The Edmund Rice Police Recruit Program

A Case Study of the Collaborative Program between Edmund Rice Camps Tasmania and Tasmania Police, as a means to meet Contemporary Demands of Police Education

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Endelig står jeg inde for, at antal ord anført på forsiden stemmer overens med virkeligheden.

Abstract

Denne kandidatafhandling præsenteres som et case studie af et politituddannelsesinitiativ udarbejdet i samarbejde mellem *Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies*, *Tasmania Police* og *Edmund Rice Camps Tasmania*. Initiativet *the Edmund Rice Police Recruit Program* er et tiltag, hvor politistuderende ved *Tasmania Police Academy* sendes på en weekends-lejr, for at træne kommunikationskompetencer i samvirke med sårbare unge som led i deres undervisning omkring udsatte populationer og nutidige sociale problematikker. Initiativet blev igangsat som en måde at imødekomme nye krav til politiet som profession, som blandt andet indebærer større professionalisme og bedre håndtering af socialt udsatte populationer. Som et middel til at imødekomme disse nye krav er fordelene ved videregående uddannelse som et supplement til politiuddannelse i stigende grad blevet anerkendt. Afhandlingen vil præsentere et afgrænset litteratur review, der kontekstualiserer initiativet i forhold til det overordnede problemfelt. Herunder indgår: en historisk oversigt over kriminalitetskontrol samt politiuddannelse; en ny konceptualisering af begrebet 'sårbar/udsathed'; samt en kort oversigt over det anspændte forhold mellem politi og unge. Med afsat i dette undersøger afhandlingen, hvordan *the Edmund Rice Police Recruit Program* påvirker politistuderendes holdninger til udsatte unge og deres opfattelse af politiets rolle i forbindelse hermed, samt om programmet kan fungere som et middel til at imødekomme nye krav til politiet.

Specialet tager udgangspunkt i data fra en evalueringsrapport af programmet, herunder: 3 semi-strukturerede interviews, 1 fokusgruppe interview, 2 observationer samt statistisk data fra en større survey-undersøgelse blandt de politistuderende. Ved brug af den adaptive tilgang præsenteres en gen-analyse af ovenstående data, hvor der blandt andet perspektiveres til koncepterne *refleksiv læring* og *refleksion-i-handling* af henholdsvis John Dewey og Donald A. Schön, som et relevant teoretisk perspektiv.

Gennem analysen fremtræder et overvældende positivt syn pa initiativet, både fra de politistuderendes samt studiekoordinatorernes perspektiv. Programmet vurderes til positivt og omkostningseffektivt at kunne bidrage til de studerendes læring gennem praksis. Lejrene fungerer som en øjenåbner, både i forhold til studiemæssige teorier samt som indsigt til sårbare sociale grupper. Afslutningsvist pointeres at afhandlingen ikke inkluderer data til at analysere virkninger pa længere sigt, hvilket anbefales for fremtidig forskning.

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1. Introduction

Police recruit training has significantly evolved as a result of many years of research, evaluation and advocacy (Bartkowiak-Théron, 2019). As the scope of the police profession has expanded through time, so has the demands on what skills and knowledge police are required to have (Rogers & Wintle, 2020). As a means to meet these new demands, the benefits of higher education as an addition to police training has been increasingly acknowledged amongst stakeholders (Paterson, 2011). Topics relating to vulnerable people, cultural competency, critical analysis of vulnerability and partnerships have now, to a larger extent, been included in the police curriculum (Bartkowiak-Théron, Asquith & Roberts, 2017). Despite such progress, a number of steps remain to be taken, in order to better familiarise future police officers with the reality of vulnerable people's life experiences. Exposing police officers to vulnerability issues at an early stage has shown to be beneficial, as a means to better prepare them for working in the field (Bartkowiak-Théron & Layton, 2012b). Previously this focus in the training of police recruits has had limited feasibility, for various reasons, such as the many risks involved, pragmatic and financial limitations, as well as a conflicting interest in curriculum designing (Mahony & Prenzler, 1996; Birch, Kennedy & Kruger, 2020). To overcome this, Tasmania Police recently found a way to expose recruits to vulnerability issues, specifically around youth, in a relatively risk-free environment. Since 2014, recruits at the Tasmanian Police Academy have been participating in a weekend camp, managed by Edmund Rice Camps Tasmania, with some young people from extremely disadvantaged backgrounds (Tasmania Police, 2019b). For the years 2015 until 2018, data has been gathered from recruits and course coordinators with the aim to evaluate the program from a teaching perspective, to decide whether to officially add the program to the police education's curriculum. This report represents an 'extension' to this evaluation, to offer a deeper empirical investigation and re-analysis of the data. Therefore this thesis is presented as a case study of the *Edmund Rice Camp Tasmania (ERCT) Police Recruit Program* as a training component for police recruits at the Tasmanian Police Academy, as a means to improve education of police to accommodate for contemporary demands of the police profession.

In this thesis, I will: (1) outline my research question and provide a brief background to the ERCT program, including the key stakeholders; (2) place the ERCT program in the meta context of crime control policy, entrenched social vulnerabilities and relationships as well as

analogous police-youth engagement initiatives; (3) provide a detailed description of the methodology and methods underpinning this research, including a statement of researcher positionality; (4) outline the theoretical perspectives deemed relevant to this research question; (5) analyse the utility of the camps in exposing police recruits to vulnerability issues amongst young people, impacting police recruits attitudes associated with vulnerable young people. Furthermore, this section will analyse and discuss the possible benefits of including the ERCT program into police recruit curriculum; as well as a brief presentation of study limitations and future research direction.

1.1 Research Question

On the basis of the above, this thesis will present a case study, and address the following research question:

> *How does the Edmund Rice Camp Tasmania Police Recruit Program impact police recruits' understanding of vulnerable youth and their perception of the police practice? And is the program relevant to contemporary police practice/policing?*

1.2 Stakeholders

The ERCT police recruit program is a collaboration between Tasmania Police and the Edmund Rice Camp Foundation in Tasmania. The program is run as part of the course *"HSP332 - Contemporary Social Issues and 'At Risk' Populations B*", taught at the Tasmania Police Academy, by researchers from University of Tasmania. Later, a detailed description of the program is presented (see section 2.4). Below is a description of the involved stakeholders.

1.2.1 Tasmania Police and the Police Academy

In Tasmania it is possible to apply for police recruitment directly after high school, as long as the applicant is 18 years of age at commencement (Tasmania Police, 2018b). Accepted recruits will study at the Tasmanian Police Academy for 31 weeks, where they are required to complete 15 units of the 24 unit Degree "*Police Studies*" (Police Studies, 2021). In addition to this, recruits go through training in weapons, fitness and drill exercises. Once accepted into the

Tasmania Police recruit program, recruits are automatically enrolled in the University of Tasmania's Bachelor's Degree in Social Sciences (Julian & Adams, 2010). They complete two-thirds of the degree in those 31 weeks, and exit the Police Academy as Constables, with an Associate Degree which they finalise after their first year in the field. Should they wish to go any higher than the rank of Constable, they have to finish their Bachelor's Degree in Police Studies, which progresses incrementally according to the Tasmania Police promotional pathway (Julian & Adams, 2010; Tasmania Police, 2019a).

1.2.2 Edmund Rice

The *Edmund Rice Camps* is a non-profit community-based organisation, functioning all over Oceania (Edmund Rice Camps, 2020). All Edmund Rice Camps programs, whether they are actual camps or not, focus on supporting marginalised and/or minority groups to participate in fun and safe environments of acceptance, challenge and growth (Edmund Rice Camps Tasmania, 2015). The specific camp-programs are initiatives to invite young people on a holiday experience they would not otherwise have the opportunity to take part in. In Tasmania, these camps are offered to 7-16 year-olds, predominantly from marginalised or disadvantaged backgrounds[1]. The camps are usually run by young adult volunteers that strive to be attentive role models and mentors, who reinforce positive behaviour for the children whilst maintaining a friendly, fair and supportive discipline (Edmund Rice Camps Tasmania, 2015). In 2014, Edmund Rice Camps Tasmania (ERCT) introduced a collaboration with Tasmania Police, involving police recruits in the camps as part of their training. ERCT Executive Officer Andrew Blackett elaborates on this partnership:

> "*As many of these children's families often have negative contact with the police, this mini-camp was both a positive interaction as well showing the new recruits the human face of children in need*" (Edmund Rice Camps Tasmania, 2015).

[1] I acknowledge that this expression is not favoured by ERC, and that the vernacular used by ERC staff revolves around 'young people', 'young leaders', with no reference to vulnerability issues, in order to avoid harmful labelling and further stigmatisation of groups. The expression is used throughout this thesis to describe the situation faced by these young people on a daily basis.

The camps provide recruits with a unique training opportunity. While the participating youth experience a fun and activity-filled weekend, the police recruits develop skills in engaging with and understanding young people. Furthermore, for these young people, such an environment also has the potential to break down traditional perceptions of police, cultivating more positive associations (Tasmania Police, 2019b).

1.2.3 UTAS, TILES & HSP332

Since the 1990s, the University of Tasmania (UTAS) has been collaborating with Tasmania Police to administer a tertiary education for police. Since the early 2000s, this collaboration has been administered by the police-sponsored research centre at UTAS; the Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies (TILES). As former Director of TILES, Roberta Julian explains, the aim with this collaboration from the University's perspective is "(...) *A quest to professionalise police in Tasmania"* (Police Studies, 2021). It is TILES' mission to incorporate research into police practice, and the collaboration allows academics to work hand-in-hand with police officers at all rank levels (Bartkowiak-Théron, McShane & Knight, 2020). TILES' purpose at the Police Academy is to educate recruits in a number of social science areas, to equip police with better perspectives e.g. on dealing with vulnerable people, as well as teach them to better address social disadvantages (Riley, Curtis, & Julian, 2017). The partnership between Tasmania Police and the University is now entering its 26th year, and is the longest-running police–academic partnership across all Australian states and territories (Bartkowiak-Théron, McShane & Knight, 2020). TILES is also in charge of the specific unit that has run the ERCT police recruit program, HSP332. The HSP332 course "*Contemporary Social Issues and 'At Risk' Populations B*" is a unit that teaches complex social issues concerning diversity and discrimination based on age, ethnicity, sexuality, gender and mental and physical disabilities (HSP332 - UTAS, 2021). Prior to the involvement of ERCT, the course was strictly theoretical and recruits were assessed through an academic report, with no practical element. The formal learning outcomes for HSP332 are as follows:

1. Demonstrate and apply knowledge of the key concepts and theories related to the subject matter, by understanding the influence of historical and societal factors on policing practices and understanding transformation movements and trends in policing.

2. Compare, contrast and evaluate concepts, theories and case studies related to the subject matter, by articulating policing theories and practices and critically analysing the implementation of policing theories.
3. Undertake secondary research using information literacy skills related to the subject matter.
4. Students should be able to demonstrate critical analysis of policies and procedure, according to their various contexts and the social events, cues and development that have shaped public policies. A thorough understanding of equity principles is essential for the critical analysis of people's access to services. Students are to be able to articulate the ideas of 'access to services', and notions of 'equity', as they feature in policies and procedures directed at disadvantaged social groups (HSP332 - UTAS, 2021)

2. Contextualising the Project and the Program

The purpose of this section is to clearly describe the empirical subject area, in which the case finds itself. Below, an overview placing the relevance of this project in a larger contemporary context will be presented. The overview starts broadly with the evolution of Crime Control Policy, Policing and Police Education. Subsequentially, relevant considerations around the concept of vulnerability in the context of modern policing will be introduced. Following this, a short general description of the relationship between police and youth is provided. Lastly, the ERCT police recruit program is presented, including an overview over similar programs, to place the program in the context of other police-youth programs.

2.1 Crime Control Policy, Policing and Police Education

The motivation behind the development of most criminological theory and research is to learn how to better control crime (Cullen, Agnew & Wilcox, 2014). Therefore, many criminologists are working, not just out of academic interest, but with the aim to impact and improve crime control policies. This does not necessarily mean that policy-makers primarily base crime control on the findings and implications of this research. Factors such as popular perceptions of what works, general views on appropriate reactions, political and lobbying considerations,

and cost considerations play a heavy role in crime control policy (Cullen, Agnew & Wilcox, 2014). Up until the 1970s, crime control was said to be based on rehabilitation, although the reality did not seem to match the philosophy, and there was little effort made to support meaningful rehabilitation of offenders (Cullen, Agnew & Wilcox, 2014). In the 1970s, this effort came under heavy criticism, as crime rates were on the rise and the political climate seemed to move toward a more conservative approach. Crime control strategies shifted towards heavier punishment and an emphasis on being 'tough on crime'. During these times, policing was built on a framework of maintaining a visible presence in the community and police recruits were trained through a quasi-military style based on an authoritarian system of command and discipline (Walker, 1999). These are all elements that have formed the framework of modern policing. This shift in crime control resulted in increased imprisonment, both in numbers of incarceration and the length of sentences (Cullen, Agnew & Wilcox, 2014). Furthermore, it made it 'easier' to charge criminals and try juvenile offenders as adults. This also fostered a shift towards a youth justice, where youth is perceived as rational people, and offending is a choice (Cunneen et al., 2015). As such, one of the key focusses becomes holding young people accountable for their offending behaviour. From a policy perspective, there was little acknowledgement that crime may be derived from social issues or vulnerabilities, and likewise no political motivation to direct the crime control measures towards these issues. As a consequence, neither did police training include any of these aspects (Walker, 1999; Bartkowiak-Théron & Layton, 2012). Up until the 1970s, less than 200,000 Americans were imprisoned, but as a result of this shift in policies, the numbers heavily increased. Today, more than 2.3 million Americans are held in the American Criminal Justice system (Sawyer & Wagner, 2020). This reflects a rise from ≈100 per 100,000 before 1970 to ≈700 per 100,000 in 2020, in spite of there being relatively little research supporting incarceration as a crime preventing measure (Lipsey & Cullen, 2007; Nagin et al., 2009). In fact, labelling theories have for many years argued that this type of public 'accusing' only serves to exacerbate the issue of delinquency and crime (Lemert, 1951; Becker, 1963; Akers, 1985; Paternoster & Iovanni, 1989; Goffman, 2009). It has been argued that relocating funds from incarceration into more crime *preventative* measures, and thereby reducing imprisonment, could potentially lead to lower crime rates (Durlauf & Nagin, 2011; Braga & Weisburd, 2010). Crime prevention sits next to crime control measures and are often initiated outside of the formal justice system (Welsh & Farrington, 2012). In spite of an ongoing push from research, strongly underlining the importance of prevention as a crime reducing measure, policymakers seem to insist on maintaining this distinction, which views prevention initiative as alternative approaches to the

more ‘traditional’ responses to crime, rather than a means to ‘control’ it (Clarke, 2009; Welsh & Farrington, 2012). The direction of police education, has likewise been a hot topic and heavily criticised for many years (Sherman, 1978; Bartkowiak-Théron, 2019). Historically, the origins of police education lies in the aim to create ‘*disciplined bodies’* and, in most cases it has stayed this way to some extent (Foucault, 1977; Bartkowiak-Théron & Layton, 2012). In Australia, prior to World War II, police training involved daily participation in one to two hours of law school, then physical training, followed by police station work/training. In post-war times, police training involved two weeks of initial training, followed by nine months at the station, and six weeks of training in law, procedures, reports, weapons training and drill exercises (Lusher, 1981). Less than five percent of the curriculum was oriented towards social and cultural factors of vulnerabilities (Bartkowiak-Théron & Layton, 2012). Over time, connections developed between regular apprenticeship systems and police training. However, the periods of training and workplace experience were so infrequent and short, that learning outcomes were limited. In 1991 in New South Wales in Australia, a new Police Recruit Education Program, based on problem-oriented learning, was introduced. In 1997, it was recommended that education of police recruits be placed in the hands of universities to avoid professional insularity, and a new, comprehensive curriculum was designed (Wood, 1997). For the first time, the education program explicitly involved issues around vulnerable populations. Specifically, it acknowledged and included teaching around how some minorities or disadvantaged social cohorts are particularly vulnerable to extortion and corrupt police conduct, simply because of limited resources, cultural backgrounds, or unfamiliarity with the English language (Wood, 1997; Bartkowiak-Théron & Layton, 2012). This social and cultural aspect of the police scope has recently started to become more acknowledged in global law enforcement. As such, during the past 10 years theoretical and empirical research have been reinvigorated in police education (O’Shea & Bartkowiak-Théron, 2019). This development has likewise increased the amount of interest groups wanting to contribute to a debate about what police education should look like. Today a considerbale amount of scholarly literature exists on the topic of police education, both from researchers, policy makers and practitioners (Cordner, 2016; O’Shea & Bartkowiak-Théron, 2019). In the field, police officers have also had to adapt to new demands of professional standards, accountability, skills, and competencies, due to a larger span of the police profession’s scope (Jones, 2015). Today it is now far more acknowledged that contemporary police education should be mixed with higher education, and most police education across Western countries collaborates with formal education institutions in some form or another (Bartkowiak-Théron, 2019). However, this does

not mean that higher education has been successfully embedded into all aspects of policing. In many cases the contemporary police curriculum is still largely based on a framework of weapons training, fitness and drills (Bartkowiak-Théron & Layton, 2012; O'Shea & Bartkowiak-Théron, 2019). Due to conflicting traditions, the collaboration between police training and higher education institutions can be divided, and sometimes troublesome. From a police perspective, there is a tendency to focus on implementing conservative professional norms in the design of curriculum, rather than to encourage change and development of the profession (Bartkowiak-Theron, 2019). This likely stems from the long-standing belief that the skills and knowledge required by the profession are best understood and defined by experienced police in the field, and not academics (Karp & Stenmark, 2011; O'Shea & Bartkowiak-Théron, 2019). It is important to consider how police education can integrate and encourage development, while still giving credence to traditional education values. So, how does police education design a curriculum that increasingly encourages development and embraces a new, larger police scope, while (critically) including old police traditions, but without allowing them to stay the dominant norm? To start answering this, first we must take a closer look at some of the specific aspects traditional police education has failed to incorporate into their practice. Farrington and Welsh (2007) argue that to foster good and efficient crime-preventative and -reducing policy and policing, you must inevitably focus on the causes as the first step. Today, 75% of all police encounters are said to be represented by 'vulnerable populations' (Bartkowiak-Théron & Layton, 2012). But what is vulnerability and how do you police it?

2.2 Policing Vulnerability

Leaders in policing have been challenged by social disadvantage in Australia. For a long time (Sunderland & Stewart, 2020). Although it is recognised that even with support of designated programs and initiatives, some social groups struggle to progress, law enforcement still fails to reverse disproportionate rates of offending and incarceration of vulnerable populations, especially amongst young members of these groups (Sunderland & Stewart, 2020). These social disadvantages can consist of (but are not limited to): chronic health problems, educational disadvantage, financial dependency on welfare, mental health illness, etc.). Police literature over the past 50 years have focused extensively on the historically tense relationship between police and some disadvantaged groups, such as young people, people living with a

mental illness, and cultural minorities. Surprisingly, a very large proportion of literature focuses on how these vulnerable groups feel about police, and very little research since the 2000s is specifically dedicated to police perceptions of these communities, and how to pre-emptively address possible negative predisposition towards them (Bartkowiak-Théron, Asquith & Roberts, 2017). It is argued that Since the 1870s, Australian legislation has done little to distinguish between neglected children from youth offenders (Cunneen, White & Richards, 2015). This highlights a general marginalisation and criminalisation of the lower class, especially youth (Birch & Sicard, 2020). Training is one of the many first possible steps towards addressing social bias amongst police (Bartkowiak-Théron & Asquith, 2012b). However, educating police about vulnerability is a complex process, with harm minimisation essential for non-police and police alike. What makes this particularly complex is the history of long-standing stereotypes associated with both groups. Reiner (1998) suggested that police see vulnerabilities in others by way of social distinctions, including 'police property' (scum, radicals, gays); 'rubbish' (domestics); and 'disarmers' (worthy victims). Further, they see themselves as 'macho' - that is, without vulnerability. It is probable that past police education has contributed to these stereotypes (Walker, 1999; Bartkowiak-Théron & Layton, 2012).

Literature relating to the over-representation of vulnerable people in the criminal justice system have been published for more than five decades (Bartkowiak-Théron, Asquith & Roberts, 2017). However, vulnerability has only in more recent times become an increased concern in policy, as well as a focus for action in policing and law enforcement. In light of this, a renewed conceptualisation and understanding of what vulnerability is, have started to improve the efforts in relation to policing practice, justice and other areas of government. The traditional understanding of vulnerability focussed primarily on minority groups with specific characteristics, such as gender, race and religion (Fineman, 2008). This has also been the way most law enforcement organisations have approached (and still do in many cases) the concept of vulnerability. As such, vulnerabilities were generally considered to be everything beyond the scope of what was traditionally considered as normal or mainstream. This exclusive understanding of the term has been heavily criticised and has recently shifted considerately (Bartkowiak-Theron, Asquith & Roberts, 2017). Now, the concept of vulnerability, within policy and legislation, is broadened to a wider scope of individual and social characteristics that can be seen as a 'disadvantage', including specific circumstances around age, indignity, mental illness, race/ethnicity, cognitive impairment, disability, homelessness, sexuality and/or

gender identity, and addiction. In policy, this has merged into normative categories that designates those individuals, police are expected to manage with more care (Bartkowiak-Theron, Asquith & Roberts, 2017). However in reality, this normative targeted categorisation contributes to a problematisation of 'differences' and obscures those types of vulnerability that fall outside the categories. In other recent developments, the term 'person at risk' has been reintroduced into policy, signifying that policing should protect certain people who may be in vulnerable circumstances. While this is a move away from the normative categorisation approach, this approach is very limiting in the way that it only ascribes vulnerabilities to *certain* people, in *some* circumstances. In that perspective, it is left to practitioners, such as police, to assess what constitutes these certain people, based on their own perception of risk. Ironically, the presence of police in itself, often constitutes circumstances that can make some people more vulnerable in the situation. As an alternative, Bartkowiak-Theron, Asquith and Roberts (2017) recommends a more universal vulnerability understanding, which acknowledges that vulnerability is a fundamental trait of the human condition, and that social structures and institutes need to be responsive to this. It is therefore suggested that the concept of vulnerability is expanded from a narrow set of marginalising individuals traits, to a fluid set of universal attributes that shift over time (Luna, 2009; Bartkowiak-Theron, Asquith & Roberts, 2017). These can be considered as:

- *A causal factor to criminal behaviour (such as addiction)*
- *A product of the criminal act (such as physical assault)*
- *A product of the policing process (such as profiling, over-policing or under-policing)*
- *A consequence of the punishment process (such as the aggravation of a mental health condition)*
- *A consequence of the constant confrontation of others' vulnerability (such as vicarious trauma)* (Bartkowiak-Theron, Asquith & Roberts, 2017).

With this new conceptualisation of vulnerability, it is therefore also necessary for police practice to shift focus. This approach automatically considers the ways policing in itself can create vulnerability, but equally important, how new processes and approaches in policing can eradicate or at least reduce the vulnerability that may arise during police encounters (Bartkowiak-Theron, Asquith & Roberts, 2017). Thorneycroft (2017) describes how the *social model of disability* has changed the way disabilities are seen in society. Today it is

acknowledged that society and its institutions are what creates the conditions in which physical disabilities become vulnerabilities; and therefore the society is also responsible for 'fixing' the problem. Therefore, today we have more and more disability friendly architecture and physical and sight impairment are accommodated for as a default in building designs Thorneycroft, 2017). In the same way, the policing world requires to be re-engineered to accommodate for a default experience of vulnerability (Bartkowiak-Theron, Asquith & Roberts, 2017). But how can this best be done? Vulnerability is fluid and can be increased or mitigated many times during one single policing encounter (Roberts, 2017). As such, encounters with vulnerability can require police to be able to assess multiple layers of vulnerability (preceding, arising, or as a consequence of something that just happened). It also requires police to be able to assess the severity of each layer, to identify the most appropriate and safe response. However, addressing social determinants of safety is not the work of police alone, as there exist many other services professionalised in all sorts of different vulnerabilities. Therefore, it is an important aspect of policing that officers remain aware of these specific services within the community, as they will most often be first responders to a case with a vulnerable person (Bartkowiak-Théron & Layton, 2012). Their preparedness for these complex encounters with vulnerabilities, determines their capacity to develop the interagency link required and get the right support according to the specific incident. This means that firstly, police officers must able to address the acute problem by identifying vulnerability layers, and responding accordingly to keep everyone safe and de-escalate any pressing situation. Secondly, they must be able to move beyond this stage and link appropriate services accordingly. This requires an advanced understanding of vulnerabilities, as many psychological vulnerabilities, such as traumas, are 'hidden' and can easily slip through a first responder's risk assessment (Bartkowiak-Theron, Asquith & Roberts, 2017). In this context, teaching cultural competence and raising socio-cultural awareness has been one of the steps undertaken to meet public demands for a more educated, and more understanding police force (Bartkowiak-Theron, 2019). However, it is acknowledged that this is still not enough (Grossman, 2013). A study of general recruit community placements in Australia have suggested that recruits to a high extent used their placement experiences to reflect on their own lives, and that these reflections are likely to affect the ways in which they conduct themselves as police (Layton, 2004). For several recruits, the exposure to real-life social vulnerabilities changed the way these recruits perceived their prospective police role, manifesting a greater social awareness and empathy. As such, exposing police at an early stage to real life social disadvantage seems an ideal method to trigger more empathy on the part of serving police. Further, as suggested by Wooden (2020) adding a

complex communication strategy to police curriculum can help police education improve. One recommended way to do this is through authentic real-life encounters and interactions during training. Wooden also suggests that the police force overall could benefit from embracing the professional practice of being "*reflective practitioners*" (Wooden, 2020). However, whilst agreed upon in principle, it has been hindered by many structural barriers and organisational obstacles (Bartkowiak-Théron & Layton, 2012).

With the trials of the ERCT police recruit program, Tasmania Police have opted for a non-confrontational and cost-efficient initiative that allows recruits at the police academy to better understand where some social disadvantage stems from, and how it impacts vulnerable individuals. This initiative seems to have been successful, and to have affected recruits in a positive way at the Tasmanian Police Academy. Further, it could represent a compromise between traditional police training and higher education. The program, which will be explained in detail (see section 2.4), exposes recruits to a young vulnerable cohort as part of their training. This specific cohort represents vulnerabilities on multiple layers. Firstly, the involved youth all come with a background that one way or another, puts them at a 'disadvantage' (such as mental illness, abusive living conditions, being poor, substance abuse in the family, etc.). Secondly, they all represent another layer of vulnerability because of their age.

2.3 Police and Youth

The juvenile justice system in Australia has gone through significant changes over the past 30 years (Birch & Sicard, 2020). However, the overall approach signifies contradictory coexisting policies, that both represents a resurrection of the 'tough on crime' approach, as well as a more progressive aim to reduce the number of institutionalised youth. As such, there has been a growing focus in media on anti-social behavior amongst youth, that is often mistaken for delinquency (Pryor & Paris, 2005). However, as the name suggests, anti-social behavior constitutes as a violation of social norms and morals, not criminal codes. As such, there is an overlap with what may currently be viewed as acts of anti-social behavior and what may also be considered crime. Examples on perceived anti-social behavior include: harassment, racial abuse, vandalism, noise nuisance, graffiti, threatening behavior in large groups, substance abuse, joyriding and vehicle crime (Pryor & Paris, 2005). This is an indication that the Australian Government view anti-social behavior as an issue that lies within the criminal justice system, rather than for example something to be dealt with within the framework of support

and welfare services. Unfortunately, this contributed to a tense relationship between youth and law enforcement. Studies that have examined the relationship between age and attitudes towards police, consistently find that young people generally hold more negative and critical attitudes towards law enforcement and are less likely to trust and support police compared to other age groups (Hurst & Frank, 2000; Friedman, Lurigio, Greenleaf, & Albertson, 2004; Chow, 2011). However, since the early 2000's, there has been a paucity of research on police perceptions of youth (Bartkowiak-Théron & Asquith, 2012). Nevertheless, some research exists that shows how youth are more often approached by police compared to other age-groups. In 2005, an article from the U. S. The Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics revealed that residents in the age groups of 18 to 19 and 20 to 24 had the highest rates of contact with police in the United States of America; with about 1 for every 3.1 persons and approximately 1 for every 3.2 persons, respectively (Durose, Schmitt & Langan, 2005). To put that into perspective, for American residents at the age of 50 or older, the contact rates were about 1 person for every 7.1 persons. In Australia for the financial year of 2019-2020, the offender rate for the youngest age group (15-19 years) was the highest out of all age groups, with a rate of 3,775 per 100.000 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021). The rate steadily falls as the age group rises, with the second highest rate being 3,265 for the 20-24 year-olds, and 2,802 for 25-29 year-olds, and so on (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021). As previously touched on, from a theoretical perspective, this public shunning of delinquent behaviour, often only serves to exacerbate the issue by 'categorising' youth (Lemert, 1951; Becker, 1963; Akers, 1985; Paternoster & Iovanni, 1989; Goffman, 2009). Labelling troubled youth may result in adoption of a deviant identity, social exclusion and seeking out others in similar life situations, which all can lead to further reinforcement of that deviant behaviour (Akers, 1985). A more recent American study looked into the specific relationship between formal police contact and youth propensity towards deviance, which presented a clear correlation between the two (Wiley & Esbensen, 2016). In line with what some labelling theories suggest, the findings from this study confirms that simply being stopped by the police may inadvertently have negative consequences for youth and can actually contribute to increased delinquent behaviour and attitudes (Wiley & Esbensen, 2016). This is quite concerning, particularly in light of the aforementioned statistics suggesting that youth are experiencing more formal contact with police than other age-groups (Durose, Schmitt & Langan, 2005). It is even more concerning, in light of the debate of the vulnerability concept, where it is explained how such encounters can be potentially harmful and escalate if police are not trained to act accordingly (see section 2.2). This emphasises the need for better ways for police to engage with youth, which is based

on understanding and appreciation of vulnerabilities and youth-specific issues. To resolve this issue and close the gap between young people and the police, it will not be sufficient to simply focus on youth's attitudes towards police. Rather, addressing the complicated and challenging relationship between law enforcement and youth requires mutual and cooperative effort. As described in "*Educating for Vulnerability*":

> *"If [ed. police] students are to appreciate the ways in which the 'other' is framed, they must recognise the complexities of social interaction and the difficulties of achieving mutual understanding"* (Bartkowiak-Théron & Layton, 2012).

An Australian study from 2008 found that informal contact with police can enhance young people's attitudes towards police in general (Hinds, 2009). Informal contact is understood as casual contact outside formal police operations, i.e., engaging in educational workshops, mentoring, or other activities not in a professional capacity. Similar findings have been confirmed in a more recent study from Canada (Leroux & McShane, 2017). This Canadian study suggests that the impression towards police that young people form during adolescence can not only determine whether or not that youth chooses to engage in juvenile activities, but can also impact long-standing perceptions of police legitimacy. Police legitimacy was identified as the biggest predictor of young people's willingness to assist police in the Australian study of youth attitudes towards police. However, the Canadian study, similarly to the Australian study, found that willingness to support police was enhanced for young people that took part in police mentoring-based activities, irrespective of their prior judgement of police legitimacy (Hinds, 2009; Leroux & McShane, 2017). This is an indication that projects, like the ERCT police recruit program, have the opportunity to positively influence youth attitudes towards police, by introducing a structure where youth and police can interact in a positive informal manner. However, as stated above, it will not be sufficient to simply focus on improving youth-attitudes towards police. Accordingly, this is neither the main aim with ERCT police recruit program. Rather, the program's key intention is to improve the police recruits' attitudes and understanding of youth.

2.4 The ERCT Police Recruit Program

2.4.1 The Program

So what is the ERCT police recruit program specifically? The ERCT police recruit program is set up as a two-night long camping trip, where each recruit is partnered up with a child/youth, based on a mentoring-structure, as recommended by the literature (see section 2.3). To reinforce the informal nature of this police contact, to accommodate above recommended approaches, the participants are initially unaware that their paired leaders are police recruits, until the last day of the camp, where the recruits present in their uniform. In the same way, the police recruits are not informed of any circumstances around the participating youth's upbringing or personal circumstances, in an effort to avoid or minimise any preconceived labelling or pre-dispositions. The camps complement the Police Academy course HSP332, on vulnerabilities and how to engage with vulnerable and underprivileged people (see section 1.1.3). Prior to the camp, all recruits also have to sit through a briefing session to learn about the camp objectives and motivations. Here, the group will discuss expectations and consider important factors, barriers, and opportunities for positive outcomes of the camps. After the camp, recruits likewise go through a debriefing session to discuss the camp in detail and reflect upon the experience, as well as link the experience to the course content. Both of these components of the program are essential. The pre-camp briefing prepares the recruits for the challenging task of supporting potentially vulnerable young people, while the debrief is for feedback and to work through and acknowledge any emotional reactions or questions raised as a result of the experience. During the debrief, recruits also discuss how the experience, and associated learnings, can be utilised in their future work as a police officer.

2.4.2 Placing the Program in the Landscape of Similar Programs

The following section is the product of a short literature overview of similar programs, to place the ERCT police recruit camps in the context of comparable police mentoring initiatives for youth. While there are numerous comparable programs around the world, for the purposes of this thesis, I present only the most relevant projects. This includes initiatives within Tasmania and broader Australia, as well as two pertinent programs in the United States of America, selected out of nine identified programs. The American programs are included simply for comparison, as police mentoring programs are not yet very common in Australia, while the

USA offers a broader range of different programs involving police and disadvantaged youth. A comparison to the ERCT police recruit program is presented to contextualise the project and highlight its unique features. The presentation of the programs will mainly focus on the following: The structure of the program; the focus-group of the specific program; and the main aim and motivation behind the program. The overview only includes programs specifically involving at-risk youth and police, where the approach is mentoring-based, or camp-based police-youth projects, structurally similar to the ERCT police recruit project.

The **Police and Community Youth Clubs (PCYC)** is well-known in all states of Australia and represents the largest youth organisation in the country (Tasmania Police, 2016a). In Tasmania, PCYC offers a wide-range of supportive activities for youth, and outreach programs to remote places and identified areas of need. Although PCYC Tasmania presents various genuine programs aiming to support disadvantaged youth and enhance the relationship between young people and police, they currently do not offer programs specifically focussed on mentorship with police. PCYC did however develop a program incorporating adventure-based learning, mentoring and individual support, which was offered in Tasmania from 2016 to 2018. This was called **Project Booyah** and involved a 20-week program with support from Police Officers, TasTAFE teachers, an Adventure Intervention Worker and a Save the Children Youth Worker (Tasmania Police, 2016b). The project was designed to help at-risk 16–19-year-old persons reconnect with family, community, and education, to avoid or halt cycles of anti-social behaviour, substance misuse, self-harm and crime. Unfortunately, in spite of it being perceived as a very successful program by all involved (Tasmania Police, 2016b), the program was shut down in 2018 due to lack of continuing government funding (Tasmania Police, 2018a).

Another Australian program to include is **The Blue Light Alternative Strategies for Teenagers (BLAST)** program, which is probably the most comparable to the ERCT police recruit camps. BLAST similarly offers a 3-day/2-night camp experience for young people (Blue Light Youth Camp, 2020). The program has been delivered in multiple communities in Victoria for a number of years, and offers an early intervention and prevention model, which aims to reduce the costs of courts, incarceration, and post release support. The program invites all youth age groups from all factions of society. BLAST activities are specifically aimed at

providing participants with strategies to improve their self-esteem and sense of belonging in their community, while fostering rapport between youth and local police members. It is the only identified program, other than the ERCT police recruit program, that intentionally aims at impacting both the young people and the police officers participating in the camp. However, an important distinction between the two programs is the voluntary nature of police officer involvement in the BLAST camp. This is most evident by the fact that police officers managing the BLAST project, have all signed up for the project themselves, in contrast to the police recruits partaking in the ERCT camps as part of their education plan.

In the USA, a similar program is **the Indian Youth Explorer's Police Academy (IYEPA)**, which is also a sleep-away camp program. It is specifically focused on Native American law enforcement and is managed by the Nez Perce Tribe's police department in Idaho. The camp invites young people to participate in a weekend where they will be introduced to police procedures, while also engaging in fun activities. The purpose is to provide a fun weekend for the kids, but it is also a cultural introduction and means to strengthen bonds within the community (Police Youth Programs, 2020). Although this program in its camp-structure is similar to the ERCT police recruit program, the aims are rather different, as the two projects target different issues. The IYEPA reaches out to a broad scale of youth, mainly to promote native law enforcement, while the ERCT police program is exclusively offered to disadvantaged youth, to foster awareness amongst recruits. However overall, the main aim of both programs is to bridge the youth-police gap and break down barriers of predispositions and labelling on different levels.

The IF project is another American project centred around the in-person interaction between law enforcement and youth. The name refers to the '*what if*' question that often follows going down an unlawful path**.** This project is managed by the Tacoma Washington Police Department's Juvenile Unit, and collaborates with schools, juvenile court, and mental health providers. The program is aimed at at-risk youth and their families. It puts kids from the focus group in contact with ex-offenders and relevant social services, as part of a mentoring program, while the kids' parents or guardians receive guidance from police officers. This approach is rather distinguished from the ERCT police recruit program, as it focuses on crime prevention more explicitly. Of all the initiatives identified, the IF project is the only program that includes ex-offenders. With this approach, the IF program is, in contrast to most of the

other presented programs, not envisioned as a 'fun' engagement, but one that points out the seriousness of bad decisions (Police Youth Programs, 2020). This direct approach is interesting, especially in light of the debate on whether singling out or labelling 'at-risk' individuals actually promotes delinquent behaviour, rather than preventing it (Akers, 1985; Paternoster & Iovanni, 1989; Goffman, 2009).

To sum up and place the ERCT police recruit camps in the context of similar youth-police projects, a few things make the program stand out. As previously mentioned, the ERCT police recruit camp is not just intended as a one-way mentoring opportunity for youth. It is mainly intended as a practical part of the police recruits' training, where the recruits are introduced to young people, from a social cohort who statistically are more likely to engage with police in the future (Durose, Schmitt & Langan, 2005). Police officers taking part in any of the other presented projects, can undoubtedly still experience an unintentional impact on their professional principles, but the aim specifically to influence the police approach as a whole, is an important distinction for the ERCT police recruit project. This leads to the other important distinction. Importantly, the ERCT police recruit program includes all recruits in the Police Recruitment Course. This means that all new Constables in Tasmania Police since 2014 have gone through this experience, which is unique to tertiary police education in Australia (Julian & Adams, 2010). All other presented programs are based on either volunteers, or a few select police officers. Therefore, any impacts on participating police officers, will only reach a fraction of the police department as a whole for these. It is also fair to assume that most police officers volunteering or choosing to be part of mentoring-programs like these, already have knowledge or personal interest in dealing with youth and youth-specific problems. To even begin to scratch the surface of disentangling the long-standing, complicated relationship between deviant or anti-social behavioural youth and police (see section 2.3), there is a need for a change in overall attitudes amongst police officers. The ERCT police recruit program is presented as a first step in achieving this in Tasmania. However, there is always a risk of labelling, when offering programs that seeks to influence a specific vulnerable cohort (Wiley & Esbensen, 2016). Even the recommended informal contact through mentoring programs, can potentially cause harm when it is a targeted one-way approach from police towards youth. However, the ERCT police recruit is not a one-way approach, where the police seek to change the young participants, rather the opposite. At the same time, it is an important element of the program, that the fact that recruits are recruits remains undisclosed until the last day of the

camp, as well as the recruits are not aware of the youths' background (see section 2.4.1). This is another unique feature of the ERCT police recruit project, and one which stands out amongst the presented programs, that all explicitly promote their program as a '*police*' and/or '*at-risk youth'* program. This fosters a meet-in-the-middle approach and can potentially enhances the feeling of equality between the youth and their paired mentor. It further cultivates an even more informal setting, which is described as vital for forming positive attitudes towards law enforcement (Hinds, 2009).

3. Methodology and Methods

The methodology of this report integrates quantitative and qualitative data to provide an in-depth understanding of the impact of the ERCT police recruit program. The majority of the data has been collected by UTAS in the years 2015-2018, with the intention to analyse a greater amount of data across multiple groups of police recruits to evaluate the program. It is important to note that as the author of this report, I have not been part of the larger data collection process, but have been given access to the raw data. Permission to use this data was granted for the purpose of this thesis, as well as to fulfill my duties as TILES/UTAS research employee in preparing an evaluative report in collaboration with Tasmania Police and the ERCT. I contributed to the data with my own ethnographic perspective from observations of one briefing session and one debriefing session. In the following chapter I will briefly describe the structural decisions of the data collection for background, whilst putting a larger emphasis on the reflections behind the data-analysis process for this thesis specifically. As this thesis represents a case study and a re-analysis of the data, this is where the methodological focus will be.

3.1 Researcher Positionality

Empirical data is the result of interpretation. Therefore it is important to pay attention to theoretical assumptions, pre-understandings and the importance of language (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009). Especially in qualitative research, we are always *re*-presenting our own and others' experiences and interpretations from a particular perspective and based on the available language (Hayward & Cassel, 2018). To add honesty and transparency to research, the

researcher should be upfront and subject their own positionality to scrutiny. This is important in understanding the conditions of the knowledge production in the specific study (Hayward & Cassel, 2018). As such, I intend to outline my position as a researcher in this specific case and disclose any areas of conflict. This is however not to belittle or degrade the quality of the study, but simply because it is important to understand the circumstances of the knowledge production in this specific thesis (Hayward & Cassel, 2018).

For the purpose of the initial evaluation, one of the reasons I was given the job was to bring an additional layer of analysis. I represented the only person in my research team at TILES who was not involved with any of the involved parties, as I did not currently teach recruits, interact with police coordinators or Edmund Rice personnel, and nor am I involved with any of the youth participating in the program. So in that way, there was potential for me to bring in an element which could broaden the initial ethnographic scope of the evaluation towards an analysis that was more centred around organisational systems and impact at macro (police and Edmund Rice) and micro (behavioural and attitudinal change) levels. While being the most objective person within my research team for the role, I was also aware from the start, that from most perspectives (TILES, police course coordinators and Edmund Rice) there was a great incentive to formally include the program in the police curriculum. So, my job was to evaluate the program, knowingly that it was in the best interest of most included parties, to present a strong argument for the program. Subsequentially, being a TILES employee could potentially represent an area of conflict, but at the same time offered me deep insight into understanding the purpose and intention behind the structure of the teaching material for the police recruits. In that sense, my specific role had many aspects to consider when planning and conducting my research. While the details of my role as a TILES employee are outside the scope of this thesis, I outline these circumstances, as they are relevant for my positionality for this thesis.

Besides my professional duties for UTAS, it is also important to note that my educational background in Education Science and Criminology may impact my interpretation of the data. To offer transparency and disclosure of positionality 'conditions' of the research, the researcher must be aware and conscious of own motivations and interests. Therefore, as suggested by Hayward & Cassel (2018) I asked myself some of these questions to help me understand my own positionality for this specific thesis: What is my personal interest in the subject? What personal experiences do I have that relate to the topic? What is the incentive behind the research? What and who promoted it, and does that affect the form of the research and how it

was carried out? Looking at the overall study from my perspective, there are a few things to keep in mind. When looking at the data, although this study represents a re-analysis independently of TILES, I cannot deny that my previous work will impact my ability to approach the data from a 'new' perspective and open-mindedly. My preliminary knowledge of the data has in this case, impacted the way my research was formed and focused around the specific research question. Therefore, this thesis takes a premediated outlook that the ERCT police recruit program does have an impact on police recruit's attitude towards young people, and investigates how.

3.2 Case study and an Adaptive Approach

To investigate elements of the ERCT police recruit program, the thesis takes the form of a single-case study as described by Dr. Robert K. Yin (2014). Yin explains the essence of a case study as "*an empirical inquiry, that investigates a contemporary phenomenon ('case') in-depth, within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident*" (Yin, 2014: p. 16). In this specific thesis, I want to understand the case of the ERCT police recruit program and its potential to be a beneficial implementation and a developmental move for Tasmania Police towards being able to meet contemporary demands of the profession. The case study approach offers the opportunity to investigate 'how' and 'why' aspects of social and individual learning processes within the scope of the program, on a more qualitative and insightful level. Although the study in that sense will be unique to the specific case, the case is an example of a 'solution' to a larger, more general 'problem' in policing and police education as earlier presented (see section 2). To investigate the case of the ERCT police recruit program, this study integrates an adaptive approach, drawing on both the inductive and deductive method in an interactive manner. The adaptive theory, was introduced by Layder (1998), and refers to a methodology of identifying emerging theory from a case study analysis, which then subsequentially adapts existing theories. More specifically, with an adaptive theory approach, it is possible to combine prior theoretical ideas to '*guide*' your research while at the same time generating new theory through the ongoing data-analysis (Layder, 1998). This approach is for example demonstrated through the data-analysis, where themes and connections emerged by thorough investigation of the empirical data ground, but likewise important elements were discovered by examining the data through a theoretical perspective. This was done in a fluid way, and through a long back-and-

forth process, which will be further explained to add transparency and increase the study's reliability (see section 3.4.2). As previously mentioned, this thesis includes four types of empirical data (surveys, individual interviews, focus group interview and observation). A strength of the case study approach, is that it fosters this opportunity to use various different sources of evidence, as is available for this thesis. In fact, multiple sources of empirical material can increase the quality and validity of a case study (Yin, 2014).

3.3 Data Gathering

For the data gathering, all participants have signed appropriate documents prior to their participation, and all data has been handed over according to current rules for data protection and sharing. The specific data available for this report is; three transcripts of individual interviews, one transcript of a focus group interview, and all answers and raw data from all surveys. Furthermore, to initiate the work on the evaluation, two observations were performed by myself; one observed briefing session, and one observed debriefing session of the same group of recruits. All interview transcripts are provided as supplementary material.

3.3.1 Semi-structured interviews

For the purpose of evaluating the ERCT police recruit program, two semi-structured interviews with course coordinators from HSP332 were done in 2015. The interviews were to add a professional police and teaching perspective. These specific course coordinators have run most of the ERCT police recruit programs at the Tasmanian Police Academy, and both have been working in the field as police officers and sergeants for many years. Additionally a third semi-structured interview with another camp-participant, not affiliated with the Police Academy, was conducted to add an external perspective. This person was part of the whole program on the same terms as the recruits, which included the preliminary briefing and subsequently debriefing. It is also worth noting, that this external participant was, at the time of engagement, a PhD student of Criminology at UTAS. All three interviews lasted about 30-45 minutes and were loosely structured, to allow the conversation to go in any direction. All interviewees remain anonymous in the report. The benefit of this semi-structured interview strategy is that it allows the conversation to follow the interviewee's strain of thoughts, and dig deeper into elements that come up during the interview (Harris et. Al, 2012). However, the semi-loose structure still ensures that the interviewer has some control over where the interview goes, to

assure that specific areas or themes will be covered. This demands a fairly flexible and focused interviewer, that can accommodatingly rearrange the order of the interview-themes during the conversation, to ensure all areas will be covered, but in a more natural way. This allows the interviewee to present inputs and ideas that might not have been expected or calculated for during the interview-planning process. One way to welcome and explore these unknown potential inputs, is by asking open questions, that encourages the interviewee to form elaborate answers (Harris et. Al, 2012; Travers, 2013). Usually, the researcher will not have a strict analysis-plan, prior to the interview, as this can have an inhibitory function, that actually excludes everything unexpected (Åkerström & Wästerfors, 2018). In a research design, such as the current one, that seeks to understand and analyse processes from the perspective of teaching, a strict structure for qualitative data gathering can actually work be counteractive. The looser semi-structure therefore represents an ideal method to be open to all inputs from the interviewees, whilst still remaining within the scope of the research. Further it makes it possible to ask follow-up questions, both for the wanted research areas and new ideas presented by the interviewee, to obtain elaborate, clarifying and descriptive answers. This approach supports the validity and quality of the data obtained from the interview, which is generally acknowledged as the strength of the in-depth interview as a practice in qualitative research (Harrits et. al, 2012; Travers, 2013). This method also produces data that is easily accessible and well-appointed for analysis by a third person, as in this case.

3.3.2 Focus group

Furthermore, data from one focus group interview with four recruits after their participation in the program was conducted in 2015. The four recruits were primarily chosen at random, although at least one recruit, who had expressed doubts prior to the camps, was intentionally invited to join, to provide insight from varied perspectives. Focus group is another form of in-depth interviewing method, but is conducted with a group of people, rather than individual participants (Travers, 2013). The interviewer role in this context, is to encourage participants to discuss and reflect on specific topics. The interviewer works as a moderator, that guides the group through relevant themes, by asking open questions that instigates dialogue in the group. Like with the semi-structured interview, this method offers an opportunity to gain deep and detailed insight into the participants' understandings and experiences, but in this case, formed through the interaction in the group (Travers, 2013). Usually, a focus group is well-suited when the participants have something in common in relation to the relevant topic.

Furthermore, the method is useful, when the aim is to explore opinions and perceptions of social problems. In this case, all participants were recruits from the same class that had taken part in the ERCT police recruit program together, which certainly made them have a common ground. Additionally, the aim of the focus group was to investigate and gain understanding of the recruits' attitudes towards vulnerable youth, and if/how the camp experience had impacted these. Therefore, this method was chosen as an ideal way to produce useful data from the recruits' perspective.

3.3.3 Pre- and post-camp surveys

All recruits participating in the camp were surveyed online twice (before and after the camp) in relation to their attitudes regarding young people and disadvantaged groups. The pre-camp survey was performed the day before the camp, while the second survey was done about one week after the camp. Both surveys took about 10 minutes and were anonymous, to get the most honest answers. The aim with the surveys was mainly to see how recruits' engagement with young people might have changed their personal attitudes towards youth and/or vulnerable groups. The survey has been constructed via Survey Monkey, and filled out online by students. This type of survey could be referred to as a mix between a panel study and a quasi-panel study (Walter, 2013). A panel study surveys the same target group at different periods of time, to measure changes - in this case in recruits' attitudes. A quasi-panel study is designed to investigate the same phenomenon over time, but with different respondents. The specific survey for the ERCT police recruit program surveys each participating class every year before and after the camp, to observe changes in understandings and views. This means that each year, the respondents will inevitably change. However, for this specific purpose we are not interested in the changes in the phenomenon over time, but changes in the recruit's attitudes in the period from before to after the camp. In that regard, the survey reflects the panel study, more than the quasi-panel study, where the data from all years, will be consolidated into two groups for analysing: pre-camp survey and post-camp surveys respectively. The point of including the survey in the data-gathering process is that it produces a large amount of data in an efficient way (Walter, 2013). The data generated via surveys, compared to the qualitative interview, is easy to manage and can be presented in a simple manner. One of the main perks about this method is also that it produces data that can easily be used for secondary data analysis - that is, analysis of raw data gathered by another researcher, like in this case. The survey consisted of a mix of closed questions, Likert-type

scale questions, and open-ended questions (Walter, 2013). As such, participants were either asked to tick off pre-populated answer options (closed) that applied to them personally, or to choose what degree they agreed with specific statements (Likert-style), or lastly asked to answer in a few sentences (open-ended).

Below is a short table showing the main demographics of the survey respondents in total:

	Recruits in total	**Female recruits**	**Male recruits**	**Average age**
Pre-camp surveys	76	40	36	27,6
Post-camp surveys	66	33	33	26,3

3.3.4 Observation

When initiating the evaluation, this thesis is based on, I sat in on one recruit briefing session prior to the camp in 2019, as well as the following debriefing session after the camp. This was a means for myself to add an ethnographical aspect to the project, to a limited degree. For the purpose of a case study, this real-world setting perspective is important (Yin, 2014). Ideally, when conducting a case study, the researcher immerses oneself in the case on an ethnographic level (Yin, 2014). However, given that I was not the one performing the interviews for this study, these observations became particularly important for my role as a researcher, to try to understand the case from an ethnographic perspective. When conducting fieldwork, such as observation, within a police organisation, it is important to be accepted as a trustworthy associate (Björk, 2018). In a way, I was accepted in the context, via my 'gatekeeper' who was the teacher of the HSP332 course, and therefore an obvious participant in the sessions. I was introduced as a research assistant from UTAS, under the supervision of this course teacher. All recruits were already aware that the teacher, who is a UTAS senior researcher, was conducting research on the specific program, so my attendance was in that sense reasonable and did not raise questions. However, I still needed to be aware that my presence could inevitably influence the recruit's willingness to share private and emotional information, by being a stranger in the room. To accommodate for this, I took a seat up against the wall on one side of the room. My reasoning behind this choice, was to appear as discrete as possible, but without giving a sense of 'watching over their shoulders', as might have been the case if I had gone to the back of the room. However, my experience of the situation was that the recruits barely noticed me or paid

me any attention at all, and throughout the briefing and debriefing sessions, it seemed they had completely forgotten I was even there. Björk (2018) recommends that to obtain quality data through observation in a police setting, you must engage yourself. However, based on the specific circumstances of these sessions, where recruits openly shared experiences and questioned course coordinators and volunteers from ERCT, I judged that simply observing and noting was more appropriate. Since this was an open class conversation, I believed that I would not miss out on important data by discretely observing. In fact, I believed my engagement could potentially have been harmful to the situation, by making the recruits uncomfortable with sharing emotional reflections. As recommended, in the observation situation I made sure to write down as much as possible in the moment, including any conceptual ideas (Björk, 2018). In the situation, it can be hard to judge what will be valuable for the analysis, so having comprehensive written summaries of the sessions is very useful. After each session, I allocated specific time to 'clean' these notes and write more extensive paragraphs on the observations, as recommended by Björk (2018). This turned out to be especially useful, as the evaluation would end up being postponed a year due to Covid-19 restrictions, and most of the observed data would undoubtedly have been forgotten without these comprehensive notes. In this thesis, my observations from these two sessions will be used at times, to add another dimension to the collected data, especially around the impact on the recruits. The ethnographic data further assist to form a more holistic understanding of the case, from my point of view as a researcher.

3.4 Data processing and analysis

3.4.1 Statistical data

For the purpose of the evaluation of the ERCT police recruit program, a more comprehensive statistical analysis of the survey data was conducted. Survey data is generally limited in its ability to investigate contextual data (Yin, 2014). However, surveys can produce a rather large amount of data on specific factors, to find connections (Walter, 2013). When used in a single-case study, the role of a survey changes from its usual intent (Yin, 2014). For this thesis, the survey-data will be used to highlight the findings regarding whether the program has had any impact on the recruit's attitudes towards young and/or disadvantaged people, and what these might be. This is included to ensure a more rounded coverage of the case. It also adds the perspective of the recruits, in the examination of the program's usefulness as a training element in Police education. That way, the inclusion of this data ensures a more holistic analysis of the case, where multiple perspectives are investigated. As Marsh (1982) suggested, surveys can include meaningful dimensions, if for example they include questions explicitly directed towards reasoning and values or reflections. The specific survey for this report included a fair amount of open-ended questions, where the recruits were asked to share their thoughts or expectations in short paragraphs. For all questions, the option was given to add further comments. A surprising amount of recruits chose to add comments to most aspects of the survey. This fosters a more insightful dimension to the data. For this analysis, I will take a closer look at some of these more detailed survey-responses and comments, and try to find meaning in them. As per the adaptive approach (see section 3.2), at times theory will be adapted to help understand some of the findings, while at other times I will aim to let the empirical data 'speak for itself'. For the closed and Likert-style scale questions, a descriptive graphical analysis, mainly through bar charts, is presented as recommended for univariate analyses by De Vaus (2013). This is to visually illustrate some of the identified patterns from the evaluation, and present the data in a simple manner. These charts are combined with short descriptive paragraphs, including an attempt to understand the data through an adaptive theory approach, as well as a holistic interest.

3.4.2 Qualitative Interview Analysis (semi-structured and focus group)

To do an in-depth analysis of gathered data, one must immerse oneself into the material (Willis, 2013). Usually, the first step to this immersion happens through transcription. In this case, where the used data was already transcribed, I had to familiarise myself with the content through thorough examination of the transcripts. Luckily, the provided transcripts were very detailed and the transcript style included features such as thought-breaks, laughs, and half-finished sentences or stand-alone words that could reflect change of thought or uncertainty. So, although some elements of the physical interaction, such as facial expression, the 'mood of the room' and other visible factors will be missed out on, a precise interview-transcript offers enough detail to produce a highly qualitative analysis (Åkerström & Wästerfors, 2018). Examining a well-detailed transcript, allows the researcher to critically analyse answers as well as questions, and be aware of 'missed' points or misunderstandings. In that way, sometimes being a 'third-person researcher', or to some degree an external researcher, actually presents the opportunity to scrutinise the data on a higher level. Some expressed reflections, might carry implicit understandings between the interviewer or interviewee, which could have been overlooked or not deemed important information by internal analysis. It is, however, inevitable to completely ignore the knowledge and experiences that we all already encompass/embody, as expressed previously (see section 3.1). As a researcher, you must be reflexive with your methods, your role and relationships with the research context, the data, and the produced results to accommodate for this (Hayward & Cassel, 2018). This can be done through a reflective process of constantly self-monitoring and understanding of own thoughts, feelings and actions as we engage in research projects (Hayward & Cassel, 2018). As I did not participate in the majority of the data gathering, I had to be extra aware of this, and my own positionality as a researcher, during my data-analysis. Because the number of transcripts for this report were relatively low (3 individuals and 1 focus group), it was possible for me to do a comprehensive in-depth low practicality systemising of the data. The first part of analysing your data is to simply 'look at it' or 'play' with it to find patterns and connections (Willis, 2013; Yin, 2014). This is the initial, but essential meaning-making and interpreting process of the analysis. This process subsequently leads into organising the data. I did this by manually categorising all content, and thereby choosing a thematic analysis approach (Willis, 2013). For the case study, Yin (2014) recommends four general strategies for analysing your data. As this study has taken on an adaptive approach, accordingly I made use of a combination of two of these strategies as general guidelines, as well as a third more theory based approach. On this

basis, for my data-analysis, firstly I started working the data 'ground up', looking for patterns and coding all transcript-sections (Yin, 2014). Secondly, I used my research proposition in the form of my research considerations from my introduction as guidelines for sorting these into smaller categories, and picking out relevant and interesting sections. Thirdly I included theoretical perspectives, mainly key learning theories (see section 4.2) as well as main findings from the surveys (see section 5.1) to narrow the focus of my analysis. Based on the nature of the research objective in this thesis, classic learning theory concepts of learning through practice has been utilised. Specifically, the concept of *Reflective Learning* and *Reflection-in-Action* by Dewey (1923 & 1997) and Schön (1987) respectively, which will be presented in detail after this (see section 4). Eventually three broader themes emerged, for my analysis structure. The themes are as follows:

1) Breaking down learning-barriers
2) Learning by doing
3) What is learned?

4. Theoretical Perspective

For the purpose of trying to understand some of the potential learning processes of the ERCT police recruit camp, pertinent learning theory concepts have been included in this thesis. Below is a brief description of two major learning theories that sheds light on the specific aspect of learning that happens through practice. That is, the concept of *Reflective Learning*, and *Reflection-in-Action* respectively.

4.1 Reflective Learning

The American philosopher John Dewey dealt with the '*concept of experience*', which is one of the most important parts of his understanding of learning (Elkjær and Wiberg, 2013). He explains human growth as an organic relationship between adaptation and development, where the individual *adapts* to the surrounding world through 'active habits', whilst this adaptation requires the *development* of abilities to use current means to achieve a goal (Dewey, 1923).

Habits are constructed of cognitive dispositions for action that the individual is constantly trying to develop and acquire. Growth occurs through the development of active habits, as the individual is able to learn from experience, and modify future action based on past reactions. Experience thus becomes what connects and embraces habit and growth, as well as the individual and the outside world in a dynamic relationship (Elkjær and Wiberg, 2013). Experience is thus a combination of an active, experimental element (development) and a passive, submissive element (adaptation) (Dewey, 1997). The experience happens when the passive element is directly connected with an experimental action. If this connection does not happen, there will be no acquisition of experience, and thereby, no new learning. The individual learning takes place through a kind of investigating process (Elkjær and Wiberg, 2013). These investigative processes, for the acquisition of experience, are always based on the fact that something appears unclear to the individual, and the goal is therefore to fill this unknowingness (Dewey, 1997). The first condition for the process is the personal interest in finding answers. Hereafter comes a tentative approach, where the individual tests out an approach, based on cognitive hypotheses, predicated on previous experience and available information. The tangible consequences of the plan reflect the value of the reflection; the more successful the consequences, the higher the value of the experience acquired (Dewey, 1923). This method is known as '*inquiry*', also called '*reflective thinking*' and '*reflective learning*' (Dewey, 1997). Dewey divides experiences into two forms: the experiences where an action is only implicitly linked to a consequence without understanding the details of the context; and the experiences where these details become explicit. The second form of experience arises through reflective thinking, where the individual becomes aware of the individual conditions that are necessary to achieve a desired outcome. As such, reflection and thinking becomes what enables the individual to set a goal and act accordingly to meet this goal. The opposite of reflective learning is routines. Dewey explains routines as ways of acting without prior thought. The routine habits constrain development, as opposed to the aforementioned active habits (Dewey, 1997). According to Dewey, the individual and context must be understood as an organic whole, and learning as something that always takes place in, and is dependent on the social context (Elkjær and Wiberg, 2013). However, Dewey clarifies that all new thinking and research is innovative and original for the individual, even if it is not necessarily new knowledge in a universal perspective, or in the social context the individual is in (Dewey, 1997). Therefore, all individuals must go through their own reflective learning process to learn specific lessons, even if they seem simple and obvious to others that have already learned them. That way, the social environment plays a crucial role in the individual's learning, and especially in relation to its

new members, who must be "brought up" and taught the implicit understandings in the specific social context. Through the social environment, human actions are modified according to the conditions that are set. If an individual does not acquire the competencies that apply in the specific social environment, he or she will feel left out and inadequate to participate in the community. In this perspective, the social environment sub-consciously provides an educational and formative influence that goes beyond the conscious purposes (Dewey, 1923).

4.2 Reflection-in-Action

The philosopher Donald A. Schön uses the term '*knowledge-in-action*' to explain the type of competences that all people use in the context of new learning (Schön, 1987). They are difficult to describe and explain, and do not necessarily represent conscious processes. Schön defines knowledge-in-action as the kind of know-how we reveal in our intelligent behaviour. Knowledge thus lies in the action and is often spontaneous. Knowledge-in-action is also dynamic in the sense that we adjust our action while doing it, which is what makes it intelligent. An example is when you catch a ball, which reflects an ongoing activity, but at the same time involves assessment of distance and correction of the body. The specific knowledge behind these actions is silent and spontaneous, and can therefore be difficult to describe. However, through reflection and observation of actions, it may be possible to describe the tacit knowledge that lies within the actions, although this will always work through some sort of reconstruction of the knowledge. Knowledge-in-action is often sufficient for the individual to cope with everyday life, but for situations when it is not, Schön introduces the concept of '*reflection-in-action*' (Schön, 1987). Reflection-in-action is for example necessary, when a known routine or action leads to an unexpected result, or when a known action suddenly feels wrong and different than usual. This creates a need for reflection-in-action. Such experiences, where previous actions are no longer sufficient, will always have an element of surprise, and the individual will always want to try to maintain normal patterns of knowledge-in-action. As such, this revelation can be unpleasant, which unfortunately sometimes leads to the experience being ignored and disregarded. However, most often the experience initiates a reflective process, either after it has occurred or by stopping and reflecting as it happens (Schön, 1987). However, this type of reflection does not necessarily have any direct connection to the experience. On the other hand, a situation may arise where this reflection happens within the action itself, without the action being interrupted, but rather modified accordingly, through his reflection. This is reflection-in-action, defined by having a direct bearing on the action as it happens. Reflection-in-action

questions the individual's knowledge-in-action, and thus adds a critical element to the way the action is performed. That way the reflection gives rise to an on-the-spot experiment, when the preliminary knowledge-in-action fails. The experiments can then lead to new reactions, which require further reflection and then experimentation again, and this can continue until a solution is found (Schön, 1987). That way, this reflection represents an opportunity for individual development. The '*ability for reflection-in-action*' represents the individual's skills to apply this reflection-process in the moment and adjust actions accordingly here and now.

5. Analysis and Discussion

The analysis will be presented in two parts. The first part mainly investigates the recruit perspective, based the data from the surveys (see section 5.1). The second part presents an analysis of the qualitative empirical data from a teaching perspective (see section 5.2). Furthermore, the second part will also present a broader discussion of the program, including findings from both the first and the second part collectively. Theoretical perspectives from previously presented theories (see section 4) will be included when relevant, as well as ethnographic data from the two observations.

5.1 Impact on Recruits' Attitudes

For this part, I would like to start with an excerpt from my field notes from the observation of the debriefing session:

> "*Andrew [ed. Executive Officer of ERCT] has asked everyone to describe the experience in just a few words. There is a serious, almost tense atmosphere in the room. The first 6-7 recruits have followed the instructions punctually and described the experience very briefly; "It was good", "Very useful", "I enjoyed it more than I thought I would". Andrew turns to the next recruit in the back of the class. The recruit looks down on his hands and starts: "I agree it was a very useful experience, but…", he pauses, and then he can't hold it back. He covers his face with his hands. And cries. Now everyone looks down at their hands. It takes him a few seconds to compose himself, but it feels like minutes in the quiet room. Andrew doesn't say anything, but lets the scene fold out. When the recruit starts to speak again his voice is hoarse and he almost*

> *chokes from holding back tears. He explains how the camp, and the connection with his 'buddy' have had a huge emotional impact on him. Now almost everyone is looking at him instead of looking down. Many look very emotional and it seems like more are fighting to compose themselves. Everyone still sits very rank in their chairs. They are still police and emotions are not 'tough'. Andrew asks the recruit if the camp was a bad experience for him? Maybe too confronting? The recruit quickly responds; "No! The camp was an amazing experience! Everyone should do this. Not just the police. It is an eye-opening experience. It's so unfair how some people have just been dealt a bad hand in life, and I feel like it is good to be aware of this. But it is hard to experience it. Like a slap in the face". As Andrew moves on to the rest of the class, all instructions of "a brief description" have gone out the window. For the rest of the session all recruits are expressively sharing their feelings and thoughts while they move around in their chairs and interact and contribute with inputs when their peers are speaking"* (Fieldnotes from debriefing session, 2019).

These observations from a debriefing session is a strong indication that the weekend had a significant emotional impact on the group of recruits. In fact, from my perspective as an observer they were almost unrecognisable between the initial briefing session and the debriefing. As I did not attend the camp, I was curious and intrigued to understand what happened during those three days, to spike this change in the recruits. And further, I wanted to know if this could potentially have an actual impact on how the police recruits perceive their future police role and how to conduct themselves professionally when they graduate.

To analyse the camps' impact on participating recruits' social perceptions and attitudes towards vulnerable youth, a statistical summary of the pre- and post-camp surveys are presented. For the purpose of the survey all recruits were asked a range of closed questions, Likert-type scale questions, and open-ended questions before and after the camp (see section 3.3.3). The following chapter will present a consolidation of the pre- and post-survey answers from all years to illustrate the diversity of answers, before and after taking part in the camps. The presentation includes an analysis of the results, which at times draws on presented learning theory concepts and observation data. Through the re-analysis of the survey-data, five main themes emerged, which structures the presentation of the data.

5.1.1 Understanding and Communicating with Young People

The first question recruits were requested to relate to was the closed question "*When you see young people congregating in the street, you would automatically...?".* Participants were asked to tick all the presented fixed options they felt applied to them for this question (see Figure 1). Participants could choose more than one per question. When looking at the consolidated answers across all years, there are some noticeable differences between answers from the pre-camp survey to the post-camp survey. For the pre-survey responses, the option "*Not mind and keep doing what you are doing*" is the most dominant answer with 50% of all ticks. In contrast, the response "*Go and have a chat to them*", was the most prevalent answer in post-camp surveys, which scored 75% of all ticks. It is also worth noting the response "*Not mind and keep doing what you are doing*" decreased to 38% in post-camp surveys. This could indicate a number of things. Firstly, several recruits seem to have changed their presumed approach strategy after participating in the camps. The differences are quite pronounced, which is an indication the camps have had a noteworthy influence on the recruits. The results suggest recruits feel more comfortable communicating with and approaching youth following the camp. One police recruit commented on this in the survey:

> "*In a police capacity, I would make the effort to speak with the youths, not just to find out what they are doing but to take the opportunity to talk to them and hopefully start building rapport, which may be useful in future*" (Police recruit from post-camp survey, 2016).

The above results, combined with this kind of personal reflections, further suggests that recruits have gained some understanding around the benefits of establishing good relationships and rapport with struggling youth in the community.

When looking at the responses for the statement *"I understand what hardships are faced by today's young people",* 10.5% did not think they understood the hardships of today's youth, while 72% believed they did prior to the camps (see Figure 2). After the camp, 0% disagreed with the statement, while 88% either agreed or strongly agreed. This is a clear suggestion that the program fulfills its objectives to help police recruits have a better understanding and better recognise disadvantaged youth. To investigate the reasons for this shift in thinking, all participants were asked whether the camps had specifically helped them with this

understanding. In total, 85% either agreed or strongly agreed that the ERCT police recruit program had made them understand more about vulnerability issues, and only 4.5% disagreed with this (see Figure 3). Further, 47% agreed or strongly agreed they had only a marginal understanding of the kind of disadvantage some young people live with prior to the camp (see Figure 4). Below are two comments from recruits in relation to this:

> *"It really puts into perspective what some children are going through. My buddy was polite, smart, and a really lovely girl. From speaking to her over the course of the camp I would not form the assumption that she has been through any hardships, or is from a vulnerable family. This helps me to realise that there can be something more than meets the eye. The children who were withdrawn, and did not want to build relationships or talk would be the children who don't want to talk to you when you are a police officer. So if I talk to a child and they don't respond or they are rude it gives me more insight into why they are like that because they wouldn't be like that for no reason"* (Police recruit from post-camp survey, 2016).

> *"It gives a great background into some of the difficulties that these kids have faced in their lives and gives some explanation of the actions they take. Compassion is important for police to build strong relationships and I think this camp developed that. It also helps us improve our communication skills and feeling comfortable having casual conversations with youths that may not have the best opinions of police"* (Police recruit from post-camp survey, 2018).

These comments and survey results suggest that partaking in the camps certainly offers the recruits some sort of insight into the reality of some vulnerable young people. Although this thesis does not include any information about the specific involved youth, and therefore cannot assess the validity of the recruits' understanding of their situation, it can however shed light on the impact on the recruits' general feelings and attitudes. The two comments are examples on how some recruits' perceptions have changed. One recruit now feels more aware that some behaviours in youth, such as anti-social behaviour, does not have to be a sign of suspicious behaviour, but can have various meanings depending on that youth's background. In fact, it can just reflect completely normal behaviour for that youth, or it can be a sign of distress. It is only through interaction the reasons for a specific behaviour can be discovered, and as the second comment suggests, '*compassion*' or at least empathy and respect are important factors

for this interaction to be meaningful. This is a very important understanding in the light of operationalising vulnerabilities and the professional capacity to identify and act accordingly to signs of vulnerability (see section 2.2).

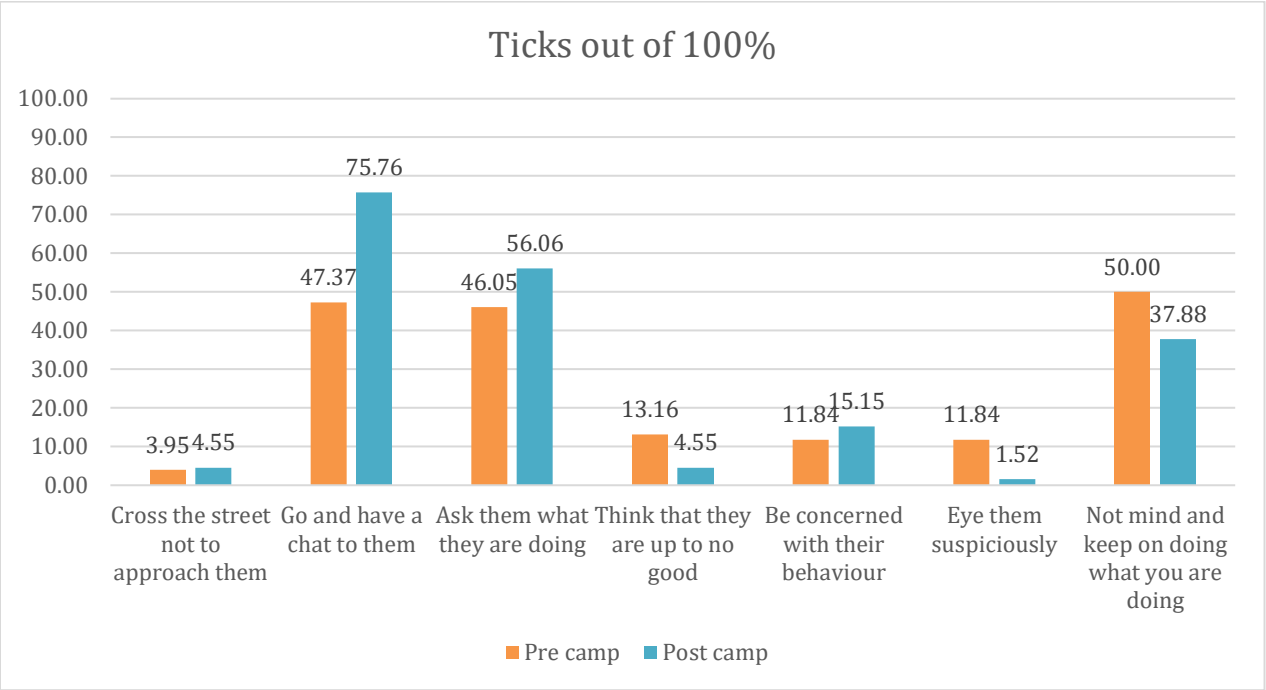

Figure 1

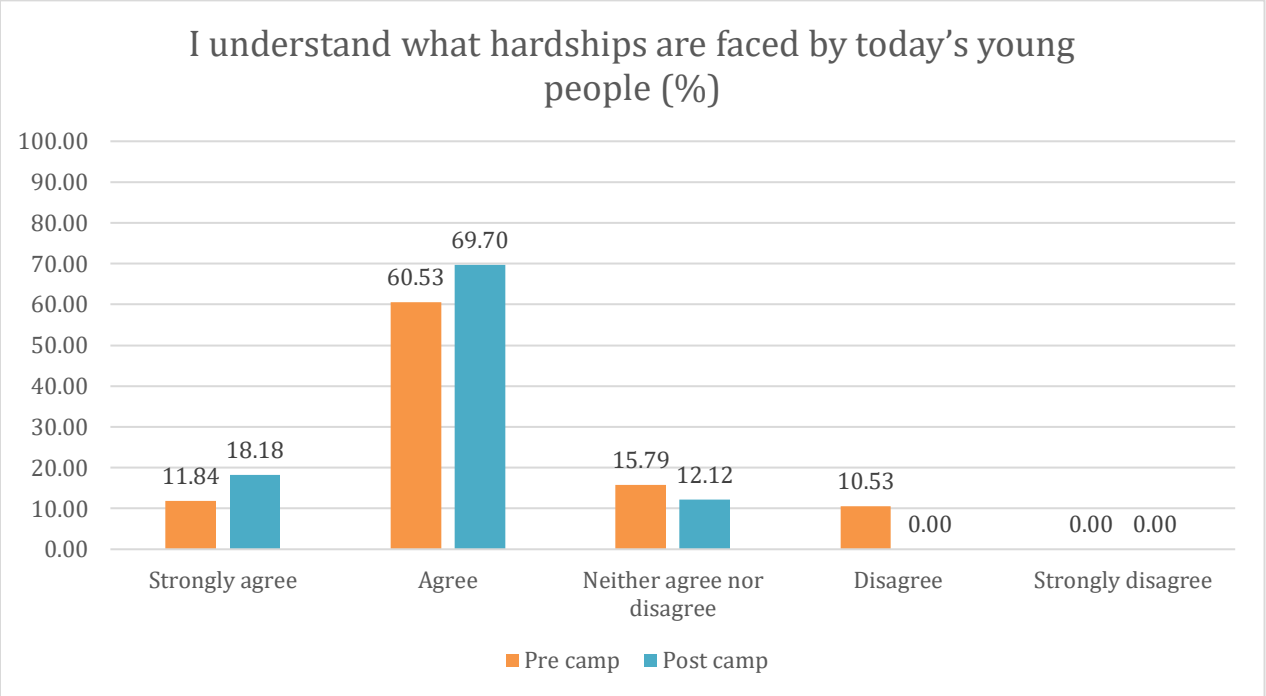

Figure 2

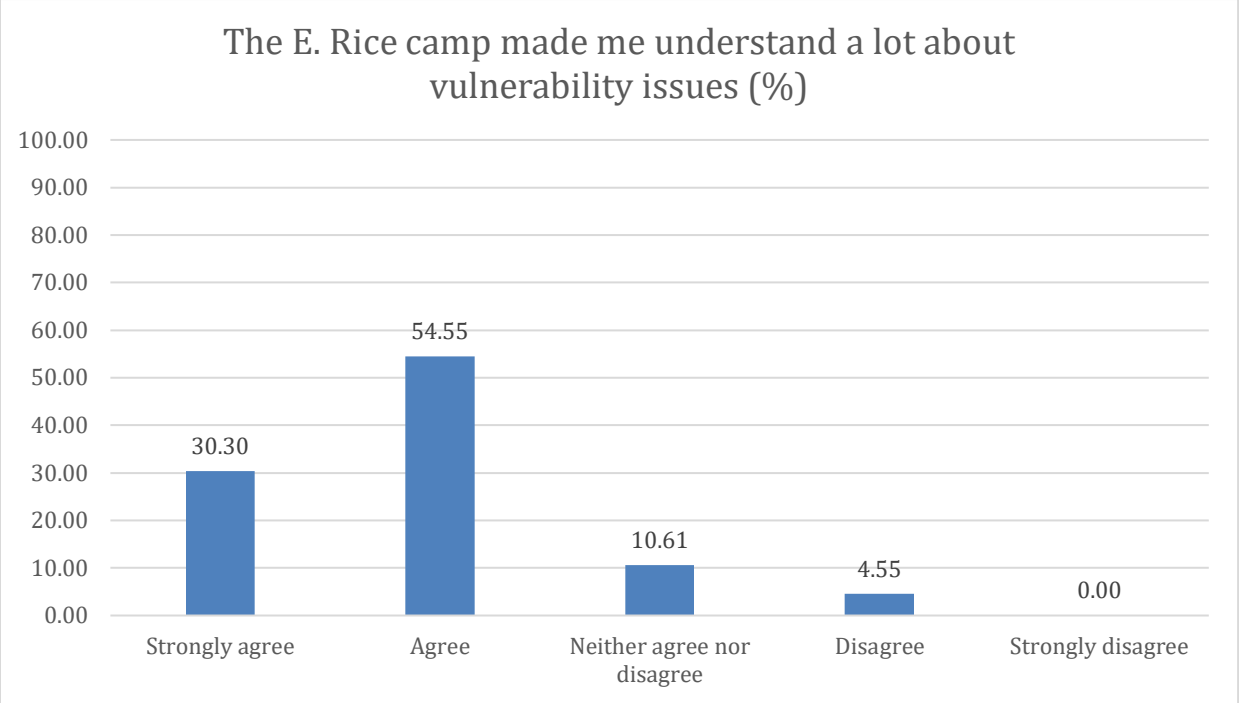

Figure 3

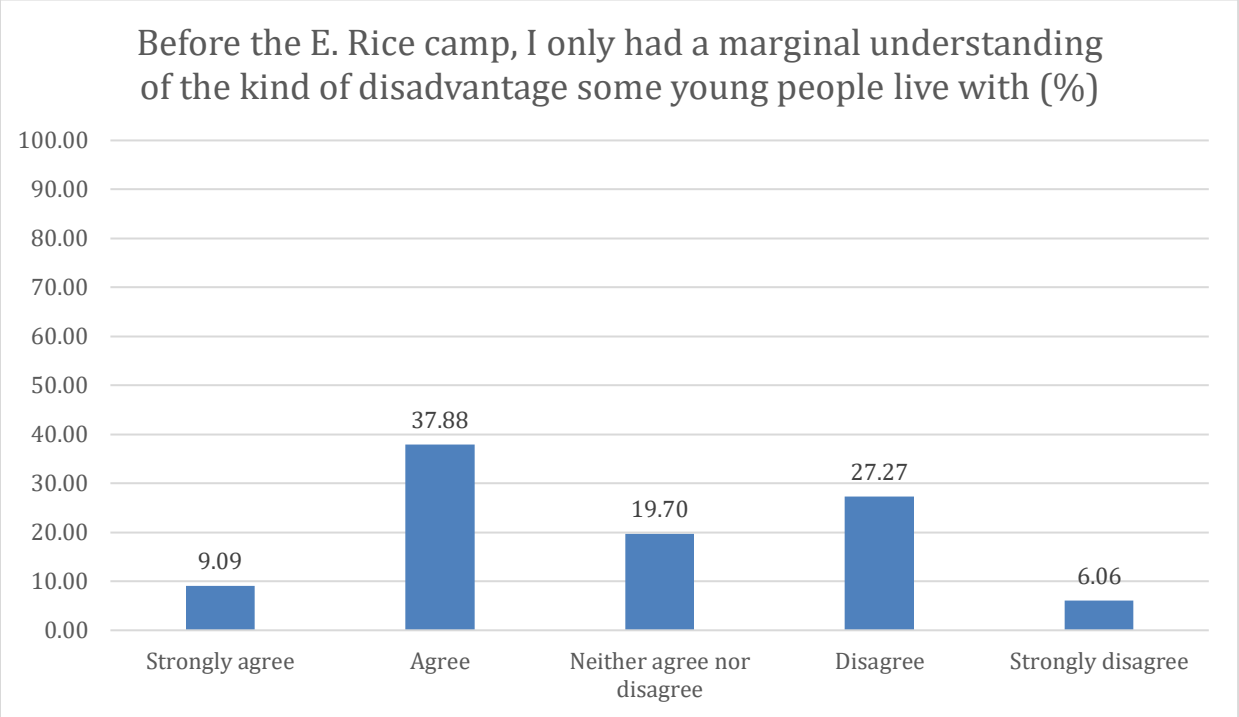

Figure 4

5.1.2 Confidence

It is suggested that to properly prepare police for professionally encountering vulnerable populations, exposure to this particular demographic is essential (see section 2.2). This will not only help minimise predispositions and stereotypical labelling from police, and promote a more

emphatic approach towards minorities and vulnerable people, it will also help police in their preparedness to deal with this in a professional capacity. However, knowledge and awareness is only one part of the process in preparing the recruits for these encounters. Another central component is, making sure the police recruits actually feel confident enough to apply this knowledge to their professional approach and communication skills. From a theoretical perspective, this can be associated with the process of linking actions to understandings (see section 4). Following both Schön's and Dewey's understanding of learning through practical experience, if the recruits are not able to link understandings and actions, the learnings will only be implicit, and the recruits might not learn to actually apply their experiences during the camp, to other contexts (see section 4).

In the survey, participants were asked to relate to the statement "*Talking to young people is easy*" (see Figure 5). Here 44.5% agreed and 19.5% disagreed with this before the camps, while 51.5% agreed and 16.5% disagreed after. This indicates that although the recruits might have increased their understanding of young people's struggles, most still acknowledged that talking to young people is not always easy. This underlines the argument, that for police to actually be able to utilise this new-learned understanding in a professional capacity, they also need to be confident in applying this in practice. Part of the survey specifically considers the program's impact on the recruit's confidence and perception of their own capabilities in communicating with young people in a police setting. In the post-survey, 94% of participants said they were *more* confident engaging with young people as a police officer after the camp experience (post-camp consolidated survey data). The remaining 6% said they felt as confident after the camp, as before. This is an overwhelming indication that training through the ERCT police camps can in fact increase recruits' perceived awareness, understanding *and* confidence to utilise this in practice. Below are some examples of from participants supporting this in the survey:

> *"I am more confident [ed.: communicating with young people] because I saw an array of different situations from all the children that I had never really thought about before"* (Police recruit from post-camp survey, 2015).

> *"I am more confident [ed.: communicating with young people] because now I have a greater appreciation for them and their situations as well as knowledge and even patience. I also know not to take it to heart if they do not want to cooperate with me*

and that if I do make even the slightest break through with them, then this is a great achievement" (police recruit from post-camp survey, 2016).

"Other than learning how to talk to certain types of children, I now have an appreciation for those children that I will encounter - though they hate me and will try to get under my skin, I know they in reality are most likely a really switched-on kid. I also do appreciate the fact that some kids really have not been taught how to socialise and this is not their fault" (police recruit from post-camp survey, 2017).

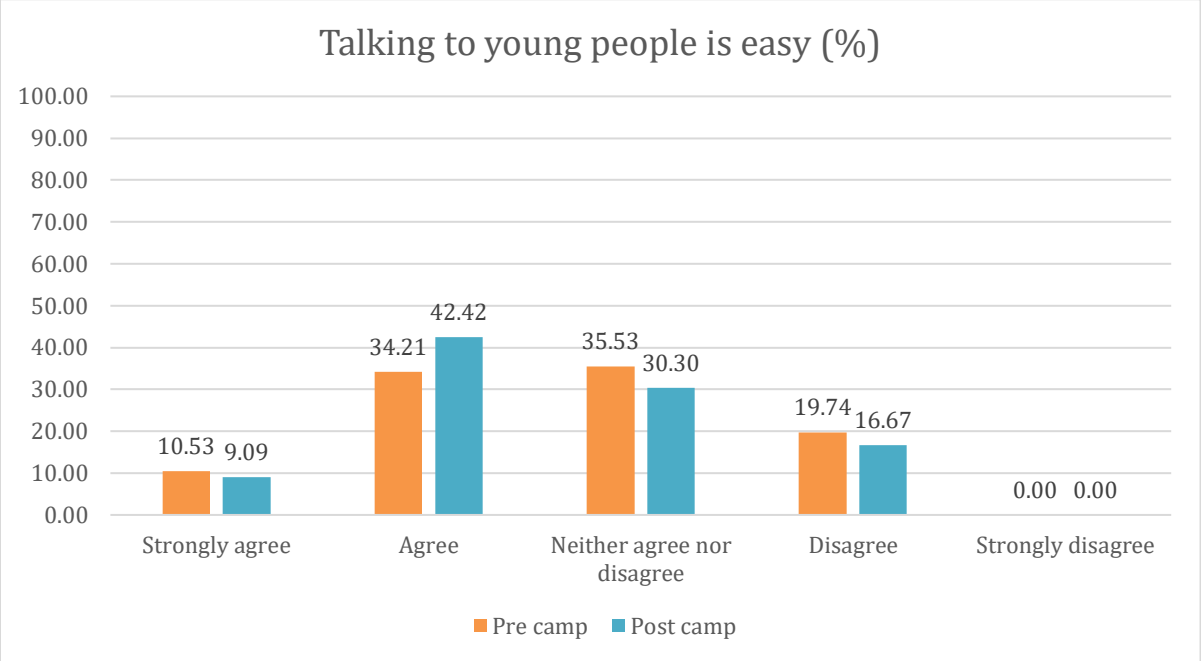

Figure 5

5.1.3 Anti-Social Behaviour

The recruits were asked a range of Likert-style questions (see section 3.3.3), regarding specific statements concerning youth. One of the most noticeable variations between the answers before and after the camps is in regard to the statement "*Underage anti-social behaviour is a problem in today's society"* (see Figure 6)**.** For the pre-camp survey, 10.5% of the participants said they either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this, while 64.5% either agreed or strongly agreed. For the post-camp survey, only 3% disagreed, no one strongly disagreed, and 74% agreed or strongly agreed. This indicates a shift in the general understanding of anti-social behaviour as a problem amongst youth, as a result of spending a weekend with young people potentially displaying signs of anti-social behaviour. After the camp, only a very small number of

participants do not see anti-social behaviour as an issue in today's society. This evidences the acknowledgment that anti-social behaviour is a major concern in Tasmania. It is even more important to note that this acknowledgement came through first-hand interaction with youth, who in some circumstances were already displaying anti-social behaviour or certain characteristics often associated with this behaviour. As presented earlier, anti-social behaviour is often wrongfully linked to delinquency, and should therefore be something the recruits learn to identify and fully understand (see section 2.3). When participants were asked how they related to the statement "*All young people will display some form of anti-social behaviour; we can't do anything about it*", most ticked that they disagreed with this, both in the pre- and post-camp survey (see Figure 7). This most likely suggests that the recruits consistently believe that anti-social behaviour is not a common problem amongst all youth. However, it is acknowledged as an issue that needs to be and can be addressed. Interestingly though, both the number of recruits strongly agreeing and disagreeing with the statement, "*Young people under 18 are likely to engage in dangerous behaviour",* increased after taking part in the camp (see Figure 8). This could be an indication of different perceptions of the experiences with the young people in the camp. Some might have formed the opinion that 'kids will be kids', which to some extent will naturally include seeking danger and pushing boundaries. However, others may have attributed any 'dangerous behaviour' to other personal circumstances, e.g. vulnerabilities and disadvantages. From the pre-camp survey to the post-camp survey, about 8% less picked "*neither agree nor disagree*", so it is clear that for some, the camp made an impact on their perceptions of youth behaviour in general. It is unclear whether this was a case of pushing recruits towards prior inclinations, or more of a confronting re-evaluation of youth behaviour, or perhaps both. Two recruits commented on the experience of youth behaviour:

> *"It is good to hang out with these great kids. I truly believe there is no such thing as a bad kid, and it is good for some people to maybe break down these barriers*" (police recruit from post-camp survey, 2016).

> *"The experience gives us some perspective on the life circumstances of a percentage of the youth population in Tasmania and also shows that at the end of the day, kids are just kids"* (police recruit from post-camp survey, 2015).

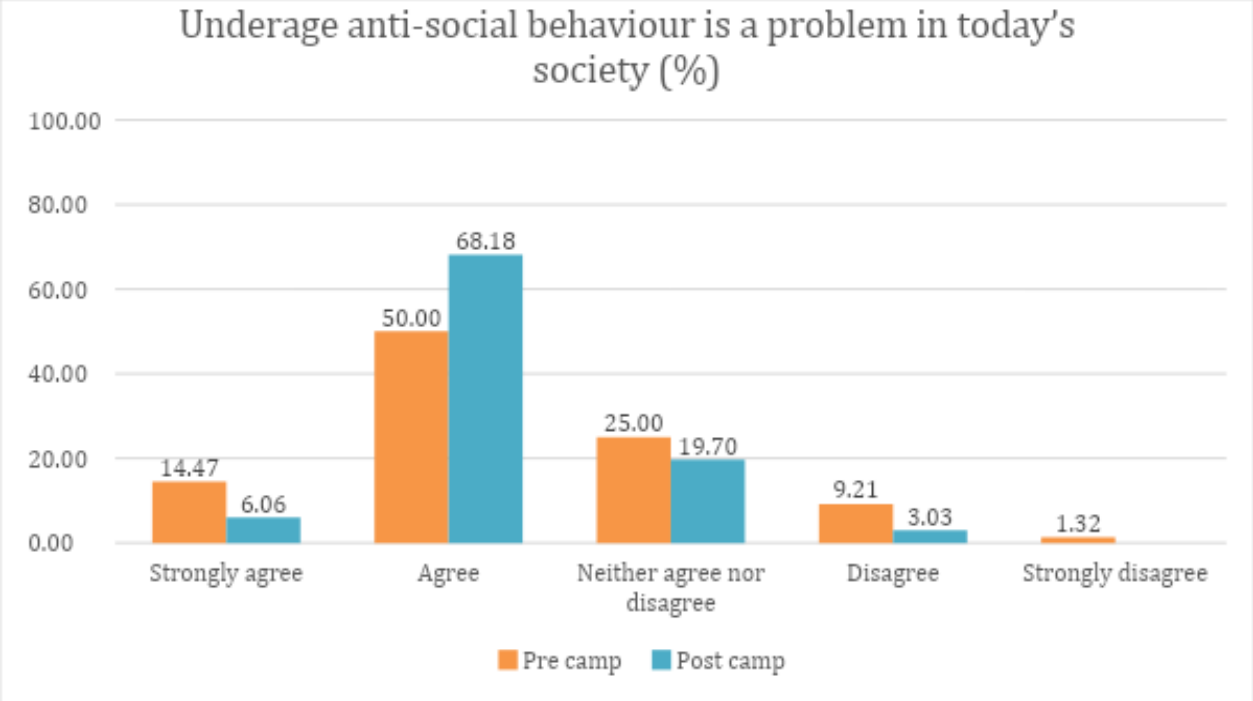

Figure 6

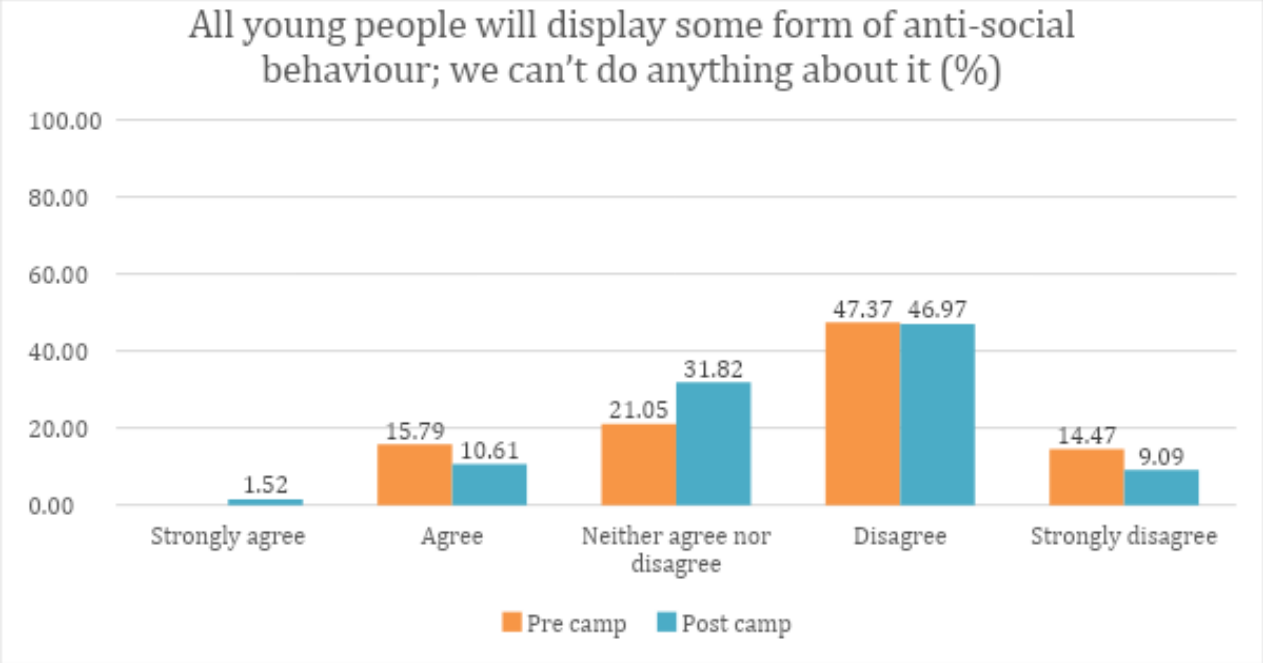

Figure 7

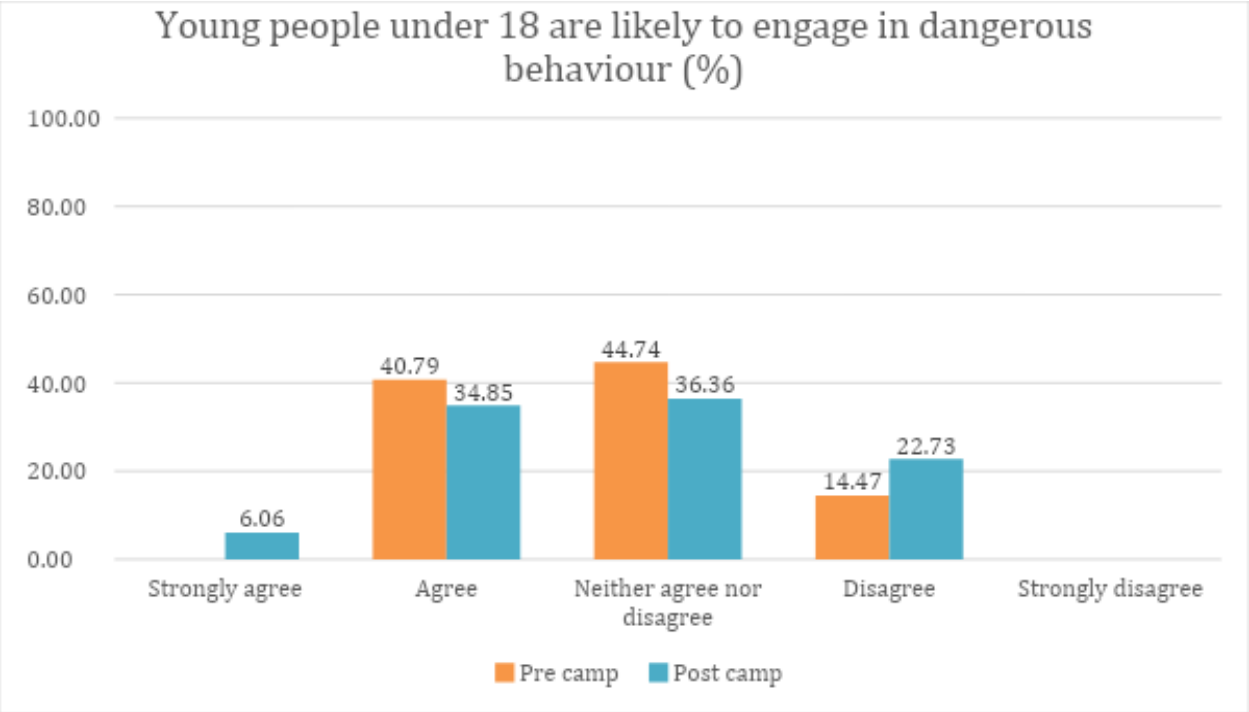

Figure 8

5.1.4 Expectations vs. Reality

To measure the extent recruit and organisational expectations were met, participants were asked to list three main expectations, before the camps commencement. A total of 186 expectations were listed (pre-camp consolidated survey data). Below, these are visualised in a chart to illustrate the distribution (see Figure 9 & 10):

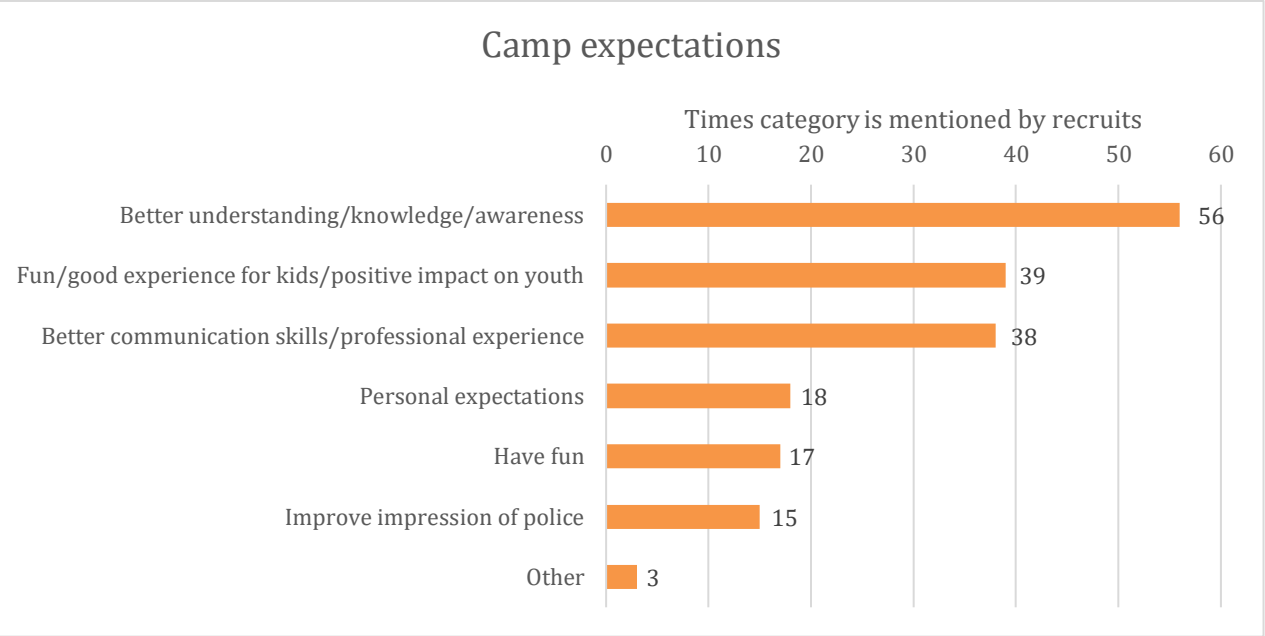

Figure 9

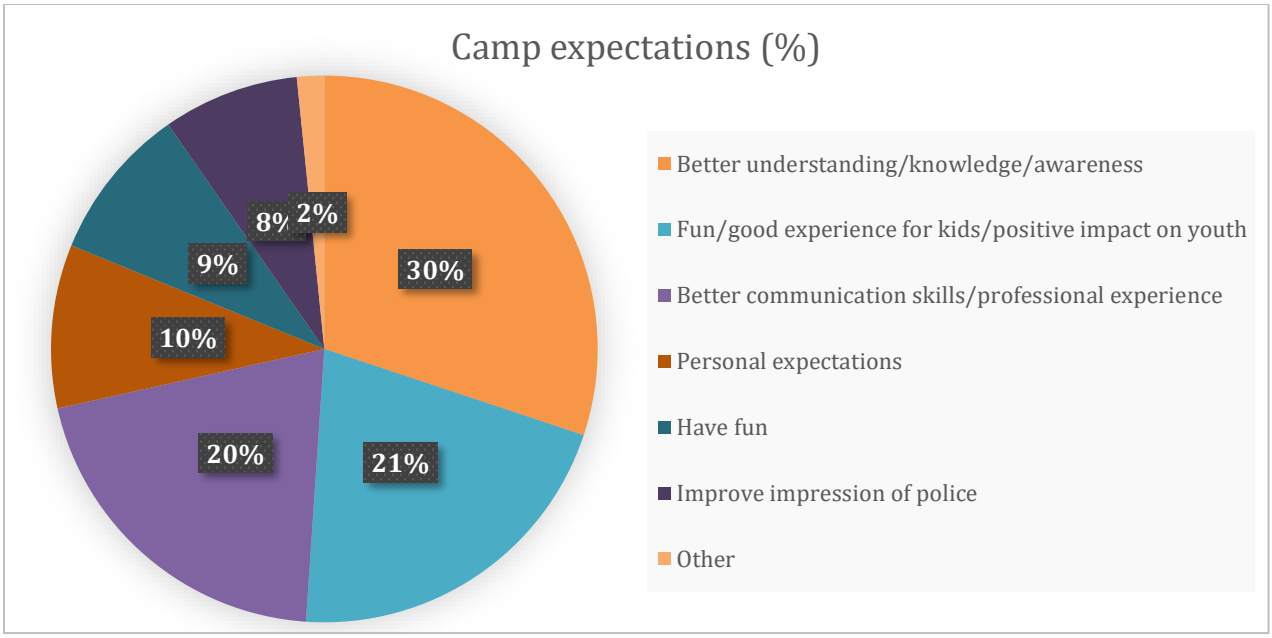

Figure 10

These figures point toward the pre-camp briefing being overall successful in presenting the aim of the project, as a police training experience, rather than a 'charity' or something done 'just' for the kids. Almost a third (30%) of all presented expectations were related to bettering the understanding, knowledge and awareness of youth, while 20% relates directly to improving police competences involving youth (i.e. communication, approach, how to deal with, etc.). 21% of expectations included making a positive personal impact on the youth participants, while 8% directly mentioned wanting to enhance young people's perception of police. To sum up, this paints an overall picture where 50% of recruits' expectations involve individual training and self-improvement of competences, while roughly 30% involves impacts on the involved youth. This aligns with the overall ambition of having the police recruits be part of this project, as an essential component of their training in addition to teaching cultural competence and raising socio-cultural awareness. So, how does this picture of expectations align with the reality of the camp experience? The post-survey participants were asked to follow up on their three main expectations. Almost all recruits declared that the camp experience either met, or exceeded their expectations (post-camp consolidated survey data). Only very few comments related to unmet expectations: One recruit had anticipated that connecting with the youth would be easier: "*It was a challenge, to build rapport with the child I was paired up*" (Police recruit from post-camp survey, 2017). Another had expected to be able to "*stay composed*" and not become "*too emotional*" during the camps, but stated that this was "*not met*" (Police recruit from post-camp survey, 2015). A third recruit simply declared: "*I will not know [ed. if my communication skills have improved] until I deal with children*

through work" (Police recruit from post-camp survey, 2017). A couple of participants had a more positive experience than expected: "*I did not think I would have so much fun*", and "*I was expecting it to be trying and difficult, but I had a ball!*" (Police recruit from post-camp survey, 2017 & 2015). Another recruit found the camp to be more emotional than expected: "*I did not think I would be so emotionally attached to these kids*" (Police recruit from post-camp survey, 2017). All other responses confirm expectations stated in the pre-camp survey. Here are a few examples from the post-camp survey:

> *"Interacting with young people in the capacity of a police officer – Achieved. This provided a bridging experience prior to our graduation"* (Police recruit from post-camp survey, 2017).

> *"I got experience. It was a good chance to get some hands-on experience with the children I may potentially be working with in future"* (Police recruit from post-camp survey, 2016).

> *"Better understanding of their needs. These kids came in all shapes and sizes and shared their stories in different ways but I definitely felt like everyone gained a better understanding"* (Police recruit from post-camp survey, 2018).

> *"More appreciation of children's behaviours and how they are influenced by their parents and lifestyles. Very much achieved this"* (Police recruit from post-camp survey, 2015).

> *"I have a greater understanding that they have been brought up in certain circumstances that will reflect on their behaviour"* (Police recruit from post-camp survey, 2016).

> *"I believe I got all the things I was hoping to get from the camp to the fullest extent possible in 24 hours"* (Police recruit from post-camp survey, 2018).

> *"I achieved perspective. Although this is only a small portion of youths, my expectations of the children were different from what I came into contact with. Even though they*

> *were disadvantaged, the majority still behaved like 'normal' children"* (Police recruit from post-camp survey, 2016).

Some important elements from the main aim of the program are confirmed here. First of all, it is mentioned how the experience is a good 'bridge' between the Police Academy and the reality the recruits will meet when they graduate, which is probably the main goal of the program (see section 2.4.1). Furthermore, many commented on the practice of communication skills, and how they felt these improved during the camp, which was also one of the main practical elements. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly in the light of wanting to close the gap between police and youth, many recruits explain how they now are more capable of seeing the kid, as a kid, and as his/hers actions. This can reflect a greater understanding of how some actions can merely be a reaction or coping mechanism, imposed by feeling vulnerable or uncomfortable, rather than being a conscious choice of behaving 'badly'. This is probably one of the most important learning aspects of the camp, as this identification of these reactions is vital for police to be able to deal correctly with vulnerabilities (see section 2.2).

Many of the recruits comments that their expectations of practising their communication skills were met. What we however cannot tell from this data, is to what extent this practice will have an impact on the recruits professional bearing. As already touched on earlier in this part of the thesis (see section 5.1.2), from a learning theory perspective, each recruit need to make a conscious connection between their experiences and new understandings during the camp. As more recruits indicated in the survey, these young people did not always act according to the recruits' anticipations, which could be experienced as an unpleasant revelation for the recruits, if we follow Schön's logic (see section 4.2). A revelation like this has the potential to encourage and enhance the *ability for reflection-in-action* and through this, practice and learn new ways to achieve specific outcomes. Unfortunately, according to Schön it can also lead to this new experience being ignored and disregarded. This can however, still be linked to new learnings from a more Deweyan perspective, if the experience is followed by a profound reflective process, which is where, as I will later discuss (see 5.2), the briefing and debriefing sessions become crucial.

5.1.5 Is the Camp a Good Idea?

The benefits of the program, as a means to help better prepare police recruit for encounters with vulnerable people, have been spoken for in the light of presented literature, but what do the recruits think of it themselves? For the post-camp survey exclusively, participants were asked whether they thought the ERCT police recruit program should become a formal part of the recruit curriculum in the future. An overwhelming 89% either agreed or strongly agreed with this, while only 3% disagreed (see Figure 11). Furthermore, every participant was asked, both pre- and post-camp, whether they thought the police recruit camp is a good idea. In total, 97% and 98.5% (pre- and post-camp, respectively) answered 'yes' to this (pre- and post-camp consolidated survey data). The only pre-camp 'no' was attributed to a recruit not feeling like they knew enough about the camps to answer. The only post-camp 'no' acknowledged that the camp is a good idea but did not think they should be compulsory to recruits. Overall, this shows a positive response towards the camp experience itself. It also reflects an optimistic attitude going into the camps, which presumably fosters a greater engagement from the police recruits' point of view. This initial positive attitude prior to the camps could stem from the introductory briefing, where the ideas and motivation behind the camps are presented and discussed openly. This is an important pre-camp element, to make sure the recruits are well-prepared to take on the responsibilities that come with running these camps and dealing with young people and their potential vulnerabilities. This pre-camp comment from one recruit, following the briefing presentation, reaffirms that the value of this element should not be underestimated:

> *"Sitting in these presentations and listening made me want to be a part of what you are trying to achieve. I think this is an awesome idea as long as these kids continue to feel like they belong to something. What an opportunity to provide some happiness for these kids. This should not be left until the end of the course"* (police recruit from pre-camp survey, 2015).

Although not all recruits were this excited about participating prior to the camp, it is still important to provide transparency behind the objectives, to help every participant be as comfortable beforehand as each is capable of. A few recruits from the first year the camp was run expressed concerns about not trusting this to be a non-assessed activity (pre- and post-camp survey data, 2015). It has since been made sure, that it is made absolutely clear during the briefing, that participants will not be marked on this activity, which is also the reason for

teachers not participating in the camp itself. From the beginning of this program it was decided that assessment had to be left out to allow recruits to comfortably engage themselves entirely, without feeling judged or watched. This is to let the police recruits have this experience without distractions, to allow for a process of self-reflection. Bartkowiak-Théron and Layton (2012) explains how, before the recruits can start to learn, teaching of police recruits regularly involves deconstruction of initial attitudes, often rooted in stereotypical views on law enforcement as an occupation. These attitudes can consist of big egos, narrow-mindedness, prejudice, defensiveness, projection, and self-delusion. Structural barriers such as strong embedded routines and bureaucratic monitoring and testing can hinder the deconstruction of these attitudes (Bartkowiak-Théron & Layton, 2012). Removing these structural barricades can help improve the self-reflection and the impact of the camp, and support them in leaving their "*selfish bubble*" for a time, as this recruit suggests:

> *"The camp was a good distraction. One of my peers made a great point the other day about, when being a recruit you become so selfish in your bubble and it was nice to be able to feel like it wasn't all about you or the academy for 24 hours"* (police recruit from post-camp survey, 2018).

This recruit experienced the camp as a break from the Police Academy, and an opportunity to get some perspective on 'life' at the Police Academy. Studies of general recruit community placements have suggested that recruits to a high extent use their placement experiences to reflect on their own lives, and that these reflections are likely to affect the ways in which they conduct themselves as police (Layton, 2004). Although this is nothing near a placement situation, it still represents an experience with the 'real world', and still fosters the opportunity to spike these self-reflections, which hopefully follows through to the recruits' professional identities. Below are some of the comments that suggest that it does. These answers are taken from open-ended question on why the camp should be formally included into curriculum (for the 'yes' answers):

> *"This was such a beneficial experience; I think a lot can be taken from the camp and I hope it continues. I would also love to volunteer in my spare time. It saddens me that there are children that are having to go through these things, and I will definitely make an effort while I am working to engage with youths and try to get an insight to if they need help, because majority of the time police may not have any idea that anything bad*

is happening to these children. It is also important to have a good relationship with youths so they have someone they can go to for help. My favourite part of the camp was that they didn't know we were police. When they saw us, first they booed and called us pigs, but then they realised we were their buddies. This changed their negative perception of police" (Police recruit from post-camp survey, 2016).

"Being aware of our own behaviour and actions around kids and any preconceived 'ideas' of what makes them behave the way they do is worth challenging. It's better to experience a short period outside your comfort zone with the full brief/debrief format in order to gain the appreciation and general understanding in dealing with young people (some very young) and considerations when approaching (in the uniform) people under 18" (Police recruit from post-camp survey, 2016).

"It reinforces a lot of the theory of what we have studied and for those that do not have a lot of interaction with children or people from low socio-economic backgrounds I think the recruits benefit greatly from the exercise" (Police recruit from post-camp survey, 2018).

"We do not have much other contact with youth in the recruit training program, though we do have lessons. It is good to see the practical side of things" (Police recruit from post-camp survey, 2015).

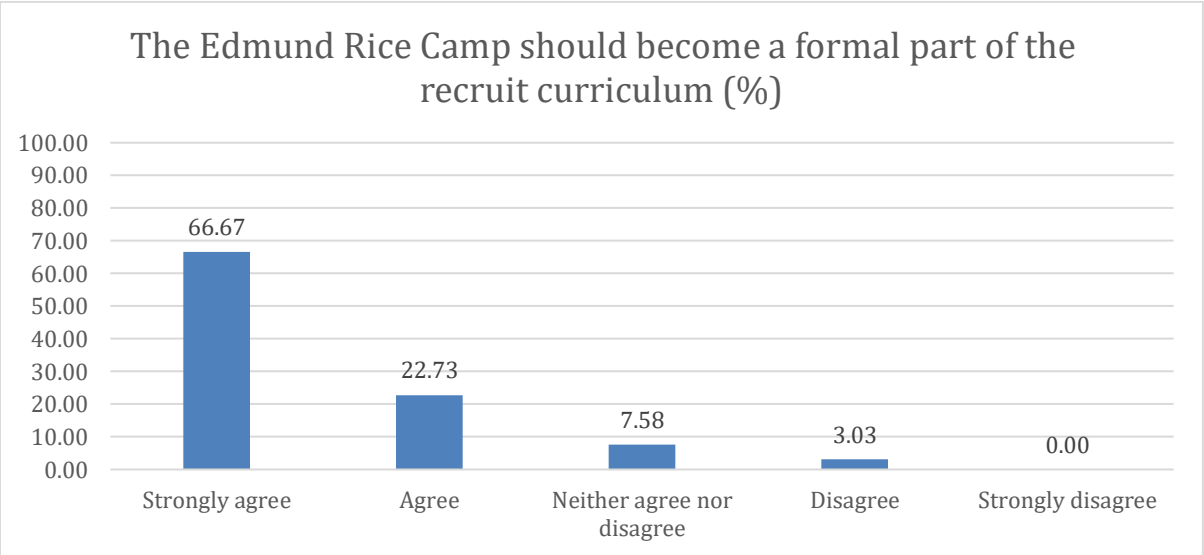

Figure 11

5.2 The Teaching Perspective

The usefulness of the recruits participating in these camps, as a way of introducing or exposing them to youth vulnerabilities have already been presented throughout this report. This section will investigate the program from a teaching perspective, based on the qualitative data as well as pertinent learning theory.

The preliminary analysis of interview-data revealed a supportive attitude towards the program across all interviews. Participants seemed to be in overwhelming agreement about whether the program positively contributes to the education of new recruits. As explained earlier (see section 3.4.2) through the analysis of the qualitative data, a consolidation of themes emerged. The principal themes found in the interviews are described and analysed below. However, the themes represent a degree of fluidity and will overlap on some points, and are therefore not to be seen as strict categorisations, but more as a guide through the analysis.

5.2.1 Breaking down learning-barriers

In *Educating for Vulnerability* by Bartkowiak-Théron and Layton (2012) it is described how in police education, teachers or educators often have to deal with recruits' 'attitudes' as part of their teaching responsibilities. Particularly in courses involving policing and vulnerabilities, it is necessary to break through these attitude barriers to make recruits fully understand the content of the course, and how it affects their prospective role as police officers. That is, a role that includes competences to observe and identify signs of vulnerability, assess these signs, respond to emergencies, and refer to specialist agencies (Bartkowiak-Théron & Layton, 2012). As previously described, in policing as well as police education, there exists a tendency to hang on to old traditional norms (see section 2.1). These normative ideas of the police role are often inherent in recruits even before they start their training, and thus, it becomes an extra challenge to rid them of these before any learning can happen. Working through the data available for this study, it became clear that the camp experience represented a 'tool' or means to break down these initial barriers for learning about vulnerabilities. During my observation of the briefing session before the camp in 2019, I observed clear apprehension from a lot of the recruits (Fieldnotes from debriefing session, 2019). The motivation behind the program, as well as the presumed benefits of participation are outlined to recruits during the preliminary briefing,

and to me this presentation reflected an obvious opportunity for the recruits to practice their communicative skills and get valuable experience. However, in spite of this briefing, a dominant part of the recruits still initially expressed doubts about the weekend. When asked about this in the focus group, one recruit simply says:

> *"I think we all knew that some of us were going to find it really hard. I don't think we all thought that we were going to be like 'touched' in some way by it"* (Police recruit 1 from focus group interview, 2015).

This excerpt suggests that it might have been fear or nervousness that generated this reluctance to participate among the recruits leading up to camp-training. Both interviewed course coordinators similarly refer to incidents prior to the camp, where recruits have expressed clear skepticism and questioned why they should engage in the program. The external participant, who observed the dynamics before, during and after the camps as an objective third party, provided their thoughts on the origins of the recruits' uncertainties:

> *"For some, it was thinking that 'well why do we have to go out and form those relationships?'. Sort of having like, the old school police officer view; 'well that's not our job. Our job isn't to go and do this, our job is to arrest them if they commit a crime. We protect them if they need protecting, but why are we going to hang out with a bunch of kids?'..."* (External camp participant, 2015).

Similarly, one of the course coordinators said:

> "*I think it was more preconceived ideas that were locked in and having the view that 'why do we bother', because we're not going to change these kids. And a comfort zone thing, too. I think it's easy, as a defence, to say, 'this is a load of [expletive]'. It's easier to say that, than to actually turn it around and say, 'I really don't feel comfortable doing this because I'm not used to dealing with kids and dealing with kids from these backgrounds'. And I think that was the real reality of what it was...*" (Course Coordinator 1, 2015).

These examples reflect some of these 'old-school', more stereotypical conceptions of police responsibilities, where vulnerabilities are downplayed and seen as weaknesses (see section 2.1 and 2.2). As suggested by one coordinator, and consistent with the literature, this might stem from insecurities, fear, and narrow-mindedness (Bartkowiak-Théron & Layton, 2012). Looking at this from a more theoretical perspective, this can also be the result of having observed more conservative portrayals of police, and through this, adopted specific cognitive patterns for what is encompassed in police roles and responsibilities. Importantly, this does not include spending a camp-weekend with young people. In the perspective of Schön, this might reflect some sort of reconstruction of observed knowledge-in-action or tacit knowledge, based on a more 'traditional' understanding of police (see section 4.2). This also represents one of the main concerns, from a higher education point of view, of the topical conflict between old militant frameworks of police training and the more contemporary ideals of the police profession (see section 2.1). However, in spite of these rather apprehensive attitudes prior to the camp, the feedback on the program has been overwhelmingly positive; both from a teaching and recruit perspective. This implies that at some point during the camps, some of the more sceptical recruits experienced a shift in their attitudes. One of the coordinators who also participated in the camp witnessed this shift:

> "*I watched two recruits, both quite apprehensive going into the course, but throughout the weekend, you could see these changes, and see them positively change. And then at the end I saw one of their buddies thank them, and when that happened, I could see the recruit stand tall. I think there was a lot of value in it for him. And if it had been voluntary, he wouldn't have been there, I've got no doubt about that. That's why I think it should be mandatory, because those that are probably having doubts, in my opinion are ones that probably need to attend it the most*" (Course Coordinator 2, 2015).

The external participant and the second course coordinator both explain how they had similar experiences of changes in the attitudes of the more apprehensive recruits throughout the camp. But what is it that triggers this change? As presented, it is theoretically recognised that learning through experience is a highly effective method (see section 4; see also Boud, Cohen & Walker, 1996). However, when some recruits appear to be very hesitant about the experience from the beginning how receptive will they be to learning? Brew (1996) introduces the concept of "*unlearning through experience".* With this concept, she refers to the mechanism where other

people's actions or possession of new information radically challenges our own understandings. Ironically, this 'unlearning' typically kickstarts a profound learning progress that forces individuals to re-evaluate previous beliefs and views (Brew, 1996). In that sense, it is very similar to the experience Schön describes as an often unpleasant surprise, when the individual realises that normal patterns of knowledge-in-action are being challenged (see section 4.2). As Schön explains, this can likely lead to the individual backing off and ignoring the experience, because it feels uncomfortable. Having seen the reluctance in some of the recruits myself, it surprises me how such a short amount of time can change all of their minds so rapidly. Maybe the intensity of the camp makes it impossible for this confronting 'unpleasant surprise' to be ignored, and therefore forces the recruits to reflect and test new approaches. This personal reflections from one of the initially sceptical recruits, indicates that this could very well be the case:

> "*A lot of us have never been exposed to that, and just having like an 11-year-old just blurt out hardcore swearwords with no real emotion… That's just how her life is, you know? So, I'm just thinking; what's she going to be like in three years' time or whatever, when she's got no real parental control, and she doesn't know any better?"* (police recruit 4 from focus group interview, 2015).

The recruit here clearly appears to have been surprised by the encounter with the specific cohort of youth in the camp, and moves on to say:

> *"So, you know there is potential that we can change stuff. Yeah, we have to stick to the book, but it is how we deal with them, and the comfort we can also provide in that situation. That's probably the biggest thing I took away from it (…) Yes, they've done the wrong thing, and I know that I might not be able to change the world or anything, but that one-on-one encounter that I might have with someone that's done something wrong, like I might be able to do something, you know?*" (police recruit 4 from focus group interview, 2015).

These are reflections from a recruit, who openly expressed apprehensions towards the camp, prior to the experience. This attitude-shift and thought process suggests that the shock of such an unexpected reaction from the young girl referred to in the excerpt has definitely led this

recruit to be more open minded for new approaches. It further suggests that the youth engagement during the program has the potential to impact recruits' perspectives, merely by confronting previously held ideas of the reality they will face when they graduate. At the same time, this process seems to support the diminution of attitude-barriers for learning, and can thereby potentially improve recruit preparedness for further educational development. It can be discussed whether this confrontation and breaking down of learning barriers, could be useful to introduce earlier in the course? However, it is also important to make sure the recruits have achieved some sort of schooling in what to expect and how to react, to ensure that the youth involved are not put in any potentially harmful situation. As Dewey explains, learning and growth happens through a dynamic relationship between the individual and the outside world, as well as knowledge and experience (see section 4.1). On that note, both elements of the course seem to be equally important and dependent on the other. As will be discussed in the next section, this relationship between the two components was also something that was recognised as a consolidated theme by course coordinators and recruits.

5.2.2 Learning by doing

As touched on previously, the benefits, and even necessities, of learning by doing is widely acknowledged in education research (Dewey, 1986; Schön, 1987; Boud, Cohen & Walker, 1996). This is obvious for most physical professions, such as police, but the importance of practice should not be underestimated for more theory-based occupations either. The process of 'trying out' studied practices in live contexts, and subsequently reflecting upon the experience, is what turns knowledge into competences (see section 4.1). Therefore, in the case of a course like HSP332, which is more theoretically based and text-heavy than some other courses at the Tasmanian Police Academy, the need for a practical element is still essential to achieve more applicable learning outcomes. From a recruit perspective, this was evident throughout the survey responses, as well as in the focus group interview. As such, one recruit specifically mentioned the need for a practical element for this course:

> "*I think there definitely needs to be some practical side to the vulnerable people side of things, because really there wasn't much else that was practical, and I think it was definitely beneficial"* (police recruit 3 from focus group interview, 2015).

Community placement is one known type of practical training that appears to have a particularly powerful impact on recruits' understanding of vulnerability, and how to deal with these in a police capacity (Bartkowiak-Théron & Layton, 2012). However, since community placements cannot pragmatically be included in all courses, the ERCT recruit program could represent an efficient, cost-effective and successful alternative. The external participant gave the following remarks about the camps capability to connect theory with practice:

> *"From what I could see, their eyes were open after the camp and it was sort of 'wow, this is what other people go through and this is the reality of it'. And I think it linked the practical with the theory. They were able to see, OK, well this is what we've been learning, and this is what it is in reality. So, I think there was a shift in understanding that they were working with a range of people who had a range of backgrounds and undertaking different considerations. I think it's a key component to their learning. It helps bring everything that they've been reading in textbooks and been taught to life. And I think that it is so important that they interact with that, to support their learning*" (External camp participant, 2015).

The course coordinators seem to agree, with the camp experience being an efficient tool to link what is taught at the Police Academy with the practical and more authentic side of things. One of them explains:

> *"If we take the time out to do this in our curriculum, I think the learning outcomes would be far more significant long-term, because they're not just something that we show in a PowerPoint; we actually get them to experience it and actually really go into a much deeper level of learning. And so that's why I thought this would be of value. It is more than just a token thing. I think it becomes a lot more valuable when we can actually link it into the learning that they are doing as police officers, and as to why certain people behave in certain ways. And so, if we can understand that we'll be better police officers"* (Course Coordinator 1, 2015).

What is underlined in both excerpts, is the benefits of the camps from a theoretical point of view, to ensure the quality of the learning outcomes of the course. It also touches on the benefits

of the program in a larger and more long term perspective, indicating beliefs that the program directly has the potential to impact the quality of Tasmanian Police. Schön recommends that all professional education should be centred around improving the ability for reflection-in-action, as it fosters strong problem-solving skills, critical thinking, and competences to reflect and act in the now. These are all skills that are also recognised in the scope of the official learning outcomes for HSP332 (HSP332 - UTAS, 2021). With strong reflection-in-action abilities, the capacity to keep on learning and continuously develop throughout the professional career will likewise be strong. So, if what happens with the recruits during the camp sort of illustrates the development of a stronger ability for reflection-in-action, what the course coordinator and the external participant suggests above might be true. That is, that participating in the camp is actually providing the recruits with an opportunity to develop skills for constant professional development, by offering a practice-environment to face real-life issues, test new approaches, make mistakes, seek more information, and discover new solutions. This is however, only if the recruits learn to be self-reflective (see section 4). A couple of the recruits from the focus group interview, touched on relatable considerations:

> *"I had to constantly adjust. What works for one is not going to work for another, so you've got to just keep adjusting until you find something that works. I think I just learnt to be prepared for anything*" (police recruit 3 from focus group interview, 2015).

And:

> "*From our perspective, I think we've probably got more out of it, because it potentially has a more lasting effect for us. Like, the kids go back to their lives, whereas we kind of think about it, and probably talk about it for a really long time. Even on our stations, you deal with some stuff, and you get a little bit of an experience of what it's going to be like, but not from a real youth perspective. Whereas this kind of really highlighted what some of the kids out there really do go through, and that you know, we're quite privileged from where we come from*" (police recruit 1 from focus group interview, 2015).

This suggests, that the program encourages recruits to enter a state of reflection-in-action, and try out different approaches until something works, and through this process obtain some sort

of reflective learning. Perhaps, as the recruits above suggest, this is simply because of the nature of the specific youth cohort participating in the camp. With many of these young people, 'normal' know-how or cognitive strategy patterns will be insufficient, as they will likely all display different coping mechanisms or unprecedented reactions, because of their individual vulnerabilities and experiences. Since 75% of police encounters also represent vulnerable populations (see section 2.2), developing some sort of ability to adjust approaches in the moment, or reflect-in-action, is absolutely vital. In that perspective, one weekend of training can seem insufficient, unless it is enough to initiate a continuous development in each recruit.

5.2.3 What is learned?

At this point, this thesis has extensively argued that the ERCT police recruit project is beneficial to learning. However, what specifically is learned and how does it relate to the official learning outcomes of HSP332? It is clear that a deeper understanding of youth and their complex vulnerabilities is part of the knowledge that recruits acquired during the experience (see section 5.1). Furthermore, the camp cultivates an optimal environment for practicing communication skills (see section 5.2.2). This course coordinator agrees with this, but further suggests that the scope of what can be learned through the camp, reaches far beyond this:

> "*Within the at-risk module, I think it definitely covers that as far as people who are* ***vulnerable*** *in the community. I think it also covers* ***communication****; we're teaching people to communicate to all different levels and different groups and types in society, and I think that communication is a big one. To actually be forced to have to relate to someone and communicate, and realise that different styles are important, I think that's important.* ***Teamwork*** *is a big part of it. Not just as in morale building for the course, but realising that when someone might be struggling, for them to actually help out that person and do that in a team environment. I think that's important too. And just the other, probably more unwritten things, like* ***confidence****,* ***persistence****, and* ***resilience****. All those are characteristics that they should have as police officers, and I think they're important things they develop as part of this camp as well*" (Course Coordinator 1, 2015).

These skills are all valuable generic skills that can support each individual recruit in becoming a more well-rounded police officer, and one that has the ability to continuously recognise self-

development. However, it was discussed in all interviews, whether or not the recruits were explicitly aware of the police training aspect during the camp, or if that "*went out the window*" when the camp started. All recruits in the focus group interview agreed that they had forgotten all about the policing when they started engaging in the camp (Focus group interview, 2015). This indicates a risk of the learnings from the camp being more context restricted, and at risk of not having the long term effect, that has been previously suggested (e.g. see section 5.2.2). However, this course coordinator, did not necessarily believe that this was true, and suggest that perhaps the policing aspect of the learning happens more subconsciously:

> "*So, firstly; they are to a degree thinking [ed. like police], because that's part of the culture that they've learnt for seven months. They haven't really been dealing with the community in a policing sense much, so it's probably hard for them to answer that really effectively, because the impact of that weekend will change them. And I would challenge any of them to say that it won't change them just a little bit. And I think having that weekend, and understanding what these kids have gone through, they would have been far more aware and used their skills that they learnt, without even realising that they'd got them. They're presented with an issue, and what I'm saying to them is; that is policing. There's a problem, and then they apply their skills and knowledge, and their experience, and they come up with a solution*" (Course Coordinator 2, 2015).

So, what this course coordinator suggests, is that the policing aspect will be implicit, because the recruits will, to some extent, already have adopted some tacit knowledge and policing habits simply by being at the Police Academy. From a theoretical point of view, this makes sense. Dewey explicitly explains how learning is always influenced by and experienced through the social environment, and that way, plays a crucial role in the individual's learning (see section 4.1). In that way, what the course coordinator suggests might be right, and the recruits are already thinking in policing patterns, perhaps without necessarily being aware of it. This perspective enables both opportunities and risks. On one hand, it works as an argument for the program's learning potential merely through the social context and nature of the camp. On the other hand, if this does not align with the reality previously experienced at the Police Academy, as well as the reality they will meet when they start their professional conduct in actual work environments, perhaps the learnings from the program will be overwritten. In the study on Australian police recruits learning through community placements, the extent of changes in police recruits' worldviews was largely related to the characteristics of the specific police

organisations in which students were placed (see section 2.2 and Layton, 2012). It was further concluded that failure for recruits to change their behaviour was attributed to a strong allegiance to stereotypical understanding of what it means to be a police officer (Layton, 2004). The other interviewed course coordinator, to a certain degree, acknowledged there is a risk of losing the potential learning:

> "*I think that's where, if we don't bring it together in the right way, like in a debrief and information beforehand - if we just did it as a camp, with minimal information about how the camp runs, I think we run the risk of it just being a nice thing to do. And I don't think anyone would argue that it's a nice thing to do, but if we want to get learning outcomes out of it I think we need to relate it to our police work, and them as police officers before the camp, and after the camp, and I think that's where the real learning comes out of it, I think*" (Course Coordinator 1, 2015).

In a way, what is suggested here is that the structural surroundings of the programs need to be well thought out. As such, the briefing and debriefing is highlighted as important components in bringing it all together, and making sure the learning outcomes transferred through to actual policing. As previously described, the experience of personally engaging with vulnerabilities helps build social competences and often causes the recruits to reflect on their own lives (Bartkowiak-Théron & Layton, 2012). These competences and self-reflections will most likely subconsciously affect the ways in which they conduct themselves as police, whether they are aware of it or not. However, supporting the recruits in these reflections and facilitating discussions directly linking the experiences to the police profession will certainly enhance the professional learning outcomes. In fact, in a theoretical light, this is essential (see section 4). Furthermore, as previously argued, the briefing and debriefing of recruits will help the recruits' awareness and understanding of theories, policies and procedures presented during the HSP332 course. That way, facilitating the briefing, and especially the debriefing after the camp, seems to reflect an essential component of the program from all points of views, to ensure that all recruits have the best grounds for reflection and development. However, it is still questionable whether the impact of this will sustain, if this does not match the reality in which they will be conducting themselves as police officers in the future.

6. Limitations and Future Research

Evidently, questions remain regarding how we can improve the police profession, to better meet social and cultural demands of contemporary society, particularly when the existing police culture often is structurally rooted in old traditions (see section 2 and 5.2.3). In the study of Australian police recruit placements, it was concluded that failure for recruits to change their behaviour was attributed to a strong allegiance to stereotypical understanding of what it means to be a police officer, which existed within the specific police organisation (Layton, 2004). Police organisations are often viewed as a highly masculinised occupation, where vulnerabilities are generally shunned, both amongst police officers themselves and towards other community members (Bartkowiak-Théron & Layton, 2012). However, just as young people do not necessarily fit stereotypical labels of anti-social and delinquent behaviour, police similarly do not necessarily fit these "macho" archetypes, and while some community placements in the police placement study blocked rather than provided opportunities to learn about vulnerabilities, others served as ideal learning contexts (Layton, 2004). Either way, this underlines a strong incentive towards introducing the exposure to vulnerabilities, through initiatives that are not contingent on the specific contextual officers or police organisation dynamics. In that perspective, programs like the ERCT police program represents an ideal opportunity to expose individuals, *outside* of a police specific context, and *before* they are potentially indoctrinated into old school police structures. Further, through the analysis, it has become evident that from all investigated perspectives, the experience with the program has been overwhelmingly positive. However, some questions of limitations to the scope of the program has arisen:

- How much of an impact can one weekend have in a more long term perspective, especially if future placements present ideological conflicts?
- Will the recruits be able to transfer learned understandings and skills to other scenarios, outside the specific context (such as dealing with vulnerable adults rather than kids and in the context of a crime scene rather than a camp)

These are all interesting and important aspects that are, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this thesis. To investigate these aspects in the specific context of Tasmania Police, more data (e.g. longitudinal) and further analysis would be necessary. On a wider scale, looking at other ways

of exposing recruits to vulnerable populations, as part of their training, both in and outside of Tasmania would also add more to the broader picture of how to improve police education in general. Perhaps, the measure of adopting smaller programs like the ERCT police recruit program into the curriculum just represents a 'band-aid solution' to a larger issue of contemporary police education. Perhaps what is really needed is, like with the vulnerability concept, is a reconceptualization of the police profession as a whole, to better suit the societal demands of the police role. Either way, this thesis suggests that these are exciting times for police education. Despite some unanswered questions about the long term effects of the ERCT police recruit program, the initiative in itself, and the intention from Tasmania Police's side to research the perceived benefits of it, illustrates a desire to develop, and offer a better and broader police education. This inclination towards measuring impacts of such initiatives, that to a certain extent reflect higher education inputs, seems to represent a new 'trend' amongst police organisations (Bartkowiak-Théron, 2019). Although there is still a long way to a fully professionalised police education agenda, and negative attitudes towards higher education for police still remain, there now exists a more widespread acknowledgement for the need of this amongst police organisations. Björk (2018) explains how, when doing research within a police organisation specifically, there is potential that the process of gathering data on its own can work in favour of collaboration. When done in the right way, research can in itself lead to a productive meeting between theoretics and practicians (Björk, 2018). As such, through extensive efforts and collaboration between academics and police, new ways of curriculum designing are continuously presented, as a way to better prepare police officers to respond to new social and cultural challenges. The impact of this is ranging from dealing with vulnerabilities, collaborating with other agencies, to better usage of tools for communicating and less use of (unnecessary) force (Bartkowiak-Théron, 2019). Rogers and Wintle (2020) suggest that the policing agencies in Australia might need a '*revolution*' of their organisations, leadership and management, to be able to meet contemporary and future demands.

7. Conclusion

To sum up, the findings in this thesis suggest the ERCT police recruit program is unique in its structure and purpose as a training initiative for police recruits. Overall, the program is found to be highly successful on multiple levels. From a recruit perspective, one reason for the positive outcomes of the project is the confronting nature of the camp. It is argued that the

camp is not just beneficial to recruits as a way of exposing them to vulnerabilities, but also because of the degree of this exposure. For many recruits, the experience impacted them in such a way that it changed their general attitude towards youth and vulnerability, as well as their overall perception of the role of a police officer. This was verified by both recruits' and course coordinators' experiences. From a teaching perspective, the camp provides an important practical addition to the course, linking theory to reality in a relevant, and efficient manner. It enhances the pertinency of formal HSP332 learning outcomes by adding a real-life perspective. Furthermore, there is little risk involved with the program, both from a youth, recruit and structural perspective. More so, the trial-and-error process of learning to communicate and deal with disadvantaged youth is considered far less risky in a controlled environment like ERCT, than out on the street with no experience at all. Based on the analysis and discussion of the ERCT police recruit project, from an educational perspective, it is recommended to formally include the program into the official curriculum and thereby give *all* recruits a chance of developing crucial social competences around vulnerabilities. Helping the police recruits increase their awareness and understanding of disadvantaged youth through the ERCT police camps represents a valuable addition to future police training, and potentially operates as a means to prepare police recruits for new demands of contemporary policing. This thesis has pointed to benefits of police education moving towards a more professionalised organisation, through collaborative relationships between the police and higher education, that integrates training and education focussed on cultural and social aspects of modern and future society and supported by literature, research and practice. From a more long-term perspective, this can help improve community engagement practices, at a time where police seem to have less time to engage in such activities.

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