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Sink or Swim: A Qualitative Analysis of CBSA's Student Border Services Officer (SBSO) Program

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DOUGLAS COLLEGE

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by

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A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINOLOGY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE BACHELOR OF ARTS WITH HONOURS DEGREE IN APPLIED CRIMINOLOGY

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Abstract

Each summer, hundreds of Canadian post-secondary students are recruited by Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) under the Federal Student Work Experience Program (FSWEP) to become Student Border Services Officers (SBSOs). In a paid, non-union role, students act in similar capacities to full-time Border Services Officer (BSO) labour. This thesis provides an in-depth analysis of the never before examined SBSO program in an academic context. Through qualitative interviews conducted with former SBSOs, a wide range of issues were uncovered, from low wages to poor culture, in addition to the challenges and tribulations associated with the examination of insular organizations, such as CBSA.

Keywords: CBSA, SBSO, FSWEP, borders, student labour, insular organizations, ATIP

Acknowledgements

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my Papa who passed away prior to its completion.

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I cannot thank you enough – We did it!

Introduction

Over 100,000 travellers enter Canada daily through ports of entry and are processed by Canada Border Services Agency upon arrival (Canada Border Services Agency, 2022). What many travellers fail to realize is that their applications for entry may be processed by a relatively unknown group of public servants known as Student Border Services Officers.

Quality paying work experience can be difficult to come by for post-secondary students. The Federal Student Work Experience Program (FSWEP) provides opportunities for full-time post-secondary students to work for federal government agencies in the summer months. One of the agencies offering student employment through FSWEP is CBSA. Through the Student Border Services Officer (SBSO) program, students receive training and supervision through CBSA, and promptly begin working paid positions at ports of entry (airports, mail rooms, etc.) across Canada. Pre-2010, prior to the land-officer arming initiatives, SBSOs were also stationed at land borders and were responsible for a myriad of additional responsibilities, such as secondary inspections, vehicle searches, personal examinations (i.e., strip searches), and more. In a role akin to a full Border Services Officer, students have historically (and, in some respects, currently) performed primary inspections (interviews, admissions of people and goods into Canada), processed legal importations for tax and duties, seized prohibited items/goods (i.e., illicit narcotics, firearms, etc.), performed personal examinations (i.e., strip searches) under section 98 of the *Customs Act*, processed immigration claims, and performed other duties as assigned. This is a unique program primarily given its exclusive availability to post-secondary students and given the program differs substantially from other student opportunities available within the criminal justice system (including volunteer positions) where there tends to be limited

enforcement-related interaction with the public and very limited authority and unsupervised critical decision making.

CBSA and international border agencies tend to be rather insular and secretive organizations (see Côté-Boucher 2013, Lalonde 2023, Walters 2020), and as a result there is little information publicly available in terms of its programming. The overall rationale for this study is to expand public knowledge of the program and answer the following research questions:

1. How does Canada Border Services Agency / the Government of Canada construct or frame the SBSO program? How do SBSOs understand or frame the SBSO program? How does the Customs and Immigration Union (CIU) understand or frame the SBSO program? What differences exist between these stakeholder constructions / understandings?

2. To what extent does the SBSO program achieve benefits (i.e., career development, learning opportunities, bridging / fast-tracking to full-time CBSA labour, etc.) marketed to potential post-secondary candidates by CBSA? How do these marketed benefits contrast with perceived employment and other outcomes experienced by SBSOs in reality?

3. How does localized (regional) SBSO training and on-the-job development contrast with that of full-time BSO training held at the CBSA College in Rigaud, Quebec?

4. How does the SBSO program in Canada contrast with domestic and international volunteer, cadet, and other programming offered to post-secondary students in other border security and law enforcement environments?

5. In light of the findings within this study, how can CBSA and the Government of Canada potentially better leverage and/or improve upon the SBSO program in the future? What are the potential real-world impacts of the SBSO program on travellers, migrants, full-time Border Services Officers, and others circulating through ports of entry? What are the overall policy implications of the continuation and/or potential expansion of the SBSO program in the future?

Literature Review

Existing research by border scholars has largely focused on contemporary issues surrounding borders. This particularly includes examinations of mobility governance and the policing of modern borders. Johnson et al. (2011) examines borders in a political-geographical context. Specifically, they seek to examine how borders are understood and studied and how meaning has continued to shift as the political-geographical landscape progresses. Johnson et al. (2011) argue for the need to trade in the historical view of borders existing merely as unchanging lines on a map for a fresh perspective which involves examining borders as a whole, starting from power relations and proceeding to examine practices, processes, discourses and overall institutions related to borders. Borders operate as *engines of connectivity* (Johnson et al., 2011, p. 67), ultimately encompassing mobility, not just of individuals, but also of goods from all over the world, including the notion that borders can aid in connecting individuals, which can stimulate economic growth.

Loftus (2015) discusses the everchanging nature of the border with the emergence of technology and other innovations. Namely, she highlights the following changes: the political and financial shift towards securities and defense of lands and territories, which she labels *intensification;* the expansion of border policing and surveillance measures, which she critiques as a way to police mobility, the *deepening* of contemporary border control; and finally, the vast scope of border security, which she notes goes beyond immigration and customs enforcement to also include private actors and commercial bodies. Loftus labels these changes *diversification* (Loftus, 2015, p. 116). Loftus also notes the need for ethnographic fieldwork to better understand border security and how security, in general, is framed at this level both culturally and practically.

Frowd, Muller, and Mutlu (2023) discuss the recent expansion of and reliance upon technology in border work, specifically *border apps,* software applications employed to govern mobility at ports of entry (Frowd et al., 2023, p. 318). The influx of these applications, noted *appification* (Frowd et al., 2023, p. 318), multiple interfaces, one of the most notable being ArriveCan, an application created during the COVID-19 pandemic allowing for faster processing of travellers inbound to Canada. ArriveCan was aimed at limiting human interaction between travellers and Border Services Officers. Similar apps have allowed travellers the ability to submit customs declarations electronically, apply for travel authorizations and more. While technological advancement is natural and important, Frowd, Muller, and Mutlu note room for discriminatory practices and lack of accountability as a result of unknown algorithms; they call for examination and scrutiny of these technologies (Frowd et al., 2023).

Aas and Grundhus (2014) conducted qualitative interviews with Frontex (European Border and Coast Guard Agency) employees and Border Guard Officers (European equivalent of Border Services Officers). The duo triangulated their findings through analysis of Frontex policy documents and reports. Aas and Grandhus uncovered an emphasis on traveller human rights in policy, however, some variance in practice with migrants detained in ditry, over-capacity detention centres, with limited access to food and water. Many officers, despite their roles and responsibility as truth finders, felt deep empathy for the detained migrants and would bring clothing from home, buy water bottles, and ensure migrants received appropriate medical care and intervention (Aas & Grundhus., 2014, p. 3-6).

Mountz (2011) conducted qualitative interviews with government and non-government employees, current and former detainees, lawyers, police, journalists, and advocates from all

over the globe (Mountz, 2011, p. 119-120). Mountz uncovered that islands are being used as key detention sites, in which migrants are held in isolation, often unable to obtain legal representation and stake claim for asylum, (Mountz, 2011, p. 123).

In addition to the overarching contemporary and international research, existing research has also considered the perspectives of full-time sworn and civilian members within CBSA. However, no prior research has examined the SBSO program specifically. For example, Lalonde (2019a; 2019b; 2023) interviewed current Border Services Officers and members of travelling publics in the Windsor, Ontario borderland about frontline interactions, officer training, and use of technology, among other issues. While Lalonde (2019) acknowledges he formerly worked within the SBSO program, the analysis does not delve into the program in any meaningful way.

The most systematic study to date is Côté-Boucher's (2013; 2016; 2018; 2020) comprehensive examination of CBSA. With permission from CBSA, Côté-Boucher conducted interviews with Border Services Officers and presented findings on a number of topics (i.e., internal organizational politics, generational differences in border work, the changing nature of border work, etc.). Côté-Boucher (2013, p. 220-223) did discuss the SBSO program, however, her analysis is limited to a basic review of the different understandings of the existence of student labour offered by CBSA, as temporary, part-time, and low-cost labour utilized primarily to offset full-time officer labour during peak travel times. Côté-Boucher focused on frontline full-time BSOs. Her participants, (BSOs) were carefully selected by CBSA, likely in hopes they would speak highly of the organization. However, many were transparent about their experiences on the job and Côté-Boucher was able to uncover numerous issues such as understaffing, poor management, and questionable performance among BSOs post-training. One major theme she

uncovered was *generational differences* among BSOs and how the different generations of BSOs approach their role differently, despite performing the same role. Many experienced BSOs expressed an essence of *perceived superiority*, focusing on their practical, hands-on, port-specific knowledge from their many years on the job. There is some resentment noted towards the reliance upon new technology and *Rigaud indicators* as taught at CBSA college, which are said to be blatantly obvious indicators of deceit relied upon by new BSOs. Experienced BSOs see their new counterparts as ill-trained to be conducting even the most basic of interviews and examinations with the travelling publics, until they too can build up a foundation of practical knowledge disseminated through their own port of entry (Côté-Boucher, 2013, p. 267-289). On the other hand, some of these experienced BSOs have struggled with the influx of technology and the rollouts of new databases and systems required for their role, forcing them to rely on their younger, less experienced, colleagues who are more adept with technology (Côté-Boucher, 2013, p. 338-339). Given the nature of border security, when searches prove resultant, there are specific protocols in place to ensure admissibility of evidence in court, however Côté-Boucher uncovered that lack of training has resulted in poor note taking, poor interviewing skills, and poor evidence handling by BSOs, which have led to evidence being thrown out in criminal investigations (Côté-Boucher, 2013, p. 280).

Pratt and Thompson (2008) conducted qualitative interviews with Border Services Officers, superintendents, and senior officials at a Canadian land port of entry to uncover the use and meaning of racial profiling at Canadian borders. Given that BSOs at Canadian ports of entry utilize an incredible amount of discretion each day with travellers, they aimed to uncover the root of some of their decision-making process concerning traveller referrals for further inspection. They uncovered that BSOs often account for race, national, and regional origin in the decision-

making process and that the concept of risk has been constructed through numerous channels, such as formal training, and informal on-the-job learning and experiences (Pratt, & Thompson, 2008).

O'Connor and de Lint (2009) conducted qualitative interviews with senior bureaucrats within CBSA on issues related to the enfolding of risk analysis technologies at contemporary Canadian borders. However, once again, this study fell silent in terms of the SBSO program.

Taking the above studies into consideration, it is evident that while there has been examination of border security, both domestically and internationally, there is a significant gap in knowledge of the SBSO program in the academic context. This study aims to address this gap.

Methodology

Procedure and Analysis

Prospective participants, former SBSOs, received a recruitment letter via email or LinkedIn. Once they expressed interest in participating in the study, they were furnished with an information and consent form. Participants then took part in a one-to-two-hour long semi-structured interview with the researcher either online or in-person at a mutually agreed upon location. At this time, participants provided verbal consent to the interviewer; this was an additional safeguard based off of a suggestion by the Waterloo University Research Ethics Board (Lalonde, 2019) to safeguard participant identities and ensure that a participant name was never associated with their coded identifier (i.e. SBSO 001). Following the interview, participants received a participant feedback letter. Once the interview was transcribed, if desired, a copy of the transcript was provided to each participant with the opportunity to clarify or redact any potentially identifying statements. Both are important safeguards aimed at protecting participant identities and mitigating possible social and career implications (Lalonde, 2019). Once returned, all transcripts were coded and anonymized (i.e., SBSO 1, SBSO 2….) Following coding, content and discourse analyses commenced.

Coding is the process of taking data and using it to form meaningful categories or *codes*. Codes are often used to link data with theory. This is generally completed through close reading and comparison of text and data. Methods of coding vary by researcher; some prefer to code on paper, others electronically, others use programs, and some work through a combination of these techniques. Regardless of personal preference, the results are consistent – valuable insight and

theories emerge as a result (Allen, 2017). Open coding was employed to develop codes based on phenomena identified in this study, as this practice allows for themes to emerge during analysis.

Given the exploratory nature of this study, an inductive approach is most logical as little to no prior research exists in this area. This allows for theory to emerge based on observed data (Thomas, 2006). Since no research has examined the Student Border Services Officer program, this approach allows for the collection of qualitative data to lead the creation of phenomenological themes (Creswell, 2014).

This study employed discourse analysis to deeply examine the language used by participants and situate it within a broader social context (Hjelm, 2013). The goal of a discourse analysis is to uncover different meanings, whether social, political, or cultural within language (Fairclough, 2013). Within a discourse analysis, one must consider that language is beyond the spoken word, but rather the key to examining interviews and transcripts is to consider what exists between the lines. Specifically, within institutional practices, the existence of power relationships is often present within language, for example, through how participants frame their own identities within their institution (van Dikl, 2008).

Phenomenological Approach

A phenomenological approach was employed. Phenomenological research seeks to understand the meaning of several individuals' lived experiences within a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). For the purposes of this study, the phenomena is the Student Border Services Officer (SBSO) program and the intended focus is therefore to uncover the lived experiences and

perceptions of the participants, former SBSOs, who have gone through the program. This positioning is not unique to this study; Lalonde (2019a; 2019b; 2023) interviewed current Border Services Officers to gain insights on frontline interactions, officer training, and use of technology (Lalonde, 2019a; 2019b, 2023).

To best facilitate an understanding of the phenomenon that is the SBSO program, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted.

Sampling and Recruitment

Participants in this study included former Student Border Services Officers. Full-time Border Services Officers and members of the public who were not formerly employed as Student Border Services Officers were excluded from this study due to ethical positioning (see ethical considerations section).

The challenges within the phenomenological approach largely lie within hard-to-reach populations. Participants must be carefully selected, as they must have lived experiences within the given phenomenon; this can often return a limited yield that is most successfully expanded using the snowball sampling methodology (Ellard-Gray et al., 2015). Snowball sampling is typically employed when examining hard-to-reach populations as a method of broadening the participant pool. Through snowball sampling, the researcher begins with a small pool of participants who meet the participant criteria, these participants are then asked to refer other individuals who may meet the same criteria, and the process continues until the point of saturation has been achieved by the researcher (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). As this study is

examining a small and hard-to-reach population, convenience and snowball sampling were employed. Convenience and snowball sampling are both non-probability sampling methods that consist of selecting participants based on a set of criteria (Etikan, 2016). For the purposes of this study, the criteria established was that all participants must have formerly worked as SBSOs. Convenience sampling was employed initially through the recruitment of former SBSOs known by the Principal Investigator (PI). These might include Douglas College students known to the PI to be former SBSOs, contacts gained by the PI while formerly working as an SBSO, and through other contacts known by either the PI or the researcher to have professional or personal connections to SBSOs. Four participants were garnered through the process of convenience sampling described above.

The use of social media site *LinkedIn* as a recruitment tool proved to yield fruitful results. Given some former SBSOs have gone on to list their employment history as former SBSOs within their LinkedIn profiles, many were easy to identify as possible participants. Four additional participants were recruited through direct messages sent via LinkedIn. Following initial interviews with key informants, snowball sampling was employed. Many former SBSOs have kept in touch with other former SBSOs and were able to refer the researcher to three additional participants through the snowball sampling method.

Demographics and Point of Saturation

Eleven former Student Border Services Officers participated in this study. Of the 11 participants, four identify as female, seven identify as male, and four are people of colour. Further demographic information was not collected in the interest of maintaining confidentiality

for participants involved in this study (see notes above). Participant employment with CBSA spanned a nearly two-decade period from 2005-2023, signifying a variation in participant ages and era of employment.

Within qualitative research, the diversity of demographic characteristics such as age, race, and gender among participants is paramount when considering the generalizability of a given study. A study with diverse participants is therefore more generalizable, especially when examining hard-to-reach populations, allowing for further nuanced insights. (Ellard-Gray et al., 2015). This study, however, is not inherently generalizable, which can be attributed to both the small sample size and the sampling methods employed as required when examining a hard-to-reach population. With 11 participants, it is not realistic to assume that this study is representative of the entire population of Student Border Services Officer program, nor was this the objective. The objective was to conduct an exploratory study to facilitate a deep understand of participant experiences and their perspectives as SBSOs. Examining this small population allows for the consideration of individual and nuanced experiences, rather than collective experience (Patton, 2015).

It is quite common that phenomenological qualitative studies using an inductive approach in policing research reach the point of saturation at around ten (but less than 30) participants. Lalonde (2019) conducted in-depth interviews with ten current and former Border Services Officers and noted that achieving meaningful saturation is generally encapsulated within the realm of 10-25 interviews. Similar studies reinforce this statement, such as Broll and Huey (2015), who conducted in-depth interviews with twelve police officers related to their

lived experience policing and enforcing cyberbullying. Multiple additional policing studies have reached the point of saturation at 10-25 interviews total (see Regehr et al. 2003; Aarons, Powell, and Browne 2004; Beletsky, Macalino, and Burris 2005; Oliva and Compton 2010; Spalek 2010; Evans, Pistrang, and Billings 2013 as cited in Lalonde, 2019, p. 33-34).

Ethical Considerations and Reflexivity

Significant ethical considerations were taken into account with respect to the participant pool. Initially, the researcher intended to interview both current and former Student Border Services Officers (SBSOs).

Under the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2) ethical guidelines, researchers performing a critical inquiry into an institution, organization, or other agency, are not required to seek permission or approval from the institution under inquiry. *Critical inquiry*, as defined by TCPS 2, involves the critical analysis of social structures, policies, and phenomena by social sciences or humanities researchers with the goal of expanding knowledge that ultimately serves to critique or challenge the policies and practices of institutions, governments, interest groups, or corporations (Government of Canada, 2022). Naturally, the depth of the proposed examination could result in lack of support from or gatekeeping by the institution should the research be proposed to them. This provision aids to remove the roadblock between researchers and potential participants, provided that safeguards are put in place and prospective participants are informed by the researcher of the potential risks that could arise as a direct result of their participation (Government of Canada, 2022).

Early on, the decision was made that CBSA would not be collaborating in this research. In general, CBSA and international border agencies tend to be rather insular and secretive

organizations (see Côté-Boucher 2013, Lalonde 2023, Walters 2020; etc.). However, CBSA in particular has not, to the knowledge of the researcher, participated in independent academic research since their 2013 collaboration with Karine Côté-Boucher, in which the researcher gained access and interviewed full Border Services Officers (BSOs) under the careful direction of CBSA who selected all participants for the study. Though participants were carefully selected by CBSA, Côté-Boucher was able to create an incredibly systematic and critical analysis nonetheless, presenting findings on a number of topics, including internal organizational politics, generational differences in border work, the changing nature of border work, and more. Côté-Boucher's critical lens was likely not well-received by CBSA, and the door between CBSA and future independent academic research seems to have been firmly shut as a direct result (Côté-Boucher 2013). With this in consideration, the chances of CBSA endorsing this study and providing access to their current Student Border Services Officers were very remote (if not impossible).

For the sake of argument, even if CBSA had agreed to provide access to current SBSOs for the purpose of this study, as within the Côté-Boucher study, CBSA would likely insist upon carefully selecting participants for the study. This means that CBSA would definitively know the identities of the participants, which could produce a number of unfavourable risks for participants should they choose to speak openly and honestly. Risks to participants include (but are not necessarily limited to) potential social and career risks. Risks to the study include potential biased results, as it is unlikely that the researcher would obtain complete information about the SBSO lived phenomenological experience given CBSA would be highly likely to select only interviewees who would speak highly of – and would not embarrass in any way – the organization and its activities. Such an arrangement would render informed critical analysis

impossible. Relatedly, participants might feel pressured by CBSA to "tow the company line" in the interview rather than giving honest and complete answers based on their own experiences. In short, it is quite likely that direct involvement of CBSA in selecting participants would create additional career and social risks to the participant that were simply not palatable to the researchers. There is also the concern that participants selected by CBSA might feel pressured to participate in the study given their employer is the direct referral source, which brings into question the ability of participants to fully consent to the research (and opt out of the study when they wish to do so). Côté-Boucher (2013) discussed this complication within her own study in that, at one stage, a CBSA supervisor openly mocked a participant for being apprehensive about participating in the study.

By opting to instead recruit former SBSOs without CBSA's involvement, there was more confidence that participants would be able to fully participate in the informed consent process while also retaining the ability to withdraw from the study without experiencing any social or career pressure to offer their consent. There is also lowered risk for negative social or career implications given participants are no longer employed by CBSA and their identities within the study (and all publications) will be coded and anonymized.

Some additional considerations have also been given to bias: Would interviewing only former SBSOs yield more negative experiences than current SBSOs? Not necessarily. It is important to acknowledge that for all former SBSOs, a decision was made, either by them or CBSA to continue or not continue employment for varying reasons that this study also aims to explore. For example, one early participant in this study is a former SBSO who went on to become a full BSO, and ultimately left CBSA to pursue a successful career elsewhere in law

enforcement. For some, the SBSO program was an excellent foundation for future career development. For others, skill and knowledge transferability from the SBSO program to other careers might be less evident or beneficial. Only by not working with CBSA in this study is it likely that both aforementioned potential types of participants can have their voices heard by the researcher without feeling the need to censor responses. This embodies the essence of a phenomenological approach; to examine the lived experiences of many, and consider the differences in perceptions among participants (Creswell, 2007).

Access to Information and Privacy (ATIP)

Access to Information and Privacy (ATIP) requests are commonly employed by the likes of investigative journalists for the purposes of creating hard-hitting reports, however, they are generally underused in the academic context (Walby & Larson, 2012). Beyond merely examining findings generated exclusively through qualitative interviews, it is valuable to search beyond for corroboration using other methods to triangulate findings.

ATIP requests are an efficient way to learn about the everyday practices and procedures within government entities, and an even better way to triangulate or corroborate data gleaned from other sources like interviews. ATIP requests have been referred to as *Smart Mixed Methods* (Walby & Larson, 2012, p. 32), as they can produce an entirely new perspective that researchers are often are not privy to. Documents gleaned through ATIP requests can include internal correspondence, such as emails or memorandums, and even policies, procedures, reports, risk assessments, and beyond. Protected and confidential information is always redacted, however, the wealth of knowledge that an ATIP request can glean is invaluable to multiple areas of research (Walby & Larson, 2012).

Filing an ATIP Request

ATIP requests are enabled through the *Access to Information Act.* The *Access to Information Act* is intended to promote both accountability and transparency between federal government institutions and the Canadian public. The Act outlines a right for the public to access such information within a reasonable period of time. An individual or organization may submit a detailed request in writing, generally through an online platform, for records being held by a federal institution. There is a nominal fee, around $5.00, associated with each request, which aids in offsetting some of the costs associated with processing such requests, in addition to deterring nuisance requests. There is also great importance in conciseness and specificity within ATIP requests; in most cases, it is better and more efficient to create multiple small and very specific requests, including date ranges if applicable, than one large and vague request (Government of Canada, 2024).

Extensions by Institutions

The *Access to Information Act* states that once the request has been received by the institution, they have 30 days to respond, however, this comes with exceptions. Should there be a significant volume of records, a number of records through a myriad of databases, extensive redacting required, or on other reasonable grounds that may adversely impact organizational operations, the institution may take an extension. Upon taking an extension, the institution is required to communicate, in writing, the reason for the extension and the new timeline for completion (Government of Canada, 2024).

Responses

In their response, the institution will provide the requestor with their request. If no records exist, for example, retention timelines have lapsed, the institution must let the requestor know (Government of Canada, 2024). The requestor may also face redacted documents, as protected and confidential information is not public record, for example, information relating to national security efforts, information related to identifiable individuals protected under the *Privacy Act,* or information requiring some form of government security clearance will always be redacted (Walby & Larson, 2012).

Complaint and Accountability Mechanisms

The requestor of an ATIP request has options for recourse if dissatisfied. Primarily, requestors are able to file a complaint with the Office of the Information Commissioner of Canada (OIC) (Government of Canada, 2024). Circumstances warranting complaints may include unreasonable or unexplained delays or alleged frivolous exemptions, such as denying or redacting unprotected / non-confidential information. The requestor must file a complaint in writing to the Office of the Information Commissioner (OIC) and should include the requestor's original request(s), how the institution responded, if applicable, and why the complaint is being filed. Following, the OIC will allow or disallow the complaint. Should the complaint be allowed, the OIC will investigate further by communicating with both parties and trying to reach a resolution.

Coordination of ATIP Requests

Of notable importance is that ATIP coordinators are high-turnaround positions and are regularly understaffed (Walby & Larson, 2012, p. 35). That said, coordinators are not always experts in the subject matter an individual is requesting, so it is not unheard of for them to reach out for clarification or otherwise ultimately leave out documents because of failure to understand or potentially misclassifying a request. This is why it is important for requestors to not only be clear and concise within requests, but also to be reflexive when it comes to the examination of results; the requestor should follow up with the agency should they feel like the management of the request yielded less than a full picture (Walby & Larson, 2012).

The Hawthorne Effect

The Hawthorne effect suggests that humans modify their behaviour in response to the knowledge that they are being or might be observed (Walby & Larson, 2012). The Hawthorne effect in the realm of ATIPs is no different; in this case, government employees tend to bury traces of their text productions and communications when they are aware that those communications may be subject to an ATIP request. For example, rather than sending an email, they may pick up the phone, or walk to the office of a colleague, and rather than sending out a memorandum, they may set an in-person meeting without minutes. This doesn't render ATIPS completely useless, but rather just adds another layer of complexity to the methodological approach. A researcher is ultimately forced to reconcile the influence the Hawthorne effect has potentially had on their data. One of the most common ways to do that is by interviewing the specific government employees involved in processing the request (Walby & Larson, 2012). However, this is not always possible if the organization under examination is insular.

CBSA and ATIP Requests

On September 11, 2023, multiple ATIP requests were submitted to CBSA for the purpose of triangulating findings generated from upcoming qualitative interviews. CBSA promptly advised that one ATIP request was unable to be fulfilled as the statutory timeline for retention (5 years) had lapsed. The second ATIP request sought to obtain information about the following:

1) Recruitment and training of Student Border Services Officers

2) Benefits and drawbacks or limitations associated with students working as Student Border Services Officers at ports of entry

3) Liabilities or risks associated with the Student Border Services Officer program

   a) including training and Student Border Services Officer experiences at ports of entry

4) The purpose and/or justification of the use of student employment at ports of entry, including the use of Student Border Services Officers as vacation coverage or schedule gap fillers

5) Bridging and fast-tracking processes allowing Student Border Services Officers to secure training and eventual placement at a port of entry toward becoming a full-time permanent Border Services.

On October 11, 2023, CBSA requested a 60-day extension, beyond their 30-day statutory limit for processing the request, stating the following:

An extension of time of up to 60 days beyond the 30-day statutory time limit will be required in order to process this request. This extension is being applied in accordance

with the Act as meeting the original time limit would unreasonably interfere with the

operations of the Agency (CBSA, personal communication, October 11, 2023).

On October 31, 2023, CBSA emailed to request clarification on one of the requested

points:

Unfortunately, we are unable to process your request at this time, as we require

additional information. Please provide our office with the following:

*1) **Please clarify "recruitment and training of student employees working specifically***

*as SBSOs."** Training and recruitment is very broad. Can you narrow down the content of*

the training, the delivery, the name the trainers or anything that will aid in the search for

responsive records. (CBSA, personal communication, October 31, 2023).

Upon receiving the email on October 31, 2023, a response was promptly returned to

CBSA:

I am not looking for training documents specifically. I am looking for information talking

about training. For instance, if an audit is conducted on the type and range of formative

or in-service training SBSOs receive, then I would be interested in that. Or if discussions

occurred (via email or otherwise) about potentially expanding formative of in-service

training for SBSOs, using new methods for training, etc., then I would be interested in

that. In short, I am looking more for information tangentially related to SBSO training

without delving into the actual training documents (which I know would require a lot of

redacting should I request them, and would therefore be very time consuming).

Once again, on October 31, 2023, a response was received by CBSA acknowledging receipt of the clarifying points:

> *Thank you for your email. I will make a note in our system and reach out to the branch tasked with providing responsive records.* (CBSA, personal communication, October 31, 2023).

On December 11, 2023, the 60-day time period elapsed with no response from the CBSA ATIP team. A follow-up email was sent requesting an update on December 11, 2023. With no response received, another follow-up email was sent on December 18, 2023, noting 67 days total had passed since the 60-day extension was filed, yet no documents had been received. With no response received again, on December 28, 2023, another follow-up email was sent, noting a total of 77 days had passed since the 60-day extension was applied on top of the initial 30-day time period, yet no documents had been received and no responses to follow-up emails had been received either. It was further communicated that if CBSA failed to satisfactory respond at this time, a complaint would be registered with the Office of the Information Commissioner.

On January 4, 2024, the following response was received from CBSA:

> *I do apologize for the delay in providing you an update. Your request is currently being processed. As there are thousands of pages to review, at this time I do not have a specific date of release.* (CBSA, personal communication, January 4, 2024).

Given the unsatisfactory response by CBSA and failure to provide a specific update regarding the date when documents would be released, on January 4, 2024, an official complaint was submitted to the Office of the Information Commissioner (OIC) regarding CBSA's handling of the ATIP request for this project.

Interestingly, this ATI experience is not limited to this project specifically, nor is it unique to CBSA as a government institution. Although the ultimate goal of the *Access to Information Act* was to promote timely transparency within government agencies accountable to the public they serve, it has instead yielded many undue delays (Akin, 2022). In 2022, the Information Commissioner of Canada, Caroline Maynard, spoke to the disappointing state of the current ATI system before the House of Commons Standing Committee. In her address, Maynard noted that as of 2022, 30% of ATI requests are not responded to within the timeline set out by the *Access to Information Act*, and that this failure rate is steadily increasing annually, promoting additional complaints to her office (Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, 2023, p. 16).

In late 2022, following Maynard's House of Commons address, *Global News* filed the same ATIP request to 13 federal departments, in which they requested any memos, instruction, or information received by staff on the topic of meeting the 30-day legislated timeline for ATIP requests. Ironically, only one department, the Department of Finance, responded within the 30-day timeline. Nine departments took between 43-907 days to respond. Three departments, including CBSA, never responded to the request (Akin, 2022).

This absence of the provision of data brings to question whether such abdication in the duty to provide the public with information is, in fact, data in and of itself. Some researchers

have considered how the absence of data can influence research. Not only does the absence of data outline a clear limitation of a given study, but the absence of data can add an additional layer of reflexivity. The researcher may consider more deeply why the data is missing, the root causes and the ultimate meaning behind the missing data. The absence of data may also lead a researcher to expand on or create new research questions that address the lack of data, or even investigate the lack of data further in later studies (Schafer, 2002).

To answer the why, Walby & Larson (2012) speculate on the existence of stonewalling by ATIP analysts and ultimately their leading organization developing through two separate channels – *amber lighting* and *red filing*. Amber lighting is the practice of delaying and obstructing the release of ATIP requests. Often these requests may be seen as contentious or containing information that could be potentially damaging to the organization at hand. This can occur through various means, although primarily through undue processing delays and significant and unnecessary redactions, which aim to protect the organization from scrutiny (Walby & Larson, in press). Red filing is the practice of flagging and handling high-risk requests sensitively. These requests may be more damaging to an organization's reputation than an amber lit request, so they are whisked off to higher-level bureaucrats for increased scrutiny, which may also lead to undue delays and unnecessary redactions (Roberts, 2006). Importantly, of note is the fact that exemptions included under the *Access to Information Act* do not include the ability of a government institution to insulate itself from public criticism. In other words, documents potentially damaging the reputation of an institution should not be processed differently in terms of redactions and/or delays in processing versus more mundane or less impactful documents. However, as noted above, research suggests such documents might be subject to enhanced

treatment and delays within the organization as a way to stall research and/or reporting on the phenomenon being reported by the requestor.

When considering this project's heavily delayed ATIP response, it is easy to speculate on the kinds of flags that were raised within CBSA given the potential for criticism associated with one of the organization's employment programs. Is the delay merely a backlog, symbolizing the poor state of ATIP processing across all federal organizations, or is this request, on a program which has not yet been subjected to much in the way of public scrutiny or analysis too "contentious" to release without additional scrutiny by higher-ups? Given what is known of CBSA being an insular and secretive organization (Côté-Boucher 2013, Lalonde 2019, Walters 2020) and CBSA's displeasure with researchers potentially damaging its reputation (Côté-Boucher, 2013; 2016; 2018; 2020), one might assume that senior bureaucrats may be concerned with how this request may be perceived by not only the academic community, but the general public. Regardless, these *thousands of pages,* or rather, this stonewall, may take some time to yield a result and may ultimately be heavily redacted. However, should this request be fulfilled, there is an expectation that these files will be very meaningful, not only in terms of research, but also in furthering public knowledge of this program. It is the researcher and PI's intention to examine and publish on the results of ATIP analysis once these documents are finally furnished by CBSA.

Findings and Key Themes

Expectations Versus Reality

It is important to consider how the SBSO program is constructed and marketed to students largely as a program of skill development, where they can gain meaningful frontline experience and get a head start on their career, while making a difference (Canada Border Services Agency, 2018). This construction has facilitated a situation of expectations versus reality among students who have participated in the program; the following themes reflect their experiences.

Insufficient Training

Nearly every SBSO shared the same concern when it came to discussing training; current SBSO training is insufficient. To highlight the insufficiencies, compare the full Border Services Officer training to Student Border Services Officer Training.

Full Border Services Officers (BSOs) complete the Officer Induction Training Program also known as the OITP. Phase one of the OITP begins with four weeks of online distance training, covering general onboarding, CBSA's background, programs and services, culture, and a background of the primary inspection process which is the admission of people and goods into Canada (Canada Border Services Agency, 2024). This is followed by phase two, which is 14-weeks of in-person training at the CBSA College in Rigaud, Québec, which outlines the major learning outcomes as knowledge and understanding of policies, procedure, and applicable legislation; the processes of primary and secondary inspections; the introduction of databases and applicable forms; the processes of searches, seizures, detentions, and arrests; scenario-based

training; and defensive tactics and firearm training (Canada Border Services Agency, 2024).

Following success at the CBSA College, trainee BSOs begin 12-18 months of their on-the-job

Officer Induction Development Program (OIDP) at their port of entry, where they are expected to

perform the core competencies of their role (as learned at the CBSA College). Once their OIDP

is successfully completed, only then are they considered to be full Border Services Officers

(Canada Border Services Agency, 2024).

In contrast, Student Border Services Officers (SBSOs) complete three to four weeks of

hybrid online and in-person classroom training, conducted by CBSA trainers, who cover policies,

procedures, and applicable legislation in addition to some scenario training. is then followed by

one to two weeks of control and defensive tactics training. This is corroborated by CBSA, who

state on its website that this is a five-week training program (Canada Border Services Agency,

2024). This is followed a brief on-the-job mentorship or job shadowing program completed by a

a team mentor, a full BSO at the assigned port of entry who is responsible for SBSO

development in addition to their own BSO duties. Many participants noted they were often left to

their own devices as their mentors were occupied with their own tasks. There are also student

mentors who are renominated SBSOs. Renominated SBSOs have been offered another term as

an SBSO and are often seen are senior and more experienced SBSOs, who the newer SBSOs rely

upon.

One former SBSO and one former BSO shared their onboarding and training documents

with the researcher. After comparing and contrasting these documents, while all of the

aforementioned learning outcomes were covered, it is of note that the BSO documents are much

more thorough, in-depth and contain a multitude of additional exercises and practice tests, promoting additional critical thinking and scenario-based training versus the SBSO documents. The BSO training documents are approximately three times as voluminous when compared to the SBSO training documents. Quantity does not always equate to quality, however, so the former SBSO participants were asked if they felt their training sufficiently prepared them for the role. In response, they noted the following:

> **SBSO 002:** I took a [Border Security] course with [a professor] the semester before I graduated, and [CBSA's SBSO training] was less than what [the professor] covers in the course.

> **SBSO 002:** You either learn to swim or you drown – that's just how the culture was there. There were a few people from our class who drowned and they quit within a week because they couldn't take it.

> **SBSO 006:** I feel like it was training lite. It was almost as if we received the minimum amount of training needed to survive. Especially for the classroom training, [it would have been helpful if they had] added in some training about using databases, and actually showing us on a computer how they work… They should absolutely be able to do that kind of thing, so there's no excuse. And then how to do the different types of seizures and walk us through each using the computer system would have been helpful. And more scenario-based learning would have been helpful because as I mentioned, it was pretty boring. We just got

hammered with all this info from our manuals by the instructors. And then we took a test at the end and that was it. It wasn't like there was then a scenario opportunity afterwards or something where they're like, John's arriving from X country and has this visa. Is he admissible or not? And a role-play scenario where you're processing someone live. It just didn't happen. So, there was no like actual demonstrating your learning during the classroom portion. Which is absurd given it's a very skill-based job and you have to actually perform on the frontline.

SBSO 004: It was good exposure… But we needed a lot more training on databases… You're on the floor and using it for real, but you've never used it before… Same with study permits and work permits, and landing immigrants - We didn't learn [that] in the training. It's hard to learn on the spot and especially something like this, there's so much responsibility… What if somebody had close name match for a warrant and you accidentally let them in because you're not reading the database correctly?

SBSO 004: We didn't really learn [landing immigrants] in the training. We just got put there, so that's also a whole other database that you have to learn for that. And same thing, no training on it. You just we had like a one-hour watching someone do it, but we didn't actually have any practice on it at all.

SBSO 005: I think an extra week of training would have been helpful, especially

to deal with the immigration stuff. So at least when we got there, we could just do

it right away rather than we retrained and take a couple of weeks to figure it out.

The above highlights inadequate training within the Student Border Services

Officer program. Many SBSOs described the training as minimal and noted it lacked

practical learning elements and hands-on training with databases. This training left

SBSOs underprepared for dealing with the public and CBSA databases, which could have

been resolved with additional scenario-based learning and an extended training program

to ensure SBSOs are adequately prepared for the job.

Cheap Labour

SBSOs are paid rather low wages for their work. To consider that the work these students

are undertaking is effectively offsetting full-time, higher paid BSO labour, what are the true

means to the end with this program? In order to best understand SBSO wages, it is important to

consider BSO wages. At the time of the study, a Trainee BSO made $69,423 to $77,302, in

addition to a $125/week living allowance and accommodations and meals while at the CBSA

College, while a full BSO made between $75,100 to $89,068, plus a bilingual bonus, if

applicable (Canada Border Services Agency, 2024). Under a new collective agreement ratified

on July 24, 2024, between the Government of Canada and the Public Service Alliance of Canada,

full BSOs will earn between $86,915 and $103,079 by the expiry of the agreement in 2025

(PSAC, 2024). Please note that these figures are base salary and do not include overtime, which

is a regular feature of 24-hour policing operations. Trainees will make between $80,344 and

$89,462 by the expiry of the collective agreement (PSAC, 2024).

In contrast, at the time of the study, a Student Border Services Officer makes between $16.00 (or minimum wage in their respective province) and $34.59 an hour based on level of education – this scale is universal across the federal public service for students, and for the sake of the SBSO program, the majority of hired students are undergraduates who will generally not exceed $25.52/hour. (Canada Border Services Agency, 2024). Though SBSOs do not work full-time year-round, translating this into an annual salary, allows for readers to understand the disparity between student and full BSO wages. This translates to roughly $33,280-$53,081 per annum assuming full-time employment – nearly half of a full BSOs wages (at best). Notably, SBSOs are not entitled to paid vacation, have limited opportunities for overtime and statutory holiday pay, and are only entitled to extended health benefits after three months of consecutive employment. Students employed within the program in the past reported to the researcher that there was formerly *no* extended health benefit entitlements regardless of length of service (i.e., those serving in the 2005-2010 era, including at land borders). Students are also not represented by the union serving to protect and represent full BSOs. Wages were not an initial question within the interview guide; however, wages were mentioned by nearly every former SBSO.

> **SBSO 004:** It's the federal government. You can't negotiate [pay] obviously…
> When I left, I was maybe getting $19.40-something an hour and I don't live with
> my parents anymore. I have bills to pay... The pay kind of is whatever - at least
> you're getting the experience. But for the job that you're doing, you deserve to be
> paid way more. We're getting paid the same classification as a student who sits in
> an office... [We have] risk… to some extent like we had a big responsibility - we

were wearing a uniform, we carried tools [of self-defence]. We could have had to use force. We could have had to arrest someone. Getting paid less than $20 an hour is crazy to do that.

SBSO 005: The biggest flaw [of the program] is the pay. I know some people think it doesn't really matter because there's experience. But I think once you get there and you see the work you have to do, I think you would want to be paid more for what you have to deal with… Minimum wage is not going to cut it.

SBSO 006: You're bringing these students in for the summer, some of them don't get renewed, yet they've seen everything, they know how the whole operation works, and then you're casting them aside, you're saying you're not working here anymore, that would be pretty dejecting. So, you could see how that could open the door for corruption on the other side of things once you're no longer working there and you, you owe no one anything within the agency anymore. So, are we serious about this program and making sure it's above board or is this just cheap labor?

The above highlights significant concerns with respect to compensation and job security within the Student Border Services Officer program. SBSOs felt that their compensation was not proportionate to the risks and responsibilities of their roles, in which they are trained in use of force and handling sensitive situations. Remarkably, SBSOs make the same as other Federal Student Work Experience Program (FSWEP) students working low-to-no risk office positions. While some former SBSOs saw the low

wages as a trade-off to valuable work experience, many note that the wages still are not

enough and are inappropriate for the type of work. Others note that the hiring of students

for these short-term positions with some being renewed and others being let go could

create an environment for corruption or other unethical behaviour rather than promoting

an above-board and ethical program.

Culture Issues

Like any workplace, CBSA is also susceptible to deficits in workplace culture. However,

students consistently reported a poor culture within CBSA over different ports of entries and

provinces, making this a worthwhile finding. When asked about their relationships with the full-

time BSOs, the SBSOs said the following:

SBSO 002: 80% of [the BSOs] were just there for a paycheque.

SBSO 003: there were quite a few officers that pretty clearly did not care. They

were just there because – whether it be the pension or whatever, they're just there

to work and that's it.

SBSO 004: Some of [the BSOs] are just kind of rude and not very helpful. Some

of them were nice and helpful. There is this one officer there who hates students,

and he made a girl on my team cry. Yeah, like there were instances where it was

more than just being rude. It was purposefully, obviously, disliking the students.

SBSO 008: They were very cliquey. There's a lot of different groups; there's the ones that train you, and they're very invested in you and everything like that because they take time out of their jobs to train people and they understand the significance of the student program as it helps with recruiting and they want to see new, effective, good officers. Others were totally indifferent towards the student - they don't necessarily dislike you, you're just not worth them getting to know you because they you'll be gone so soon. They'll work with you if you ask their help or their opinion on something like that. But they're not particularly friendly. And then there's the other ones that and would file grievances that students were taking positions away from full timers and taking away their overtime. Some of these full BSOs just see students as cheap labor to cut down on the overtime budget. So some would just be disgruntled and kind of, not necessarily hostile, but just not necessarily pleasant to be around as a student.

The above highlights strained relationships between Student Border Services Officers and full Border Services Officers, characterized largely by a lack of engagement by BSOs, who seem to be most motivated by their pay and pension rather than their job and their work environment. Many SBSOs noted unprofessional and hostile behaviours by BSOs, characterized by disrespectful, rude, and unhelpful behaviours. While some BSOs were spoken highly of and deemed to be supportive and helpful, these negative experiences severely outweighed the positives, resulting in multiple instances of toxic work environments and poor morale at ports of entry.

The existence of nepotism was also reported to be a significant part of the workplace culture at multiple ports of entry:

> **SBSO 002:** My [relationships with the full BSOs] were fantastic. We used to go for dinner, usually twice a week... It did sour, not because of me, but because the superintendent had [their child] working there - nepotism, right? And [they] would rat everything and everyone out to [their parent], so if a BSO said something to [them] and [they] didn't like it, [their parent] was acting chief, so the BSO would get in so much trouble and the BSOs started being cold to the students from then on, because they thought we were all snitches

> **SBSO 006:** What I noticed right away was that there is some nepotistic hiring going on, which is not a good thing, especially for public service and enforcement roles. One student at my port, I would describe as a complete putz. They only got hired because [they] had a parent who was relatively high up in the region, who everyone knew. No one liked [them] - the full-time officers did not like [them], the students did not like [them]. Yet, here [they are] working for this very serious, very important job all summer. And being a pain in the ass, right? That's a problem.

The above highlights concern over nepotism impacting the workplace, noted at

various ports of entry. Underqualified individuals hired as a result of their parentage impacted morale and soured relationships between BSOs and other SBSOs, and greatly undermined the merit of these roles in lieu of connections and favouritism.

Notable cases of favouritism within the workplace culture also emerged from participants working at certain ports of entry:

SBSO 004: Some students would get to go do secondary examinations – they would get to practice opening a bag, but it was always the exact same people that were getting those kinds of opportunities. We all got trained on x-raying bags, but before that - the favorite ones - they would get pulled to practice it and get to actually open the bag and search them. I never got to search the bag.

SBSO 003: The only thing we got to do was x-ray bags. If we ever saw something that was something worth looking at, we'd have to ask a BSO to open the bag because we weren't allowed to open bags. This is kind of a grey area though because there were some students that had - I don't know if it was like a favoritism thing - but some students were allowed to open bags but others were not.

The above highlights concern over favouritism at ports of entry. Particularly, that some SBSOs were chosen to complete hands-on non-SBSO tasks, such as secondary examinations,

while most SBSOs were not entitled to the same opportunities, leading to feelings of frustration, disappointment, and straining their relationships with one another.

Disorganization

CBSA as an organization seems to be plagued with a notable level of disorganization. From accountability to payroll to health and safety, there seems to be identifiable room for improvement. When asked what opinions participants were left with regarding CBSA as an employer, two participants reported not being paid on time due to internal system issues. One participant, a renominated SBSO, noted they did not receive payment until the end of summer, both summers they worked for CBSA as an SBSO.

SBSO 001: One overarching thing was disorganized. We didn't even get paid until after the summer… So, those of us that would quit your other jobs to go full-time [With CBSA], it was actually a challenge sometimes, you'd be like "hey, can I actually get a cheque here?" Because of payroll in Ottawa – and both summers it was like that. Every time they'd have to redo your authorization, it was a headache and your cheques would back up. Even trying to get new equipment or uniform pieces, it was so disorganized. You would have to drive to different ports because they might have a jacket for you there.

SBSO 002: They have a lot of work to do. They're disorganized. You're never paid on time… Phoenix [the payroll software] is a mess…
The class after us – they weren't paid for the whole summer; they got it at the end.

For us, the longest I waited was 3 weeks… Nobody holds them accountable and nobody is going to question them, so they get away with it.

The above highlights CBSA as an organization struggling with basic operations. Disorganization in payroll, leading to students not being paid on time, in addition to poor equipment distributed have led to dissatisfaction among SBSOs. Some note that the lack of accountability by CBSA is problematic, and that there is significant work to be done with respect to internal processes and accountability measures.

When asked about the tools and technology available to the SBSOs, SBSOs working at airport ports of entry reported radios (cell phones), however, they all reported a shortage of radios, which marked a notable health and safety concern for SBSOs and travelers:

SBSO 002: BSOs had work cell phones, but we had to share one per 2 SBSOs... Having one phone per two students was hard because if the phone dies or you misplace it… There were times where you didn't have a cell phone and there was an emergency, like some guy was having a seizure - he had epilepsy - but I didn't have a phone, so I had to leave him to go get one. Stuff like that happened more often than not.

SBSO 004: All the officers have radios, but the students had to split like in the summer. There could be like 15 or 20 students on shift and we'd have like four radios or five radios to split… Walking to and from stations by myself, I always

thought, it's not that far, but it's far enough that someone could just grab me right now and start fighting me and… no-one would know, unless someone is paying attention, because I don't have a radio.

The above highlights operational resource management and health and safety issues. The shortage of radios not only impacts the perception of SBSO safety, but also the efficiency of their work.

Fast Tracking Delays

One of the marketed benefits of the SBSO program is *fast-tracking* or *bridging*. This is the opportunity to go through an allegedly expedited process from student labour to full-time BSO employment. In theory, an easy in, however, in practice, apparently not particularly expedient. Only one of the 11 participants went on to become a full-time BSO. Three of 11 participants reported delays in the fast-tracking process, leading them to seek alternative employment in the criminal justice system. When asked if they had the opportunity to change something about the SBSO program, one SBSO said:

SBSO 007: Bridging into full time and making it more accessible… Some students were waiting for two years, three years to bridge over, which is ridiculous. They have all the experience of a full-time BSO, they wear the same uniform, same use of force training, authority, right? And you're actually working. Why is it such a challenge or uphill battle? For some [SBSOs] I've seen [bridge

to] permanent – they're not actually a student anymore. You're enrolled in a full-time [post-secondary] program just so you can keep the job status.

This was not the only SBSO that reported knowledge or experiences of SBSOs extending their studies just so they could stay employed with CBSA during the fast-tracking process.

Good and Worthwhile Experience to levy into other CJS opportunities

Overall, every participant noted that the SBSO program, despite its flaws, is a good worthwhile experience to levy into other criminal justice system opportunities. Of the 11 participants, two now work in law enforcement, one works in corrections, two are lawyers, one works for the federal government, one works in education, and four are still students vying for careers in the criminal justice system. When asked whether they would recommend the program to other post-secondary students, they said:

SBSO 001: Yes, I would, definitely. Especially those looking to get into law enforcement and I'm surprised that we don't see more of them [in law enforcement].

SBSO 007: Yeah, I always recommend it. I recommend it to a lot of young people I know who want to go into law enforcement. I say, it's a great experience to put on your resume. Then when you're in a police interview, you have a lot of scenarios to pull from, right?

SBSO 009: Yeah, I would, just the same as any FSWEP opportunity. It's a good

way – If that's what you're thinking, to try it out and see if you like it. But I would

also say that this isn't the whole world. If it doesn't work for you, there's lots of

other avenues in the law enforcement field…

The above highlights the program as highly beneficial to students. It provides students

with work experience and valuable skills, such as law enforcement techniques, use of force

training, and hands-on experience with the public that will significantly enhance their resumes

and make them more competitive in the job market, specifically within the field of law

enforcement, where much of their experience is directly transferable.

Theoretical Considerations

Governmentality

Foucault's theory of Governmentality examines power relations. Its aim is to explore how states seek to govern populations, including the examination of technologies used and ends to be achieved through the use of power. Governmentality is not strictly related to the state, as in "*government*", but can also be extended to government institutions and other stakeholders as participants in leveraging power over populations. Technologies, not to be confused with digital technology, exist as a means to achieve a form of end (Foucault, 1978). CBSA, for the purposes of this project, is a government institution, and throughout this project, the research aimed to uncover how CBSA governs the SBSO program and SBSOs. This study also considered the ends, or goals, of government sought by CBSA through the SBSO program.

This included the consideration of Senate subcommittee meeting minutes where questions were posed to CBSA executives and Customs and Immigration Union officials regarding the SBSO program. These minutes provide evidence that the SBSO program might partially serve as a means of leveraging cheap labour to fill scheduling gaps in covering full-time BSO summer vacations (Senate Committee on National Security and Defence, 2005). Responses from participants in this study (see above) provides further evidence of such claims.

Take the example of governance through punishment, which is a stark contrast from original punishment, which was often public executions and torture, to modern punishment. Modern punishment focuses largely on surveillance and rehabilitation. Disciplinary power exercised through modern punishment seeks to control a given population using tools, such as

surveillance and rules (Foucault, 1995). SBSOs are required to follow CBSA and Federal Public Service codes of conduct, which in this context would be construed as technologies, and are expected to conduct themselves appropriately throughout their employment. Insubordination is not tolerated and can lead to punishments such as suspension or even termination. One SBSO reported the following:

> **SBSO 002:** We lost the ability to work [statutory holidays] by the time I left…
> The BSOs were mad that students were working them, so they complained and
> the students got taken off of stats. Some senior SBSOs went to a superintendent
> and complained, because they had already turned down plans, and they were
> really banking on having the money from working, especially because you don't
> get vacation, sick leave. The superintendent was like "Alright, I hear you", but
> nothing happened. One of the SBSOs was really close with the chief - the chief
> used to be superintendent - so he decided to go to him to talk about the situation
> since his superintendent didn't do anything. The chief followed up with the
> superintendent and the superintendent said to the SBSOs "You went above my
> head, that's not acceptable…" … and these students who had been there for 5-6
> years were suddenly let go for *Bad Behaviour… S*ome of them were our student
> mentors… Their fast-tracking applications were pulled. Their psych evals were
> done, everything, and the superintendents went out of their way to pull their
> applications

> **Alexis:** Oh, so the *bad behaviour* is insubordination?

SBSO 002: Exactly, yeah, and apparently that's not something that the agency

wants, so that's why they call it *bad behaviour*.

Postmodernism

Postmodernism assumes that there are no universal understandings or truths, rather that

everything is subjective and shaped based contextually on the experiences of individuals

(Lyotard, 1979). Consider how the contexts of SBSO experiences can shape their identities and

behaviours. There is no such thing as a universal SBSO experience. The training, the interactions

with superiors, full BSOs, travellers, etc. – these are not universal. The identity of an SBSO is

created based on their individual experience of working as an SBSO. This can be impacted by

considerations such as who their superiors want them to be as an employee, the interactions they

have with travellers they encounter, and their general on-the job experiences and specific duties.

SBSOs also have a great deal of autonomy and exercise discretion every day on the job. Personal

biases can unknowingly lead an SBSO's decision-making process and result in an imbalanced

power dynamic between an SBSO and the travelling public. For example, SBSOs leverage

significant discretion in considering whether or not to refer a traveller to secondary inspection,

whether or not to charge duties and taxes, and so forth. Mandates and expectations by Ottawa,

superiors, ports of entry, and other parties can lead to rushed interactions that could jeopardize

public safety and leave SBSOs in an ethical grey area. This could result in rushing primary

inspection or, for example, BSOs not taking SBSO referrals to secondary seriously. One SBSO

said:

SBSO 007: [There's a real focus on] speed, but you can even see the contrast between the CBSA and the CBP (USA - Customs and Border Protection). The Americans are very much like, no, this is our country, we're not going to be pushed around by the airport, we're going to do our job and we're not going to work on [the airport's] clock, we're going at our own pace. But CBSA gets bullied by the airport. The superintendent or a chief is running around worried about wait times. A lot of the BSOs feel like Rigaud is now being thrown out the window, because you don't even have time to do your job, you're just like a Costco receipt checker. You're just checking receipts. You're not even asking [travellers] any questions.

Another noted:

SBSO 002: When you're in the classroom setting, of course you can take 3-5 minutes to make a decision, but when you're at the airport acting as a referral officer [conducting primary inspections], your interactions should only last 10-15, maybe 30 seconds, so you need to make a decision quick, but especially when you're new, that's so hard, and you're going to fall on your stereotypical biases to help you make those decisions and start really relying on those a lot more than you think that you would

Alexis: Do you feel as though they didn't sufficiently prepare you for that process?

SBSO 002: Well, they did, but what they taught us was horribly racist… Like Filipinos always lie to you – they always have food, stuff like that. Or the Mexicans aren't here to be tourists, they're here to [work]. Stuff like that.

Alexis: Okay, so they hit you with stereotypes and basically said if you see people with these passports –

SBSO 002: Send 'em in.

A number of SBSOs reported that BSOs glossed over their secondary inspection Referrals (not taking student referrals seriously). When asked about it, one SBSO said:

SBSO 004: Oh yeah, like every single time.

Alexis: Yeah?

SBSO 004: I'm not referring [someone] unless there's something glaringly off about them. I feel like I had a good grasp on what the norm was and what to actually look for… As students, I felt that we were held to a higher standard, so I would build up multiple indicators - I would refer people that were in a drug source country, someone else bought their ticket. They were there for three days. They can't tell me what they did. They're traveling by themselves – and because you could check on the database when they got released, they'd get released

within like 5 minutes of you referring them… Not everything is going to be

resultant. Obviously, you're going to refer people that probably up to no good and

they don't have anything on them, so nothing can be done. We would get about

10,000 travelers a shift, you start to learn really quickly what the normal is and

what isn't and like if you're referring things that are abnormal, it's really

frustrating to see them just walk out the door.

Discussion

Potential CBSA Policy Implications

More Definition and Less Student-Only Posts

A more streamlined definition of the Student Border Services Officer role is required. The role and responsibilities for SBSOs should be clearly defined and documented, providing no opportunity for ambiguity in regards to expectations and job performance, and ensuring that all SBSOs perform only their job functions, elimination favouritism.

Student-only positions are problematic, as they are viewed as a reflection of cheap labour, where students are being placed in roles that could otherwise be performed by more qualified Border Services Officers. Student-only run positions undermine full BSO labour, subsidizing full-time roles with cheap student labour, undoubtedly impacting the quality and consistency of these positions at ports of entry.

Eliminating student-only positions would ensure that there are always experienced and appropriately trained individuals working each position, promoting more consistency, and additional resources for SBSOs on the job.

Training Review

Based on my conversations with former SBSOs, there was a lot left to be desired in respect to the classroom training, particularly the lack of time and lack of access to training resources relevant to their port of entry including scenarios and/or simulation-based training and databases to practice on.

I suggest that CBSA Increase SBSO training by 1-2 weeks for more in-depth learning into heavily nuanced concepts, such as immigration and other legislation, in addition, to allow time for practice in sandbox-like environments (which require creation), where SBSOs can practice on mock databases (i.e., ICES, IPIL, FOSS, ORS, etc.) using mock documents, rather than being exposed to these databases for the first time on the job and forcing port BSOs, who are already overextended, to retrain students. More in-depth simulation training is also required. Simulation training is one of the most important training tools to successful public service work. By role-playing prospective scenarios, students can gain hands-on experience, understanding, and confidence in difficult situations before ever having to do so in the field (Pearson, 2012). Simulation can use peers, instructors, or trained actors to present realistic scenarios, giving participants real-world experience and the opportunity to hone skills they otherwise would not get to practice, all within a safe environment where trial and error, and overall learning are encouraged (Havig et al., 2020). Practitioners learning how they respond in simulations often strongly correlates to how they will respond in the field, so being able to experiment and practice critical thinking skills within a multitude of simulations is invaluable (Baker, 2007). Full BSOs at CBSA College practice frequent simulations, so SBSOs should be afforded the same opportunities for success.

Wage review

The continuation of low SBSO wages could have a number of consequences for CBSA going forward. Wages should be proportionate to the duties, responsibilities, and risks of the role. The current wages fail to account the differences between one student doing administrative

work at a desk versus another student carrying tools of self-defence. These positions are not parallel, so the pay should not be parallel.

Poor pay may result in low morale and less job satisfaction, which may result in decreased quality of work, which is not conducive to border work. Given near minimum wage roles often fail to keep up with rising cost of living, this could result in increased financial stressors and desperation, which could breed corruption and unethical behaviours among SBSOs, which are not conducive or beneficial to the organization.

Poor wages may also increase turnover in SBSOs. Some interviewed SBSOs stated one of the major reasons they left CBSA was for higher paid opportunities. Ironically, high turnover generally costs an organization more money than paying their people appropriately in the first place. Significant costs are associated with recruitment and training, so perhaps, a budget for retention is warranted. Working to divorce SBSO salaries from the rest of the Federal Student Work Experience Program would bring significant benefit to CBSA in terms of employing students in the future at higher wages.

Fast-Tracking review

Fast-tracking should be a more expedient process given this is one of the major highlights of the program. Fast-tracking should be streamlined and expedited process to avoid lengthy delays. If students face unreasonable delays in the fast-tracking process, they may decide to take their experience elsewhere, which is a huge loss of experienced potential BSOs for CBSA. These unreasonable delays may also damage the Student Border Services Officer

Program's reputation and make it less attractive for prospective applicants vying for careers with CBSA. It is not realistic for SBSOs to pay to extend their studies unnecessarily to maintain employment with CBSA during the bridging process. Should CBSA not be able bridge SBSOs expediently, perhaps the creation of a transitional program would be appropriate, in which post-secondary graduate SBSOs who are waiting to bridge to full-time BSO labour are able to continue working for CBSA.

Health and Safety Review

SBSO referrals to BSOs at secondary inspection should be considered appropriately and fully every time. SBSOs without proper training may make nuisance referrals, causing backlogs in secondary inspection and creating a large strain on resources. However instead of having a bias toward all referrals from students, additional training for SBSOs making nuisance referrals should be identified and training for those individuals should be reviewed. SBSO referrals should be considered with the same respect as those coming from BSOs, as current practices are unsustainable. Within this current practice, serious referrals may be missed, which could compromise security at the borders and the purpose of the organization. In addition, multiple SBSOs reported feeling undervalued and frustrated when their referrals were not considered. This may also result in SBSOs not making necessary referrals, compromising organizational safety.

Additional radios should be made available to ensure SBSO and traveller safety at all times. The lack of technological resources may lead to communication breakdowns and compromise SBSO and traveller safety in critical incidents.

Areas for future research

Examination of ATIP Files related to the SBSO program

It is anticipated that these files will greatly expand knowledge of the Student Border Services Office Program, in addition to insights into the program's operational details, decision-making processes, and areas of concern that are not presently publicly available. It is anticipated that such files will likely confirm and provide additional context regarding some of the concerns raised by participants in this study.

In-depth analysis of SBSO and BSO training materials

Conducting an analysis comparing and contrasting the training materials used for both Student Border Services Officers and Border Services Officers can reveal gaps, inconsistencies, or areas for enhancement in the training programs; this could be used to improve upon both training curricula. It is anticipated such an analysis will confirm several of the gaps in training identified by participants in this study.

Current SBSO perspectives on the program

Feedback from current SBSOs would be valuable on numerous fronts; specifically in learning the most up-to-date information on the program and finding out was currently is and is not working within the present program. While this study is, of course, limited to the perspectives of former SBSOs no longer employed by CBSA, it is anticipated that many of the gaps identified in this thesis likely still persist within the SBSO program.

BSO perspectives of SBSOs

Learning from BSOs how they work with and interact with SBSOs would be inherently valuable. Learning the dynamic between the two roles, and how BSOs perceive the SBSO role, its strength and flaws. These insights could identify ways to enhance the working relationship between SBSOs and BSOs, creating a better and healthier working environment.

CBSA Culture

Exploring the culture within CBSA could reveal how organizational values, norms, and practices impact the SBSO program and overall performance of SBSOs and BSOs. This examination, as above, could help by addressing issues with employee engagement and foster a positive working environment.

CBSA Oversight

Analyzing the oversight and governance structures within CBSA can provide insights into how effectively the SBSO program is monitored and evaluated. Ensure mechanisms for oversight are in place can help ensure that the program operates with transparency, accountability, and adherence to best practices.

Conclusion

This study has provided an in-depth examination into the Student Border Services Officer program, offering never-before documented insights and experiences from former SBSOs. Through in-depth qualitative interviews and discourse analyses, a number of key themes surrounding this program have been identified, including potentially insufficient training, cheap labour, and the expectations and realities of this work.

The findings highlight a significant discrepancy between the program's marketing and the actual lived experiences of participants as former student employees within the program. This discrepancy suggests that the SBSO program may need to revaluate and enhance its training protocols to better prepare students for their roles. Additionally, the study underscores the importance of considering the broader social, political, and cultural implications of border security practices, as reflected in the experiences of the participants.

In addition, the study has emphasized the need for more robust and transparent Access to Information landscape. The absence of data can significantly impact research outcomes and should be addressed to ensure a more informed public discourse, as originally intended by to Access to Information Act.

To conclude, this research contributes to the ongoing conversation about border security and the undiscussed role of student officers within this context. By shedding light on the experiences and perspectives of former SBSOs, this study aimed to inform future policy decisions, enhance program effectiveness, and promote a more nuanced understanding of the complexities of border security.

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Appendix A

<u>**RECRUITMENT LETTER**</u>

Hi (***Insert Name of Potential Participant***),

My name is Alexis Watt and I am a current Bachelor of Arts (Honours) student working under the supervision of Dr. Patrick Lalonde, a faculty member in the Department of Criminology and Legal Studies at Douglas College and former Student Border Services Officer. The reason that I am contacting you is that I am conducting a study that examines the Student Border Services Officer Program through the Federal Student Work Experience Program and administered by Canada Border Services Agency. I am seeking volunteers who were formerly employed as Student Border Services Officers with CBSA as participants for this study. Participants from all ports of entry from any region in Canada are welcome. Participants may be English or French speaking.

Participation in this study involves participating in a one-to-two hour interview with the researcher online, or in another location mutually agreed upon. Your identity and all information you provide during the interview will remain strictly confidential. The interviewer will ask participants questions regarding SBSO training, SBSO duties, SBSO perceptions of the program and work performed, overall experience within the program, and more.

This study has been reviewed by and received ethics clearance through the Douglas College Research Ethics Board.

I should inform you that under the TCPS 2 ethics guidelines, it is not necessary for researchers to seek the approval of organizations / agencies to conduct studies in cases where the research involves critical inquiries (as this study does). "Critical inquiry" (as defined by TCPS 2) involves a social sciences or humanities researcher seeking knowledge that serves to critique or challenge the policies and practices of institutions, governments, interest groups, or corporations. <u>CBSA is therefore not collaborating in this research</u>.

In an attempt to mitigate risks to participants, the following participant protections are in place:

1) After initial contact, the researchers will assign you a unique coded identifier (i.e., SBSO 001, SBSO 002, etc.) that will be used when referring to you in schedules and other physical and electronic documents (including transcribed interviews). The researchers will never associate your name or contact information anywhere with your unique coded identifier.

2) The researchers will <u>always</u> arrange for interviews to be conducted in private locations agreeable to both you (the participant) and the interviewer.

3) If you choose to participate in this study, you will be furnished with an Information and Consent Form and asked to give an oral declaration of consent. This protection means that neither your name nor signature will ever be recorded on any form or physical and/or electronic document.

4) If you consent to your interview being recorded, the audio files from your interview will be transferred immediately from the recorder and stored on the researcher's password protected / encrypted external hard drive and will only be kept long enough to transcribe results and then will be deleted. Typically, this process will be completed within one week of the completion of the interview.

5) The researcher will <u>always</u> redact (delete) all possible identifying information (including mentions of ports of entry, officer identities, geographic locations, etc.) from quotations in interview transcripts to further protect the identity of all participants (and any non-participant SBSOs or BSOs you happen to mention during your interview). If you wish to redact any information during or immediately after the interview, you have the right to inform the researcher of this decision and said information will be redacted from the transcript. You may inform the researcher of any necessary redactions up to one week after receiving your copy of the transcript (see point # 6 below). All electronic data will therefore be completely anonymized (after assigning unique identifiers and redacting potential identifying information in the transcript).

6) Shortly after the interview is completed, the researcher will also email you (the participant) a copy of the interview transcript in order to allow the participant to: 1) correct / clarify any incorrect information, and 2) also remove any information the researcher may have missed redacting that you feel may compromise your confidentiality (or the confidentiality of others not involved in the interview). Please note, emailing of transcripts may pose risk to anonymity, outside of the researcher's control. If you wish you may opt out of receiving the transcript via email, you may elect instead to review the transcript in person, or you can otherwise opt to not read over the transcript and simply inform the researcher during or immediately after the interview which sections of the transcript you wish to have redacted.

7) All transcripts and data sets will remain the exclusive property of the researchers and will not be sent to other researchers or outside of Douglas College. The transcripts and data sets will be retained indefinitely on an encrypted and password protected computer in a locked office (N3439) at the Douglas College campus.

8) During your interview, you will be asked to recall some of your experiences working as an SBSO. This may result in the resurfacing of unpleasant memories or experiences. To some, this may cause discomfort or distress. Mental health resources will be listed and available to all participants, if necessary.

If you are uncomfortable with the potential risks outlined above or any of the aforementioned precautions taken by the researcher to mitigate these risks, it is your right to choose not to participate or otherwise to withdraw your participation at any point during the study.
If you are interested in participating, please contact me directly at watta1@student.douglascollege.ca and list the top three days of the week / times you are potentially available for an interview. I will then send a confirmation email indicating that you have been scheduled for one of those times and inquiring as to where you wish to have the

interview conducted. If for whatever reason you have to cancel your appointment (or no longer wish to participate), please email me at watta1@student.douglascollege.ca or contact me directly via my cell phone (listed below).

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns about this research, you may also contact my supervisor - Dr. Patrick Lalonde at lalondep@douglascollege.ca

All the best,

_____

Alexis Watt
Bachelor of Arts Applied Criminology (Honours) Student
Douglas College
Department of Criminology & Legal Studies
700 Royal Ave, New Westminster, BC V3M 5Z5

Appendix B

INFORMATION & CONSENT LETTER FOR INTERVIEW

Douglas College

Date

Dear *(insert participant's name):*

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study I am conducting as part of my Bachelor of Arts (Honours) thesis in the Department of Criminology and Legal Studies at Douglas College under the supervision of Dr. Patrick Lalonde, a faculty member in the Department of Criminology and Legal Studies at Douglas College and former Student Border Services Officer. I would like to provide you with more information about this study and what your involvement would entail if you decide to take part.

While recent research on borders, more specifically, Border Services Officers (BSOs), have done an excellent job at examining important topics, such as BSO relationships with the travelling public (Lalonde, 2019), and the ever-changing nature of the role (Côté-Boucher, 2018), studies have yet to shed light on the Student Border Services Officer (SBSO) program administered by Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) under the Federal Student Work Experience program (FSWEP). This program, while directly marketed to students in post-secondary institutions, remains under-examined in an academic research and public knowledge context. The purpose of this study is to conduct an in-depth examination of the SBSO program and gain the perspectives of former SBSOs to facilitate a thoughtful analysis of the program.

This study will focus largely on your experiences while working as an SBSO, including, but not limited to: your training, your duties, perceived challenges and successes, and your takeaways from the program.

Participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately one-to-two hours in length to take place online or in a mutually agreed upon location. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences by advising the researcher.

With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded to facilitate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the interview has been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript (if you elect to receive it) to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study, however, with your permission anonymous quotations may be used. Resulting transcripts and data sets will remain the exclusive property of the researchers and will not be sent to other researchers or outside of Douglas College. Only researchers associated with this project will have access. The transcripts and data sets will be retained indefinitely on an

encrypted and password protected computer in a locked office (N3439) at the Douglas College campus.

There are no anticipated direct benefits for participants in this study.

I should inform you that under the TCPS 2 ethics guidelines, it is not necessary for researchers to seek the approval of organizations / agencies to conduct studies in cases where the research involves critical inquiries (as this study does). "Critical inquiry" (as defined by TCPS 2) involves a social sciences or humanities researcher seeking knowledge that serves to critique or challenge the policies and practices of institutions, governments, interest groups, or corporations. <u>CBSA is therefore not collaborating in this research</u>.

In an attempt to mitigate risks to participants, the following participant protections are in place:

9) After initial contact, the researchers will assign you a unique coded identifier (i.e., SBSO 001, SBSO 002, etc.) that will be used when referring to you in schedules and other physical and electronic documents (including transcribed interviews). The researchers will never associate your name or contact information anywhere with your unique coded identifier.

10) The researchers will <u>always</u> arrange for interviews to be conducted in private locations agreeable to both you (the participant) and the interviewer.

11) If you choose to participate in this study, you will be furnished with an Information and Consent Form and asked to give an oral declaration of consent. This protection means that neither your name nor signature will ever be recorded on any form or physical and/or electronic document.

12) If you consent to your interview being recorded, the audio files from your interview will be transferred immediately from the recorder and stored on the researcher's password protected / encrypted external hard drive and will only be kept long enough to transcribe results and then will be deleted. Typically, this process will be completed within one week of the completion of the interview.

13) The researcher will <u>always</u> redact (delete) all possible identifying information (including mentions of ports of entry, officer identities, geographic locations, etc.) from quotations in interview transcripts to further protect the identity of all participants (and any non-participant SBSOs or BSOs you happen to mention during your interview). If you wish to redact any information during or immediately after the interview, you have the right to inform the researcher of this decision and said information will be redacted from the transcript. You may inform the researcher of any necessary redactions up to one week after receiving your copy of the transcript (see point # 6 below). All electronic data will therefore be completely anonymized (after assigning unique identifiers and redacting potential identifying information in the transcript).

14) Shortly after the interview is completed, the researcher will also email you (the participant) a copy of the interview transcript in order to allow the participant to: 1) correct / clarify any incorrect information, and 2) also remove any information the

researcher may have missed redacting that you feel may compromise your confidentiality (or the confidentiality of others not involved in the interview). Please note, emailing of transcripts may pose risk to anonymity, outside of the researcher's control. If you wish you may opt out of receiving the transcript via email, you may elect instead to review the transcript in person, or you can otherwise opt to not read over the transcript and simply inform the researcher during or immediately after the interview which sections of the transcript you wish to have redacted.

15) All transcripts and data sets will remain the exclusive property of the researchers and will not be sent to other researchers or outside of Douglas College. The transcripts and data sets will be retained indefinitely on an encrypted and password protected computer in a locked office (N3439) at the Douglas College campus.

16) During your interview, you will be asked to recall some of your experiences working as an SBSO. This may result in the resurfacing of unpleasant memories or experiences. To some, this may cause discomfort or distress. Mental health resources will be listed and available to all participants, if necessary.

If you are uncomfortable with the potential risks outlined above or any of the aforementioned precautions taken by the researcher to mitigate these risks, it is your right to choose not to participate or otherwise to withdraw your participation at any point during the study.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about your participation, please feel free to contact me by phone at 604-762-4181 or by email at watta1@student.douglascollege.ca. You can also contact my supervisor, Dr. Patrick Lalonde at lalondep@douglascollege.ca.

This study has been reviewed by and received ethics clearance through the Douglas College Research Ethics Board, although, your decision to participate remains yours alone. Should you have any ethical concerns surrounding your participation in this study, feel free to contact Dr. Niki Huitson (Chair, Research Ethics Board, reb@douglascollege.ca)

I have great hope that with your participation, the results of this study can bring great benefit to prospective SBSOs and the research community as a whole.

I look forward to hearing from you and sincerely hope to speak with you soon. Thank you in advance for your assistance in this study.

CONSENT FORM

By verbally acknowledging your consent to items presented in this consent form, you are not waiving your legal rights or releasing the investigator(s) or involved institution(s) from their legal and professional responsibilities.

_____

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Alexis Watt and Dr. Patrick Lalonde of the Department of Criminology & Legal Studies at Douglas College. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted.

I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be audio recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses.

I am also aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in the honours thesis and/or publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous.

I am aware that CBSA is not collaborating in this research.

I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher.

This project has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Douglas College Ethics Review Board. I was informed that if I have any comments or concerns resulting from my participation in this study, I may contact Dr. Niki Huitson (Chair, Research Ethics Board, reb@douglascollege.ca)

With full knowledge of all foregoing, do you agree, of your own free will, to participate in this study?

☐YES ☐NO

Do you agree to have your interview audio recorded?

☐YES ☐NO

Do you agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any thesis or publication that comes of this research?

☐YES ☐NO

Do you wish to receive a copy of your interview transcript via email after the interview?

☐YES – VIA EMAIL

☐YES – IN PERSON

☐NO – I DO NOT WISH TO RECEIVE A COPY OF THE TRANSCRIPT VIA EMAIL OR IN PERSON

Participant Coded Identifier: _____ (Please print)

Witness Name: _____ (Please print)

Witness Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix C

Interview Guide

1. How long did you work with CBSA as an SBSO?

2. What year were you hired? What year did you stop?

3. Type of port of entry? (Mailroom, land, airport?)

4. Tell me about your prior work experience?

5. Tell me about your educational background? (program/institution?)

6. Did you know anyone who worked for CBSA before you applied/started in the program?

7. How did you hear about the program?

8. What made you want to apply to the program?

9. Was your goal to work for CBSA specifically, or were you open to any FSWEP placement?

10. What kind of training did you receive from CBSA?

11. How long was your training?

12. Who trained you? (Trainers vs standard BSOs)

13. What specifically did you learn during your training?

14. Do you feel as though your training sufficiently prepared you for the role? Why or why not?

15. What areas did you feel like you lacked training in?

16. Tell me about some of your favourite parts of SBSO training?

17. Tell me about some of the most difficult parts of SBSO training?

18. If you had the opportunity to change something about the training (add/remove/alter) what would it be?

19. How were your first few days/weeks on the job?

20. Tell me about your experience of job shadowing or mentorship, early on in your role

21. Can you describe your average shift? In terms of duties, assignments, etc…

22. Tell me about some of your favourite duties/experiences

23. Tell me about some of the duties/experiences you found to be most challenging

24. Were you ever in a situation where you felt unprepared? Underprepared? Tell me about that

25. Were you ever in a situation where you felt endangered/unsafe/intimidated/scared? Tell me about that

26. How often were you engaged in enforcement actions on the job? (Seizures, etc…)

27. If applicable, do you have any memorable stories you would like to share about your experiences dealing with enforcement actions?

28. If applicable, how often were you engaged in immigration matters?

29. If applicable, how did you feel about being directly responsible for the result of immigration claims, removals from Canada, etc…

30. If applicable, do you have any memorable stories you would like to share about your experiences dealing with immigration matters?

31. What were your relationships like with the full BSOs?

32. What were your relationships like with your superiors?

33. What kind of supervision did you have? When were you supervised?

34. If applicable, what was your experience of working with the public like?

35. If applicable, how do you feel that the travelling public perceived this role? (Patient? Supportive? Overly critical?)

36. What technology/equipment were you exposed to on the job?

37. What percentage of your duties would you estimate necessitated the use of technology?

38. What do you see as the pros and cons to the use of technology on the job?

39. What are some of your most memorable experiences/incidents from on the job?

40. If you had the opportunity to change something about the SBSO program (add/remove/alter) what would it be?

41. Going into the program, did you intend to continue on as a full BSO?

42. After completing the program, how has that changed, if at all?

43. What are you doing now?

44. What are your current career aspirations?

45. What skills/abilities did you take away from this work?

46. To what extent do you feel that that those skills have transferred into your current role?

47. What opinions were you left with regarding CBSA as an employer?

48. Based on your experiences, would you recommend this program to other post-secondary students?

49. Is there anything that I haven't asked you about, that you would like to share with me about your time with CBSA as an SBSO?

Appendix D

Dear *(Insert Name of Participant),*

I would like to thank you for your participation in this study entitled **"Analysis of Student Border Services Officer Program"** (tentative title). As a reminder, the purpose of this study is to conduct an in-depth examination of the SBSO program and gain the perspectives of former SBSOs to facilitate a thoughtful analysis of the program.

If you experience any level of discomfort or distress resulting for your participation in this study, please consider obtaining assistance from the following resources:

For Douglas College students, please visit the following websites:

https://www.douglascollege.ca/student-services/student-support/counselling/contact-counselling

https://www.douglascollege.ca/student-services/student-support/counselling/additional-counselling-crisis-support-resources

For all participants, please visit the following website to identify the best resource for you:

https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/mental-health-substance-use/resources

If you experience a life-threatening mental health crisis and require immediate support, please call 9-1-1.

I would ask that you please not discuss your participation in this interview or the content of questions posed with other former SBSOs. This is important in order to ensure: 1) your personal confidentiality as a participant in this research is maintained, and 2) that you do not possibly contaminate the results of interviews with future potential participants in this study. Please also remember that CBSA is not collaborating in this research.
The precautions discussed previously have and will continue to be made by the researchers to ensure your confidentiality. Please refer to your copy of the information letter for a comprehensive list of these precautions.

Shortly, it is my intention to send you an email containing the transcript of your interview. Please feel free to read over the content and contact me back within one week of receiving the transcript if information is incorrect or if you wish to make any clarifications and/or additional statements. Additionally, if the transcript contains any information that you feel could compromise your confidentiality (or the confidentiality of others) after publication of the results, please email me with any suggested deletions (which I will of course remove from the transcript immediately after). **If you change your mind after the conclusion of the interview and no longer wish to receive an emailed copy of the transcript, please inform me immediately.** You can also elect to not review the transcript at all and simply inform me within one week of the conclusion of your interview if you wish to have anything removed.

Please remember that any data pertaining to you as an individual participant will be kept confidential. Once all the data are collected and analyzed for this project, I plan on sharing this information with the research community through seminars, conferences, presentations, and journal articles. If you are interested in receiving more information regarding the results of this study, or would like a summary of the results, please visit the Douglas Open Repository (DOOR) at https://dc.arcabc.ca on or after the anticipated completion date of August 31, 2024. Alternatively, please feel free to email or call the researcher at the contact details below after the conclusion of the study and results will be provided to you directly.

In the meantime, if you have any questions about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me by email or telephone as noted below.

As stated elsewhere, the researcher will remove all information that could identify you from the data collected soon after transcription (usually within one week of you receiving your copy of the transcript) and delete it permanently. You can withdraw your consent to participate and have your data destroyed (or edit any comments you made) by contacting the researcher within this time period. After this time, it is not possible to withdraw your consent to participate as the researcher has no way of knowing which responses are yours. Additionally, you will not be able to withdraw consent once papers and publications have been submitted to publishers. The researcher will destroy the data. All records are destroyed according to Douglas College Policy

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns about this research, you may contact my supervisor - Dr. Patrick Lalonde - at lalondep@douglascollege.ca

This study has been reviewed by and received ethics clearance through the Douglas College Research Ethics Board, although, your decision to participate remains yours alone. Should you have any ethical concerns surrounding your participation in this study, feel free to contact Dr. Niki Huitson (Chair, Research Ethics Board, reb@douglascollege.ca)