of change:

4.3.1.1 Monitoring and review

Several participants (n=11) believed that the decision to adopt EBP was prompted by the need to justify organizational decisions to external stakeholders. As one interviewee, an Inspector, mentioned how anecdotal reporting is no longer acceptable to oversight bodies stating, ‘we’re in the environment now where any sort of decision-making, reporting to the public, or to our oversightees, these really have to be evidence-based.’ Others agreed that the oversight bodies had become more involved in policing issues over the years and were acutely aware of the importance of evidence-based practices. Commenting on this, a Deputy Chief reflected:

> I’ve noticed in my twenty years in policing, whether we’re dealing with community groups or councils or even police boards, twenty years ago if the police said, “hey we have this problem and we propose the solution is this”, most people would say “humph, that sounds good, they’re the experts, let’s do that”. Rarely do I go to a high-level meeting now and we suggest something, and they go, “what makes you think that’s a good idea?” so you know to be able to say, “this is why”.

A Deputy Commissioner attributed the adoption of EBP to public expectations in relation to performance and high expectations of accountability especially in relation to decision making, noting that ‘evidence-based decision making helps in sort of that accountability
At least two officers pointed out the importance of adopting EBP to successfully measure program outputs and objectives. A Superintendent considered such measures important in justifying organizational decisions so that he was in a position to ‘attribute facts to that program if it were to come under attack or a bunch of pressures.’ Similar views were echoed by a Chief of Police who supported the adoption of EBP in his agency for more accurate evaluation of programs and ‘to be able to actually demonstrate returning value’. However, not all interviewees seemed convinced of the benefits of externally imposed EBP initiatives. As one Superintendent recalled:

When I reference my time starting in my unit, back in 2006, I mean, those are the times when Compstat out of New York was really starting to take hold and our city here tried to adopt that program. It certainly created more accountability for just visual matters.

4.3.1.2 Funding

Some of the participants (n=7) highlighted competition for public funds as a driver of EBP adoption. With limited availability of funds and a growing demand for improved organizational efficiency and effectiveness, police organizations are focusing on improving the quality of decision-making to satisfy the funders. In the words of a civilian officer, ‘we’re being held more accountable or are spending our dollars wisely, and we have to show that by making good tactical decisions.’ A Chief also acknowledged the growing pressure and scrutiny from the councils specially to justify increases to police budgets in times of fiscal restraint. He commented, ‘it’s incumbent upon police leaders to look at evidence-based research and to find and demonstrate that the tax payers are getting the best
value for the money they’re putting’. An Inspector recalled how his agency had to justify hiring two additional staff members to the oversight bodies:

With that came a requirement from city council that we’re able to produce neutral metrics for them to be able to see the utility and the efficacy of having police officers embedded within the team. And so that has caused us now to approach the University of XYZ (name of university) and now we’ve asked them to do a study for us and the faculty of Psychology has agreed to do that.

4.3.1.3 Inter-organizational networks

4.3.1.3.1 Direct networking

Some participants (n=8) noted the benefits of networking with academics outside the organization to gain a better perspective regarding EBP. They admitted that police agencies sometimes require objective and expert opinion for the improvement of organizational performance, or in the words of a Superintendent, ‘to readjust your program, fine-tune it.’ The same officer explained the importance of external research support:

That’s [research] probably one of the missing links when we first started doing this about ten years ago. It was kind of, you know, “I’m not sure the profit within”, all that kind of stuff. We really bought into it back then. But now, with the objective, outside research-based academics looking at this and evaluating it for us, really should benefit the program, and again, provide the needed support.

Another Inspector shared similar views and asserted that police agencies should benefit from academic expertise to get a better understanding of the EBP philosophy: We’re the police but there’s a lot of people out there with an interest and the expertise that we just simply don’t have, right?’. Commenting on a research project his agency had conducted
with the help of external academics, the same officer noted: ‘we would’ve lacked the expertise internally to do that correctly without screwing it up.’ A Superintendent from another agency explained how an unusually high number of homicides in their region made them realize the importance of research: ‘So we ended up bringing in Dr. ABC (name of academic) and she did that for us. And then we were able to target those high-risk areas that were resulting in those sorts of crimes.’

4.3.1.3.2 Indirect networking

One of the interview questions asked the participants their motivation for joining the CAN-SEBP. Most of the responses (n=23) pointed towards the importance of a platform providing networking opportunities with other policies agencies and research organizations to learn about the current evidence-based practices. A Chief of police viewed CAN-SEBP membership as an opportunity to ‘be able to advocate provincially and nationally of the need for more evidence-based decision making, and more collaboration nationally and provincially around our profession’. A civilian officer stressed the need to maintain a community of practice given the interdisciplinary nature of police work. Similar views were expressed by a Deputy Chief who also believed in the benefits of becoming a part of the EBP community ‘to move ourselves one step closer to a more evidence-based driven organization’. The participants were also convinced that networking through EBP would enable them to learn from other agencies and tailor programs to their individual needs. As one Chief explained: If there’s work that’s been done in a particular area that we’re looking at then we want to be able to tap into that information and use it to our advantage to avoid duplication of resources.
A Staff Sergeant expressed similar views regarding conservation of resources by making use of research by other agencies. He suggested reviewing ‘what research has been done to support one direction or another and incorporating all that into the recommendation and decision-making process’. Another Chief stressed the need to avoid ‘reinventing the wheel’ reflecting that: ‘We’re holding off on a strategy until we see that it’s working elsewhere and that there’s sound policy that isn’t going to erode public trust.’

4.3.2 Inner context

4.3.2.1 Absorptive capacity (Knowledge/skills)

Openness to new ideas depends on the level of existing skills and knowledge base of the employees. Some of the participants of the present study (n=9) suggested the importance of having a dedicated and diverse group of researchers within the organization for exploring and facilitating EBP. According to a civilian employee, it is the presence of research-minded individuals and subject-matter experts within the organization which encourage exploration of new strategies like EBP. He credited these individuals with bringing about the realization that ‘we’re already working hard, we just need to work smarter’. An inspector considered higher education to be instrumental in adoption of EBP by talking about his own experience: ‘My education in university, talking and learning about evidence-based practices and how the evidence-based practices out there can make us more efficient, more effective, as long as we start to link academia with policing.’

Diversity of educational backgrounds and skillsets was also supported by one civilian officer who had several highly qualified researchers working under his supervision: ‘So, the common denominator is diverse. I’m not saying that we’re doing anything ground breaking, but it is almost second nature’. A Superintendent lauded his agency’s efforts in
mostly hiring individuals with undergraduate degrees. As a result, the agency has gradually developed an evidence-based focus. According to the officer:

Pretty much every policy, project involves some form of evidence. I can say in our research and audit section, everything involves that. We’ve got fulltime researchers where a large segment of their work is exclusively researching academic papers, documents, subject matter experts, scan of organizational data, that sort of thing. That happens all the time. There isn’t a piece of policy that doesn’t include that.

A Deputy Chief highlighted the importance of aligning the operational and administrative functions to create an environment that supports EBP. He explained his agency’s efforts towards ensuring that a significant component of their priorities are data-driven or analysis-based. On the administrative side, hiring external consultants to assist in assessing their service delivery can enhance organizational efficiency and effectiveness. A civilian officer commented on the role of top leadership in adopting and encouraging evidence-based practices in his organization by noting that:

they’re [management] not going to make a decision on flimsy information. They’re going to ask, “Well, how did you get that information?” “What makes you so confident?” “Did you think of this?” Did you think of that?” So, the decisions on how police resources are deployed and whether a program is effective or not, you definitely have to be very mindful of the evidence that you’re collecting and what you’re basing your findings on.

4.3.2.2 Culture

A number of officers (n=14) believed that organizational culture that is open to change and calculated risk-taking is an important factor affecting receptivity to EBP. An Inspector
explained how his organization arrived at the decision to adopt EBP through trial-and-error, subsequently adopting a model that suited their needs. The Chief of the same agency believed that there was a gradual shift in police culture to embrace research-based practices as many earlier practices can no longer be justified. A Superintendent explained how members of his agency made a conscious effort to adopt EBP:

> It goes back to the whole idea of more proactive, preventive, intervention-based policing tactics, rather than the traditional, you know, reactive call for service and pinball policing, and really trying to change the culture of policing, certainly in our organization.

A civilian employee appreciated his organization’s efforts in aligning organizational culture and EBP strategies through ‘a relatively extensive consultation process’ with members of the organization. Another Deputy Chief also talked about the importance of involving and consulting with employees at various organizational levels to ensure a culture-strategy fit for EBP adoption. A Chief of police explained his organization’s transition from simply working on hunches to establishing focused strategic plans. He expressed the hope that in the future, documents and reporting processes would be even more finely-tuned to ensure that for new programs they would ‘rely on [their] research staff here to do the homework before a program gets launched’. Officers also indicated the importance of inculcating innovation as a core cultural value. As one Sergeant commented:

> I think looking at innovative ideas is important to maintain that core value and then to also be a steward and consolidator of it as well. So, you have to be able to walk the talk in that regard.

Another civilian employee recalled her agency’s efforts to incorporate EBP in the past. She believed that the focus on EBP has even affected their hiring strategies, noting that ‘when
we’re hiring our business strategists, we have people with doctorates in research, and I don’t remember a time when that wasn’t in existence in the organization since I’ve been here’. A Chief highlighted the efforts by his department to develop a research culture across the organization by providing adequate resources and research material:

So, we’re trying to build that expectation within the organization and as we start getting things that aren’t supported by back-up documents, we’re sending them back to encourage staff to do more research, and at the same time, making those tools available to them. We’re trying to expose this to everybody in the organization, so it becomes a new way of thinking for everybody, not just decision makers.

4.3.2.3 Climate

Organizational climate is based on the perceptions of employees regarding organizational expectations of employee behaviour. It plays a significant role in creating openness to EBP as evidenced by responses from a majority of participants (n=19). A Deputy Chief acknowledged that sometimes articles in practitioner journals encourage them to explore new strategies with the expectation that it would improve the quality of decisions. A civilian employee believed that police organizations are accustomed to emulating agencies that have a demonstrated record of program effectiveness. He considered it a ‘recognition that we need to change how we do business and that these groups look to offer an opportunity to either expose ourselves to things we don’t know or help us shape things within the organization.’ A Superintendent explained his agency’s efforts in observing effective EBP strategies locally and internationally since: ‘crime changes, resourcing funding changes and we have to shift our direction and focus and what’s working out there
and how can we incorporate it here.’ The pressure to undertake evidence-based research despite limited resources was described by an Inspector in the following way:

we simply lack the resources to be able to do our own research. We try to and individuals who are extremely busy, we try to do it off the corner of our desks, often times we may not be experts in certain fields but just because of where you’re currently working you’ve been asked to research it and come up with the information to inform or to guide policy for the police department.

A Deputy Commissioner considered EBP to be driven by some issue or what he described as a ‘quasi-crisis’. The officer believed that in such a scenario ‘there’s a need to rationalize a service, figure out ways to do the same thing for less money, or do better things for the same money, or worst-case scenario, do better things with less money’. Similar views were expressed by two other participants. A Deputy Chief identified specific issues such as gang violence and fentanyl overdoses that led his organization to explore an evidence-based approach to decision-making. An Inspector described how a specific type of gang-violence related to a particular minority group prompted them to adopt more research-based solutions to the problem: ‘So we’re trying to figure out, outside of traditional investigations and trying to put people in jail, what can we do to try and curve this, bearing in mind that there is a cultural aspect to it.’

4.3.2.4 Leadership

The officers (n=10) highlighted the efforts of top leadership in creating openness to EBP practices. One inspector stated: ‘essentially, it comes right from our chief and one of his key guiding principles is everything has to be evidence-based.’ A Chief of Police credited one of his predecessors for setting a strategic direction for the agency based on research,
ingraining it in the organizational culture. The Chief further added that EBP was a natural fit for his organization as they were accustomed to such practices, observing that ‘when a lot of services are talking about all these really cool things, we’re kind of like, “Yeah, we did that”’, or “Yeah, we do that.”’

The participants believed that top management’s level of education and exposure to research is key to EBP adoption. As one inspector commented:

Yeah, so our chief and one of our former deputies… they read a lot of literature and then brought studies to the table. Our chief, he’s always challenging us to try new things. So, a lot of it comes from within, to look and see if there is research in other areas.

Another Inspector from a different agency appreciated his senior leadership, the chief and the deputy for having good academic backgrounds and the open-mindedness to embrace new ideas like EBP. One of the Chiefs explained how a quest for improved accountability and introduction to international practices became his motivation to explore evidence-based practices:

What sort of got me down that road is the economics discussion and trying to make sure that we have the kind of accountability to say that the programs we’re running are the most high value. I had the opportunity to go out with the director from the Police College in the UK to look at a program. It’s a good opportunity for our service to start looking for how we’re going to start assigning better metrics, better evidence to the work we do.

4.4 Discussion

The application of externally sourced evidence-based knowledge is considered important for organizations, not only because it can lead to the enhancement of their knowledge base
but also because it can ensure organizational effectiveness and economic performance (Bierly et al., 2009; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). In view of these benefits, the present study serves as an attempt to identify factors that help to develop receptivity towards evidence-based practices in a particularly change-averse segment of the public sector namely, police organizations.

The results, based on in-depth interviews with senior police management across Canada partially support a model of receptivity to EBP advanced by Aarons et al. (2011). I was interested in the first stage of the model that is delineated as the exploration stage, as organizations are believed to become receptive to new ideas at this juncture. Interview responses highlighted factors present in the external and internal organizational environment that tend to impact a police agency’s receptivity or openness to change. In terms of the internal environmental context, while the participants highlighted the organizational characteristics that created openness to change, they did not discuss the individual adopter characteristics as identified by Aarons et al. (2011).

The impact of outer organizational context on EBP was supported by four sub-themes. The first two sub-themes in the outer organizational context related to monitoring and review of police agencies by external stakeholders for ensuring accountability under growing fiscal pressures. The participants considered EBP adoption essential for justifying performance and funding needs. This finding aligns with previous literature which suggests that by increasing oversight, the governing bodies in Canada aim to secure public interest and trust by ensuring optimal utilization of public funds by police organizations (Sheard, 2016).
The focus on accountability has encouraged Canadian police agencies to adopt research-based strategies thus enabling them to provide more scientific performance measures to police boards. However, police boards in Canada insist on assessing agencies mainly on the basis of efficacious utilization of funds while ignoring the myriad factors affecting performance which is a source of concern for police organizations (Perrin, 2011). Besides accountability, the rising cost of policing in Canada has prompted the government to push for the adoption of EBP to enhance organizational effectiveness (Mazowita & Greenland, 2016; Public Safety Canada, 2013).

Directly networking with researchers outside the organization for research consulting also emerged as one of the factors that is believed to be pivotal to enhancing openness and receptivity to EBP. This finding aligns with previous research on utilization of research knowledge which highlights the importance of “relational capital” (Chagnon et al., 2010, p.10) or the trust that develops between researchers and practitioners through continued interaction. This trust is one of the key factors contributing to receptivity to research and highlights the importance of social linkage between the two groups (Amara et al, 2004; Chagnon et al., 2010; Landry et al, 2001)

Since organizational membership with CAN-SEBP was one of the inclusion criteria in the study, participants were asked their thoughts on why their agency had joined the platform. A majority of responses identified indirect networking as a sub-theme, and considered idea sharing a major reason for joining such a network. This result aligns with previous findings which suggest that practitioners tend to rely more on their professional peers and opinion leaders for information rather than academic sources (Ferlie et al., 2006; Lum et al., 2012; Palmer, 2011; Weiss & Bucavalas, 1980). Weiss (1998) encouraged the creation of forums
where practitioners, researchers and experts could benefit from current developments in their field and tailor the knowledge to their own circumstances. As a response, several societies of evidence-based policing have been established across the globe to ensure that the best evidence and practices are available to police agencies thereby also ensuring the uptake of evidence-based practices (Rousseau & Gunia, 2016).

Besides the importance of factors in the outer organizational context, the respondents also indicated how the inner context affects receptivity to EBP. Four main sub-themes based on organizational characteristics emerged during analysis. The first sub-theme suggested the importance of absorptive capacity or the ability to utilize externally obtained knowledge for creating an organizational advantage (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990). Some of the participants considered the level and diversity of education and skill along with specialized positions helpful in supporting the uptake and dissemination of research within the agency. Previous research suggests that having an in-house EBPs mentor and connections with EBP supporters outside the organization is believed to lead to openness to new ideas as organizational members begin to recognize the benefits of the initiatives (Aarons, 2006; Rousseau & Gunia, 2016; Melnyk et al., 2004).

Organizational culture was the next sub-theme believed to affect openness towards EBP identified by the participants which aligns with previous studies on research utilization. The evolution of organizational culture depends on knowledge acquisition by an organization. Differences in organizational cultures therefore determine the manner in which knowledge is adopted and incorporated thereby leading to varied absorptive capacity by different agencies (Belkhojda et al., 2007). This difference in absorptive capacities is also one of the reasons why EBP adoption varies between agencies (Cabell et al, 2013). Organizational
changes that are internally driven and are not in direct conflict with organizational culture and identity are more easily adopted than ones that are unfamiliar (Jacobs et al., 2013). Rousseau and Gunia (2016) consider organizational changes such as EBP implementation to be a time consuming, adaptive process as cultural norms may take a generation to be modified (Rogers, 2003). Such changes therefore require constant support by organizational leaders and peers to be successful.

Another theme related to organizational culture was the influence of organizational climate on receptivity to EBP. An organization’s climate is based on the perceptions of individuals regarding work expectations (Burke & Litwin, 1992). Therefore, managerial focus on knowledge acquisition and application through incentives and rewards can create openness towards EBP amongst employees (Aarons et al., 2011; Hemsley-Brown & Sharp 2003). Damanpour and Schneider (2006) also argue that specifically rewarding change related behaviour can create an organizational climate that is perceived as being receptive to new ideas and innovation, thus facilitating change in the organization.

Leadership support also emerged as an important theme supporting openness to EBP. Prior literature highlights the importance of leadership’s role in enhancing innovation capacity through the introduction and support of change initiatives (Lewis et al., 2018; Piening, 2013). Rousseau and Gunia (2016) describe leadership support as a “countervailing force” which helps offset any threats to professional identities, thus creating openness and acceptance towards evidence-based practices (p.667). Since the adoption of new ideas requires expertise and knowledge to deal with potential challenges, leaders with higher levels of education are expected to deal with such situations more effectively (Damanpour & Schneider, 2006). Educated leaders are able to scan the environment for new ideas and
facilitate the adoption of innovation by building employee confidence and abilities to support such changes (Mumford et al., 2000; Rogers, 2003).

4.5 Limitations

The present study was an attempt to gain insight into police organizations’ receptivity to evidence-based practices. Due to the exploratory nature of the study, the associated limitations warrant a discussion as they pose a challenge to the generalizability of findings. Firstly, the sample size was limited since data were collected only from organizations that are CAN-SEBP members and are already receptive to EBP. It can also be assumed that individual factors identified in the Aarons et al. (2011) model did not emerge in the current study due to lack of variation in the sample. Since all the participants were already receptive to EBP, the individual factors did not emerge as they would have with less receptive participants. Future studies could benefit from including non-member agencies or those less receptive to the idea of evidence-based practices. This would allow a comparison to be drawn between the two groups and to gain a better understanding of factors affecting receptivity to EBP.

A second limitation is agency location as the sample consisted mainly of urban police agencies across English speaking provinces in Canada. With the current sample it is difficult to determine whether the results would be similar for police organizations of different sizes, in different geographical locations as the internal and external organizational factors could vary substantially. It is recommended that future studies consider both urban and rural agencies as well as French speaking regions to obtain a more representative sample. A cross-national study would also be useful in drawing useful comparisons amongst different countries. Lastly, the sample consisted mainly of top
management which is also a limitation of the present study as the views of officers at other hierarchical levels have not been taken into account. Future studies should include officers at all organizational levels to capture a more inclusive range of opinions regarding EBP adoption.

4.6 Conclusion

For the past two decades, scholars in policing have supported the idea of EBP adoption for the enhancement of organizational efficiency and effectiveness (Lum et al., 2012; Mastrofski, 1999; Sherman, 1998). However, openness to EBP which is the very first step towards its adoption has generally been overlooked by researchers. The present study utilized the exploration phase of EBP adoption framework by Aarons et al. (2011) to identify factors in both the external and internal organizational environment which affect police organizations’ receptivity to EBP.

For police organizations, oversight bodies responsible for performance monitoring and allocation of funds can influence the adoption of innovations such as EBP. However, to avoid conflicts of interest which create the perception of EBP being forcefully imposed, police agencies should clearly communicate and justify their funding requirements and operational realities to oversight bodies. Furthermore, building close partnerships with the academic community and other agencies can be mutually beneficial in introducing police organizations to the benefits of EBP.

In terms of internal environmental factors, the level of officer education can be instrumental in ensuring openness to new ideas such as EBP. Officers exposed to research and knowledge of the latest innovations in policing are believed to be convinced of the
benefits are likely to be more supportive of such ideas (Kalyal et al., 2017). Besides a strong skill base, other factors such as leadership support as well as organizational culture and climate also affect openness to EBP. It is the responsibility of top leadership to ensure an organizational climate conducive to EBP adoption. Although it is more challenging to attempt cultural change especially in police organizations that are set in their ways, it is not entirely impossible to do so. Aarons et al. (2011) recommend proceeding gradually by adopting strategies to improve organizational climate. These range from investing in training and development exercises to maintaining open channels of communication within and outside the organization to ensure openness to evidence-based practices.
4.7 References


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[http://www.implementationscience.com/content/5/1/41](http://www.implementationscience.com/content/5/1/41)


Chapter 5

5 Conclusion

Evidence-based policing (EBP) requires strategic decision-making to be based on research evidence and is considered important for the enhancement of organizational effectiveness (Lum et al., 2012). However, despite its acknowledged benefits, the practice has not gained expected traction across the globe (Lum & Koper, 2017). There is a dearth of literature specifically highlighting factors that are responsible for this lack of interest as well as factors that may lead to openness and receptivity to EBP. Therefore, the present research attempted to fill this gap in the literature by analyzing the organizational context (internal and external environmental factors) in the light of institutional theory, to identify factors influencing police resistance and receptivity to EBP.

An organization’s response to change can only be understood properly by beginning with the history of success or failure of new initiatives (Amburgey et al., 1993). In this dissertation, Chapter 2 titled “‘If it’s not worth doing half-assed, then it’s not worth doing at all’: Police views as to why new strategy implementation fails” examined officer views regarding the extent of and reasons for the failure of change implementation in the past. In this paper, I focused specifically on the implementation phase as this is considered the most challenging aspect of strategic management, although it has largely been ignored in the literature. It is worth noting that the failure of a strategy not only becomes embedded in organizational memory but also results in the loss of organizational resources and employee commitment towards such initiatives in the future. The paper was based on qualitative survey responses collected from 353 officers from seven police agencies across Canada. The results reflected officers’ disappointment in the ability of their organizations
to undertake new initiatives and revealed several factors for the failure of change at the implementation phase. These insights comprise an important contribution to policing and strategic management literature with identified factors including lack of communication, leadership resistance to change, lack of motivation and direction, insufficient resources, lack of adaptiveness, and inadequate person-organization fit. The alignment of all organizational resources with strategy is imperative for ensuring the successful implementation of new initiatives in today’s work environment.

Chapter 3, “‘One person’s evidence is another person’s nonsense’: Why police organizations resist evidence-based practices” also illuminates an important aspect of receptivity to EBP, offering insights that serve as a useful addition to policing literature. Adopting a contextual approach, this chapter differed from the previous one due to its focus on identifying barriers to a very specific type of change, namely the adoption of research-based practices by police organizations. Based on interviews with 38 police leaders of 16 agencies across seven Canadian provinces, the results suggest that these organizations are averse to any attempt to change their traditional model of policing which is focused on calls for service. The external barriers to EBP were identified as political, while internal organizational factors included issues related to organizational communication, culture, resources, and relationship with external researchers. Based on the thematic analysis of the interview data, the interesting conclusion that was drawn pertained to the need to improve internal and external organizational communication. Open and honest communication at every stage of organizational change is seen as being vital to reducing cynicism towards the initiative not only within the organization but also amongst external stakeholders, thus decreasing resistance towards change (Goodman & Truss, 2004).
While there is a general lack of literature on EBP adoption, a wider gap exists in regards to contextual factors which lead to officer receptivity and openness to such practices. In Chapter 4 “‘Well, there’s a more scientific way to do it!’: Factors influencing receptivity to evidence-based practices in police organizations”, I focused on specifically identifying factors in the internal and external organizational context which could potentially influence officer receptivity to EBP as this is the first step towards adoption of such practices. I based the inductive thematic analysis on 38 in-depth interviews with police executives across Canada. The emerging themes aligned with two of the three elements of a model of innovation adoption by Aarons et al. (2011) i.e., internal and external organizational factors but did not indicate any personal factors included in the model. The results revealed that several external and internal organizational factors influence officer openness to EBP. External factors include the influence of oversight bodies as well as inter-organizational networking on the adoption of research based practices. In terms of inner organizational context, it is the police agency’s capacity to adopt research, innovative culture, organizational climate indicating support for change and strong leadership support that are instrumental in creating receptivity towards EBP.

5.1 Practical Implications

Research suggests that a strategic human resource management approach can be employed to institute change in organizational culture and values, thereby resulting in enhanced organizational performance (Barratt-Pugh et al., 2013). The strategic approach is based on communication and participative decision-making involving employees at all organizational levels in developing a future course of action and shared vision which can overcome resistance and generate behavioural support for change (Cunningham &
Kempling, 2009; Herscovitch & Meyer, 2002). HR initiatives such as succession planning for creating a network of future change champions and training programs for developing performance and planning skills which ensure that change-related assistance is specific to the needs of various departments are vital for garnering support for current and future initiatives (Barratt-pugh et al., 2013). Further, Porras and Robertson (1992) have identified four subsystems within organizations that can be manipulated to bring about organizational change. These include the alignment of reward systems, organizational culture, job designs and physical layout of the work spaces to ensure the success of organizational change. The need for slow and gradual introduction of change process has also been highlighted in literature (Golembiewski, 1968). In addition to suggesting that organizations exercise caution during the change process by slowly and gradually introducing new initiatives, Golembiewski (1968) highlights the need to provide clear explanation of the need for and benefits associated with change and to adopt a participative approach. Resource constraint is also a major factor affecting an organization’s ability to undertake a change initiative especially if it is not an established project (Dougherty & Hardy, 1996). It is therefore considered important to establish legitimacy for new projects by assuring the stakeholders of its success by demonstrating the competence of those involved in the project and highlighting success with similar projects (Morris et al., 2010).

Fernandez and Rainey (2006) through their research on change in public sector organizations have provided an eight factor model which can systematically deal with resistance while ensuring the institutionalization of change. These factors include effectively communicating the need for change, providing a clear plan of action, garnering internal stakeholder support, and obtaining top management commitment, in addition to
building external stakeholder support, providing adequate resources, embedding change within the organization and adopting a comprehensive approach to implement change across organizational sub-systems. The Fernandez and Rainey model (2006) can be effectively implemented in public sector organizations such as the police by adopting organizational development (OD) approaches to change implementation. The focus of OD is on increasing organizational effectiveness by applying behavioural sciences techniques to a planned organizational change process. This is achieved through creating:

- a learning environment through increased trust, open confrontation of problems, employee empowerment and participation, knowledge and information sharing, the design of meaningful work, cooperation and collaboration between groups and the full use of human potential (Daft et al., 2010, p. 470).

Specifically, there is a dearth of literature in the case of implementing planned change initiatives in police organizations; however, prior research suggests that adopting an organizational development approach, namely Action Research (AR), has proven to be effective (Beal & Kerlikowske, 2010; Boss et al., 2015; Stott et al., 2016; Wilkinson et al., 2017; Wuestewald & Steinheider, 2010). AR methodology encourages collaborative problem-solving between researchers and practitioners, thus reducing organizational and cultural resistance to change (Mead, 2002). For instance, Boss et al.'s (2010) longitudinal study examined the effectiveness of a 4-year OD intervention over thirty years at the Metro County Sheriff’s Department, making it the longest longitudinal study in the field of OD. The department faced issues such as problems with management style, communication issues, high staff turnover, financial mismanagement and policy development (Boss, 1979). Several interventions were employed in various phases which started with team building
sessions to confront personal issues and action planning to develop short and long term solutions to organizational problems. The interventions that followed were management training sessions as skill-building exercises, meetings with consultants to resolve organizational issues, survey feedback to periodically review the progress of the project, third-party consultation for resolution of differences as well as redesigning work practices to accommodate socio-technical changes increasing accountability and formulating policies. These interventions improved overall organizational effectiveness through improvement in organizational climate, leadership effectiveness, increase in organizational resources and a decrease in citizen complaints, jail breaks and employee turnover.

Similar studies have been undertaken in police agencies that demonstrate the effectiveness of OD interventions, particularly action research. Beal and Kerlikowski (2010) have discussed successful OD interventions in police organizations that were undertaken with the help of researchers. One of the projects was initiated by the University at Buffalo School of Management and the Buffalo Police Department to implement community policing strategies for solving low-level crimes. The researchers assisted police in developing mutually beneficial projects by providing research support rather than by imposing their own ideas and timelines on the police department. Middle managers and patrol officers were initially interviewed to develop an understanding of the ground realities and to obtain their views on the possible solutions. Such collaboration not also reduced resistance to solutions from outside the organization but also allowed the researchers to communicate the expectations of the top management to other levels in the hierarchy. In another such project, Seattle University developed a certification program in collaboration with the Seattle Police Department to develop analytical and problem solving
skills for crime analysts. The upper and middle management were brought together in working groups to provide solutions for more effective deployment.

Stott et al. (2016) employed the participant action research approach to generate and analyze the impact of changes in operational practices of Police Liaison Teams (PLT) on football related public order in the UK. Based on direct observation and focus groups, the results identified problems related to strategy, PLT deployment and resistance to change that were affecting the performance of the teams. Wuestwald and Steinheider (2010) applied the action research methodology at the Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, Police Department (BAPD) to deal with resistance to change and mistrust arising from authoritarian, top-down leadership style. A leadership team was elected by the BAPD employees to ensure the inclusion of members from all levels of the organization. This was followed by communicating the vision for an inclusive agency to build support for new projects and training of the members of the leadership team. The results showed a marked improvement in employee commitment, working conditions, productivity and interpersonal relationships within the organization. Similarly, Wilkinson et al. (2017) used the AR approach to introduce and embed EBP within the Devon and Cornwall Police (DCP) Service in the UK. Training workshops were developed collaboratively by researchers and police officers to enhance knowledge and skills to utilize research-based practices to inform organizational decision-making. Based on the feedback obtained after the workshops, the training sessions were deemed successful not only in familiarizing police officers with EBP but also in ensuring that the strategy was utilized effectively within the organization.
In light of the use of the AR model to implement change in police organizations, it may be concluded that the model is useful not only for overcoming resistance to EBP and enhancing receptivity to the initiative but also for convincing external stakeholders of its value.

5.2 Limitations and Future Research

Although the present research helped to generate insights that can be of value to the existing literature on EBP implementation, its limitations do have some implications for the generalizability of the results. Firstly, in the case of the first study which was based on qualitative survey questions, the response rate was low and data were collected mostly from urban police organizations which are not necessarily representative of other smaller agencies. Future research could try and expand the sample to also include rural agencies which would allow for a comparison to be drawn between different sized agencies and their response to EBP. There were also fewer civilian members in the overall sample, due to which a comparison could not be drawn with the responses of sworn officers. This group could specifically be oversampled in future studies to ensure their participation. Self-selection bias is also a limitation of this study as it is possible that those employees who responded to the survey were resentful towards the organization due to personal issues and hence more vocal than the satisfied ones.

The second and third studies had similar limitations are they were part of the same data set. Since the purpose of these studies was to determine the reasons behind resistance and receptivity to EBP, I collected data only from those police agencies which are members of the CAN-SEBP and have ongoing EBP projects. This sample potentially biases the results of the two studies as the sampled organizations already hold favourable views of EBP.
Future studies should include police agencies that have not implemented EBP programs in an attempt to determine if their reasons for resisting such initiatives are similar to those identified in our current findings. The sample size and geographical location also limited the generalizability of our results. Future studies should also include rural agencies as well as French-speaking regions to compare results across urban and rural agencies across Canada. The study could further be expanded to include other countries for a cross-national comparison. Further, due to its scope, the present research canvassed only the views of top management, perforce excluding officers at other levels who could also have contributed to a more in-depth understanding of EBP implementation. It is therefore recommended that future studies sample officers from all organizational levels to determine whether the opinion varies across the hierarchy. Specifically, in terms of study design, future projects could adopt longitudinal designs to observe how change unfolds over a period of time and the factors influencing the process at various stages.

5.3 Concluding Thoughts

In order to design effective strategies for organizational and cultural change, the internal and external environments of an organization must be viewed as a complex whole or a system to understand how the interaction of these factors affect change (Molineux, 2013). Attaining effectiveness or developing high performing work systems is important for today’s organizations which are constantly faced with performance related and fiscal challenges (Schneider, 2000). In the case of public sector organizations such as the police, the introduction of evidence-based practices would require a systems view of change. Such change would involve top management support and involvement, networking within and
outside the organization and communication of the change effectively within and outside the organization with external stakeholders (Rowden, 2002).

It is important to note that for public sector organizations, abandoning traditional systems such as formalization is not necessary for introducing flexible work practices (Dunford et al., 2013). In fact, a balanced approach incorporating a certain level of control along with flexibility is recommended to reduce risk, provide a sense of structure to the employees to prevent ambiguity and maintain the legitimacy expected of public sector organizations (Davis et al., 2009; Weick, 1993).
5.4 References


Appendix A: Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board Amendment Approval Notice

Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board
NMREB Amendment Approval Notice

Principal Investigator: Dr. Laura Huey
Department & Institution: Social Science/Sociology, Western University

NMREB File Number: 108339
Study Title: Factors Affecting Receptivity to Evidence Based Policing in Canada

NMREB Revision Approval Date: November 18, 2016
NMREB Expiry Date: August 25, 2017

Documents Approved and/or Received for Information

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The Western University Non-Medical Science Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the amendment to the above named study, as of the NMREB Amendment Approval Date noted above.

NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the NMREB Expiry Date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Ethics Officer: Liska Banks, Katelyn Harris, Nicole Kaniki, Grace Kelly, Yuki Tran, Karen Gopal
Appendix B: Certificate of Institutional Ethics Clearance

Carleton University

CERTIFICATION OF INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS CLEARANCE

The Carleton University Research Ethics Board-B (CUREB-B) at Carleton University has renewed ethics clearance for the research project detailed below. CUREB-B is constituted and operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2).

Title: Receptivity to Evidence Based Policing Among Members of Canadian Police Agencies

Protocol #: 104661

Principal Investigator: Dr. Craig Bennell

Department and Institution: Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences/Psychology (Department of), Carleton University

Project Team (and Roles): Dr. Craig Bennell (Primary Investigator) 
Brittany Blaskovitz (Co-Investigator) 
Thomas Walker (Co-Investigator (External)) 
Laura Huey (Co-Investigator (External)) 
Hina Kalyal (Co-Investigator (External))

Funding Source (if applicable):


Restrictions:

This certification is subject to the following conditions:

1. Clearance is granted only for the research and purposes described in the application.

2. Any modification to the approved research must be submitted to CUREB-B. All changes must be approved prior to the continuance of the research.

3. An Annual Application for the renewal of ethics clearance must be submitted and cleared by the above date. Failure to submit the Annual Status Report will result in the closure of the file. If funding is associated, funds will be frozen.

4. A closure request must be sent to CUREB-B when the research is complete or terminated.

5. Should any participant suffer adversely from their participation in the project you are required to report the matter to CUREB-B.

Failure to conduct the research in accordance with the principles of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans 2nd edition and the Carleton University Policies and Procedures for the Ethical Conduct of Research may result in the suspension or termination of the research project.

Please email the Research Compliance Coordinators at [email protected] if you have any questions or if you require a clearance certificate with a signature.

Cleared by: Andy Adler, PhD, Chair, CUREB-B
Bernadette Campbell, PhD, Vice-Chair, CUREB-B

Date: August 02, 2017
Appendix C: Publication permission: Taylor and Francis

Our Ref: AF/GPPR/P19/0244

06 February 2019

Dear Dr. Hina Kalyal,

Material requested: 'If it's not worth doing half-assed, then it's not worth doing at all': Police views as to why new strategy implementation fails’ by Hina Kalyal, Laura Huey, Brittany Blaskovits & Craig Bennell *Police Practice and Research* Published Online: 8 October 2018.

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Yours sincerely,

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Fri 2/1/2019 4:10 AM

to: Hina Jawaid Kalyal <hikalyal@uwoc.ca>

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Curriculum Vitae

Name: Hina Jawaid Kalyal

Post-secondary Education and Degrees:

University of Western Ontario
London, Ontario, Canada
2015-2019 PhD Sociology

National University of Sciences and Technology
Islamabad, Pakistan
2002-2009 PhD Business Administration

Quaid-e-Azam University
Islamabad, Pakistan
1995-1997 M.P.A.

Punjab University
Lahore, Pakistan
1992-1994 B.A. (Humanities)

Honours and Awards:

Ontario Trillium Scholarship
2015-2019

Canadian Sociological Association Outstanding Graduating Student Award
2019

Western Graduate Research Scholarship
2015-2019

Fulbright Postdoctoral Fellowship
2012-2013

Int’l Research Support Initiative Program
Higher Education Commission, Pakistan
Mar-Sep 2008

Mega IT Scholarship for Doctoral Education
Government of Pakistan
2002-2005

Related Work Experience:

Research Assistant
The University of Western Ontario
2015-2019
Assistant Professor
Prince Mohammad bin Fahd University
Saudi Arabia
Jan-Aug 2015

Fulbright Postdoctoral Scholar
George Mason University, USA
2012-2013

Assistant Professor
NUST Business School
2009-2015

Publications:


