

Zhiqiu Lin. *Policing the Wild North-West: A Sociological Study of the Provincial Police in Alberta and Saskatchewan, 1905-1932.* Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2006. 210 pp. \$34.95, paper, ISBN 978-1-55238-171-7.



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During the past two decades, readers keen to explore new historical studies on Canadian policing have had their appetite satisfied by such scholars as Greg Marquis, John Weaver, Steve Hewitt, and Andrew Graybill. In *Policing the Wild North-West*, Zhiqiu Lin does not discuss any of these four authors' work. Instead, he offers his ideas largely against the backdrop of historical scholarship published in the 1980s or earlier. Nevertheless, Lin's topic, questions, and research strategies possess the right combination of similarities to and differences from those found in the more recent literature to make his study a suitable addition to current scholarship.

As Marquis has pointed out (*Policing Canada's Century: A History of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police* [1993]), Canadians making their living as police officers have most often done so as part of a municipal or provincial force, rather than in a Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) uniform. In contrast to a good deal of the historiography published prior to their own studies, Marquis's and Weaver's (*Crimes, Constables,*

and Courts: Order and Transgression in a Canadian City, 1816-1970 [1995]) discussion of policing has often dealt with these non-Mounties. Through recent publications by Hewitt (*Spying 101: The RCMP's Secret Activities at Canadian Universities, 1917-1997* [2002] and *Riding to the Rescue: The Transformation of the RCMP in Alberta and Saskatchewan, 1914-1939* [2006]) and Graybill (*Policing the Great Plains: Rangers, Mounties, and the North American Frontier, 1875-1910* [2007]), however, discussion of the Mounted Police, especially of their work in the Prairie region, has risen to prominence again. While Lin's book keeps us on the prairies, it does so to highlight another example of policing conducted by organizations not under RCMP control—in this case the Saskatchewan Provincial Police (SPP) and the Alberta Provincial Police (APP). The credit for the policing carried out in certain urban centers within the two provinces has long belonged primarily to municipal police forces. By contrast, only during a brief chapter of the region's history did the cast of characters in Prairie society include the

SPP and the APP, and these latter two forces sought primarily to ensure that the law won compliance among nonurban citizens. Although the rural policing mandate was in the Mounties' hands for decades, human resource challenges, among other things, were making this role burdensome for the federal force by the middle of the Great War. The solution came in 1917 in the form of the two newly created provincial police forces, which served as the principal players on the rural front. By 1928, however, the government of Saskatchewan judged it best to make the RCMP its chief supplier of nonurban policing once again, rather than to keep the more costly SPP in operation. By 1932 Albertan authorities had become ready to make the same decision with respect to the APP. Accordingly, Lin's analysis, which revolves around his research on the SPP and APP, also addresses some noteworthy comparative data concerning the RCMP's pre-1917 and post-1932 work. The study as a whole attempts both to reveal key characteristics of the two provincial forces themselves and to highlight one important pattern that made its presence felt with respect to policing in general in this historical setting: the phenomenon of professionalization.

As Lin sees it, the decisions, trends, and adjustments discernible in the policing of the Prairie region during the first third of the century are the kinds of developments that materialize in a setting where professionalization has begun to exert significant influence. In highlighting professionalization, Lin is not seeking to demonstrate that the police became intent on portraying certain norms, skills, and credentials as especially characteristic of their particular occupation, or on putting their own profession in a position to reap various advantages. Instead, he intends the term "professionalization" to evoke "rationalization" and Max Weber's ideas concerning the latter. "Calculable and predictable rules and procedures" have tended more and more to infuse organizations and enterprises in many nineteenth- and twentieth-century societies, and this holds true, Lin believes, in

the case of policing in Western Canada (p. 203n7). By no means does Lin claim that the patterns and approaches emerging among Canadian police during the period of his study always possessed a more professionalized flavor than their previous practices had. Sometimes the provincial police went with the less professionalized alternative from among the options that they might potentially have pursued. On the whole, however, the police found it attractive to incorporate new doses of professionalism into their patterns of work. After all, citizens who noted a police force's proclivity for professionalized dealings became less likely to worry that they might suffer from prejudiced actions or capricious responses on the part of officers. And this, in turn, tended to reduce the chances that police would find their efforts impeded by distrust or recalcitrance on the part of the people among whom they worked.

At times Lin's discussion reveals that the SPP and the APP took advantage of the kind of carefully devised systems and instruments that references to "rationalization" might bring to mind. Thanks to regular, mandatory reports from officers stationed in various communities, supervisory officers responsible for larger geographic areas possessed a written source that could help them remain abreast of the ongoing work performed by the force. Moreover, the desire to make certain policing objectives more attainable could lead a provincial force to try to develop a more strategically effective system of police roles and responsibilities than had initially been employed. The APP decided that establishing new subdivisions in the force to handle particular aspects of its mandate might foster the development of greater competence than ordinary APP constables would be likely to display. Furthermore, the two forces' quest for successful policing strategies made them receptive to some of the technological opportunities of the hour, such as those represented by the automobiles in which many officers now traveled. Lin is concise in his discussion of these aspects of professionalization. In fact, he is concise enough

that readers who expect this kind of evidence to underpin the bulk of the study's analysis may feel shortchanged by the end of the book.

For Lin, however, the most interesting issue concerning professionalization centers neither on systematization nor on technologization, but rather on the kinds of unlawfulness and types of people in opposition to which the police most frequently put their foot down. As he portrays it, the law enforcement mandate created two broad policing opportunities. On the one hand, the police could attempt to display their prowess as bulwarks against the practitioners of "serious crime"--against all those who subjected fellow citizens to violence, or who stole what others owned. On the other hand, officers who wanted problems to solve were also amply supplied therewith by what Lin terms "public-order offences"--a wide variety of unlawful activities, including ones centering on intoxication, vagrancy, prostitution, and so forth. In many respects, the point of making it possible to penalize citizens for public-order offences was to ensure that what had once been termed the "dangerous classes" did not get the chance to fully demonstrate their supposed propensity for what Canadian social leaders regarded as pernicious conduct. In the eyes of many police officers, this sort of pernicious proclivity tended to be found especially among non-Anglo-Celtic immigrants. But although authorities' perspective on public-order offences was particularly unfavorable to this less advantaged group, the police generally wanted neither the man on the street nor the socially advantaged citizen to get away with serious crime. From Lin's perspective, a fully professionalized organization expects that the principles and practices which it has instituted should prevail in all of its decision making and action, with no suspension of these norms in cases where the persons with whom it is dealing possess special influence or particularly admirable qualities, or display a special lack thereof. To Lin, therefore, professionalization meshed well with the type of policing sparked by serious crime, but

not so well with the objectives or attitudes that often flavored police efforts when public-order offences were the issue at hand. Accordingly, assessing how much enthusiasm the police demonstrated for public order work provides a rough sense of the degree to which professionalized traits had come to characterize the police forces in question.

Some of Lin's most interesting analysis emerges as he explores this issue with reference to statistical evidence, examining data series for Saskatchewan and Alberta that stretch from 1906 to 1950. Measured in proportion to total population, arrests stemming from public-order offences tended to occur less frequently in the later stages of this period, especially during the 1930s, than in the earlier years. But his figures especially highlight the difference between the practices of the provincial forces, on the one hand, and of the RCMP, on the other. When someone was placed under arrest by the SPP or the APP, the case more often revolved around a public-order offence than around a serious crime. By contrast, serious offences became the more prevalent cause of arrest in each province as soon as the provincial government made the RCMP the major policing authority once again.

Supporting certain aspects of his reasoning through regression analyses and associated statistical work, Lin develops four notable contentions about the ingredients that may have helped such patterns to emerge. First, arrests sparked by public-order offences became less common in the 1930s partly because the RCMP did not retain the same policy to which the provincial forces had adhered. The Mounties, Lin suggests, considered it inadvisable to go ahead with such arrests in as broad a range of scenarios as had the SPP and the APP.

Second, however, public order enforcement moved onto the back burner in the 1930s partly because the two provinces had now acquired a more obvious proclivity, quantitatively speaking, for serious crime than before, which created a

policing workload that was not conducive to a heavy public order emphasis. The principle applied not just in the 1930s, but also during the period of investigation more generally. When serious crime had recently been climbing, arrests sparked by public order infractions tended to take place less frequently than they otherwise would have; when serious crime had been waning, they tended to occur more often than would otherwise have been the case.

Third, when the region began to acquire immigrants on either a more or a less extensive scale than it previously had, the frequency with which the police placed public order offenders under arrest also tended to change as a result. It would appear that as the police made decisions about their approach to public order work, developments linked to immigration may have served as a key source of the motivation from which they acted. Indeed, as the police perceived it, suggests Lin, few considerations mattered so much with respect to public order enforcement as the possibility that it could help to limit the purportedly serious problems that the country might suffer due to immigration. If Lin is correctly envisioning the realities in play here, it seems reasonable to suspect that immigrants had to endure a disproportionate amount of policing concerning public order issues.

Fourth, quantitative shifts in immigration neither helped serious crime to acquire a stronger presence in the region nor caused such crime to wane. This last point reveals that the police themselves, who suspected serious crime to be a partially immigration-triggered phenomenon, had in this case misjudged the dynamics with which they were dealing.

Whether further investigation of these issues would result in confirmation or in modification of Lin's four contentions, the methodology to which he turns when seeking statistical clues pertinent to his questions is the most impressive facet of the study. The means by which he seeks to prevent

the nonstationary character of certain time series from hampering the effort to accurately detect correlations, especially "long-run relationships," may prove particularly germane to other historians developing quantitative analyses, whether with respect to criminal justice or to other topics (p. 175).

In his effort to shed light on professionalization and the activities of the provincial police by examining public order issues, Lin highlights not only statistical matters but also textual evidence. Acquiring the bulk of his evidence from the annual reports that the SPP and the APP created, but also introducing information from other archival documents, Lin points out ways in which the provincial forces attempted to prevent drifters, laborers, and especially immigrants from disturbing the interests of mainstream Canada's more advantaged citizens. The policing efforts connected to Prohibition, a crucial public order initiative of the early interwar period, also interest him a good deal. To a significant percentage of the region's occupants, Prohibition was one case in which there was much to be said in favor of remaining a hold-out against the authorities' decrees, and many people behaved in accordance with this attitude. For many officers, therefore, police work springing from Prohibition was riddled with too many adversities and disappointments to provide a strong sense of efficacy. In some respects, the two provinces' decision to bid Prohibition goodbye in 1924 illustrates the ability of professionalization to win out. As the police perceived it, much could be gained from the 1924 change. The public, they believed, would be pleased to see the police making themselves dangerous to the practitioners of serious crime rather than to the sellers of alcohol, and would therefore grow more inclined to credit the force with having a sound mandate and maintaining reasonable expectations of citizens. With this type of assumption also influencing officers' stances at other points over the years, profession-

alized options tended to prevail more and more in police practice.

Notwithstanding his portrayal of the Prohibition situation, Lin's extensive discussion of public order issues tends to leave readers particularly aware of the ways in which the efforts of the provincial police lacked certain features that he associates with professionalization. And he points out an additional characteristic of the SPP that those inclined to advocate professionalized norms would have found objectionable. During the premierships of Charles Dunning and Jimmy Gardiner in the 1920s, the ruling Liberal Party sought to enhance its own political fortunes via the SPP. On some occasions, officers found that complying with the expectations of a government member or of other Liberal figures would not merely be a matter of meeting typical policing objectives, but would also involve carrying out tasks or following exceptional directives designed to help the Liberals remain king of the political castle in Saskatchewan. In many respects, Lin's statistical arguments create the impression that the professionalization taking place in Prairie policing during the decades prior to World War II came into its own primarily within the post-1930 RCMP, rather than within the provincial forces. As a result, the Mounties acquire a considerably different image from Lin's study than from Hewitt's characterization of the interwar RCMP in this region. Hewitt's *Riding to the Rescue* highlights not the vigor with which the Mounties leapt into action when serious crime surfaced, but rather the readiness of the RCMP to suspect that certain Canadian organizations harbored sharply leftist political designs for the country, and to attempt, especially through intelligence-gleaning measures, to limit the degree to which these groups could pursue those purported designs. To be sure, Lin is not primarily trying to make a point about the Mounties in particular. Accordingly, the contrast between the two authors' portrayals reminds us not to form an overly firm mental image of the post-1930 RCMP on the basis of Lin's limited dis-

cussion of that agency. Nevertheless, the handful of propositions generated by Lin's statistical work do provide concrete clues about dynamics that, despite gaining little visibility in a study like Hewitt's, may have been important elements in the interwar history of the RCMP.

There are individual facets of Lin's discussion that may lead readers to wonder whether claims about professionalization actually do an optimal job of answering questions about the specific historical developments that the study is examining, or about the actual evidence that he offers. Still, reflecting on professionalization serves Lin well insofar as it supplies him with observations to offer about an impressively broad portion of the assorted issues that arise for discussion as he explores the SPP and the APP. Also, in a sense his exploration of this phenomenon serves as a worthwhile confirmation and extension of a key idea found elsewhere in the relevant historiography. The importance of professionalization to the Canadian policing experience has won clear recognition in previous studies that deal with urban contexts (e.g., Weaver's *Crimes, Constables, and Courts*, and Marquis's *Policing Canada's Century*), or with nationwide aspects of policing. Lin, in turn, has shown that there are also plenty of opportunities to take professionalizing dynamics into consideration when exploring the policing that occurred in nonurbanized portions of Western Canada. And perhaps the literature has now pursued this line of inquiry sufficiently to permit historians to turn their analysis in other directions when they examine the Canadian policing scene--at least for the next while.

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[1]. See, for example, Greg Marquis, *Policing Canada's Century: A History of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993); John C. Weaver: *Crimes,*

Constables, and Courts: Order and Transgression in a Canadian City, 1816-1970 (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995); Steve Hewitt, *Spying 101: The RCMP's Secret Activities at Canadian Universities, 1917-1997* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002); Steve Hewitt, *Riding to the Rescue: The Transformation of the RCMP in Alberta and Saskatchewan, 1914-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006); Andrew R. Graybill, *Policing the Great Plains: Rangers, Mounties, and the North American Frontier, 1875-1910* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007).

[2]. Marquis, *Policing Canada's Century*, 5.

[3]. Marquis, *Policing Canada's Century*; Weaver, *Crimes, Constables, and Courts*.

[4]. See especially Hewitt, *Riding to the Rescue*, and Graybill, *Policing the Great Plains*.

[5]. Weaver, *Crimes, Constables, and Courts*; Marquis, *Policing Canada's Century*.

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