

Redefining public safety: police-citizens committees in Ottawa and Montreal

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Abstract: Issues of accountability and transparency are increasingly becoming a challenge for police services in liberal democratic states such as Canada. In metropolitan areas, where diverse populations include people from different “racial”, ethnic and religious backgrounds, as well as sexual minorities, the challenge faced by police services is made even more complex.

The problem of institutionalized racism in the criminal justice system, including police services, has been well documented (Neugebauer, 2000; Lewis, 1995; Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2003; Bellemare, 1988). The solutions to prevent racism and more generally discrimination in police responses, however, are not clearly identified. Must the police adapt their responses to better serve multicultural and diverse populations? How can police services adapt their practices? What can the public expect from the police?

Police services in both Ottawa and Montreal have set up police-citizen committees as a mechanism to improve relations between the two groups. These committees are intended to make police more responsive to specific citizens' needs and, in return, citizens are supposed to regain trust in the police, as their needs and realities are accounted for. This paper will examine whether these committees make police services more responsive and accountable to a diverse and multicultural public. It will ask whether public safety is redefined to include previously marginalized groups. It will question if police services, which are institutionalized structures, can function in more democratic ways, open to citizen input. The consequences for substantive citizenship will also be discussed.

Introduction

The police as an institution, in the realm of political science, have not been studied to the extent that they should. If we consider that political science focuses on states and their legitimate use of power, and that police services are one of the institutions within the territory of the state that have recourse to the legitimate use of force, the limited interest in the study of policing in the field of political science is surprising. The situation is slowly changing. Previously, security and use of force were usually studied within the discipline at the international level. Number of events have led us to focus increasingly on issues of security and the legitimate use of force within the state's own territory: potential cases in civil rights abuses in the application of measures to counter terrorism and the inappropriate use of immigration controls for security purposes, including the use of security certificate (ex. Project Thread, Toronto 18)¹; civilian-police confrontations at the APEC meeting in Vancouver in 1997, at the Summit of the Americas

¹ Both are Canadian cases in which individuals were arrested on the presumption that they were involved in terrorist activities. In August 2003, with *Project Thread*, twenty-three men were arrested and subjected to preventative detention under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*. All were Muslim of Pakistani origin and had links to a school which was being used fraudulently as a shell to assist foreign students in securing visas. All were labeled terrorists and presumed part of an "al-Qaeda" sleeper cell. None of the men were charged with terrorism offences and most have been deported. In the case of the Toronto 18, in June 2006, 18 Canadian citizens of Muslim faith were arrested for supposedly planning attacks against targets in Ontario.

in Quebec City in 2001 and, at the annual march held by the *Collectif opposé à la brutalité policière* (COBP or the Coalition Against Police Brutality) in Montreal which, again in 2010, ended in a violent confrontation between police and civilians, and increasing concerns over and awareness of "racial" profiling.²

There are several aspects of policing, including what the police represent and their function in maintaining social order, which should fascinate political scientists. Whereas criminologists were usually the ones who studied policing and the criminal justice system, political science has a lot to contribute to expand the realm of what is being examined concerning policing and the criminal justice system. The links between policing, the legitimacy of the state, democratic principles and citizenship have been under-theorized. As an institution that upholds social order and security, how police services fulfill their functions has a great effect on the legitimacy of the state. Abuses in their powers can undermine democratic principles of governance. We may also want to question whether police services, an institution mandated with upholding public order, can function in more democratic ways. In this respect, political science can bring new insights in the study of policing.

I propose to examine the role of the police using citizenship as a lens. My concern with citizenship, particularly when examining the experience of minorities (sexual, racialized and religious minorities) is one of social justice. Do individuals who belong to minorities enjoy the rights and benefits associated with substantive citizenship? Substantive citizenship goes beyond the formal-legal definition of citizenship. It includes ensuring minimum levels of safety for individuals to access the rights of citizenship. The police are a key institution in upholding minimum levels of safety to ensure that even vulnerable groups benefit and enjoy the rights of citizenship.

When we consider the police, a state institution, in relation to marginalized groups in society, the potential for abuses of power are all too obvious. We can clearly outline how police officers uphold dominant norms, protect powerful groups and reproduce social inequalities in so doing. In contrast, we may want to question whether officers who take part in liaison work and truly engage with the communities can contribute to securing the minimum levels of safety required for minorities to access the rights of citizenship. The links between citizenship and the role of the state are all questions of interest to the discipline of political science which would find itself enriched by paying closer attention to how police services in liberal democratic states deny or enable the conditions for the inclusion of minorities in substantive citizenship.

Policing diverse communities in liberal democratic states

Issues of accountability and transparency are increasingly becoming a challenge for police services in liberal democratic states such as Canada (Eng, 2005; Chalom, 2009). In metropolitan areas, where diverse populations include people from different "racial", ethnic and religious

² In 2003, the Ontario Human Rights Commission published a landmark report defining racial profiling and documenting the social cost associated with such a practice. The definition provided in that report became the reference used by people working on that issue, including the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, academics, and others who intervene in this area. In 2004, in Saskatchewan, Justice David Wright released his report of the inquiry into the death of Neil Stonechild, an Aboriginal person who died after having been in the custody of the Saskatoon Police. Soon after, other cases of "Starlight Tours" were also documented. In 2010, the Quebec Human Rights Commission has begun a public consultation on racial profiling. The Commission will hear from victims of racial profiling. It will then hold a public consultation to identify solutions. Its report is expected in the Fall of 2010.

backgrounds, as well as sexual minorities, the challenge faced by police services is made even more complex.

The problem of institutionalized racism in the criminal justice system, including police services, has been documented (Lewis, 1995; Neugebauer, 2000; Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2003; Bernard and McAll, 2009; Bellemare, 1988). The solutions to prevent racism and more generally discrimination in police responses, however, are not clearly identified. In fact, contradictory trends are operating at once. Just as levels of police violence and "racial" profiling appear to be increasing (or, at least, there seems to be increasing awareness by the public of such incidents), simultaneously police services are implementing diversity training and employment equity objectives (Amar, 2009, 578; Bowling et al., 2005) and this without having assurances as for the effectiveness of these measures. Must the police services adapt their responses to better serve multicultural and diverse populations? How can police services adapt their practices? What can the public expect from the police? What are the implications with respect to public safety, and more specifically with regards to citizenship?

Within a democratic state, the police have always had an important role with respect to maintaining civil order. Beyond the visible functions of crime control, the police, as a vital arm of the state, embrace an objective and legalistic culture. They have been an "ideal-typical representation of impersonal application of the law" (Forcese, 2002, 5; see also Neugebauer, 2000, 84). In fact, the role of policing in democratic states is often portrayed as a "social contract between citizens and the state, in which each individual surrenders certain liberties to the state for the greater good of public security, and the state, in turn, guarantees that such powers will be exercised equitably and impartially" (Eng, 2005, 320). Police and other security services, in the conduct of their institutional role, have a legitimate recourse to force. The use they make of this tool can uphold or undermine the legitimacy of the state. "Good governance" depends on state legitimacy, which is in part determined through the just use of force by the law enforcement arm of the state or, in other words, its security services (Bourgault and Gow, 2001, 2-3).

When we consider police relations with minority groups, we must account for the fact that the police, as a state institution, have the monopoly over the legitimate use of force. "The police are empowered to infringe upon liberties of citizens and are legally entitled to use force and violence to uphold law and order. The police deal with conflict and are empowered by the state to do so" (McLaughlin 2000, 129-130). This automatically puts them in a situation of power inequality and even in a position in which abuses of power, especially against a marginalized group are not unlikely.³ Vickers has argued that

...these coercive institutions (the military, prisons, and the police) exist to protect citizens from potential violence from "outsiders" and deviant insiders. [...] Even in democracies, in which state violence against citizens is less common, vulnerable minorities are exposed to violence without state institutions acting to protect them, and may even experience violence from the state agents themselves, such as the police (2002, 238).

³Findings from surveys that focus on LGBT communities' experiences of violence in cities across Canada reveal that police brutality does take place (See Calgary Gay and Lesbian Communities/Police Liaison Committee, 2000; Quebec, CDPDJ, 1994; Wellness Project, 2001).

Police officers are front-line workers. They are the most visible representatives of the criminal justice system and for most citizens, they also represent the most constant and frequent contact with that system (Wortley and Qwusu-Bempah, 2009, 449). In other words, the police are "both a visible manifestation of power and one with which civil society has extensive day to day interaction" (Bowling et al., 2005, 118). They offer a service, that of protecting citizens and keeping the peace in society. Thus, while we expect police objectivity and political neutrality from police services (Eng, 2005, 320; Forcese, 2002, 9), police response may not be as uniform as anticipated from an institution of the state.

Police officers are individuals who intervene (or not) in society. Their role, as front-line workers maintaining the peace, gives them a great amount of autonomy. They can help prevent situations, allow others to take place, take part in some and be unaware of yet others. Moreover, since police forces are not a monolith, but rather are made up of numerous individuals, despite similar training and common rules of operation, some segments of the police force are more likely than others to be sensitive to the problems associated with hate/bias crimes and activities, sexual assault, partner assault or other forms of violence that target vulnerable groups. In sum, although the role of police is contrived by a legislative framework and a set of rules of conduct, and policing is subordinated to the elected government, police officers have sufficient autonomy to respond variably to situations, applying some laws more diligently than others and, as a result, potentially reinforcing inequalities (Amar, 2009, 577; Quebec, CDPDJ, 2009, 31-44; Gordon, 2006, 74-107; Eng, 2005, 327; Forcese, 1999, 7 and 3-6).

Irrespective of social class, gender, race and other such determining factors, Canadians expect from the police protection of their person and property, as well as the maintenance of social order. Depending on the sub-group of society to which one belongs, "the perception and confidence that police meet these expectations" (Forcese 1999, 1; Wortley and Owusu-Bempah, 2009)⁴ will vary. For example, evidence of the practice of racial profiling (Quebec, CDPDJ, 2010; Ontario Human Rights Commission 2003; C. Smith 2004; Chalom, 2009) substantiates that police officers do not always apply rules and regulations in an impartial manner and that certain groups in society are the target of over-policing. Also, in some areas, police officers may refuse to go or rarely be present, leaving certain communities under-policed and under-protected. This is usually the case with poor areas or areas where immigrants and racial or ethnic minorities are overly represented (Forcese, 1999, 5).

Moreover, with respect to those who become police officers, the dominant group in society (white, heterosexual men) is overly represented. Minority groups are underrepresented in police services across Canada and when they become police officers, those from minority groups often speak of their rejection within the police service and from the communities to which they belong (Forcese, 1999, 9; Buhrke, 1996; Peak, 2000).⁵ They are rejected within the police force because of their difference. Yet they are rejected from their community or group of origin because they are seen as having joined the dominant group, betraying their "oppressed community" or group of origin.

⁴ The Wortley and Owusu-Bempah (2009) study documents how attitudes towards the justice system are most positive among recent immigrant. Negative attitudes towards the criminal justice system are more prominent among Canadian-born racialized minorities, while attitudes among immigrants become less favorable with more time spent in Canada.

⁵ This could be seen in the documentary *Zéro Tolérance* by Michka Saal (NFB production, Canada, 2004). It is also documented for the case of France by Sophie Body-Gendrot (2009) in a study that examines the issue of policing and the *balieues* of France.

Since stereotypes are likely to guide police responses (Neugebauer 2000, 97; Bernard and McAll, 2009),⁶ police officers tend to consider crimes towards minority groups as less important than crimes against the majority group. This attitude impacts negatively on the treatment received by minority group members from police officers. Such negative treatments take on various forms such as not taking the victim seriously or minimizing incidents. The result is always the same. Responses help maintain power relations between the majority or dominant group and minorities, resulting in diminished citizenship for LGBT people and other racialized or religious minorities.

Overall, the lack of trust in police services by a number of marginalized groups and communities contribute in maintaining power inequalities between the police and these groups and police hold the balance of power. In such a context, police services are more likely to continue on with their role of agent of social control, working to uphold the dominant worldview and the power relations that set police in a dominant position vis-à-vis minority groups. As Neugebauer concludes from her study on police and Black youth exchanges: “[t]he police will protect when called on only according to their own frame of reference. The police serve and protect those elements in the community that have demonstrated an investment in the existing order. Other constituencies in the community are perceived as troublesome” (2000, 86). This seems to indicate that there is not much hope in opening up access to the police for marginalized groups and ensuring that the police engage in their role of protecting all citizens on their territory regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, etc.

Studies have shown that police are more likely to mistreat individuals who are stigmatized by the dominant society (Underleider, 1992; Body-Gendrot, 2009). Moreover, marginalized communities are more vulnerable in part because they do not report incidents. As a result, one of the tasks before police is for them to recognize problems even when there is a lack of reporting. To do so, they must work in partnership with these communities to identify problems and solutions. What minority groups want from the police is not preferential treatment, but rather a response that is adequate and respectful of the community being served (Chalom, 2002, 79). More generally, considering the power inequalities between the police and marginalized groups such as racialized and religious minorities or LGBT communities, can we speak of police-community relations and can we assume that the police will respect their role in protecting all citizens? Relationships between the police and minority groups are embedded in power relations in which police officers represent the dominant group.

When such abuses do take place, they compromise more than citizenship rights; they also compromise the democratic framework (McLaughlin 2000, 130) and delegitimize the state (Bougault and Gow 2001). As Bowling *et al.* claim:

Abusive policing strikes at the very core of the idea of democratic policing. The police are not only guardians of liberty, but also gatekeepers of the criminal process. Consequently, discriminatory policing can be the first step towards criminalization, especially in contexts where prejudice and discrimination in the criminal justice process support or compound police decision-making (2005, 139).

⁶Neugebauer’s study looks at “the policing of youth and the role of race in police-community encounters” (2000, 83). One aspect of her work explores how a normative frame of reference that depicts all Blacks as potential criminals informs police assessments and affects their interaction with Black youths” (Neugebauer 2000, 97). Bernard and McAll’s study speaks to the overrepresentation of Black youths in the justice system in Montreal.

Access to adequate policing is an issue of citizenship. If we consider the varying degrees of trust and openness that certain groups in society are likely to have towards the police and the fact that police services are not impartial in enforcing the law, it is unlikely that minimum levels of safety required for individuals to participate and contribute to the political community are being ensured by police services. One can easily conclude that

Equality of access to personal safety and freedom from interference in pursuing lawful activities should be taken for granted in a community policed according to core democratic values – security in the broadest sense ought to be a "public good", a communal asset to which everyone contributes and to which everyone has access (Eng, 2005, 324).

Without police protection of one's person and property, individuals are likely to withdraw from the political community. As a result, the democratic fabric of the state becomes threatened. In this respect, it is informative to examine the role of the state in protecting citizens and ensuring minimum levels of security.

Police-citizen committees in Ottawa and Montreal

Police services in both Ottawa and Montreal have set up police-citizen committees as a mechanism to improve relations between the police and citizens. These committees are intended to make police more responsive to specific needs of citizens and, in return, citizens are supposed to regain trust in the police, as their needs and realities are accounted for. We must question whether these committees make police services more responsive and accountable to a diverse and multicultural public. Can these committees contribute to overcome obstacles such as the lack of trust by minorities towards the police or the inequitable treatment by police towards minorities? As a result of the work of these committees, is public safety redefined to include previously marginalized groups? Can police services, which are institutionalized structures, function in more democratic ways, open to citizens' input? In the final section, the consequences for substantive citizenship will also be discussed.

Ottawa Police Liaison Committee for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Communities⁷

The *Ottawa Police Liaison Committee for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Communities* (hereafter the Liaison Committee) brings together LGBT community representatives from various organizations, individual community members, and police officers.⁸

⁷ This section of the paper presents partial findings from a broader study on citizenship, hate crimes and the safety of LGBT people. The fieldwork consisted primarily of formal and informal semi-structured interviews with LGBT individuals and individuals affiliated with LGBT organizations, police officers, crown attorneys, and policy-makers mostly in Ottawa. I conducted 53 in-depth interviews in the period from 15 February 2002 until 4 March 2003, including 14 interviews with individuals who have participated as a representative of a community organization or as an individual member on the Ottawa Liaison Committee, the nine individuals involved in liaison committees in other cities across Canada (e.g. Toronto, Hamilton, Vancouver, Edmonton, and Calgary), and the 13 individuals from police services, mostly in Ottawa, but also in Gatineau, Montreal, Toronto and Calgary who participate in similar initiatives. The information presented is also based on an extensive review of archival material, including all of the Liaison Committee's Minutes and reports.

⁸The committee has a permanent membership that includes the representatives of the Ottawa Police Services, the Gatineau police, Carleton University Safety, University of Ottawa Security Services and the Crown Attorney's Office. The list of community organizations that are represented are: Pink Triangle Services, Parents and Friends of

The committee was set up in the early 1990s⁹ as a result of pressures from the LGBT communities and their willingness to liaise with the police to solve problems that compromised the safety of LGBT people.

The mobilization of LGBT community members followed a series of violent incidents, or gay bashings, in the summer of 1989. A civilian task force was created to develop solutions to make Ottawa safer for LGBT people. Various measures were developed, culminating in pressing the Ottawa Police Services to meet with the community. At the initial meeting, the police were made aware of problems faced by the LGBT communities. Although gay-bashing incidents were a definite concern for the LGBT communities, the police had little if any information on this particular problem since most of these incidents went unreported.¹⁰

Following the initial meeting in July of 1991, regular meetings between the Ottawa Police and Task Force began and eventually were institutionalized as the *Ottawa Police Liaison Committee for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Communities*. To this day, the Liaison Committee hosts monthly meetings that are attended by anywhere between 10 and 30 people from both the police and LGBT communities (LC, *Fact Sheet*, August 2000: LC, *Minutes*, 1991-2010). The *Minutes* of the Liaison Committee are distributed widely to share the information with as many LGBT people, community groups and police officers as possible.

The meetings give the police and LGBT communities an opportunity to share information about hate crimes, to discuss issues that affect these communities, to network and to identify potential initiatives to solve problems and improve the safety of LGBT communities or their relations with the police.

Sharing information on incidents is a central component of the mandate of the Liaison Committee. Incident reports provide useful information that can contribute to preventing incidents from taking place by making both the police and community aware of potential problems or safety concerns. It is an opportunity for both the police and community to engage in proactive and preventive work.

The partnership that exists between the police and LGBT communities as a result of these meetings is beneficial for both parties involved. For police services, the main advantage to such a committee is an increased awareness of the problems faced by the LGBT communities and the gathering of information to better respond to security issues. Some high-ranking police officers involved in the Committee consider the presence of officers at the Liaison Committee as a form of intelligence gathering. They believe police can learn much more about LGBT people and issues and problems they face by being out there doing outreach than by engaging in the traditional forms of intelligence gathering information away from the community.¹¹

For the communities, the Liaison Committee helps in building trust in the police. Through the Liaison meetings, the communities have direct access to police officers and can raise issues with them. It is an effective mechanism. LGBT communities are able to voice their concerns directly and usually get an immediate response to their queries. If police officers do not act in certain cases, the community can ask them why. Police officers who come to the

Lesbians and Gays (PLAG), Gender Mosaic, Sage, AIDS Committee of Ottawa, Ottawa Knights, GLBT Centre (Carleton University), Pride Centre (University of Ottawa), Pride Committee of Ottawa, and VASOC.

⁹At its inception, the committee was originally called the Ottawa Police Lesbian and Gay Liaison Committee. The name was changed in 1994 to add bisexuals and transgendered people.

¹⁰ Interview with Ottawa police officer, Hate Crime Section, 15 February 2002; Interview with community member, Ottawa Liaison Committee, 20 March 2002.

¹¹Comment made by Deputy Chief Larry Hill, adapted from my notes of the Liaison Meeting, 8 July 2002.

Liaison meetings have to be ready to justify police action or inaction, so meetings are used to hold police accountable¹². The accountability process helps the LGBT communities to develop a better understanding of police operations, including their limits in terms of both law and resources. As it will be discussed in the final section, it is also a first step in contesting the boundaries of the citizenship regime.

At these meetings, individuals from the LGBT communities have at times raised concerns about the handling of specific cases, the behaviour of certain officers and have praised the Ottawa Police for their response in other cases. For their part, the police officers keep the LGBT community members informed of new initiatives, outreach efforts, training and the work being done in various sections, especially in the Hate Crime and Partner Assault Sections. It has also given the LGBT communities opportunities for advocacy and to demand accountability of its police service, while giving police needed information to help them identify problems and solutions with respect to LGBT-related issues.

At the outset, the Liaison Committee had identified areas that needed to be worked on such as a phone-line dedicated to reporting crimes, meeting with police, having the Police Services Board recognize the needs of the LGBT communities, and training for police on LGBT-related issues. All of these objectives have been achieved (LC, *Minutes*, 18 February 2002).

Many changes in the approach of the Ottawa Police are the result of work, outreach, and pressure from the Liaison Committee and community groups. The Liaison Committee was a major catalyst in getting the Hate Crime Section set up in January 1993. One of the officers who headed the Head of the Ottawa Police Hate Crime Section pointed out: "[t]he police did not form the Hate Crime Section because of their good nature; they were shamed into it. It was exposed by community groups that they should be doing this."¹³ The Ottawa Police Hate Crime Section "was set up in response to community-defined concerns about racism, homophobia and anti-Semitism" (LC, *Fact Sheet on Hate and Bias Crimes*, 1994).

The Partner Assault Section also underwent a number of changes. Although these cannot necessarily be attributed directly to the Liaison Committee, these changes coincide with concerns that have been expressed at the Liaison Committee meetings. Working in partnership with the community, the Partner Assault Section refashioned its services to what is more appropriate for the needs of the communities. Its old name, Spousal Assault Unit, was replaced by Partner Assault Unit (LC, *Minutes*, 11 December 2000), to be more inclusive of the clientele it aims to reach, as partner is inclusive of all conflicts in intimate relationships, including same-sex couples. Moreover, the "Domestic Violence Supplementary Report" sheet to be filled out by an officer when there is an arrest in a partner dispute or assault now includes same-sex couples in the identification section, which reminds officers that same-sex partner assault is a *real* problem to be dealt with seriously. The Unit also was able to add a number of investigators to its staff to cover shifts when most of these incidents occur. This new system ensures that investigators are on hand when incidents happen and that victims get officers who specialize in "domestics".

The new Partner Assault investigators were selected through a selection process that included a number of questions developed with community input (not only LGBT people, but others in Ottawa likely to use this service) to incorporate indicators of sensitivity to these issues. The officers received specialized domestic violence training. As part of an outreach effort, the Partner Assault Section in collaboration with community partners developed an information

¹² Interview with Police officer, Gatineau police services, 28 February 2002; Interview with Ottawa police officer, Hate Crime Section, 15 February 2002

¹³ Interview, 26 February 2002.

pamphlet. The Partner Assault Section has also used Liaison Committee meetings as a forum to convey their concerns with the lack of reporting of same-sex partner assault (LC, *Minutes*, 11 December 2001)¹⁴. The changes in the Partner Assault Section are an example of how partnerships between communities and the police can help in bringing about changes to policing practices that ensure that the community can access services that are suited to their needs.

Les comités de vigie du Service de police de la Ville de Montréal (SPVM)¹⁵

An initiative from the management of the SPVM, the Montreal police vigilance structure was set up in 2003. As part of the strategic plan on relations with the community, the SPVM set up a structure composed of 5 vigilance committees, one expert committee and one strategic committee. The vigilance committees are: Black and Latino; Arabs, Asian, Elders and Youth. The expert committee focuses on racial profiling. The strategic committee has the mandate to assess the problems identified by the various vigilance committees with respect to issues of security and advise the police service on the best way to act with regards to identified problems. The individuals who sit on these committees are citizens who intervene on behalf of communities that they represent. They are selected by the police service (SPVM, 2004).

Although some of the committees have lived up to the expectation of their mandate and actually identified security issues that effects their particular communities, others have not had the same success. Some of the committees are quite active and do advise the SPVM, identifying issues and working on solutions that can contribute to increasing the level of security of community members. For example, the Arab committee has been active on cooperating with the SPVM with respect to the issue of hate crime targeting their communities.

One problem that was identified, however, is the lack of awareness at the local level of the existence of this structure. As a result, local problems that could be avoided or others which can be replicated elsewhere remain unknown, defying the main objective of this structure which is to act proactively on issues of security. In fact, an evaluation of the structure was undertaken in 2007. Various problems with the structure were identified including the problems relating to communication between the committees and the various levels of the police service. The evaluation also questioned the representativeness of the structure. Does the structure still reflect the more acute problem with respect to safety or is the structure not adequate for responding to the new challenges in the current environment? For example, are the problems of the Black and Latino communities really the same? Why is there no LGBT committee? Should there be committees that are issue oriented rather than representative of communities? Are the mandates given to the committees clear enough or should they be revisited to make sure that the proactive objectives that a vigilance structure should provide are met? (Bingoly-Liworo).

There is no question that the SPVM, as an organization, favours an environment in which communities have a say in identifying the problems associated with their insecurities. However, one must question whether a structure that is set up and controlled by the management of the police service itself, no matter how enlightened that police service is, is in a position to really change things for minorities on the Montreal island. The centralized vision of the partnership between communities and the police service makes it difficult for changes to come about.

Assessment of police-citizen committees

¹⁴Also interview with Ottawa police officer, Partner Assault Section, 19 March 2002.

¹⁵ Translates as: Montreal police vigilance committees.

Despite its success in changing a number of things with respect to police responses when LGBT individuals are involved, the work of the Ottawa Liaison Committee is only known by a small portion of individuals in the LGBT communities. The same can also be said of Montreal's *comités de vigie*.

Speaking generally about police-LGBT partnerships, John Fisher (at the time president of EGALE), explained the lack of awareness of these structure by saying that unless you are put in a situation where there has been a hate crime or harassment, people are unlikely to seek out this type of service or to inquire about what is available to them. This of course does not undermine the importance of having these services there and ready to be accessed (Interview, 23 April 2002). We must keep in mind that police-citizen relations are not natural relationships. Power inequalities between the two are always present.

The Ottawa Liaison Committee is considered a definite success by those involved and most likely by a large number of LGBT people in Ottawa. Although it is quite possible that most LGBT individuals in Ottawa will not make a direct connection between their feelings of relative safety and the work done by the Liaison Committee, the partnership established between the police and the communities that is maintained through the Liaison Committee has been key in ensuring that increasing numbers of incidents are being reported, that actions are being taken to prevent incidents from occurring and that incidents are resolved (or investigated) when they do happen. As one community member explained, "the police are a great resource to deal with safety issues. If the community is not accessing police services, their safety is likely to be compromised."¹⁶ The Liaison Committee and the work being done by the Hate Crime Section which has been an active member of that committee and therefore affect the lives of countless individuals directly and positively, especially those who are the victims of hate and bias-motivated crimes and incidents.

Generally the Liaison Committee has been successful. It has gone from having the problem of violence targeted at LGBT individuals recognized to holding police accountable for the safety of LGBT communities in Ottawa. The Liaison Committee in Ottawa is an essential component of moving toward making the city a safer place for LGBT individuals. An immediate and concrete outcome is that LGBT individuals are more likely to receive appropriate and fair treatment at the hands of the police when they are victims of a crime. A less obvious and longer term outcome is that the Liaison Committee, by allowing LGBT people to access police services, is empowering their communities by enabling their citizenship. This is a necessary first step toward a regime shift, toward redefining citizenship in substantive terms that are inclusive of the LGBT communities.

The part of y study which focused on Ottawashows that the Liaison Committee's collaboration with the Ottawa Police Hate Crime Section has been key in developing an approach to police work which conceptualizes crime and safety in ways compatible with the communities' experience of targeted violence by minority groups. In sum, the Liaison Committee is a small scale application of community-policing, one in which the principals of prevention, problem-solving and partnership with the community, the three Ps of community policing that require patrol officers to be proactive, interventionist and willing to rely on a problem-solving approach, are being applied (Griffiths, Parent and Whitelaw 2001, 59).

The Liaison Committee, a community-based committee with police involvement, is a successful model of police accountability to the communities. A key distinction between this committee and other committees of the Ottawa Police is that unlike the others, this committee is

¹⁶ Interview with community member, Ottawa Liaison Committee, 26 February 2002.

community driven with some police involvement, rather than being police driven with community involvement. Although police voices are heard at meetings, the LGBT communities use the committee to voice¹⁷ their concerns and problems to the police. The committee meetings are a forum used to find solutions that will promote the safety of LGBT people in Ottawa, thereby opening up spaces where LGBT individuals are able to enjoy the rights associated with Canadian citizenship.

In contrast, the Montreal *Comités de vigie* are a structure that was set in a top-down fashion. The lack of communication within the structure itself has meant that little is known about what other committees are working on and even more problematic is that little is known about this structure within the organization itself at both the corporate level and at the local level. Organisational mechanisms or the actual functioning of the structure have had the effect of limiting the effectiveness of these committees. The lack of communication, unclear mandates of the committees, and the fact that the structure may not be representative of current safety issues all contribute in limiting the impact of these committees.

Something positive must be said about the willingness of the management of the SPVM to want to set up such a structure and pursuing since 2003 various initiatives that have come about following the advice of these committees. For example, the policy adopted on racial profiling as much to do with the work of the expert committee on racial profiling. Regardless, the SPVM remains plagued with problems of racial profiling as various cases are before the Human Rights Commission. Moreover, as previously mentioned, there is no communication between the corporate level and the local level which has meant that in many respects, the SPVM were unprepared to deal with the riots that took place in Montreal North in the evening following the death of Freddy Villanueva at the hands of police in August 2008. Better communication or better use of the vigilance structure is suppose to enable the SPVM to become aware of potentially explosive situation, allowing them to act proactively to circumvent them or be prepared to react accordingly. More needs to be done to exploit the potential benefits of the *comités de vigie*.

Rethinking public safety

Using targeted violence as an indicator of diminished citizenship, I have examined the role of police-citizen committees in securing the needed space for minorities to experience minimum levels of safety to access the rights associated with substantive citizenship. If we consider that substantive citizenship includes being protected from violence so as to benefit from a relative level of safety, it may well be police-citizen committees who voice the needs of vulnerable groups in society are a contributing factor to the safety of these given groups and, consequently, to the level of citizenship these citizens are able to enjoy. If access to police services is increased through police-citizen committees, marginalized communities represented by these committees over time will experience greater levels of safety. As a result, the citizenship of these communities will be enhanced. Establishing a contact with the police to give citizens access to police services may be key to ensuring minimum levels of safety needed to enable minorities to enjoy rights and privileges associated with citizenship. For marginalized groups, access to police services and enhanced citizenship are likely intertwined.

The link between safety, equality and citizenship is apparent in documents produced by various police services. Examples are found in the publications from the Toronto Hate Crime Unit, the Ottawa Hate Crime Unit and Montreal Police Services. Clearly, police services have a

¹⁷ Interview with Ottawa police officer, Hate Crime Section, 26 February 2002.

role to play with respect to ensuring that each and every individual in its territory, regardless of race, nationality, religion, sexual orientation or any other defining characteristic, is able to enjoy the privileges of citizenship, including the freedoms and liberties associated with a democratic state such as Canada. Police services are key in ensuring the needed levels of freedom and security that allows citizens to access other privileges associated with their citizenship. If police services are more accessible as a result of proactive initiatives such as the establishment of police-citizen committees that engages with vulnerable communities, then it is likely that having such committees is a first step in shifting the boundaries of the citizenship of these targeted groups.

I presented the case of the Ottawa Liaison Committee and Montréal *comités de vigie*. The work that has been done over the last two decades in Ottawa has had positive outcomes in terms of giving LGBT communities access to police services and likely improving their safety by so doing. This is positive with respect to the citizenship of LGBT individuals. Being empowered as a result of being safe opens a number of doors for the participation of LGBT people in the political community. I am not suggesting that there is no violence targeted at LGBT individuals in Ottawa, nor any problems with police services. Rather, I am suggesting that the development of a working relationship between the LGBT communities and police services is a positive step towards ensuring the safety, and at the same time, deepening the citizenship of LGBT people. With respect to the situation in Montreal, for police services to be responsive there is a need for more than a willingness form management. Strong civilian involvement is also needed as well as a shift in the mentality of the rank and file. It is a significant change which has not yet materialized (CIPC, 2009; Bingoly-Liworo, 2007)

One of the questions I wanted to explore is whether the work being done through police-citizen committees contribute to hold the police accountable for the security of minority groups and whether it expands the citizenship in ways to include minority groups? Is it a struggle in which the boundaries of the citizenship regime shift to be more inclusive of minorities and LGBT people in various cities across Canada, and eventually more generally in the Canadian state?

The Liaison Committee in Ottawa is integral to contesting a situation of oppression. The work of the Liaison Committee allows opportunities for both the police and LGBT citizens to increase their awareness of targeted violence and policing practices, thereby diminishing the barriers between the two groups and contributing to LGBT people having access police services—a prerequisite to their safety and deepening their citizenship. It is uncertain at this point that work from the *comités de vigie* succeeds in achieving the same ends. As mentioned, there are issues of representativeness; moreover, the structure is a top-down one which appears to limit its potential.

Minority groups are often reluctant to have anything to do with police. Some perceive such initiatives as assimilationist (Warner 2002, 289), rather than a base from which the boundaries of the citizenship regime can be challenged. Considering that power relations between the police (the coercive arm of the state) and minorities will always be unbalanced, the warning of cooptation is warranted. LGBT individuals sitting on the Liaison Committee cannot afford to be complacent; they must be vigilant in their task of holding the police accountable for their security. As for the *comités de vigie*, civilian members need also to be more proactive in requesting accountability. I would argue that there is a risk in engaging in initiatives with the police, but in the case of Ottawa, the initial gamble taken up by the members of the community Task Force on Violence paid off. In the case of Montreal, the vigilance structure is currently

undergoing an evaluation. Hopefully, the proposed changes will make it more vibrant and effective in incorporating the needs of minorities.

More research is also needed on how policing has changed and whether policing can change sufficiently to be part of the solution for marginalized groups and minorities with respect to accessing substantive citizenship. Seemingly, in Ottawa, LGBT individuals and communities are better off after a little more than decade of cooperation or partnership with the police (Wellness 2001). Part of what has made the Ottawa situation successful is that members from the Hate Crime Section have come to understand the problem of targeted violence as informed by the realities experienced by the communities. This goes a long way to bridging the gap between the state-defined and community-defined problem of hate crime or targeted violence. As with the *comités de vigie*, more work needs to be done for the voices of civilian members to be truly heard and change how police engage in their work. Despite the willingness on the part of management to have a vigilance structure and be responsive to the needs of communities, the Montreal case points to the difficulties of democratizing an institution which has for main function to act as the repressive arm of the state. Ultimately, if police-citizen committees have the potential to contribute to the safety of minorities and works toward greater social justice and substantive equality for all marginalized groups, regardless of the difficulties and obstacles in implementing them, they remain something worth striving for.

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