

The Identification of  
Participation Barriers Associated with  
Employment Testing in the  
Ontario Constable Selection System

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## **Abstract**

North America's aging population is poised to generate significant strains within the labour market over the next few decades. The profession of law enforcement, specifically policing, has recognized that it has entered an era where the recruitment process can no longer passively attract applicants. As such, the existence of a testing protocol such as the one employed by the Ontario Constable Selection System was examined to assess whether barriers within the process discouraged candidates from competing for a career in the policing profession. A qualitative analysis determined that factors related to the perceived validity of the test, financial cost, and perceived fairness, discouraged potential applicants from competing.

## **Introduction**

Police services have utilized a variety of testing mechanisms as part of the selection process in recruiting officers across Canada for many years. Intelligence, physical and psychological tests have all been utilized in some fashion to select the vast majority of officers that have served communities for the last half century. The process associated with these tests has served a useful purpose in ensuring all applicants have the intellectual, physical and psychological attributes needed to anticipate success within this career

In recent years, however, a concern has been identified regarding the supply of candidates for the positions available in police agencies across the country. The Police Sector Council, a federally funded research organization that focuses on human resource issues related to policing, has determined that significant challenges will arise in coming years from a shortage of qualified candidates across the country. The root cause of this problem is a shortage in the labour supply market and a lack of interest by target populations to consider policing as a career.<sup>1</sup>

Many of the demographic factors affecting the shrinkage of the labour market are beyond the control of employers. As such it will be incumbent upon policing, and indeed a great many other professional disciplines, to identify other means through which it may be possible to recruit new staff and minimize the frustrations sometimes associated with the application process.<sup>2</sup>

This study examines the practice of employment testing within the Ontario Constable Selection System (hereinafter referred to as O.C.S.S.) to identify whether the examination

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<sup>1</sup> Johnson, P. Packham, R. Stronach, S. Sissons, D. & HayGroup. *A National Diagnostic on Human Resources in Policing*. Police Sector Council 2007. p106

<sup>2</sup> Smither, James W, Reilly, Richard R, Millsap, Roger E, Pearlman, Kenneth, Stoffey, Ronald W. Applicant reactions to selection procedures. *Personnel Psychology*. Durham:Spring 1993. Vol. 46, Iss. 1, p. 70

regime implemented by the Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services discourages potential recruits from competing for the positions available across the province.

Given the lack of other direct research in this field, this study was designed as a qualitative analysis in order to identify issues of concern related to participation in the testing phase of the O.C.S.S. Given the limited scope of this analysis, it is not possible to determine the quantitative significance of these concerns but it is possible to identify the barriers within the O.C.S.S. testing phase.

The analysis involved police officers who have been employed with an Ontario police service within the last four years and civilians who had considered policing as a career but elected not to participate in the testing phase of the O.C.S.S. Eleven police officers and ten civilians were interviewed about their perceptions of the testing process, their decision to participate or not participate in testing, and their own views about the effects that O.C.S.S. testing has on recruiting.

The design of this study was based on a quantity of literature regarding candidate perceptions of organizational selection procedures and their effect on a person's decision to submit an application for employment. Influences related to past applicant experiences in conjunction with current perceptions of an organization and its selection system may impact a potential candidate's decision to pursue a particular job. By interviewing police officers, an array of experiences and opinions about this testing regime could be identified and then extrapolated towards future applicants. Conversely, the attitudes of civilians who chose not to compete for employment as a police officer could also be assessed to determine how the O.C.S.S. testing phase factored into their decisions not to try out.

The study identified a dichotomy of views by police officers about O.C.C.S. testing. Some viewed the testing system quite positively as an efficient method, both for themselves

and their respective organizations, to select candidates. The opposing perspective was far more cynical of the testing process as these respondents often viewed the procedure as a means of financial gain at the expense of candidates.

Upon interviewing civilians, the analysis identified an array of barriers that often revolved around the uncertainty of success for the time and money invested in O.C.S.S. testing. Interestingly, very few of these subjects were well versed in the testing process. This may be due to the fact that many of the civilian respondents viewed policing as a secondary or fall-back career and as such did not research the particulars of the examinations as thoroughly. Many knew however that an outside private organization conducted the testing and that it cost money to complete the examinations.

This study did identify a number of barriers associated with the Ontario Constable Selection System testing. Based on the data collected from subjects during the interviews in conjunction with the quantitative data provided by a number of Ontario Police Services, significant evidence exists to suggest that the testing phase of this selection process is discouraging people from pursuing a career in policing. The magnitude of these barriers cannot be accurately assessed given the qualitative limitations associated with this study. As such, recommendations regarding relief from these barriers along with future research will be discussed.

## **The Ontario Constable Selection System Testing Phase**

Being hired as a police officer anywhere in North America is unique to the selection process found in many other occupations. A summation of the Ontario Constable Selection System has been provided for the sake of providing additional background.

In March of 1993 the Ontario Ministry of the Solicitor General and Correctional Services (SGCS) commissioned a study by Hay Management Consultants to review the police selection process employed across Ontario. The conclusions drawn from this study recommended that Police Constable Selection processes be standardized between services across the province. This was to reduce the costs associated with the selection process, make the selection process user-friendly for applicants, and standardize the initial stages of the selection process using job relevant testing procedures.<sup>3</sup> The SGCS concentrated on making changes to the testing phase and the initial interview of the selection process. By February of 1998 the SGCS authorized the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police (OACP) to sub-contract out the testing of potential police applicants to the private sector.<sup>4</sup>

Historically the policing sector has enjoyed a plethora of applications for employment allowing them to passively wait for potential candidates to step forward.<sup>5</sup> As a result, transferring testing services to a private firm seemed a fiscally responsible strategy to screen

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<sup>3</sup> Hay Management Consultants & Dennis Strong and Associates. *Police Constable Selection – Phase II – Final Report Recommended Design of the New Selection System*. The Queens Printer for Ontario 1993. p17-18.

<sup>4</sup> Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Constable Selection System  
[http://www.mcscs.jus.gov.on.ca/english/police\\_serv/const\\_select\\_sys/become\\_police\\_const.html](http://www.mcscs.jus.gov.on.ca/english/police_serv/const_select_sys/become_police_const.html)

<sup>5</sup> Johnson, P. Packham, R. Stronach, S. Sissons, D. & HayGroup. *A National Diagnostic on Human Resources in Policing*. Police Sector Council 2007. p67

potential applicants and allow police services to reallocate their testing budgets to other endeavours.

A private firm known as the Applicant Testing Service (ATS) was formed under the supervision of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, and the testing of potential police applicants began. The Ontario Provincial Police also obtained a licence to administer these tests but decided on November 1, 2009 to only host tests in Northern Ontario.<sup>6</sup> The standardized process across the province is that potential applicants, other than those in Northern Ontario, must successfully complete the testing provided by ATS.<sup>7</sup>

### Constable Selection System Testing

Police testing consists of two phases that are administered over a two-day period. Phase I is administered to potential applicants who are subjected to three separate tests consisting of a cognitive test entitled the Police Analytical Thinking Inventory (PATI), a written composition test known as the English Written Ability Test (EWAT) and a physical exam called the Physical Readiness Evaluation for Police (PREP). These three tests take approximately seven hours to complete over the course of one day. The potential applicant is contacted by ATS once the tests have been evaluated and advised whether he or she has passed the first phase. The candidate is then provided with another date to complete Phase II of the testing process.

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<sup>6</sup> Ontario Provincial Police. Careers – Certificate of Results. Retrieved November 17, 2009.  
<http://www.opp.ca/ecms/index.php?id=90>

<sup>7</sup> Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Constable Selection System, Retrieved January 30, 2009.  
[http://www.mcscs.jus.gov.on.ca/english/police\\_serv/const\\_select\\_sys/const\\_select\\_info/info\\_selection/info\\_selection/info\\_selection.html](http://www.mcscs.jus.gov.on.ca/english/police_serv/const_select_sys/const_select_info/info_selection/info_selection/info_selection.html)

The examinations conducted in this phase consist of a Behavioural Personal Assessment Device for Police (B-PAD), a hearing test and a vision test. The B-PAD is a psychological assessment tool used to evaluate how individuals respond to certain verbal or visual stimuli that are introduced on a television screen. Their responses or reactions are graded and a decision is made as to whether they meet a minimally accepted standard. Basic hearing and vision tests are subsequently administered. This stage takes approximately 1.33 hours to complete.<sup>8</sup>

Upon successfully completing all 6 tests, potential applicants receive their O.A.C.P. Certificate of Results and are free to apply to any police service within the Province of Ontario - other than the Peel Regional Police, which has refused to participate in the Ministry's selection protocol.<sup>9</sup> The tests remain valid for a period of three years with the exception of the PREP test which is valid for a period of 6 months. Potential applicants who are unsuccessful in any one of these tests must wait a period ranging between two and six months, depending upon the test, before registering for any re-examinations. Components of the testing regime must also be repeated after the expiration period in order to keep their certificate valid.<sup>10</sup> The initial start-up cost for anyone wishing to become a police officer is \$294. Any subsequent tests after this initial fee cost a potential applicant \$67 each.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Applicant Testing Services. Applicant Testing Services Inc. Matching People to Positions. Retrieved January 15, 2009. [http://www.applicanttesting.com/policing\\_TI.htm](http://www.applicanttesting.com/policing_TI.htm)

<sup>9</sup> Peel Regional Police. Uniform Recruiting. Retrieved November 17, 2009. <http://www.peelpolice.on.ca/Employment/Uniform%20Recruiting.aspx>

<sup>10</sup> Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Constable Selection System, Retrieved January 30, 2009. [http://www.mcscs.jus.gov.on.ca/english/police\\_serv/const\\_select\\_sys/become\\_police\\_const.html](http://www.mcscs.jus.gov.on.ca/english/police_serv/const_select_sys/become_police_const.html)

<sup>11</sup> Applicant Testing Services. Applicant Testing Services Inc. Matching People to Positions. Retrieved January 15, 2009. <http://www.applicanttesting.com/index.htm>

## The Application Process

Upon receiving an application, police services are given their first opportunity to evaluate an applicant's qualifications and conduct an interview. It is in this stage that a divergence exists in relation to how applicants are evaluated. The Constable Selection System endorses a standardized interview known as the Essential Competency Interview that is utilized by a majority of police services in Ontario. This interview is highly structured and designed to evaluate an applicant's suitability for the position by examining their life experiences. If the applicant is successful he or she will continue through that service's application process. If however the applicant is not successful, he or she is disqualified from being interviewed by any of the other police services that subscribe to the ECI for a period of six months.<sup>12</sup> Approximately 80% of all applicants are selected using this selection method in the Province of Ontario.<sup>13</sup> By the time the applicant is eligible to be re-interviewed, their Physical Readiness test will have expired requiring the candidate to pay an additional fee to complete the physical test again.

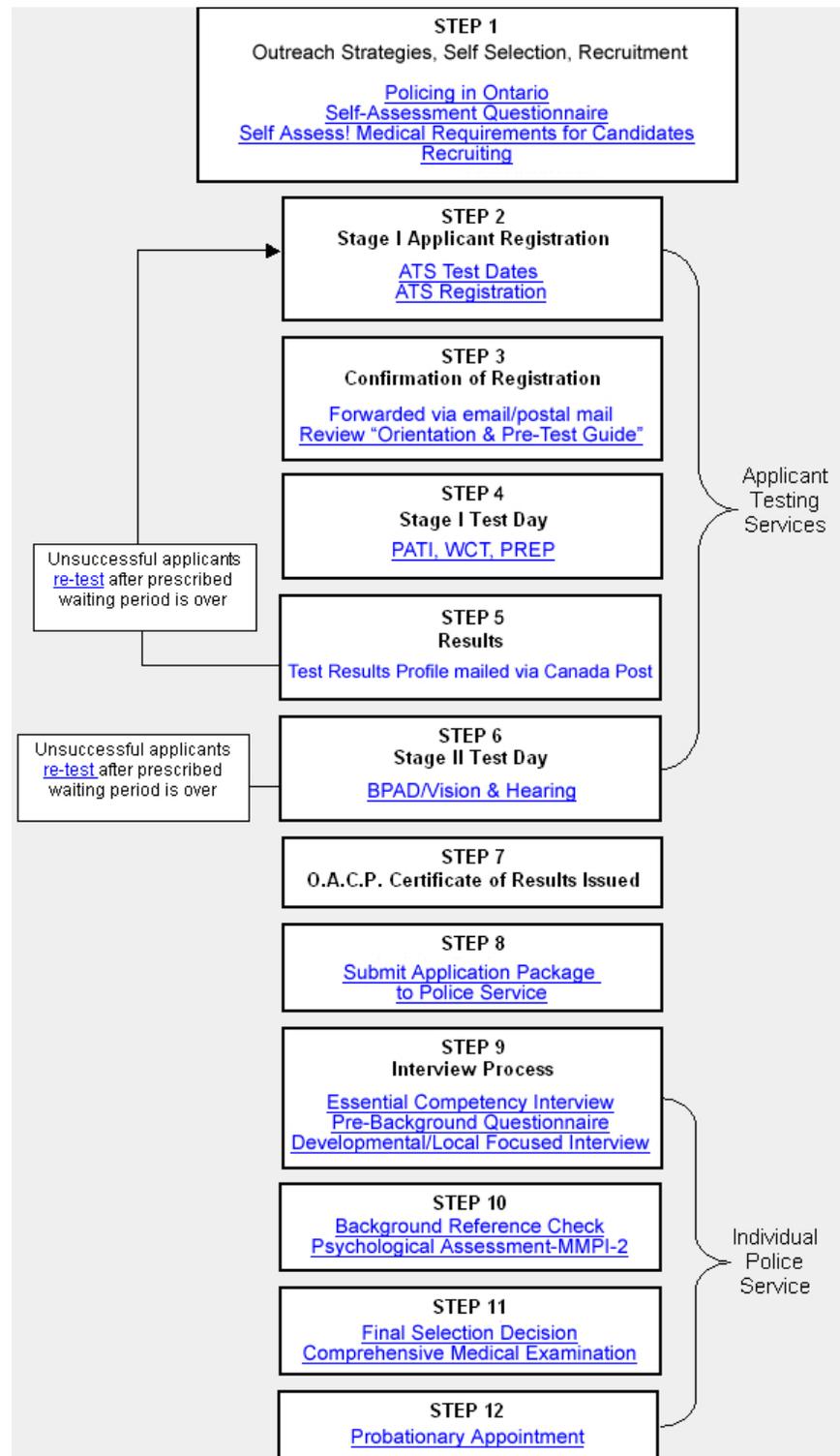
Once applicants have successfully proceeded past the interview stage of the application process, a series of additional steps are required. Additional interviews, psychological tests and interviews, character background investigations, and medical examinations are still required before a candidate may be offered a probationary appointment with the service that has selected them and are sent to the Ontario Police College for basic training. See Figure 1.

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<sup>12</sup> Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Constable Selection System, Retrieved January 30, 2009.  
[http://www.mcscs.jus.gov.on.ca/english/police\\_serv/const\\_select\\_sys/become\\_police\\_const.html](http://www.mcscs.jus.gov.on.ca/english/police_serv/const_select_sys/become_police_const.html)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid – The remaining 20% are selected outside the O.C.S.S. through the Peel Regional Police

Figure 1: Schematic Flowchart of the Ontario Contable Selection System



<sup>14</sup>Applicant Testing Services. Applicant Testing Services Inc. Matching People to Positions. Retrieved January 15, 2009. <http://www.applicanttesting.com/policing.htm>

## **Labour Market Challenges in Policing**

The issue facing policing today involves a gradual shortage of available personnel in the labour market. This shortage has been identified by the Police Sector Council as a looming crisis within the profession.<sup>15</sup> A significant shift in the age demographics of Canada is the principal cause of this problem and is anticipated to place a substantial recruitment strain on all employers in coming years.<sup>16</sup>

Since 1971 the proportion of the Canadian population aged 45 to 64 years of age has increased by approximately 10% while in the same time period youths aged 18 to 24 have dropped 3%.<sup>17</sup> As Figure 2 illustrates, a greater proportion of Canada's population is reaching the retirement age now than it has in at least the last 40 years. The problem born out of this is that an insufficient number of young people are available to fill those vacancies as older Canadians retire out of the work force.

Future projections regarding the composition of Canada's population have confirmed a continuation of this aging trend. For instance, the total population of Canadians under 15 years of age dropped 3.6% over the last twenty years to a record low of 17.9%.<sup>18</sup> As a result, there will be no change in the proportion of young people entering the labour market for at least the next twenty years.

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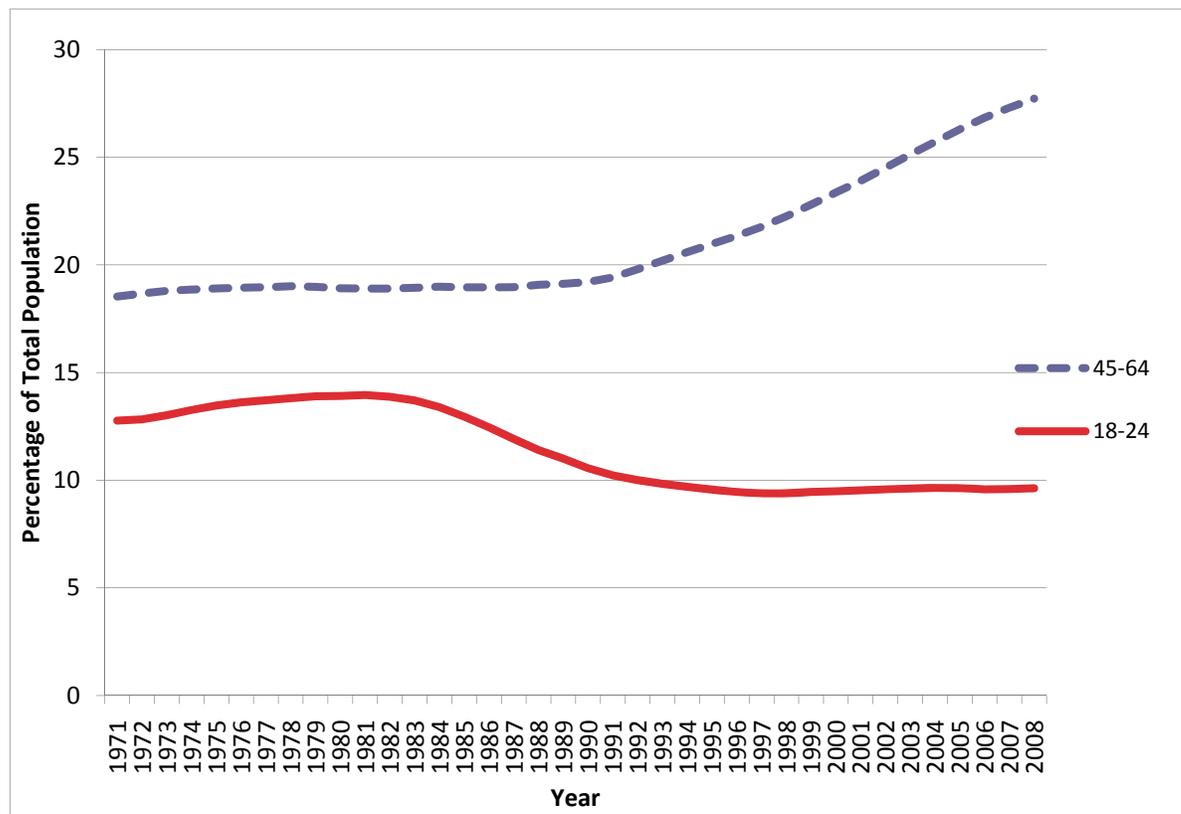
<sup>15</sup> Johnson, P. Packham, R. Stronach, S. Sissons, D. & HayGroup. *A National Diagnostic on Human Resources in Policing*. Police Sector Council 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Statistics Canada. *Market Research Handbook-2008*. Ottawa. Minister of Industry. 2008. p324

<sup>17</sup> Statistics Canada. Table 051-0001. Estimates of population, by age group and sex for July 1, Canada, provinces and territories, annual (persons unless otherwise noted). Retrieved November 19, 2009.  
<http://estat.statcan.gc.ca.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca:2048/cgi-win/CNSMCGI.EXE>

<sup>18</sup> Statistics Canada. *Market Research Handbook-2008*. Ottawa. Minister of Industry. 2008. p21

Figure 2: The Demographic Age Shift in Canada's Population from 1971 to 2008



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The human resource shortfalls in the labour market have been anticipated for some time. Smither (1993) acknowledged that demographic changes in the North American labour market would make recruiting sufficient applicants for their positions increasingly difficult.<sup>20</sup> To move further back in time, Johnston and Packer (1987) predicted that the changing, aging, demographics of the workforce would challenge employers to attract and recruit employees.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Statistics Canada. Table 051-0001. Estimates of population, by age group and sex for July 1, Canada, provinces and territories, annual (persons unless otherwise noted). Retrieved November 19, 2009.

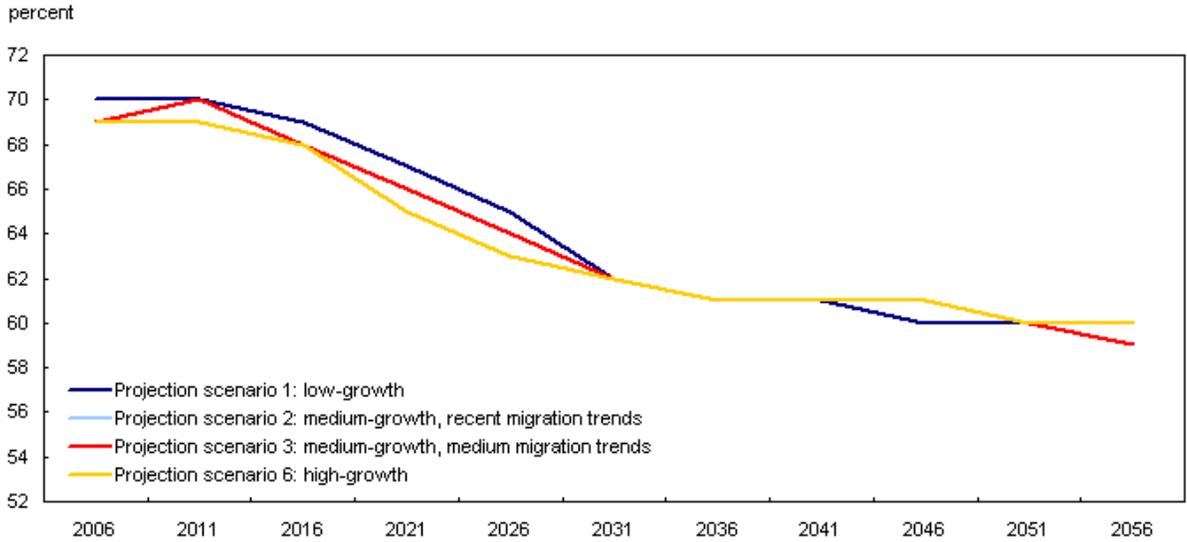
<http://estat.statcan.gc.ca.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca:2048/cgi-win/CNSMCGI.EXE>

<sup>20</sup> Smither, James W, Reilly, Richard R, Millsap, Roger E, Pearlman, Kenneth, Stoffey, Ronald W. Applicant reactions to selection procedures. *Personnel Psychology*. Durham:Spring 1993. Vol. 46, Iss. 1, p. 70

<sup>21</sup> Johnston WB, Packer AE. *Workforce 2000: Work and workers for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Indianapolis: Hudson Institute 1987.

This trend will not improve in the coming decades as a gradual decline in the relative size of the Canadian workforce population between 2006 and 2056 is anticipated. Even using high growth projections, Canada’s population aged 15 to 64 years is expected to drop by 10% by 2056 with this bulk of this change taking place over the next two decades.<sup>22</sup> Figure 3 outlines the anticipated trends in this regard with a variety of growth scenarios considered.

Figure 3: Projected Proportion of the Working Aged Population (aged 15-64 years) in Canada from 2006 to 2056



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In a study commissioned by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police in 2001, a shrinking applicant pool is projected to affect recruiting efforts across the law enforcement sector and continue for the foreseeable future. The study concluded that passive attraction activities would fail to draw sufficient applicants to replace an aging profession reaching

<sup>22</sup>Statistics Canada. *Market Research Handbook-2008*. Ottawa. Minister of Industry. 2008. p332  
<sup>23</sup> Statistics Canada. *Market Research Handbook-2008*. Ottawa. Minister of Industry. 2008. p335

retirement. Recommendations were made to vigorously recruit from diverse communities in order to fill the expected gap in human resource capital.<sup>24</sup>

In 2007 the Police Sector Council commissioned another human resource analysis on police recruiting by Johnson, Packham, Stronach, & Sissons. Their initial assessments on the state of human resources in policing concluded, “Our first and potentially most important observation is that the sector has not responded to challenges that were identified in the 2001 Sector study.”<sup>25</sup> Despite recommendations to take a more proactive stance on human resource recruiting, policing as an industry did little to secure a labour pool to fill their ranks.

A quantification of the police sector’s human resource needs determined that an insufficient labour pool will exist to fill future vacancies across the country. It was noted that between 2010 and 2030, an excess 3000 recruits will be required each and every year across the country simply to keep up with attrition or retirements. Note that in the preceding two decades Canadian policing has hired 1800 recruits each year.<sup>26</sup> This problem has been compounded by the fact that the number of applications received by police agencies annually is diminishing. In light of this, Johnson et al. determined that current police recruiting practices in Canada will be unable fill the human resource needs.<sup>27</sup>

The reduction in applications has been attributed to a number of different sources that are not directly linked to Canada’s changing age demographics. For instance, policing has adjusted their hiring practices, through the utilization of the ECI, by selecting recruits between the ages of 26 to 29 years on the premise that the additional life experience can enhance effectiveness. Given the fact that a post-secondary school education is completed when

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<sup>24</sup> PricewaterhouseCoopers. *Strategic Human Resources Analysis of Public Policing in Canada*. The Police Sector Council 2001. p.56

<sup>25</sup> Johnson, P. Packham, R. Stronach, S. Sissons, D. & HayGroup. *A National Diagnostic on Human Resources in Policing*. Police Sector Council 2007. p. 2

<sup>26</sup> Ibid p.65

<sup>27</sup> Ibid p.67

individuals are in their early 20's, selecting older recruits requires that policing draw applicants from other disciplines or careers. In effect the selection of older applicants restricts their own labour supply.<sup>28</sup>

A lack of interest in policing as a career is another factor that curtails the pool of viable candidates. Approximately one quarter of youths between the age of 18 and 30 indicate that they would consider policing as a career. However, only 8% of all respondents strongly agreed that they had considered policing as a career.<sup>29</sup> Additional and more recent research in this regard by Ipsos Reid for the Police Sector Council cut the proportion of youth interested in policing to just 4%.<sup>30</sup>

The pool of interested youth shrinks even further however, given the reality that many youth choose to explore alternative careers while others are an inappropriate fit for law enforcement. As a result conclusions have been drawn that the human resource pool cannot feed the labour needs of police services across the country over the next two decades.<sup>31</sup>

The issue regarding inappropriate applicant fitness is of particular concern as anecdotal evidence indicates that over 90% of applicants are rejected by police agencies across Canada.<sup>32</sup> This number can be empirically supported through a publication released by the New York Police Department where their recruiting branch processed 205,000 applicants in order to hire 15,600 police officers over a five year period. In the case of New York, only

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid p.68

<sup>29</sup> Ibid p.69

<sup>30</sup> Ipsos Reid (2009). *Police Sector Council Perceptions and Attitudes about Police and Policing as a Career*. May 2009.

<http://www.policouncil.ca/reports/PSC%20Youth%20Attitues%2009.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> Johnson, P. Packham, R. Stronach, S. Sissons, D. & HayGroup. *A National Diagnostic on Human Resources in Policing*. Police Sector Council 2007. p.69

<sup>32</sup> Ibid p.69

13% of their applicants were selected for employment.<sup>33</sup> As such, it would appear policing requires a substantial labour pool to select their officers from. (Further data will be presented below)

Cultural attitudes towards policing also discourage visible minorities from pursuing a career in law enforcement and restrict the availability of interested candidates further. A lack of interest from diverse populations restricts the labour pool so significantly that the sector cannot hire to match their communities' cultural mosaic.<sup>34</sup> This is a particularly important issue as police services have striven in recent years to ensure the community's diversity is represented by their workforce.

### Application and Employment Metrics Within Ontario Police Services

Although the Police Sector Council publications indicate that a labour pool shortage has already impacted the field, no data to support this position has been provided. As such this section of the study quantifies how many applicants compete for the positions available in policing across the province. A comparison between the volume of applications received by various forces is also included.

Police services have reported a drop in the number of applications they receive annually and recruitment leaders are acknowledging a need to attract applicants from other fields in what has been coined a "war for talent."<sup>35</sup> However, this study could not confirm the existence of a drop in applicants because the available data on applications received was

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<sup>33</sup> New York Police Department. New York Police Department Application Process. Retrieved January 30, 2009.

[http://www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/html/careers/application\\_overview.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/html/careers/application_overview.shtml)

<sup>34</sup> Johnson, P. Packham, R. Stronach, S. Sissons, D. & HayGroup. *A National Diagnostic on Human Resources in Policing*. Police Sector Council 2007. p.70

<sup>35</sup> Ibid p.67

restricted to the last six years as three of the four police services included in this study failed to track this information prior to 2002. It is likely that this was due to the fact that policing had traditionally enjoyed a wealth of applicants and had no need to monitor their numbers before the new millennium. Without this data, however, it is difficult to determine whether Ontario's drop in police applications corresponds with the advent of O.C.S.S. testing.

Observations can be made regarding the data provided by these organizations regarding the volume of applications received by each service and the human resource capacity of their individual labour pools. Table 1 below displays the data from these police services regarding the number of applications received and the number of new police officers hired.

**Table 1: Number of Applications vs. Recruits Hired in Four Ontario Police Services**

Year	Applicant and New Hire Data Obtained							
	London Police Service <sup>36</sup>		Ontario Provincial Police <sup>37</sup>		Toronto Police Service <sup>38</sup>		Peel Regional Police Service <sup>39</sup>	
	Appl.	Hires	Appl.	Hires	Appl.	Hires	Appl.	Hires
<b>1999</b>	N/A	35	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2912	117
<b>2000</b>	N/A	44	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2406	167
<b>2001</b>	N/A	13	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2022	121
<b>2002</b>	N/A	33	1378	277	N/A	N/A	2941	130
<b>2003</b>	523	25	1377	157	N/A	N/A	5755/790	200
<b>2004</b>	716	53	1167	87	N/A	N/A	3975/764	130
<b>2005</b>	465	32	1075	142	1161	346	2639/364	98
<b>2006</b>	331	37	1185	210	1231	450	3032/607	85
<b>2007</b>	233	14	2049	322	1237	262	5026/650	129
<b>2008</b>	382	23	1954	286	1021	360	6326/3301	144

\*Peel Regional Police data for 2003-2008 – Displays applications received and total number of applicants who passed testing.

<sup>36</sup>London Police Service. Raw Data of Applications Received 2003-2009 and Cadet Recruit Hires 1998-2009. Provided by Inspector John Pare. October 1, 2009

<sup>37</sup>Ontario Provincial Police. Raw Data of Applications Received 2002-2008 and Recruit Hires 2002-2008. Provided by Sgt Angie McCollum and Lisa Jennings, October 15, 2009

<sup>38</sup>Toronto Police Service. Raw Data of Applications Received 2005-2008 and Recruit Hires 2005-2008. Provided by Staff Inspector Robin Breen, September 4, 2009

<sup>39</sup>Peel Regional Police Service. Raw Data of Applications Received 1999-2008 and Uniform New Hires 1999-2008. Provided by Inspector Kim Whyte, October 14, 2009

As demonstrated the number of applications received by each service can vary widely. Although only four of Ontario's police services are represented in the table above, the four combined account for a significant proportion of the officers hired each year. To provide an example, in 2007 the Ontario Police College trained 1342 cadets for police services across the province. The four services outlined above account for 54% of the cadets trained that year. As such, these police agencies account for a significant proportion of all new hires in the province and may be viewed as a representative sample.

As previously cited, police services report a ninety percent rejection rate in the applications they receive.<sup>40</sup> When examining the data received from the four police services, this predetermined rate of rejection did not necessarily manifest its self in practice. Table 2 displays the same information outlined in Table 3 but as a percentage of the applicants who are successfully employed by each service.

**Table 2: Proportion of Applicants Hired by Ontario Police Services**

Year	Rate of Successful Selection by Each Service (Percent Success)			
	London Police Service	Ontario Provincial Police	Toronto Police Service	Peel Regional Police Service
1999	N/A	N/A	N/A	4.0
2000	N/A	N/A	N/A	6.9
2001	N/A	N/A	N/A	6.0
2002	N/A	20.1	N/A	4.4
2003	4.7	11.4	N/A	3.5/25.3*
2004	7.4	7.4	N/A	3.3/17.0*
2005	6.9	13.2	29.8	3.7/26.9*
2006	11.2	17.7	36.6	2.8/14.0*
2007	6.0	15.7	21.2	2.6/19.8*
2008	6.0	14.6	35.3	2.2/4.4*
<b>Avg.</b>	7.0	14.3	30.7	3.9/17.9*

\* Peel Regional Police data for 2003-2008 – Displays applications received and percentage of applicants who passed testing.

<sup>40</sup>Johnson, P. Packham, R. Stronach, S. Sissons, D. & HayGroup. *A National Diagnostic on Human Resources in Policing*. Police Sector Council 2007. p.69

The rate of hires varied widely from service to service. The London Police have, on average, hired 7% of their police applicants over the past six years. Comparatively, this is a much lower ratio than that of Ontario's two largest police agencies, the Ontario Provincial Police or the Toronto Police Service.

The Toronto Police appears to face the greatest challenge in attracting applicants. Despite being the largest municipality with the second largest police service in the Province of Ontario after the OPP, they receive proportionately fewer applications. On average they hire 30% of their police applicants which is a significantly higher proportion than any other police service discussed in this study. This ratio is also three times higher than the 10% hiring rate identified as the practical standard by the Police Sector Council. Although a myriad of reasons could provide some explanation as to why Toronto receives proportionately fewer applications than other municipalities, the possibility cannot be excluded that the T.P.S. are simply the first victims of the looming human resource crunch identified by both Statistics Canada and the Police Sector Council.

Before addressing the metrics provided by the Peel Regional Police Service, some background on their application process is required. At the inception of the Ontario Constable Selection System, the Peel Regional Police opted to stay the course with their own testing and application system. The P.R.P. today receive applications from interested candidates and invite them to attend on a particular date for testing that is free of any financial burden. This testing is somewhat different than that of the O.C.S.S. but roughly measures the same qualities or competencies. One area that has changed recently as a result of a successful court challenge against the Peel Regional Police Service involved their physical fitness exam.<sup>41</sup> Anecdotal accounts about the fitness test suggested that the Peel physical was extremely

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<sup>41</sup>Interview with Peel Regional Police Inspector Kim Whyte on October 5, 2009

rigorous and challenging. In order to comply with the court's ruling, the Peel Regional Police were forced to transition to the Physical Readiness for Police test employed by the O.C.S.S. starting in 2008.

A significant reduction in the proportion of applicants hired is observed in the data provided by the Peel Regional Police. The interpretation of this data must be done cautiously, however, as the P.R.P. receives applications, tests the candidates and then interviews them. This differs from the O.C.S.S. where applications may only be submitted once a candidate's testing is completed. So it is necessary to evaluate Peel's application metrics by examining the number of applications received and the number of people who pass their testing regime.

On average only 3.9% of Peel's applicants obtained employment. Until 2007, a large proportion of their candidates were eliminated by the testing process used by the P.R.P. It appears that the primary hurdle was the department's physical testing, as a dramatic increase in the number of candidates passing the tests was observed in 2008. The difference was so significant that between 2007 and 2008, the proportion of applicants hired after passing the tests dropped from 19.8% to just 4.4% and was linked directly to the change in the physical fitness test.<sup>42</sup> As such, the Peel Regional Police have a much larger pool of applicants to select their police recruits from than any of the other three services polled.

The fact that the Peel Regional Police are part of the Greater Toronto Area makes this finding even more significant. Despite being neighbours to one another and facing many of the same challenges associated with being in Ontario's most populated area, the Toronto Police receive significantly fewer applications for employment than Peel does. This evidence suggests that O.C.S.S. testing perhaps has a deleterious effect on a candidate's decision to compete for employment as a police officer.

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<sup>42</sup> Interview with Peel Regional Police Inspector Kim Whyte on October 5, 2009

It should be possible to draw inferences from a provincial perspective on this issue by examining the total number of participants in the O.C.S.S. testing and the number of recruits being trained at the Ontario Police College every year. Attempts were made to obtain this data from the Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Unfortunately, the Ministry does not track these numbers.<sup>43</sup> No one in the province knows exactly how many candidates have successfully completed their testing and are actively seeking employment as an Ontario police officer. However, by comparing the number of registrants identified in the testing process, the number of participants who have passed the testing and the number of recruits enrolled in the Basic Constable Training program at the Ontario Police College, estimates can be made of the total number of potential candidates available for employment as a police officer across the entire province.

The Ontario Constable Selection System has licenced a private organization known as the Applicant Testing Service and the Ontario Provincial Police to administer the examinations. Attempts to obtain their participation numbers were made. Although the Applicant Testing Service provided data from 2000 to 2009 that included both the number of registrants and the number of O.A.C.P. certificate of results issued, the Ontario Provincial Police could only provide registration numbers for 2007 to 2009. Hence some extrapolations with respect to the OPP's data were made in order to estimate the number of people with valid O.A.C.P. certificates of results who were eligible to apply in Ontario.

The data presented in Table 3 were provided by the Applicant Testing Service. They show the number of people registered to take the O.C.S.S. tests and the number of people who

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<sup>43</sup>Email correspondence with Aiesha Zafar - Manager, Selection Systems and Appointments Unit, Public Safety Division, Policing Support Services, Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services. November 4, 2009

passed the testing. Note that although the O.C.S.S. started in the late 1990's it was not fully functional until approximately 2003. The numbers tested in the first few years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are significantly lower as the program was still ramping up, so only the data after that time are significant for the sake of this study.

Table 3: Pass Rates of the Applicant Testing Service Registrants

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Candidates Registered</b>	<b>Number of OACP Certificates Issued</b>	<b>Proportion of Candidates Registered that Passed</b>
<b>2000</b>	598	229	38.3%
<b>2001</b>	1228	550	44.8%
<b>2002</b>	3048	1698	55.7%
<b>2003</b>	4687	2333	49.8%
<b>2004</b>	4567	2423	53.1%
<b>2005</b>	4234	2147	50.7%
<b>2006</b>	4780	2368	49.5%
<b>2007</b>	4514	2939	65.1%
<b>2008</b>	4443	2625	59.1%

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The Ontario Provincial Police were unable to provide any other data other than their registration numbers from 2007 to 2009. It was possible to estimate how many O.P.P. registrants passed their testing and were eligible to submit applications for employment. By using the percentage of registrants who passed the O.C.S.S testing with the Applicant Testing Service in 2007 and 2008 the number of certificates issued by the Ontario Provincial Police can be estimated for those two years. Note that the 2009 numbers were excluded as this study began in January of 2009.

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<sup>44</sup> Applicant Testing Services. Test Statistics for 2000 to 2008. February 3, 2009

Table 4 includes the number of O.C.S.S. registrants with the Ontario Provincial Police along with the pass rate calculated with the Applicant Testing Service. The estimated number of certificates issues was subsequently calculated in the final column.

Table 4: Extrapolated Pass Rates of Test Participants with the O.P.P.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Participants Tested by OPP<sup>45</sup></b>	<b>Pass Rate Calculated From ATS Data</b>	<b>Estimated Number of Certificates Issued</b>
<b>2007</b>	1900	65.1%	1237
<b>2008</b>	2006	59.1%	1185

With this data it is now possible to obtain a rudimentary estimate of the number of people with Certificates of Results that make them eligible to apply for a position as a police recruit. Note that since the Ontario Provincial Police only provided useable data for 2007 and 2008, these two years are the most significant in determining how many people were competing for police recruit position in Ontario.

With these estimates in place, the percentage of candidates with O.A.C.P Certificates that gained employment somewhere in the Province of Ontario was calculated using data provided by the Ontario Police College on the number recruits trained each year. Note that the number of recruits sent by the Peel Regional Police was removed from this number as the application process they employed was outside the O.C.S.S. and is being used to compare the participation rates of the two selection systems.

Table 5 provides an accounting of the hiring rates for candidates who have passed the O.C.S.S. testing using the enrolment numbers provided by the Ontario Police College. The data obtained for 2007 and 2008 are anticipated to be the most accurate as they have taken

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<sup>45</sup>Ontario Provincial Police. Data on the Number of People Registered for Testing 2007-2009. Provided by Sgt Angie McCallum. November 3, 2009

into account the number of participants and certificates issued by both the Applicant Testing Service and the Ontario Provincial Police. It would appear that 29% and 27% of candidates with O.A.C.P. certificates obtained employment as police recruits in the Province of Ontario (excluding the Peel Regional Police). In other words, almost 3 in 10 applicants gain employment somewhere in Ontario.

Table 5: Proportion of Candidates Hired Through the O.C.S.S.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Candidates Registered</b>	<b>Number of OACP Certificates Issued</b>	<b>Number of People Enrolled at OPC <sup>46</sup></b>	<b>Percent of Candidates Hired</b>
<b>2000</b>	598	229	964	N/A
<b>2001</b>	1228	550	1007	N/A
<b>2002</b>	3048	1698	1229	72.4
<b>2003</b>	4687	2333	918	39.3
<b>2004</b>	4567	2423	814	33.6
<b>2005</b>	4234	2147	809	37.7
<b>2006</b>	4780	2368	1290	54.5
<b>2007</b>	4514 + 1900 = 6414	2939 + 1237 = 4176	1213	29.0
<b>2008</b>	4443 + 2006 = 6449	2625 + 1185 = 3810	1029 <sup>47</sup>	27.0

Therefore, it would appear that even province wide, the Peel Regional Police are accessing a larger proportion of the labour market than every other police service across Ontario combined. Despite the fact that passing the O.C.S.S. testing allows candidates the opportunity to apply for employment almost everywhere in the province, the Peel Regional Police obtain proportionately more applications for their one service.

<sup>46</sup>Ontario Police College Research and Evaluation Unit. *Demographics of Recruits in the Ontario Police College Basic Constable Training Program 1996-2007*. Queen's Printer for Ontario. January 7, 2008. p.4

<sup>47</sup>Email correspondence with Ramona Morris – Research and Evaluation Unit – Ontario Police College. June 4, 2009

With a total population of 12.9 million people in Ontario<sup>48</sup>, the O.C.S.S. should be testing ten times the number of candidates as the Peel Regional Police Service does in their jurisdiction of 1.2 million<sup>49</sup>. Table 6 illustrates succinctly that this is not the case as the Peel Regional Police enjoy a proportionately larger number of applications than the registrants of both the Applicant Testing Service and Ontario Provincial Police combined.

Table 6: Comparison of the Number of Registrants in O.C.S.S. Testing and the Number of Applications Received by the Peel Regional Police

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Candidates Registered with ATS and OPP Across Ontario (12.9million people)</b>	<b>Number of Applications Received by the Peel Regional Police (1.2 million people)</b>
<b>2003</b>	4687	5755
<b>2004</b>	4567	3975
<b>2005</b>	4234	2639
<b>2006</b>	4780	3032
<b>2007</b>	6414*	5026
<b>2008</b>	6449*	6326

\*Numbers referenced are from both the OPP and ATS. Prior to 2007, numbers from the OPP are not available

This limited analysis does suggest that the Ontario Constable Selection System is failing to fully access the labour market of potential candidates. Undoubtedly, many of the same O.C.S.S. participants will apply to the PRP and participate in their testing. According to the Peel Regional Police Service, however, a significant proportion of their applicants are local residents hoping to gain employment in their home town.<sup>50</sup> For policing, the added benefits

<sup>48</sup>Government of Ontario. Ontario Population Projections 2008 – 2036. Retrieved November 22, 2009. <http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/economy/demographics/projections/#s2>

<sup>49</sup>Peel Regional Police. Peel Regional Police 2008 Budget Document. Retrieved November 22, 2009. p.1. <http://www.peel.police.on.ca/About%20Us/Finance/ecms.aspx/2008BusinessPlan.pdf>

<sup>50</sup>Interview with Peel Regional Police Inspector Kim Whyte on October 5, 2009

associated with receiving local applicants include the increased probability that these employees will remain within the same municipality throughout their career.<sup>51</sup> Conversely, applicants through the O.C.S.S testing phase may opt to distribute their applications across the province to see who will employ them and then once hired move to a municipality of choice with greater ease.

Regardless, from a metrics perspective, the Peel Regional Police are receiving a significantly greater number of applications for employment as a police officer than every other police service across the Province of Ontario combined. This may be due to the fact that Peel has chosen not participate in the O.C.S.S. testing and can receive applications directly without charging participants a fee to compete.

## **Statement of the Case**

The data illustrated above suggests an influence exists throughout the Province of Ontario that may dissuade people from pursuing a career in law enforcement. It would appear that the structure of the application process utilized by the O.C.S.S. is limiting the number of potential candidates from competing for employment.

Employment testing has been used by organizations as part of the selection process in hiring staff for many years. Research already exists to theoretically support the possibility that the structure of an employment selection system or of an employment testing protocol can affect participation rates. Much of this research, however, has examined this issue but not necessarily as it pertains to policing. Regardless a number of extrapolations from these

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<sup>51</sup>Interview with Peel Regional Police Inspector Kim Whyte on October 5, 2009

publications are possible and can support the position that O.C.S.S. testing is the reason candidates are turning away from policing.

## **Theoretical Background**

Substantial resources have been invested on research involving employment testing. Predominantly these efforts have focussed on testing as a valid predictor of performance or on the equity associated with different types of tests. Relatively little study has gone into the willingness of people to participate in employment testing. Although this study does not intend to critique the validity of police testing it is necessary to address the established validity of testing in general in order to differentiate it from how people perceive the validity of employment tests. The review will then address more practicable concepts by examining how perceived or face validity, perceptions about testing, selection systems in general, and testing fees influence motivation to participate or apply for a given job.

General Mental Ability (g) as a performance indicator has been used as a means of predicting work performance for over a century. A host of studies have established that the correlative validity between criterion related tests for g and work can range from between 0.4 and 0.6.<sup>52</sup> More recent research by Ree, Earles and Teachout (1994) reaffirmed this and concluded that General Mental Ability is the most accurate predictor of job performance.<sup>53</sup> Further support from Hunter determined that cognitive ability predicts job success in any field

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<sup>52</sup>Muchinsky, Paul M. (2003) *Psychology Applied to Work, Seventh Edition*. Belmont, California: Thompson Wadsworth. p.103

<sup>53</sup> Ree, M.J., Earles, J.A., & Teachout, M.S. (1994) Predicting Job Performance: Not Much More than g. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 79. p.520

and that this relationship strengthens with the complexity of the job.<sup>54</sup> In relation to policing, Gottfredson confirms, though not directly, that g is a valid predictor of not only learning police work but also in predicting police performance through supervisor evaluations.<sup>55</sup> A plethora of additional studies surrounding General Mental Ability confirm that the use of g tests is a valid predictor of job performance.

Perceptions about the validity of testing are important as they may play a role in whether people agree to participate in the examinations. Lounsbury, Bobrow and Jenson (1989) determined that a significant proportion of the population have negative attitudes towards the validity of employment testing and that just over a third of the population in the United States believe that testing was a poor way to predict employment suitability.<sup>56</sup>

This is a particularly important issue given that Smither (1993) established a strong relationship between face validity and organizational attractiveness. If an applicant views the testing methodology as invalid, perceptions of the organization deteriorate. The ripple effect created by this connection was a link in an applicants' willingness to recommend that employer to others after completing the testing.<sup>57</sup> Evidence also exists to suggest that disdain towards an employer's selection process negatively influences the participation of highly qualified candidates.<sup>58</sup> Hence, if candidates resent the employment testing being utilized, an

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<sup>54</sup> Hunter, J.E. (1986). Cognitive ability, cognitive aptitudes, job knowledge and job performance. *Journal of Vocational Behaviour*, 29. p.340

<sup>55</sup> Gottfredson, Linda. The Flight from G in Employment Testing. IPMA Assessment Council Conference on Professional Personnel Assessment. Newport Beach, California. 1997

<sup>56</sup> Lounsbury, John W., Bobrow, Warren, Jensen, J. Brad. (1989) Attitudes Toward Employment Testing: Scale Development, Correlates, and "Known Group" Validation. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*. Vol. 20, No. 5. p.346

<sup>57</sup> Smither, James W, Reilly, Richard R, Millsap, Roger E, Pearlman, Kenneth, Stoffey, Ronald W. Applicant reactions to selection procedures. *Personnel Psychology*. Durham:Spring 1993. Vol. 46, Iss. 1, p. 70

<sup>58</sup> Ibid p. 51

organization may experience a reduction in the number and quality of candidates competing for the available jobs.

These issues revolve around the concept of fairness and whether potential applicants view their chances of gaining employment will be fairly evaluated. To that, Gilliland (1993) proposes that a person's motivation for taking a test will be lower if they do not believe that the selection procedure is fair. He continues that the people will not even apply for a job if they perceive that the selection process is unfair. From a practical standpoint, the perception of fairness in employment testing may influence an organization's ability to attract highly competent individuals.<sup>59</sup>

Minimal research on the issue surrounding fees for testing was identified. However, Coffee (1996) advocates the use of nominal testing fees as a means to offset recruiting expenses in situations where organizations are facing a fiscal or budgetary shortfall.<sup>60</sup> Coffee (1998) also advocates the use of testing fees as an applicant reduction strategy and includes a recommendation that testing be structured to ensure applicants are required to attend on multiple days to make the application process more arduous.<sup>61</sup>

To summarize, a significant body of research suggests that the perceived validity and fairness of a selection system will have an impact on organizational attractiveness and on motivation to submit an application. Although the research is minimal, the same train of thought suggests that the application of fees and other intangible costs associated to testing may limit the size of an organization's labour pool.

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<sup>59</sup> Gilliland, Stephen, W. (1993) The Perceived Fairness of Selection Systems: An Organizational Justice Perspective. *The Academy of Management. The Academy of Management Review*: 18, 4. p.695-723

<sup>60</sup> Coffee, Karen., (1996) To Fee, or Not to Fee What a Question! *Public Personnel Management*. Vol 25 No. 2 p.181

<sup>61</sup> Coffee, Karen., (1998) Candidate Reduction Strategies. *Public Personnel Management*; Vol. 25 No. 4. p.468-469

In applying this research to the Ontario Constable Selection System, the findings suggests that if potential police applicants perceived the testing regime to be invalid or unfair, a corresponding reduction in the motivation to compete for employment in policing would be realized. Finally, the use of ‘nominal’ testing fees for examinations that take place over a two-day period may reduce the number of candidates competing for a job in the Ontario policing sector.

## **Hypothesis**

The research cited above suggests that applicants will assess whether they are willing to apply for a given job based on how they perceive the validity of the employment testing, the fairness of the selection system and the costs associated with competing. Based on these three criteria, the following hypothesis has been devised.

### **Hypothesis:**

$H_1$ : The testing process for the Ontario Constable Selection System acts as a barrier that affects the number of people willing to compete for a career in policing.

$H_0$ : The testing process for the Ontario Constable Selection System does not act as a barrier that affects the number of people willing to compete for a career in policing.

## **Methodology and Measurement**

This study was designed specifically to determine whether the structure or content of the Ontario Constable Selection System testing phase could deter potential candidates from

considering employment as a police officer in the Province of Ontario. A variety of different populations can provide insight regarding this issue. Police officers both new and seasoned, recruiters, applicants, students in law enforcement based programs, individuals who have tried and failed the testing, and individuals who opted not to participate in testing were all considered as potential subjects for this study. In order to contain the scope of this study, only two populations, newly sworn police officers and people who chose not to participate in the O.C.S.S. testing, were included.

Given the difficulty associated with accessing respondents who had chosen not to participate in the testing, the study was designed as a qualitative analysis of the O.C.S.S. testing phase. It was hoped that through conducting the study in this fashion that a breadth of views would be realized that had not previously been considered.

### Police Officers

The parameters defined for this particular paradigm of respondents included any Ontario police officer with less than 4 years of experience in the profession. The four year time limit was used since a change in the intelligence tests administered took place in 2003. Eleven respondents originating from the London Police Service, the Ontario Provincial Police and the Halton Regional Police Service were interviewed between May and November of 2009.

The average length of any interview was about half an hour but some did extend beyond that as needed. A prearranged template of interview questions was constructed and approval for its use was obtained by the University of Western Ontario, Faculty of Social Science, Department of Political Science. This template is found in Appendix I.

Officers were principally questioned on their career objectives, their perceptions of the validity of the tests, their perceptions about the fairness of the testing process, and their views of the costs associated with the O.C.S.S. testing phase. Additional information related to the participant's demographic background was also obtained. During the course of the interviews, respondent comments frequently spurred on other questions. These enquiries were documented within the space allotted in the template.

It should be noted that this was an easily accessible population and that attempts were made to select respondents randomly. In some instances, however, candidates with a varied background were selected in order to ensure perspectives from a given segment of the population could not dominate the responses provided.

### Non-Participant Civilians

In contrast to the young police officers, the population of civilians who opted to turn away from the O.C.S.S. testing process could not be easily located. There simply are no identified communities of non-participants to tap. So subjects were identified through word of mouth and could not be selected at random as it was extremely difficult to find them. In fact even when found, a significant proportion of them actually agreed to participate in the study but then failed to return calls for an interview. Ultimately, the study took anyone who agreed to participate and carried through with the interview.

This category of respondents were principally questioned on their career objectives, their perceptions of the validity of the tests, their perceptions about the fairness of the testing process, the costs associated with O.C.S.S. testing, and their decisions not to pursue a career in law enforcement. Additional information related to the participant's demographic background was also obtained. During the course of the interviews, respondent comments

frequently spurred on other questions. These enquiries were documented within the space allotted in the template.

An interview template for non participant civilians was formulated and submitted to the University of Western Ontario, Faculty of Social Science, Department of Political Science for ethics approval. A condensed copy of the interview template for non participants is contained in Appendix II.

### Respondent Typologies

After conducting the interviews, the respondents were broken into two additional subcategories or ideal typologies. The classification was predicated on their attitudes regarding the O.C.S.S. testing process. Police officers were effectively labelled Supporters and Cynics while non participants were classified as Believers and Sceptics.

The categories were labelled for very specific purposes. In the case of the respondents who were police officers, recognition was made that having already experienced O.C.S.S. testing, their perceptions were based on firsthand accounts. As such the terms Supporter or Cynic were chosen given the fact that their views either way were based on direct evidence. Conversely, the non-participant typologies of Believer and Sceptic were utilized as both suggest an opinion based less on direct evidence and more on their own ideologies or second hand accounts.

### Identification of Respondents

Initially this analysis intended to provide respondents with an opportunity to use their real names if they so wished. After conducting a significant proportion of the interviews, however, the decision was made to conceal the identities of all participants. This was done to

ensure that the information disclosed in this study could not be accessed by others who might view the respondent comments negatively. It was feared that revealing their identities would place them in a precarious position if potential employers responded negatively to their responses in a publication. Fictitious names were henceforth used to ensure the analysis contained a human perspective.

## **Results**

A total of 23 respondents were interviewed between May and November of 2009. Of these 10 were police officers, 1 was a police cadet about to attend the Ontario Police College while 12 were non participants. Two non-participants were later excluded from the study given that their interviews revealed they had fact had completed the O.C.S.S. testing.

A quantity of demographic information was collected on respondents in order to assess whether their backgrounds played a role in their participation with O.C.S.S. testing. It should be noted that the demographic data collected was never intended for use in assessing statistical or practical significance. Rather it was used to as a means of determining how broad the spectrum of individuals being interviewed actually was. Regardless, some observations were made in relation to the information collected on the respondents which was used to differentiate the pool of officers interviewed from the pool of civilians. Table 7 provides a summary of the demographic data collected from respondents according to their classification as police officers or non-participants.

Table 7: Demographic Breakdown of the Police and Non Participant Respondents

<b>Demographic Variable</b>	<b>Police Officers 11 total</b>	<b>Non Participants 10 total</b>
<b>Number of females</b>	2	2
<b>Number of visible minorities</b>	1	0
<b>Mean age of respondents at time of interview</b>	29.7 yrs	28 yrs
<b>Mean number of years of post secondary education per respondent</b>	3.2yrs	2.2yrs
<b>Mean salary of respondents at the time they made decision about participating in O.C.S.S. testing</b>	\$45,100	\$46,700
<b>Number of respondents married or common law at the time the made decision about participating in O.C.S.S. testing</b>	4	7
<b>Number of respondents with dependants at the time the made decision about participating in O.C.S.S. testing</b>	0	2
<b>Number of respondents who considered policing their #1 choice of careers</b>	6	2

The observations made in relation to the demography of respondents included the fact that the police officers interviewed tended to have more education and on average made less money than non-participants prior to their respective decisions to pursue a policing career. It was also noted that at the time of the testing, more non participant respondents were already involved in long term relationships and had dependants they were supporting. Finally, the number of respondents who viewed policing as their number 1 career choice was substantially higher in the police officer category than that of the non participant.

### Police Respondents

The views expressed by officers were classified according to their relevancy to the issue being examined. Officer's responses were used to determine if they believed that the examinations were a valid indicator of performance, fairly structured within the O.C.S.S.

selection system, and if cost was a factor in their decision to take the tests. Officers were also asked for their opinions about the O.C.S.S. testing process and its effect on the recruitment of new officers.

Of the eleven officers interviewed, five were employed by the London Police, one by the Ontario Provincial Police, and five by the Halton Regional Police. Although additional officers from other police services would have been a benefit to this study, the resource restrictions associated with the study prevented a broader reach.

A polarized dichotomy of attitudes towards the O.C.S.S. testing was identified through the course of these interviews. Six of the respondents viewed the O.C.S.S. tests negatively while five viewed them positively, and they were respectively assigned to Cynic and Supporter typologies. It was noted that the two police women polled spoke negatively about the testing process. Table 8 outlines how officers perceived the O.C.S.S. testing regime based on the issues being assessed in this study.

Table 8: Summary of the Perceptions Obtained by Police Officers on O.C.S.S. Testing

<b>Type of Police Respondent (11)</b>	<b>Positive Experiences with OCSS Testing</b>	<b>Positive Perceptions of Validity</b>	<b>Positive Perceptions Regarding Cost</b>	<b>Positive Perceptions as to Fairness</b>	<b>Positive Opinions Regarding Recruiting</b>
<b>Supporters (5)</b>	5	5	4	5	3
<b>Cynics (6)</b>	1	0	5	2	0

As Table 8 illustrates, the subject's attitudes towards O.C.S.S. testing generally coincided with other respondents within their typology. The one exception involved the Cynics who almost unanimously indicated that the cost was not a factor in their decision to take the tests. When asked if the cost may be a factor for other people in the community, 8 of

the 11 police respondents indicated that the cost could be a deterrent to potential candidates. It should be noted that all respondents indicated that family financial support existed if they needed assistance in paying for the testing.

Assessing the value of the views expressed by respondents goes beyond simply assessing which direction they leaned. Their perspectives or attitudes towards O.C.S.S. testing will allow this study to identify issues of concern to police recruiting. Each of the listed variables from Table 8 will be discussed in more detail from both the Supporters' and Cynics' frame of reference.

### Respondents Own Experiences with O.C.S.S. Testing

#### Supporters

All five respondents within this paradigm indicated that the testing phase went relatively smoothly with all but one passing every component on their first attempt. With respect to their personal experiences with O.C.S.S. testing, the reasons behind why they enjoyed it were quite varied.

Peter Dugal, for instance, commented that he enjoyed the entire process as it provided him with an opportunity to network with others who had a similar interest in law enforcement. Since it took him a while to get hired, Peter spent more than \$1200 on testing fees and ultimately met a large number of people over and over again. He never considered it an inconvenience to repeat the tests and perceived it as a, "neat" way of screening applicants.

Not everyone however appreciated the value of the O.C.S.S. testing at the time they actually took the tests. Peter Arguin took the tests in April of 2007 and indicated that he thought the mathematics component and the written composition had minimal relevance to a

career in law enforcement. In hindsight however he indicated that he understands the value of these tests after now working as a police constable for an Ontario police service.

With respect to accessibility, Phillip Price stated that he found the private company that administered the O.C.S.S. test very accommodating with respect to the multitude of available test dates. He continued as well that the testing itself was facilitated efficiently given the number of people in attendance.

### Cynics

Of the six respondents classified as cynics, 5 had difficulty passing the tests and repeated tests on at least one occasion. Generally the failed tests were part of either the Police Analytical Thinking Inventory (PATI) or the Written Composition Test (WCT) and the respondents expressed significant discontent in the lack of transparency regarding why they were unsuccessful or what constituted a pass. Angela Radley referred to the testing process as secretive after failing the WCT several times with no feedback regarding what she was doing wrong. This same criticism was expressed by 3 of the 6 respondents in this grouping of individuals who articulated feelings of frustration with respect to their goals of becoming police officers.

With respect to the fact that he had failed the first time, Ken Bothello, stated that he was, “devastated.” He indicated that he felt his only other option was to apply to the Peel Regional Police and he was starting to believe that being police officer was, “never going to happen.”

Julie Smith, a one year police officer, indicated that she was so discouraged with failing the tests the first time that she contemplated the possibility that she was not cut out for policing and walked away from the O.C.S.S. testing for almost two years. She was

particularly upset because she believed that with a university education, she would be successful with the testing.

Even the one respondent who passed all of the tests acknowledged that the testing process was discouraging to many people. Matt Jackson indicated that a significant number of female competitors involved in the physical testing component had difficulty passing the tests. He also made reference to the lack of feedback and indicated an associate of his had attempted to file a complaint about the WCT testing procedure but was told it take 6 months to obtain a response. Having passed the entire testing the first time around, Matt indicated that his own personal experience with the O.C.S.S. testing was relatively innocuous. He expressed a genuine belief, however, that his was an exception rather than the rule as he had heard many people express discontent and anxiety over the testing protocol.

When asked about his overall experiences with the O.C.S.S. testing, former professional hockey player, Brent Yeo, started his response with the words, “money grab.” Brent indicated that he believed that the private company administering the exams, Applicant Testing Service, wanted people to fail in order to collect more money from them during their subsequent testing. He indicated that, in his opinion, ATS concealed the minimum scores constituting a pass in order to ensure the company could make enough money from repeat customers. Brent indicated that he failed the PATI exam twice before attending an OPP testing date where he ultimately passed. He claimed he did nothing different during the exams but inexplicably passed when the OPP graded his examination.

Although other respondents expressed this same discord, it should be noted that one of the respondents who spoke negatively towards the testing was a former employee of ATS. When asked about this particular concern the subject emphatically denied any manipulation like this and reaffirmed that minimum scores remained constant over time. As an exam

proctor, this same respondent also indicated that numerous competitors openly expressed their displeasure with one another while waiting to take the exams.

In contrast to the Supporters, the Cynics did not find the personnel administering the O.C.S.S. tests to be customer friendly. “The people they hire don’t really care,” is how Angela Radley indicated she felt she was treated.

### Perceptions of Validity

Regarding validity, all respondents were asked exactly the same question, “Employment testing is used as a means to predict how someone will perform on a given job. How good a job do you believe the ATS testing process is in predicting someone’s performance?” Note that the phrase, ‘ATS testing process,’ was used due to the fact that most respondents would have no idea that this company was simply licenced by the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police to administer the tests. Had the phrase, O.C.S.S. testing been used, it is anticipated that none of the respondents would have known to what the question referred.

As a reminder, face validity is a separate and distinct topic from the actual validity of a given test. It refers only to whether people believe the test is a valid predictor and is not necessarily predicated by any direct knowledge of an examination’s actual validity as a predictor of performance. As such, an exam could have a correlative validity of 1.0 in predicting performance and still lack face validity.

### Supporters

All of the respondents classified as Supporters believed the O.C.S.S. testing process was a valid means to predict employment performance. For instance, Henry Pilj spoke quite

positively about the testing phase when he indicated that it was, “a good introduction in predicting how employees turn out.”

In some cases, the respondents expressed differing views about various components of the O.C.S.S. testing regarding their predictive validity. Peter Dugal for instance believed that the testing was very thorough and valued the usefulness of the WCT most of all. He did however criticize the PREP as being inadequate and recommended a return to the traditional Ontario Police Fitness Pin as a more appropriate measure. This sentiment was repeated several times by other respondents including Henry Pilj who stated, “out of shape people could pass (the PREP).”

Another respondent, Peter Arguin, indicated he believed the test did examine whether a participant had the necessary thinking skills to be a police officer and believed this was important. He cautioned however that the test did not measure life experience and as such could not be entirely relied upon as a performance predictor.

References by respondents within this particular typology also suggested that the O.C.S.S. testing was an effective tool in weeding out lazy candidates from the application process. This perspective was repeated on several different fronts by respondents who stated that if candidates really wanted the job they would prepare accordingly. Although this concept does not speak directly towards the predictability of performance, the concept of face validity is a fluid one as the attitudes expressed often lack knowledge or comprehension of a test’s true validity.

### Cynics

None of the respondents in this category considered the O.C.S.S. testing process as valid. They predominantly indicated that although the testing may examine a candidate’s

intellectual skills it did nothing to assess their people skills. As Angela Radley stated, “Whether I can solve a math problem says nothing about whether I can solve a people problem.”

A limited number of other issues were raised by the Cynics in this regard. Ben Gruden, a police officer since 2008, suggested that there are people in Ontario’s population who may not be able to pass a test but would make exceptional police officers. He referred specifically to those individuals with learning disabilities who have no chance of passing the O.C.S.S. testing regiment.

This group’s discontent with testing validity should not be mistaken as animosity for testing in general. Comments were made by three of the six respondents suggesting that testing was a necessary measure for policing. One of these respondents suggested that the O.C.S.S. testing was used as a means of ensuring a baseline to guarantee a minimum standard. Another respondent, Brent Yeo, conceded that although he didn’t believe the testing was valid, he doubted whether another resolution to address police testing existed.

The issue of validity is important in assessing participation rates as people’s views regarding how relevant the testing is to an occupation has previously been linked to participation rates.<sup>62</sup> Regarding this, Matt Jackson made this connection to validity by stating, “There are going to be people who would have made good police officers but were turned off by ATS.”

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<sup>62</sup> Lounsbury, John W., Bobrow, Warren, Jensen, J. Brad. (1989) Attitudes Toward Employment Testing: Scale Development, Correlates, and “Known Group” Validation. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*. Vol. 20, No. 5. p.346

### Perceptions Regarding Cost

All respondents were asked if they knew how much testing cost a candidate to participate. Not surprisingly, most police respondents answered this question with reasonable accuracy. The mean cost to all police respondents was \$625. Three of the candidates, who passed all the testing on their first try, paid \$300 for the examinations. One other candidate estimated that the testing cost him \$1200 before finally passing and gaining employment.

All police respondents of both types were asked if the cost associated to the test was a factor in deciding whether or not they should take it. Given the fact that only a single respondent expressed any reservation about the costs of the testing, their position on this issue will be addressed collectively for the sake of brevity.

Ten of the eleven respondents indicated that the cost of the testing was not a factor for them as they accepted that the fee was a standard practice. As Julie Smith indicated on the issue of cost, "It is what it is." All indicated that they had the financial resources available to them through their family in the event that they could not pay for it.

Many of the officers interviewed indicated that they were willing to pay whatever it took to get hired. As Brent Yeo stated, "they way I looked at it was spend money now and get security"

Upon assessing the opportunity costs associated with giving up two days to complete the testing, most respondents were mute on the issue with only one commenting that he actually liked the two day process.

Phillip Price was the only individual to express some concern over the cost of the testing. At the time he had a significant student debt. As such he factored in the cost of the testing and ultimately concluded that the initial testing cost did not break the threshold of what he was willing to pay.

When an additional question was posed to 8 of the respondents about how the costing might affect other potential applicants, 7 individuals conceded the cost might be an issue. Some like Henry Pilj suggested that there are people in the community who would make good police officers but don't have the money to pay for the testing. Jack Suzuki was even more direct about the fees associated with O.C.S.S. testing when he responded, "I think we're definitely discouraging people."

### Perceptions Regarding Fairness

Respondents were asked three principal questions regarding their perceptions of equity on the exam. The first involved what they thought about the tests before taking them while the second was what they thought after completing all the tests. The final question involved their perceptions of having to complete these tests before submitting an application. The responses made by respondents were generally polarized at opposite ends of the spectrum between the Supporters and Cynics. All five Supporters expressed a belief that indeed the process was fair while two thirds of the Cynics disagreed with this position.

#### Supporters

When asked what they thought about the testing process before ever taking the tests, not all Supporters spoke favourably of the process.

For instance the first impression of Phillip Price was that, "(the process) was a lot of hoops." He continued that he thought it was frustrating that he could not apply before taking the tests. However he found the private company administering the tests to be very accommodating and facilitated the testing well. Phillip passed all of his tests on the first attempt and found the examinations to be fair and relevant. He submitted his application to a

police service and was quickly hired. In hindsight now as a police officer of about 3 years, he believes that the O.C.S.S. testing is fair and, “serves a basic purpose to ensure applicants have basic skills.”

Peter Dugal believed that the testing process was fair and expressed many of the same sentiments of the previous respondent although he was completely receptive to the process from the moment he learned about O.C.S.S. testing. When asked if testing someone was a fair way of selecting the people who would be eligible to submit an application he referred back to his previous career as a manager in the entertainment industry. Peter indicated that he had been responsible for hiring people while in management and ultimately employed a significant number of inadequate employees. He stated that employment testing, like one with O.C.S.S., allows employers the opportunity to select, “the cream of the crop.”

### Cynics

Four of the six police subjects categorized as Cynics responded negatively towards the fairness of O.C.S.S. testing. When assessing their comments it was noted that the issue of fairness came up throughout other aspects of their interviews. The lack of transparency and the uncertainty of the unknown left these individuals questioning the integrity of the testing. This spurred on the assessment by some that the O.C.S.S. testing was a money grab. As Brent Yeo suggested, “Need more money this month? Fail an extra 40. You’ll never know if you actually failed.” The issue of transparency appeared several times with these individuals and led them to question whether the tests were fairly evaluated.

Fair or not however, one respondent pointed out that police services need to weed out the strong applicants from the weak. For Julie Smith, the tests were a necessary evil to shortlist potential applicants. When asked about her initial impressions of the O.C.S.S. testing

she expressed no trepidation about taking the tests. She had a university degree and was in good physical condition. It was not until she found herself failing a portion of the exam that she started to question the fairness of the process.

For Matt Jackson and Angela Radley however the structure of the testing process isn't fair to applicants. "Its ridiculous," claimed Jackson, "They want you to take ATS, pay \$300 and the come find out if you're what they want." He continued that applicants should be able to get feedback from a service to see if they have a fighting chance of being hired. Angela Radley offered up this same argument and suggested police services interview first and then send applicants for the testing. From her perspective, "These people spend a lot of money for something that may never happen."

Although two Cynics commented in a generally positive light about the fairness of the testing, their perception in this regard was with respect to the need to test individuals before allowing them to submit applications. Ken Botelho conceded that this process was the only way he knew to hire police officers so the issue of fairness was never truly and concern.

For Ben Gruden, the O.C.S.S. indicated that testing wasn't necessarily a negative experience for him although he didn't view it as valid. On this issue of fairness however, he agreed with the need to test individuals prior to accepting their application in order to, 'pre-screen,' them.

### Opinions Regarding Recruiting Efforts

Of the eleven police respondents interviewed, seven expressed concern about the effect that the O.C.S.S. testing phase may have on recruiting new staff. All six of the categorized Cynics indicated that the testing system had a negative effect on recruitment while only one Supporter had any concerns in this regard. Although it may seem inappropriate to ask

individuals who have little involvement in police recruiting to hypothesize about this issue, it is important to keep in mind that Smithers (1993) identified a link between organizational attractiveness and experiences with employment testing. As such the views expressed by those already in the profession are relevant in determining how others may view O.C.S.S. testing.

### Supporters

Clearly the Supporters of the OCSS testing system have had a positive experience with it. Even when asked how it may affect policing's ability to attract new recruits, references were made by all five suggesting that it had a positive effect. Jack Suzuki and Peter Arguin both commented that a principal benefit was that once a candidate's testing was done, they could apply almost anywhere. Mr. Arguin went even further than that by suggesting that with the Certificate of Results on file, a candidate can use a shotgun approach and submit applications across the province.

Peter Dugal suggested that perhaps the testing process would discourage some from competing to become a police officer but then qualified this by stating that the O.C.S.S. testing, "shouldn't be an issue if you want it (the job)."

However two Supporters expressed a belief that the O.C.S.S. testing may discourage some from trying out. As Henry Pilj indicated, "Definitely people are out there who refuse to do the testing because it's a hassle." He continued that the 3-4 month process to simply do the testing would discourage some.

Phillip Price pointed out that it really isn't the job of Applicant Testing Service to attract new applicants. He expressed a belief that the enthusiasm of some to try out could wane

simply from the frustration created by the process. He indicated that he could see how, “People who consider this a second choice may be deterred.”

### Cynics

All six of the identified Cynics indicated that the layout of the current testing protocol has a deleterious effect on Ontario’s capability to recruit new police officers. A broad spectrum of perspectives was provided on this topic regarding why people may choose not to compete.

When asked this question, Matt Jackson adamantly expressed his belief that O.C.S.S. testing discourages people from competing. In his own words he stated, “When you make people jump through too many hoops and they have other life commitments they won’t do testing.” This sentiment was expressed by all of the Cynics in one form or another. However Jackson’s remarks went further when he suggested that some people will fail one or more components of the test and give up immediately. Evidence was uncovered by various respondents indicating that this is indeed an issue. Julie Smith, for one, admitted to failing the WCT on her initial testing. She was so devastated by the results she gave up and did not return to the O.C.S.S. testing for two years.

An array of other police respondents relayed similar sentiments about women and the physical. Several made comments about the fact that women had a much harder time passing the PREP test than men did. Julie Smith, for instance believes that people are discouraged by the testing as it is orchestrated to be more difficult for women to complete given their naturally smaller build. Standing almost six feet tall, Julie indicated the PREP wasn’t a problem for her but she knew many other women who struggled with it simply because of their stature and body weight.

With respect to the testing's effect on participation rates, Brent Yeo, was passionate about the fact that policing is losing a lot of potential applicants. "...the overall opinion is that we lose more good candidates than we do get good candidates from the process." He wholly believed that the administration of the testing process lacked the transparency needed for people to believe in it. He continued that since people have no idea what constitutes a pass, they are discouraged from trying out. This too was a view shared by other respondents such as Ken Botelho.

When the same question was asked of Ben Gruden, he indicated that O.C.S.S. testing discouraged people from trying out. He cited the fact that a lack of friendly customer service by ATS disrupted the recruiting drives of individual police services. He stated that he knew of people who had walked away from the testing for this reason. He then reconsidered his answer and suggested that the testing is structured this way to ensure the only people who get through are those who would not give up.

### Civilian Non-Participants

A total of 10 Civilian Non-Participants were interviewed in this study. This was an extremely difficult population to access as their choice to not compete meant that there were no identifiable communities from which to select from. As a result, these respondents were not picked at random in any way whatsoever. Every respondent who agreed to participate was interviewed. Approximately 20 non-participants were contacted and asked to talk with the investigator in this study. Despite repeated attempts to contact them, 8 simply refused to call back or participate even though they initially expressed an interest to do so.

The perspectives provided by these respondents were as polarized as the police officers interviewed and were divided into Sceptics and Believers. However, very few of them actually understood how the testing was structured or what its components were. In fact many of these individuals didn't even know how much the O.C.S.S. testing would cost them. Despite this, the respondents still expressed views on the testing regimen. This is a particularly important point to keep in mind as people often view employment testing as poor way to select staff.<sup>63</sup> The value of this study is that these views are held by people who know little about the actual tests administered. Hence, despite their naivety about O.C.S.S. testing, their views may still influence a decision to pursue a policing career.

Again a polarized dichotomy of views was observed in the responses provided by Non Participants. However in this instance, a heavier contingent of subjects were identified as Sceptics than Believers. As with the Police Officers, the respondent's attitudes regarding different aspects of the study were somewhat varied. Table 9 provides a summary of how these respondents perceived O.C.S.S. testing based on the previously determined criteria.

Table 9: Summary of the Perceptions Held by Non-Participants on O.C.S.S. Testing

<b>Type of Non Participant Respondent (10)</b>	<b>Positive Perceptions of Validity</b>	<b>Positive Perceptions Regarding Cost</b>	<b>Positive Perceptions as to Fairness</b>	<b>Positive Opinions Regarding Recruiting</b>
<b>Sceptics (7)</b>	2	1	2	0
<b>Believers (3)</b>	1	3	3	3

The value of these interviews, however, go beyond a table summary as the reasons cited provide some rationale as to why these subjects were discouraged from trying out. As with

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<sup>63</sup> Lounsbury, John W., Bobrow, Warren, Jensen, J. Brad. (1989) Attitudes Toward Employment Testing: Scale Development, Correlates, and "Known Group" Validation. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*. Vol. 20, No. 5. p.346

the police respondents, the explanations will provide evidence to justify their views about each of the criteria summarized on Table 9.

### Perceptions of Validity

All of the respondents were asked if they felt O.C.S.S. testing was a valid measure in predicting performance as a police officer. Very few of the respondents in the Non Participant category were fully aware of the various components to the testing. They were aware that it involved a written test and a physical fitness exercise but generally not much more. Six of the twelve non participant respondents, five Sceptics and two Believers, indicated that they did not believe the tests were valid despite their limited knowledge of what they involved.

#### Sceptics

When asked how valid O.C.S.S. testing was in predicting performance, two individuals among the respondents provided an answer in the positive. The reasons used to support this position differed. Andrew Fraiken, a 29 year old personal trainer, for instance, stated that, “testing doesn’t make a good cop.” He continued on that although he didn’t know much about the actual written testing he was very familiar with the PREP test. His view was that anyone could condition themselves to do this test as it lacked intensity and passing that test told employers nothing about whether a candidate was fit enough to chase down a perpetrator of crime.

Bill Horner, a 26 year old father of three, indicated that some very good candidates may be lost simply because they become too anxious while taking test. He referred to the phrase, “white coat syndrome,” and suggested that some people may not even try out due to their fear

of failure. As for the actual validity of the testing; Mr. Horner, indicated that testing was only as valid as the person marking the tests. In essence he suggested that if the examiner wanted a person to fail, they would.

Other respondents commented directly on the tests administered. For instance, Thomas McKenzie, a 22 year old member of the Canadian Forces, stated that the tests were not an accurate reflection of what makes a fundamentally good police officer as the test follows a set pattern and does not assess whether candidates can think and act quickly.

Two respondents did state however that they believed O.C.S.S. testing was a good starting block to select police officers but were reserved in providing too much support. Both Richard Martin and Nicole Gentleman spoke positively about the validity of the testing, indicating it was a good method to ensure candidates were basically fit.

### Believers

One of the three Believers expressed confidence in the O.C.S.S. testing. However, by his own admission, Jason Preston stated he knew little about the tests but placed his faith in the validity of the testing on the fact that if the Province of Ontario liked the tests they must be good.

The other two Believers were somewhat ambivalent about their misgivings. Neither expressed overt concerns about the test but rather suggested that testing could not weed out the inappropriate people or select precisely what policing is looking for in their officers

### Perceptions Regarding Cost

Seven of the respondents from the Non-Participant half of this the study, were aware of how much the testing cost. For the respondents that didn't know, the investigator outlined the

financial costs associated with the testing. Overall six of the respondents indicated that cost was most certainly a factor as they perceived \$300 to be a significant amount of money.

### Sceptics

Four of the eight interviewed Sceptics indicated that the costs associated with the tests were prohibitive for them. When asked why, their answers came down to two fundamental reasons. The first was that it was a lot of money to pay when there are other expenses to cover. For Bill Horner, with his wife and three very young children, testing is not an option. In Bill's case however the costs are significantly greater as he requires corrective eye surgery to bring his sight up to the minimum standards required. Regardless, Bill stated that the initial \$300 cost simply creates another barricade for him to overcome in order to achieve his dream of being a police officer.

The response of David McManus, a 38 year old father living in Eastern Ontario was, "that's a lot of money," when the interviewer apprised him of the cost. As a former Ontario Provincial Police Auxiliary officer David had considered policing but decided that the testing itself was a hassle. Ironically he was unaware of what it actually cost financially until being told and was incredulous about the amount. "I wouldn't do it on a whim," he exclaimed and indicated that it most certainly would discourage some from trying out.

The uncertainty of the outcome was another issue raised by respondents as well. Nicole Gentleman, knew the financial costs of the O.C.S.S. testing and indicated that, "\$300 is a lot of money, especially if I didn't pass and that I'm going to have to pay and pay and pay." She indicated that the cost was a factor in her decision not to compete. When asked if she would have taken the tests if they had been free, her response was a definitive yes as it reduced the risks associated with failing.

Andrew Fraiken's perspective was unique. He suggested that charging to do the testing meant that people would prepare exclusively to pass the tests. Police services would only receive candidates who had artificially prepped themselves to pass. By making the tests free, more candidates would compete without preparing and provide police services an opportunity to see just how naturally oriented a candidate was to policing.

Fraiken stated that he struggled to save the money to take the tests and that at the back of his mind, "it was lost money," if he failed and outlined that the risk associated with losing the money was simply too great. He stated he would absolutely take the tests if it were free.

### Believers

Two of the three believers indicated that cost was not a factor in their decision to submit to the O.C.S.S. testing. When asked if they thought the cost could be a factor for others, two hypothesized that it may be issue for some considering a career in policing.

Andrew Benner stated that the price was not a factor in his decision to turn away from the tests. When asked however if he would have taken the OCSS tests if they were free, his response was, "Yes." When asked how that affected his motivation to take the tests, he stated that he would not want to pay \$300 only to find out that he wasn't a competitive candidate or that he ultimately didn't like being a police officer. With respect to the opportunity costs associated with the tests being over 2 days he indicated that this was not a factor for him at all.

### Perceptions Regarding Fairness

Given the fact that most respondents had no knowledge of the testing protocols employed by the O.C.S.S., the only question relied upon in this questionnaire was how

respondents felt about taking a test before being eligible to submit an application. This created a situation whereby a lack of diversity in their views was observed and, as such, it was not necessary to address the perspectives of Believers and Sceptics separately as their views were polarized.

Of the 10 respondents queried, six expressed a view that this was an unfair practice. Five of those individuals had previously been classified as Sceptics while only one was a Believer. Their reasons were almost universal that the fiscal and opportunity costs associated with passing the tests may not translate into employment if a police service determined their application was not competitive. They generally felt it more appropriate to submit an application to a police service, obtain feedback on the organization's interest in them, and then attend testing. As Steve Alderson, a Believer, remarked, "It could be a giant waste of time if you're not going to be considered [for a job]."

With respect to the four respondents, two Believers and two Sceptics, who believed the current process was fair, their justifications were equally direct. Their view was that it weeded out the weaker candidates and created a minimum standard from which officers should be selected. All four believed it was a fair way to administer a selection process and believed that it was sensibly structured.

#### Opinions Regarding Effects on Recruiting

All respondents were asked to extrapolate their own knowledge of the O.C.S.S. testing to theorize the influence it had on recruiting efforts throughout the Province of Ontario. Eight of the ten respondents indicated that they believed the effect would be negative while the remaining two indicated they did not believe it would act as a deterrent to potential candidates. The reasons expressed by both camps of thought were somewhat diverse.

### Sceptics

All eight respondents from this paradigm surmised that O.C.S.S. testing acted as a deterrent to potential testing candidates. Their views were very committed on this issue as they expressed concern over the fact that many people will not bother to try out. Bill Horner, for instance commented that the O.C.S.S. testing creates so much, “red tape,” that people realize they can do other things for a lot less hassle.

Internal fears of failure were also introduced by another respondent. Cindy Adamson, a single mother of two stated that she believes the entire process is intimidating for people, as it was for her, as she acquiesced to her fear of failure. She continued, that she has known a number of people who have taken the testing and have all complained and worried about this phase of the selection process.

An issue regarding fear of the unknown were also raised by another respondent. Nicole Gentleman indicated that it is a huge investment of time and money only to discover no one wants to hire you. “What if you do the testing and then don’t meet the credentials?”

However Ms. Gentleman offered up a more in depth perspective in that this fear of the unknown extends further into the future than just the application process. She pointed out that many people have no idea how well they will perform at the Ontario Police College or even whether they will enjoy the career after the initial training period. The influence of these unknowns, she surmised, might further discourage people from participating.

David McManus introduced another reason why people may not want to participate: it discourages people who have a desire to remain local from competing. Given the amount of money they have to pay in conjunction with the fact that they only want to apply to one police service, the risk versus the possible reward is simply too great. He continued, “so many

people get their certificate and fail the interview.” He continued that those individuals will pursue other employment opportunities that will allow them to work in their locale of choice more readily.

Richard Martin, a government research assistant, commented that although the cost would not deter him, O.C.S.S. testing would definitely act as a barrier to individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds. He stated that \$300 wasn't going to keep him away from trying out if he wanted it but if he was unemployed it may be an issue.

One other perspective posited by Thomas McKenzie was that with O.C.S.S. testing structured the way it is right now, applicants are encouraged to flood every police agency across the province with applications. Once hired, he suggested that the new officer may not even stay with the service that hired him. This is because the current system does little to ensure applicants seek employment with a police service that they want to work for but rather encourages people to take a shotgun approach at being hired anywhere and then worrying about finding a place to spend an entire career in. When asked directly how the O.C.S.S. testing protocols affected his decision not to apply, Mr. McKenzie stated that if he were to try out he would, “really have to want it to go for it.”

### Believers

Only one respondent from this paradigm expressed a negative perspective about the effect that O.C.S.S. testing may have on recruiting. Andrew Benner, a 25 year old salesman in Southwestern Ontario, indicated that people will view the testing as a \$300 fee to submit an application. He continued that people who are already comfortably employed may choose not to participate. He concluded his perspective on this by indicating he believed that the

detering effect of O.C.S.S. testing was a significant factor in attracting new people to the profession.

The last two Believers indicated that this testing process would have no effect on recruiting whatsoever. Steve Alderson for instance stated that the recruiter's job was to spark the interest and that the O.C.S.S. testing protocol was simply part of the application process. This was a sentiment shared by Jason Preston.

## **Discussion**

A number of issues were raised by respondents from both the policing community and the non participant community that suggest barriers do exist in the structure and application of the Ontario Constable Selection System testing phase. The concerns identified span a wide spectrum and in some cases are shared by both the police and civilian respondents. Of the 21 respondents interviewed, 13 viewed the testing process negatively over all. Their reasons varied and their perspectives on the criteria identified differed. As a result, reliable conclusions can be drawn regarding whether O.C.S.S. testing acts as a barrier in acquiring applications for careers in law enforcement across the Province of Ontario on a number of different fronts.

With respect to the face validity of the testing process, a number of concerns were identified. The most profound was a lack of transparency in the testing process and created cynicism regarding how the exams were evaluated. Assessments by respondents were actually made that the private company administering the O.C.S.S. tests deliberately failed candidates in order to generate more revenue. Evidence to the contrary was obtained that indicated the standards are rigidly followed. However the inflexibility of the O.C.S.S. testing

process to provide concrete feedback on a participant's results appears to have fed a rumour mill that has compromised the test's face validity.

No direct evidence linking the lack of face validity to participation was identified in this study. However, a strong relationship exists between face validity and organizational attractiveness.<sup>64</sup> The consequence of this linkage is a diminished motivation by potential candidates to compete for employment within that organization. Therefore, the face validity of the O.C.S.S. testing phase cannot be excluded as a factor in discouraging people from participating.

In examining respondents' attitudes towards the costs associated with the tests, a number of perspectives were identified that suggest a link may exist between the cost of testing and a potential candidate's decision to participate in the testing. Both police and non participant respondents commented that some people would be unable or perhaps unwilling to put forth the fees associated with taking the O.C.S.S. tests. The principal explanation provided was an intuitively calculated risk versus reward philosophy that posited the belief that an investment in the testing process may not translate into employment as a police officer.

Interestingly, some respondents who had chosen not to participate in the testing process overtly stated that cost was never factor into their decision. When posed with the question regarding whether they would participate if the tests were free, some remarked that it would have changed their decision. Intuitively this seems somewhat contrarian. However, given the fact that Coffee indicates that even nominal fees can be used to reduce application rates for an organization, it is reasonable to assert that a \$300 fee associated with an employment exam

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<sup>64</sup> Smither, James W, Reilly, Richard R, Millsap, Roger E, Pearlman, Kenneth, Stoffey, Ronald W. Applicant reactions to selection procedures. *Personnel Psychology*. Durham:Spring 1993. Vol. 46, Iss. 1, p. 70

may certainly discourage less committed candidates from competing.<sup>65</sup> Fiscal costs associated with the O.C.S.S. testing cannot be excluded as a barrier to competing for employment as a police officer.

In determining the perceived fairness of the Ontario Constable Selection System testing phase, a number of respondents viewed the examinations as an unreasonable demand to simply submit an application for employment. This was due to the fact that some respondents expressed a lack of confidence that passing the tests would translate into employment. The notion that a candidate could spend a minimum of \$300 to pass the testing only to discover he or she was not competitive or an appropriate fit to policing, was a concern raised by a number of individuals.

Gilliland's research that an individual's motivation for taking a test will be lower if they do not believe the selection process is fair suggests that the identified lack of perceived fairness could discourage some from competing in O.C.S.S. testing.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, the identified perceived injustice associated with these examinations cannot be excluded as a potential barrier in participating in the selection system.

The data collected from the Peel Regional Police, Toronto Police, London Police, Ontario Provincial Police, Applicant Testing Service, and the Ontario Police College provide another important perspective as the only service in Ontario not utilizing the O.C.S.S. testing phase receives proportionately more applications than the rest of the province. This provides additional support that the O.C.S.S. testing phase may influence participation rates.

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<sup>65</sup> Coffee, Karen., (1998) Candidate Reduction Strategies. *Public Personnel Management*; Vol. 25 No. 4. p.468-469

<sup>66</sup> Gilliland, Stephen, W. (1993) The Perceived Fairness of Selection Systems: An Organizational Justice Perspective. *The Academy of Management. The Academy of Management Review*: 18, 4. p.695-723

Therefore, with identified concerns related to validity, cost and fairness of the O.C.S.S. testing in conjunction with the empirical evidence obtained from the policing agencies within the Province of Ontario, it seems plausible that factors related to the O.C.S.S. testing are discouraging candidates from competing. Hence, the null hypothesis that the Ontario Constable Selection System testing phase creates no barriers for people considering policing as a career can be rejected.

## **Conclusion**

This study was designed to act as a qualitative analysis to identify factors that create barriers for people considering policing as a career in the Province of Ontario. The most that can be achieved from this enquiry is that issues previously not considered on this topic may be identified and substantiated as possible barriers. Additional endeavours to extend this research are necessary in order to quantify the magnitude of the influence that these barriers have in motivating people to compete for positions as an Ontario police officer. Unfortunately, the scope of this study does not allow the measurements of the strength of the barriers identified.

However, empirical evidence obtained from the Peel Regional Police regarding their applicant numbers, particularly in recent years, suggests a larger market of police applicants exists but refuses or is unwilling to access the Ontario Constable Selection System. Additional research may assist the O.C.S.S. in identifying strategies to draw this pool into policing.

A concern regarding the lack of oversight by the Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services was identified over the course of this investigation. Given the

reality within policing that application numbers are dropping across the country, a mechanism should be in place to determine, on an annual basis, how many candidates have passed their testing and are eligible to apply for employment as an Ontario police officer. With both ATS and the OPP conducting these tests, no one in the Province truly knows how many potential applicants are trying to gain employment in Ontario. This is a metric that the Ontario Government should track to ensure an adequate supply of candidates is available.

Given the labour market projections provided by Statistics Canada and the Police Sector Council, Ontario's policing community might well pursue additional study within this vein by supporting research that could quantify the potential barriers identified.

Policing is entering an era where a shortage of qualified applicants will reduce the profession's ability to replace retiring employees and potentially will lose its ability to respond adequately to the community's needs due to human resource shortages. The Ontario Constable Selection System and policing recruiters should examine their current practices in order to maximize the size of their already dwindling application pool.

The O.C.S.S. may wish to consider providing potential applicants with the opportunity to submit applications before ever attending the testing process. By doing this, applicants may be given some feedback regarding their potential of being hired before they attend the testing process. In essence this would create a degree of continuity between the recruitment phase and selection phase of the hiring process that does not exist today.

In the event that a statistically significant relationship is identified between the financial burden associated with the testing process and participation rates, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police may wish to consider strategies that offset the cost of the testing process. By lowering the cost to a level deemed more appropriate by potential candidates, the O.A.C.P. may benefit from an enlarged application pool.

One of the most important spin offs that could be realized may be the need to generate greater transparency regarding the validity of the testing process. This needs to be dealt with as this perception has created a myth that the minimum scores fluctuate with ATS' need to generate more revenue. One way of addressing this would be to provide participants with their scores in conjunction with the required standards to illustrate where the candidate fell short.

Improving the perceived validity of the O.C.S.S. testing may also be realized through independent scholarly reviews of the examinations. Conducting studies in this way would allow the Ontario Constable Selection System with evidence to substantiate the validity of the testing process. These reviews could then be used to provide potential candidates with additional information regarding the importance of these examinations and may reduce their inhibitions for participating. This is based on the premise that perceptions of validity improve with information and explanations regarding why a particular test exists.<sup>67</sup> It should not be overlooked, as well, that this outside critique of the examination process may reveal validity threats that the Ontario Constable Selection System had previously failed to identify.

A commonly used phrase, "Your perception is your reality," is essentially what this study attempted to draw attention to. Virtually no scholarly research has been done on Ontario's Constable Selection System or the effects that user fees have on candidate participation in employment testing. It is hoped that conducting this research will generate additional research within these fields as Canada's aging population grows increasingly dependent on a shrinking labour pool of young people.

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<sup>67</sup> Smither, James W, Reilly, Richard R, Millsap, Roger E, Pearlman, Kenneth, Stoffey, Ronald W. Applicant reactions to selection procedures. *Personnel Psychology*. Durham:Spring 1993. Vol. 46, Iss. 1, p.52

## Appendix I

### Outline of Interview for Individuals Employed within the Policing Sector

Name/Alias

Age

Occupation

When did you want to become a police officer?

Did you have other career directions you were considering?

Were you involved in the ATS testing process?

Tell me about it.

What did you think about the testing process before you took the tests?

After taking it, what did you think?

1. PATI
2. WCT
3. PREP
4. B-PAD
5. Vision
6. Hearing

Employment testing is used as a means to predict how someone will perform on a given job.

How good a job do you believe the ATS testing process is in predicting someone's performance as a police officer?

Do you remember what it cost to take the tests?

How did the cost of the tests factor into your decision to take them?

Almost every police agency across the province now uses ATS. How do you believe this has affected policing's ability to attract new applicants across the province?

Tell me how you feel about having to take these tests before submitting an application. Do you think this is a fair way to select applicants to be interviewed?

Demographic information

1. Education
2. Ethnic / Cultural background
3. Estimated annual salary at the time respondent tested
4. Occupation at time of testing
5. Did you have access to family support?
6. Area of origin (Eastern Ontario etc)
7. Gender
8. Marital status
9. Dependent status

Do you know anyone who has chosen not to take the ATS test and was considering policing?

## Appendix II

### Outline of Interview for Individuals Who Chose Not to Participate in the Application Process within the Policing Sector

Name or Alias:

Current Age:

Current Occupation:

When did you start to consider policing as a career?

Do you have other career directions you were considering?

Were you involved in the ATS testing process?

No? Tell me what lead you not to take the tests?

What did you know about the testing process?

Employment testing is used as a means to predict how someone will perform on a given job.

How good a job do you believe the ATS testing process is in predicting someone's performance as a police officer?

Do you remember what it cost to take the tests?

How did the cost of the tests factor into your decision to take them or not take the tests?

Almost every police agency across the province now uses ATS. How do you believe this affects the ability of policing to attract or recruit new police officers across the province?

Tell me how you feel about having to take these tests before submitting an application.

If you never did take the tests or at least decided after taking them not to pursue a job in policing, what factors lead you to make that decision?

Demographic information

1. Education
2. Ethnic / Cultural background
3. Estimated annual salary at the time respondent tested
4. Occupation at time of testing
5. Did you have access to family support?
6. Area of origin (Eastern Ontario etc)
7. Gender
8. Marital status
9. Dependent status

Do you know anyone else who chose not to go for testing?

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