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Can ethics survive the shock of the job? Quebec's police recruits confront reality

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Previous research has shown how skills acquired in different settings are gradually transformed into work strategies (McNamara 1967, Van Maanen 1973, 1974, 1977, Fielding 1988, Chan 2003). Other research has looked at the complex question of ethics and policing (Kappeler et al. 1998, Klokars et al. 2004). However, very few attempts have been made to understand how these two aspects, professional skills and ethical standpoints, gradually merge. We look at one particular aspect in the professional socialisation processes of young police officers – how new police officers deal with the ethical dilemmas they encounter. This paper presents the results obtained from a follow-up cohort study of 316 police recruits after their third year as newly sworn officers throughout Quebec's police forces.

Keywords: police career; police training; police ethics; professional socialisation; cohort study

Introduction

As well as subjects such as community policing, militarisation of the police, police history, police administration and police and politics, there has been some previous research on the important areas of police ethics and the professional integration and training of recruits (Fielding 1988, Monjardet and Gorgeon 1999, Chan 2003). After separate research projects on these areas (Alain 2001, 2004, Alain and Baril 2005a,b), it became apparent that it would be useful to consider them together in an attempt to understand how the gradual processes by which police recruits build their own professional identity and the transformation of what begins as a more or less theoretical ethic into a personal set of rules and conduct are related. Having shown that recruits acquire the different skills and competencies needed to perform police duties through a learning process that involves a gradual transformation of theoretical notions into more practical *habitus* (Bourdieu 1984), it seemed logical to study whether the same process was involved in acquiring the ethical standpoint required for policing in general, and policing in different organisational settings and realities in particular. In order to undertake this research we assumed that police ethics is one skill among others – no more theoretical than the skills one needs to drive a police car in an urban context, for instance – in the sense that the reality of everyday patrol work involves making ethical decisions in situations where nothing is

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either black or white but always shaded in different tones of grey. In any profession new employees must adjust and adapt the theoretical knowledge acquired in school to the specificities of actual employment. In the case of police organisations, however, it remains to be seen how sensitive these organisations are to this reality: if recruits are left more or less alone by the organisation that hires them, theoretical ideals may be transformed into ideas about police work that do not accord with what society expects of its police officers.

We look first at the actual state of police education and training in Quebec. In the second part of the article, we explain the method and theory behind the collection of data and show how analysis of this material allows us to better understand the unexpected situations police recruits often encounter and how these confrontations effect the ethical positions they have acquired through previous life experiences and education. We conclude with some suggestions about how research provides for ways in which the integration process for recruits in Quebec might be improved and how these improvements might be used by police organisations in other part of the world that are encountering the same kind of difficulties.

Police education and training in Quebec

The educational programme for future police officers in Quebec is divided into two main components: a compulsory three-year technical college programme, followed by 15 weeks of intensive training at the Quebec Police School, the Quebec version of police academies found elsewhere in North America.

In both the technical and general education programmes offered by colleges throughout Quebec, at least half the curriculum is devoted to humanities (philosophy, sociology, psychology, history, and so on), mathematics, sciences, and writing. For those in a technical programme, the second half of the curriculum is devoted entirely to their future profession. In the policing programme, students attend courses such as criminology, legal aspects of police intervention, elements of community policing, and emergency driving.

The second part of basic police education is provided at the Quebec Police School (École nationale de police du Québec), situated near Trois-Rivières, between Quebec City and Montreal. The 15-week programme for police recruits is highly intensive. In contrast to most other North American police academies, those attending the basic training programme at the Police School have not yet been hired by a police organisation. They are sworn in only once they have successfully completed the programme and found a position within one of the 40 police agencies in Quebec. In contrast to the more academic regimen of the technical college curriculum, from the moment students set foot in the school they are considered to be 'virtual police officers'. They wear the same uniform, are supervised by police officers acting as patrol supervisors, and attend simulated situations that mimic what they can be expected to encounter during their future careers. In these simulated situations professional actors play different roles to allow students to respond to experiences that range from arresting a vagrant to highly emotional experiences such as attempting to prevent a suicide or arresting a violent husband after an episode of domestic violence.

As all police organisations expect their recruits to perform at the highest possible level, the training is very intense and dramatic events occur throughout the day, at a

level rarely seen in real police work. The training programme constantly attempts to resolve the dilemma created by the need to give students an opportunity to develop the maximum number of skills required by police officers while also maintaining a certain degree of realism. Failure to resolve this problem may partly explain why recruits are often disappointed by the repetitive aspects of real police work, as both Monjardet and Gorgeon (1999), Chan (2003) and our own data shows.

A more generalised aspect of the curriculum also creates unrealistic expectations among recruits – the very intense competition among candidates. For the last approximately 15 years, policing has been a highly favoured profession in Quebec: apart from the fact that policing is seen by potential recruits as a challenging and important social function, officers earn good salaries (at least when compared to other technical professions), they have interesting professional conditions, which include the possibility of working extra hours at double pay, and, last but not least, they can retire after 25 years of service at an age where the prospect of a second career is still a very appealing possibility. It is not surprising, then, that the ratio of those who are accepted in the college programme to applicants is, on average, 1:5. Only one out of every 20 candidates successfully completes the programme.¹

The competition to get into policing programmes may, however, have a detrimental effect on the profession: since the competition to enter the profession is fierce, only the best students are accepted and succeed in the difficult educational and training processes. Those who are admitted are often reminded of how hard it is to get to be a police officer and how good they must be to be among the privileged few. Many recruits are thus firmly convinced that their eventual position in the force will be far above that of a simple uniformed officer. Disappointment is inevitable when, after only a few months in the profession, they realise that 75% of any police force is made up of positions at the lower level, which is where most of them will remain for their entire careers.

The employment situation of police officers in Quebec

Nearly 15,000 police officers in the province of Quebec are more or less evenly distributed among three main categories of employer. The first category is the *Sûreté du Québec* (SQ), which employs some 5000 officers and is the provincial police force responsible for highway patrols, policing in rural areas, and criminal investigations at both the provincial and the international level. Criminal investigators are assigned to either the general headquarters in Montreal or to headquarters in other cities (mainly Quebec City, Trois-Rivières, and Sherbrooke). The second largest employer is the Montreal City Police Department, with some 5000 officers; the department's territorial jurisdiction is restricted to the island of Montreal, which is the most densely populated area in the province as well as its main economic hub. The third category of employer is the 38 municipal police departments, which range from large forces, such as those in Laval and Longueuil, the two main suburbs of Montreal, to small forces in those cities that do not have contracts with the SQ, a possibility offered in the last territorial reform in 2001. These smaller police departments hire the remaining 5000 police officers and are now referred to as *Sûretés Municipales* or SM.

An important phenomenon in policing in Quebec is that at one point, over a short period of time, experienced police officers were replaced by a contingent of

younger, inexperienced officers. During the second part of the 1970s and most of the 1980s, mostly because of a difficult economic situation, recruitment of new officers was cut to the bare minimum. In the 1990s, senior police officers retired en masse and recruits were hired in the same fashion to replace them. This posed the problem of who would supervise the recruits. In Montreal and a majority of other municipal police forces, the officers who supervise recruits were often hired only one or two years before the recruits. It is not surprising, then, that they can give recruits only a rather limited view of the more profound aspects of police work and the potential moral dilemmas they might encounter, since they themselves have not encountered these kinds of dilemmas (Franck et al. 1995).

Theoretical background, sample, questionnaire, and methodology

Professional socialisation involves the formal and informal processes by which an individual acquires the distinctive cultural and social traits of a specific professional group (Dubar and Tripier 2003). While most research done on police officers' professional socialisation has been conducted after the process had occurred, that is, by interviewing career officers about their experiences during the integration period (Manning and Van Maanen 1978, Crank 1998), some researchers have explored the question by following recruits while the integration was taking place.

This latter method of studying the professional socialisation of police officers can be traced back to the pioneering work of McNamara (1967) and Van Maanen (1973, 1974, 1975, 1977). McNamara conducted one of the first longitudinal studies of the professional integration of police recruits in the 1960s at the New York Police Department. He was particularly interested in the disparity between training and real police work. For instance, the way recruits were taught to communicate to the public at the police academy was almost totally unsuited to the New York streets of that era, since the population in general held the police in very low esteem. McNamara proposed that training programmes should be much more closely connected with real police work as experienced on the beat. Van Maanen (1973), on the other hand, identified different consecutive stages in integration into the police profession. As our own results show, the first two stages of integration he identified are still prominent: the anticipation stage, where recruits express a mix of idealism and anxiety, and the shock of reality stage, where recruits become disillusioned when they realise that police work is not necessarily as highly charged as they had expected. Less than a decade later, Ericson (1982) studied police recruits in Quebec and Ontario by following them during their everyday patrol routine. He focused on the reactions of recruits to repetitive encounters with people in crisis and with people not prone to cooperate with the police. Ericson concluded that these sorts of encounters, executed more or less repetitively and eventually requiring large amounts of time spent completing forms, diminished the recruits' interest and creativity in dealing with such situations in favour of the more administrative aspects of police work, particularly in organisations obsessed with working standards and productivity. During the mid-1980s, Fielding (1988) studied the training of UK police recruits. He showed that professional socialisation took two parallel paths: the official path resulting from the formal elements of training and education, and a parallel path resulting from the conflict engendered by the recruits' idealism and their contacts with more experienced officers. Fielding

realised that the recruits' idealism was very quickly replaced by apathy towards the most repetitive aspects of police work, an attitude somewhat similar to what we found in our subjects.

More recently, Chan (2003) and her research team carried out an exhaustive longitudinal follow-up of a sample of Australian police recruits. The team followed 150 recruits during their first two years, from the police academy to their first year in the New South Wales Police. Their results are similar to ours in many respects, particularly with regard to the depth of the recruits' commitment to the profession as well as the development of disillusion and isolation.

Our study was directly inspired by a cohort study conducted in France during the 1990s by Dominique Monjardet and Catherine Gorgeon (Monjardet and Gorgeon 1992, 1993, 1996, 1999). Their main objective, like ours, was to monitor the process of integration as it occurred, with a sufficiently large sample of recruits to allow researchers to study different socialisation paths and their relationship to previous ideas and attitudes expressed by subjects in the study. Monjardet and Gorgeon studied the attitudes, beliefs, and opinions of all recruits finishing their training at the *École de police de Paris*; almost a thousand subjects were enrolled in the study. Even though our own sample is more limited in number, it can be considered highly representative as we were able to enrol 723 of the 744 students admitted to the Quebec Police School during the 2001–2002 academic year. All respondents were surveyed for the first time during week number eight of their training programme. (Questionnaires were administered in French but have been translated for this article.)

The 130 questions originally developed for the French study had to be adapted slightly in order to better capture specific aspects of policing in Quebec. We also added 21 questions, adapted from the tool developed by Hyams (1990), in an attempt to measure respondents' attitudes towards the ethical aspects of police work. This last set of questions is the basis for one important aspect of this article: determining at what moment specific attitudinal traits regarding ethics develop.

Qualitative information was added to this quantitative data, using an approach followed earlier by Chan (2003): recruits from phase one of the study were asked to volunteer for open-ended question interviews; 10 recruits responded at the first phase, and eight of them were available at the third phase of this ongoing study. Such interviews often provide important information on the processes and attitude changes involved in becoming a police officer. Quotes from these interviews complement the analysis of the responses from the questionnaires.

For the second and the third phases of the study, respondents were sent a questionnaire by mail at one-year intervals, starting one year after the first survey. Relying on the School of Police address database,² two follow-up attempts were conducted to make sure that all those who missed the first mailing were reached. The second and third questionnaire were almost identical to the one they had responded to in the first instance (a few additional questions were added), to allow us to accurately measure both shifts and stability in the views expressed.

Response rates are 55% (398 subjects out of 723) at the second phase and 44% (316 subjects out of 723) at the third phase of the study.

Results

Before getting to the core results, we must first establish the validity and reliability of the data. In statistical terms, the 43.7% response rate gives us (at a 95% confidence level) a globally significant and valid rate (Krejcie and Morgan 1970).³ The question of reliability, however, is somewhat more complicated. Just how representative are the responses given by those who returned the questionnaire in comparison with the opinions and attitudes of those who did not? We can answer this question through two different approaches: first, by measuring the differences between observed and expected frequencies in phases one and three for such descriptors as gender, the college where the respondents completed their first police degree, and the cohort number to which they were assigned during their internship at the Police School (respondents were assigned to one of the 12 cohorts, ranging from cohort number 19 to cohort number 30),⁴ and, second, by measuring, among the 723 respondents to phase one, the differences in answers between the 314 subjects who responded to phase three and the 409 others who did not. In both instances and for all items, chi-square tests showed non-significant statistical differences. We can therefore reasonably assume that respondents in phase three do not show attitudinal traits specifically related to their willingness to participate in the study.⁵

Phase three respondents' characteristics

As Table 1 shows, response rates of men and women tend to stay quite even through the three phases, even though, female participants from phase two are a little more likely to answer and return the questionnaire than their male counterparts. This difference is not, as we saw in the former section, statistically significant. The age progression of the participants also reflects the timing of the study as participants graduated between 2001 and 2002 and answered the questionnaire after a one-year interval each time. There is no real age difference between male and female respondents throughout the three phases.

The two last lines of Table 1 show the employment status of participants during their first two years as police officers. Forty-nine per cent of recruits now have permanent status as the passage from phase two to phase three marks the end of uncertainty for an additional 30% of all respondents. Promotion to permanent status varies greatly among police organisations in Quebec, which do not follow

Table 1. Sex, age and status distribution of all subjects through the three phases of the study.

	Phase one (2000–2001)	Phase two (2002–2003)	Phase three (2004–2005)
Number of subjects	717	401	316
Average age (standard deviation)	23.2 (3.2)	25.1 (3.1)	25.9 (3.0)
Number of females (%)	300 (41.8%)	185 (46.1%)	145 (45.9%)
Average age (standard deviation)	22.8 (3.0)	25.1 (2.9)	26.0 (3.0)
Number of males (%)	417 (58.2%)	216 (53.9%)	171 (54.1%)
Average age (standard deviation)	23.4 (3.2)	25.1 (3.3)	26.1 (3.0)
Number with a permanent status (%)	Not hired yet	80 (20%)	153 (49%)
Number with a non-permanent status (%)		381 (80%)	163 (51%)

standardised hiring procedures: while 96% of recruits hired by the Montreal Police Department (SPVM) have obtained permanent status after three years (75 of the 78 subjects), this is true for only 11 of the 95 subjects hired by the SQ. At the SM, 50% of the recruits in our sample have become permanent employees. Generally speaking, recruits in all police organisations in Quebec are on a probationary basis for at least a full year. Ninety-eight per cent of the recruits in the sample are still patrol officers and thus at the first level in the police hierarchy.

Analysis of the data gathered at phase one, during the final stage of almost four years of specialised training, reveals a picture of deeply committed individuals, who rank very high on ethical scales. As we showed in earlier contributions (Alain and Baril 2005a,b), their attitudes were very positive and agree with the most positive images of the police as a social institution. The answers given during the first phase revealed strongly motivated future police officers, devoted to maintain peace and security among fellow citizen through community policing, soft persuasion, and cooperation rather than the more traditional repressive and authoritative approaches. We also showed how and to what extent this positive standpoint was quickly called into question and, as far as community policing was concerned, affected by a significant level of disappointment and realism even one year after recruits had been sworn in. It was therefore suggested that the answers given during the first phase of the study might have reflected a 'casting' effect, in which the respondents, seeing us as authority figures, gave the answers they thought we wanted. If this had been the only explanation of the changes observed between phases one and two, opinion changes, especially those reflecting the darker sides of policing, should have become somewhat stabilised during the passage from phase two to phase three. However, as our present study shows, other and potentially more complex phenomena are at work here, as some of these more negative opinion shifts are still following the trend observed in phase two.

Elements of stability and elements of change

Some attitudes expressed by the recruits appear to remain both solid and positively charged: in general these involve the reasons for the choice of police officer as a career and are presented in Table 2. Such a commitment for what can be understood as the symbolic aspects of police functions has been thoroughly documented in earlier studies involving recruits, from the pioneering work of McNamara (1967) in the 1960s to the more recent study conducted by Chan (2003).

This strong commitment to the job was described, almost naively, by one of the participants⁶:

'I love this job! I don't see what else I could do, what could provide all of what I'm learning through it. If it's tough sometimes, especially working the evening and night shifts, when I wake up in the morning, that's forgotten and I never have the feeling that I'm doing something boring'. C., female recruit interviewed in phase three

This perspective seems to be shared by the other respondents, 94% percent of whom said that they would not choose another profession. Ninety-two per cent said they would still choose to train for the job, while 100% of the respondents think the police profession will give them the opportunity to reach their professional aspirations. Another item worth noting is the response to the first question – what criteria should

Table 2. Stable opinions regarding the personal choices of becoming a police officer, variation between phases one and three.

Question and answer possibilities	Percentages of answers in phase three (marginal differences, between phases two and three)
Promotions should be given according to:	
accumulated experience	6% (+1%)
professional criteria	94% (-1%)
You chose the police profession mainly:	
to maintain public order	40% (-4%)
for the career	21% (-2%)
because we are useful	25% (+2%)
(other answers)	14% (+4%)
Had you been given the possibility, would you have chosen another profession?	
Yes	6% (+2%)
No	94% (-2%)
If you were given the possibility, would you again choose to train for the police?	
Yes	92% (no change)
No	8%
Do you think the police profession will give you the opportunity to reach your professional goals?	
Yes	100% (+2%)
No	0% (-2%)
Would you prefer to say:	
I will remain a police officer	82% (-4%)
I might do something else	18% (+4%)
Would you recommend to a member of your family that he/she choose the police profession?	
Yes	94% (+2%)
No	6% (-2%)
Would you prefer to say:	
Policing is <i>not</i> a job like any other	85% (+1%)
Policing is a job like any other	15% (-1%)

be used in determining promotion. The most favoured answer (professional criteria rather than accumulated experience) reflects the importance the respondents place on professional training, since the curriculum they followed involved training aimed at allowing them to reach the highest possible levels of professional competency. Without being too cynical, however, such a strong commitment to professional competency may conflict with a more traditional police union standpoint, in which accumulated years of experience are still the most important criteria for promotion. The possibility of potential conflict between generations, between these recruits and their older colleagues who are committed to a more traditional police union view, is revealed in a quote from one of our interviews:

‘I think they don’t really take care of us; the Union’s guys presented us with a proposal for an agreement, but we had to vote on it here and now, without any possibility of

studying the details. We had no choice but to accept their words about it. In the end, I think [the Union] made us lose ground in terms of what we already had. I mean, who are they working for? Maybe not for us, but for themselves in terms of keeping their assets intact'. M., male recruit interviewed in phase two

While this quote reveals traces of disillusion and disappointment with the union, our study shows that these attitudes are also apparent among recruits in many other aspects of their profession.

Literature in this field (Dubar and Trippier 2003) generally separates the kinds of disappointment experienced by newly hired employees starting their first career into two classes. In the first instance, disappointment develops from the contrast between what the new employee expects in terms of responsibility, working condition, salary, and so on, and the reality of the job. As a general rule, the more difficult and selective the training required to get the job, the greater the gap between expectation and reality. This attitude is therefore referred to as endogenous disappointment. In the second instance, some part of the disappointment originates from outside or external sources and is therefore referred to as exogenous disappointment. In this case, the attitudes are typical of any specific professional identity and are gradually constructed through formal and informal contacts with more experienced colleagues, from what these colleagues say the job involves, and how they carry it out.

For respondents in our research, both types of disappointment are apparent, but it appears that exogenous disappointment has had a more rapid effect, occurring only one year after recruits joined the police force. Table 3 illustrates the effects of realism as well as other elements we consider marks of endogenous disappointment.

Two main items emerge from the data illustrated in Table 3: the relationship between the training the respondents received and the tasks to be accomplished and between the material means and tools one needs to do the job. While we consider these attitude changes as reflections of endogenous disappointment, they can also be understood as the result of a growing realism, since they reflect recruits' experiences with the routine contingencies of the job. The general confidence expressed by respondents in phase one seems to decrease steadily, reflecting an increasing realism about the fact that nothing is really as positive as they had, more or less naively, thought at first. Interview quotes further illustrate the kind of frustrations experienced by the recruits with regard to the poor quality of the tools at their disposal:

'It's incredible how poorly equipped we are at our police department! It was quite all right when we were first hired, but since then, I cannot get any new material, even new boots. (...) Our computers are prehistoric! The US had these computer years ago, which were then bought by the police department of ..., and then bought by our own department. Some keys just don't work, and we cannot replace them since they are not manufactured anymore!' L., male recruit interviewed in phase two.

Another and more troubling aspect emerged from interviews, an element that is not so apparent from the questionnaires but is indicative of the gap between the training experience and everyday work. This element relates to the type of clientele dealt with by the police, namely people not necessarily interested in any kind of police intervention:

Table 3. Evolution of opinions regarding elements of endogenous disappointment, from phase one to phase three.

Questions and answer choices	Answer distribution, phases one to three (%)		
	Phase one	Phase two	Phase three
Would you say that, in order to ensure public security ($W = -2.94^{**}$):			
police officers are well trained	96	87	82
training is not optimal	4	13	18
While in duty, do you sometimes feel a contradiction between being efficient and following the rules ($W = -2.86^{**}$):			
often	38	50	57
rarely	62	50	43
When this happen, it is best to:			
follow the rule	44	55	58
finish the mission	66	45	42
Do you think your training prepared you well enough to understand the different context of intervention as well as understanding the different kind of public you encounter:			
yes	87	69	67
no	13	31	33
Would you say that, in order to ensure public security ($W = -3.35^{**}$):			
police have all the necessary material means	58	35	27
police don't have all the necessary material means	42	65	73

Note: W indicates a significant difference at the Wilcoxon test for answers' distribution between phase two and phase three (Miller and Whitehead 1996); $^{**}p < 0.01$.

'What is being a police officer? Well, more or less, it's trying to solve problems for people who cannot solve them themselves. People are not talking to each other, so it's almost as if they are looking for trouble and conflicts; they don't respect each other anymore, so they don't respect our job and our uniform. All this makes me feel sad, but so far, I'm trying to cope with this as best as I can ...'. M., male recruit interviewed in phase three

'In the city of ..., we're not that well appreciated, you know. We give a lot of tickets, since the bosses, they want it that way. The percentage of people living on social welfare is also so high! And the number of them who have criminal records ... You stop a vehicle and it's always someone who's in trouble with the law. So, it's a fact that they don't like us so much, and they say it loudly!' M.L., male recruit interviewed in phase two.

Since access to the profession is, as we saw earlier, highly restricted, the fact that ideals among future police officers are quite high can be understood as a normal phenomenon. It is also normal that recruits feel some sort of disenchantment when they are first confronted with a reality that does not match these ideals. The problem is that training, especially in the final 15 weeks at the Police School, should better prepare the recruits to cope with this reality, not necessarily by stressing the existence

of a gap between what the recruits think the job is and the reality they will face but by preparing them to deal with the possibility and with the potential negative consequences of such a confrontation. One important negative consequence may be to reinforce a professional culture and environment that is set apart from the rest of society, governed by its own rules and standards. As we will see later on, the onset of this phenomenon is already apparent among the subjects of this research.

Disenchantment could, however, also be partly attributable to another factor, unrelated to training: the lack of accumulated experience in Quebec's police force. As the recruits cannot rely on experienced colleagues to provide in-depth perspectives on the everyday contingencies of police intervention, it is understandable that disillusion may become more prevalent than a more balanced perspective where it is recognised that police duties do not always go unrewarded. New recruits in most police organisations are being directed by officers who, on average, were hired no more than two or three years before they were. This may mean that it is as difficult for these officers as for the rookies to see the positive aspects of intervention when faced with all the negative aspects.⁷ As we will see, the fact that training is not necessarily able to provide an understanding of the contingencies of everyday police intervention and that recruits may not be able to count on mature and experienced colleagues to put things in perspective also has a measurable impact on the development of what we referred to as external or exogenous disappointment.

It is important to recognise that the distinction between exogenous and endogenous disappointment may be somewhat arbitrary. To someone unfamiliar with the sometimes quite subtle intricacies of the police professional culture, the distinction may seem somewhat artificial. However, there is a sufficiently strong consensus among researchers that the factors shown in Table 4 are typical of police culture (Manning 1978, Alain 2001, Paoline 2003, Alain 2004, Manning 2004, Paoline 2004) that we feel warranted in presenting them⁸ as cultural elements constructed largely from everyday encounters with colleagues during which specific views about the job are shared, as well as through encounters with the public, authority, and so on.

We can see, for instance, from answers given to the first question about the legal powers of the police, how a gradual shift in opinion is occurring, a shift that is typical of the opinions of police representatives during civil crisis or legal reforms. We frequently found this point of view among the recruits we interviewed:

'The system's really too soft. It's so frustrating! You catch someone for a given offence, and the week after, you catch the same guy for exactly the same thing! And he did it all: he was convicted in court, spent a few days in jail, and the first thing he tells you when you arrest him for the second or the third time is, 'go for it, cause they won't keep me too long in jail, anyway ...'. There's a problem, you know. Sometimes just running checks on car plates, you get 18 drivers out of 20 with a criminal record, and those 18 are just travelling there, right in front of you ...!' P.H.L., male recruit interviewed in phase two.

This kind of opinion shift seems to be even more important with regard to how respondents consider the organisation and its administration: in answers to the second question in Table 4, we can see an almost complete reversal of opinion from phase one to phase three. This kind of attitude about official authority, an attitude

Table 4. Evolution of opinions regarding elements of exogenous disappointment, from phase one to phase three.

Questions and answer choices	Answer distribution, phases one to three (%)		
	Phase one	Phase two	Phase three
Would you say that, in order to ensure public security ($W = -4.39^{***}$):			
police officers possess sufficient legal powers	40	31	21
police officers lack sufficient legal powers	60	69	79
Would you say that, in order to ensure public security ($W = -4.25^{***}$):			
the organisation is efficient	74	56	43
the organisation is not efficient	26	44	57
Would you say that, in order to ensure public security ($W = -2.27^*$):			
the number of police personal is enough	33	11	5
the number of police personal is not enough	67	89	95
Do you think community policing is ($W = -4.71^{***}$):			
a good strategy to ensure public safety	84	66	52
demands a lot for few results	16	44	48
Would you rather say ($W = -6.33^{***}$):			
superior officers facilitate service delivery	90	73	53
with less 'little bosses', service delivery would be better	10	27	47
When a colleague tells you not to make wave as the best way to stay out of trouble, you;			
agree	34	51	54
disagree	66	49	46

Note: W indicates a significant difference at the Wilcoxon test for answers' distribution between phase two and phase three (Miller and Whitehead 1996); $^{***}p < 0.001$; $^*p < 0.05$.

typical of what separates the expressed views of officers from those of uniformed patrolmen, is further illustrated in this excerpt from an interview:

'We, in the city of . . . , have been through a major restructuring of service. In this restructuring, civilians have taken all the positions at the top of the hierarchy and these guys are not in the force, they never wore the uniform. They make decisions without the consent of those who are on the street 24 hours a day. They reduced personnel and they plan to do more reducing in the coming years. Personally, I find that this is ridiculous since we're supposed to be here to serve the public!' L., female recruit interviewed in phase two.

(The same subject, one year later) 'The problem is the hierarchy pyramid that we have to endure. What is frustrating here is that those who are high in the pyramid have lost the idea of what it is really like, being in uniform, doing your beat on the street'.

In no other area, however, do we find such strong disillusionment as with the idea of community policing. Even if a small majority of the respondents still consider the approach as worth the effort, the number committed to these policies has literally

melted away through the years. This change is perplexing as police education and training in Quebec relies on ideas such as partnership, prevention, and sharing of responsibility in matters of public safety, three key elements of the community policing approach (Skolnic and Bayley 1998). Either (1) the main ingredients of community policing are so badly internalised by recruits during their training that they are easily dismissed as only theoretical possibilities that are abandoned when confronted with the 'real' world of policing, or (2) this trend reflects the prevalent opinion of uniformed patrol officers for whom community policing remains a good but impractical idea due to the lack of time and resources. A third and potentially more inclusive explanation might be that this attitude towards community policing originates from the way Quebec's police organisations function, where community policing remains an intervention strategy that stands apart from the regular and more conventional way of doing things, as this interview quote from an officer recruited by a major city police department reveals:

'We don't have time for this. We cannot spend time on follow-ups. Maybe it's different at the SQ or at other municipal police departments, but here, in the city of . . ., we don't have any time for this. Sometimes, we give the community policing specialist's phone number, they're paid for this, they serve on special citizen committees. But in our organization, they don't want the patrol officer to get involved in any of this'. J.M.D., female recruit interviewed in phase three

We have already discussed the fact that uniformed patrol officers hold their superiors, as well as the police hierarchy in general, in low esteem: the fifth item of Table 4 reinforces this idea, showing that a positive opinion of authority is gradually and steadily eroding. We see the same trend with regard to both the authorities in charge of ethical conduct and the public who relies on these authorities⁹:

'It seems we're always confronted. You know, people file so many complaints against us that it puts us in a continual state of stress, especially for those like me, not yet on a permanent status. You're always stressed. Sometimes, you do just about nothing, but you're always thinking of what could happen'. C.R., female recruit interviewed during phase two

When we turn to analysis of matters of ethics, we appear to be observing the gradual appearance of signs of insularity that are generally typical of professions¹⁰ that have become uncomfortable both with (1) the public they serve and (2) any outside authority with specific powers affecting their duties and obligations. As we examine the evolution of respondents' attitudes towards the ethical aspects of work in the police, it is important to determine whether the same endogenous and exogenous causes noted in other aspects of our study are apparent here. These aspects are not isolated one from another since almost every mechanism aimed at elevating ethical standards among police officers emanates from outside the profession and is almost exclusively coercive by nature (e.g., article 260 of the new police act makes denouncing a fellow officer mandatory). Given this, they could encourage the development of attitudes contrary to what is really wanted, while also trapping previously enthusiastic recruits in a repetitious daily routine.

Shifts in ethical standpoint

The mechanisms intended to provide better control of ethics in Quebec's police organisations seem to contradict some ideas about professional ethics and police professionalism. On one hand, policing is presented as becoming increasingly professional, relying on the autonomous capacity of each officer to make the best decision in given circumstances. On the other hand, ethics in policing is enforced by increasingly complex and coercive measures and rules. For instance, Quebec's Police Act makes it mandatory for all police officers to report any misconduct they might witness or hear about pertaining to a colleague. This raises the question of whether whistle blowing can be coerced. Our own data corroborate the literature in this respect (Snell 2000), showing that while respondents do not hesitate to criticise their own organisation and its administration, they are much more reluctant to do the same with reference to specific individuals, as these two excerpts from interviews demonstrate:

'For me, what's happening in the car stays in the car. Even if I do not always agree with what's going on, I'd never say anything about it'. G., male recruit interviewed during phase two

'Personally, I'd never report a colleague's conduct. Think about drunk-driving, for instance: someone I know did arrest a police officer who was DWI. Well, he had to resign because he just couldn't bear the pressure, since no one would trust him anymore'. M.L., male recruit interviewed during phase two

Kennison (2002) and Lewis (1999) have shown that legally enforced denunciation generates cynicism among police officers, who then tend to suspect the ombudsman office and other civilian ethics enforcement mechanism of being systematically against the police. The ambivalence that emerges from the contradiction between being loyal to colleagues while having to report misconduct is already very apparent among the respondents.

The fact that in all four items in Table 5 respondents shifted their opinion either towards neutral or towards the opposite position from that expressed during phase one must be seen as an indication of this ambivalence, with situations becoming less clear than they were during training. This observation led to a question that has not yet been totally resolved: when does this moral position regarding the 'code of silence' begin to emerge? As respondents have been questioned three times, we can at least start to explore potential answers to this question.

The onset of observed shifts in the ethical position of the recruits

As all 21 items about ethics adapted from Hyams (1990) are answered on Likert scales ranging from one to five, from 'totally disagree' to 'totally agree' with a somewhat neutral position in the middle, it is possible to add respondents' scores in order to construct more complex variables that may then be treated with more robust statistical equations. Three global themes were constructed this way:

1. respondents' opinion towards gratuities, ranging from a minimal value of 2, indicating a position against gratuities, to a maximum value of 10, indicating a position in favour of gratuities;

Table 5. Evolution of opinions regarding the evolution of attitudes towards the code of silence, from phase one to phase three.

Questions and answer choices	Answer distribution, phases one to three (%)		
	Phase one	Phase two	Phase three
I would lie in order to save a colleagues' position, especially if this colleague is one of my friends ($W = -3.39^{**}$)			
Disagree	82	64	58
Neutral position	13	26	28
Agree	5	10	14
Some people should be punished by 'street law' when they hit an officer because it is the only punishment they would have ($W = -3.83^{***}$)			
Disagree	79	57	50
Neutral position	13	21	17
Agree	8	22	33
Outside the case of extreme misconduct, police officers should protect one another in cases of alleged misconduct ($W = -2.69^{**}$)			
Disagree	63	35	28
Neutral position	14	23	26
Agree	24	42	40
I would take appropriate measures for any officer who would commit a reprehensible action, even if this officer is a friend ($W = -2.23^*$)			
Disagree	21	22	26
Neutral position	18	35	34
Agree	24	43	40

Note: W indicates a significant difference at the Wilcoxon test for answers' distribution between phase two and phase three (Miller and Whitehead 1996); $***p < 0.001$; $**p < 0.01$; $*p < 0.05$.

- respondents' opinion towards using illegal means in order to get the job done,¹¹ ranging from a 7 to 35 (the higher the score, the more the respondents agree with the use of illegal means);
- respondents' opinion regarding his or her organisation's politics aimed at better control of officers' misconduct and his or her willingness to report misconduct and reprehensible behaviour,¹² ranging from 9 to 45 (the lower the score, the less respondents agree with these politics and the less they are willing to report misconduct).¹³

Each of the respondents was given a score on these three variables for each of the three phases; Table 6 illustrates the descriptive statistics of these variables at each phase of the study, expressed as P1 for phase one, P2 for phase two, and P3 for phase three.

As we can see from the descriptive statistics, there is a slight evolution of the variable constructed around the phenomenon of gratuities, where respondents

Table 6. Descriptive statistics for the three ethic variables, measured separately at all three phases of the study.

	<i>N</i>		Mean	Median	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
	Valid	Missing					
GratuitiesP1	717	7	4.82	4.00	2.453	2	10
GratuitiesP2	385	339	5.59	6.00	2.019	2	10
GratuitiesP3	305	419	5.93	6.00	2.109	2	10
Illegal meansP1	715	9	14.24	10.00	8.908	7	35
Illegal meansP2	381	343	13.13	12.00	5.155	7	35
Illegal meansP3	306	418	13.97	13.00	5.734	7	35
Org. politicsP1	704	20	30.64	32.00	5.731	12	42
Org. politicsP2	382	342	30.72	31.00	4.242	18	45
Org. politicsP3	304	420	30.23	30.00	4.226	17	45

increasingly agree from phase one to phase three. The same cannot, however, be said about the two other variables, since the mean statistic associated with illegal means and organisational politics fluctuate without any given direction. The median of these two variables, however, shows more regular tendencies, indicating opinion shifts towards less compliance in both instances. These shifts have to be analysed as a growing tendency, among the respondents, to soften the ethical standpoint that they expressed while in training, to make such a standpoint more amenable to changing contexts and situational contingencies. As such, we are confirming similar results obtained from an earlier study involving a different sample of police officers (Alain 2004). This study showed how a majority of respondents (all of them sworn officers), when they were asked to judge the importance of ethical breaches presented to them in the form of written vignettes, made a judgement on the contextual elements of these hypothetical situations, and not on the mere ethical principles. The respondents in this present study seem to develop a comparable sense of relativity regarding ethics where things are not black or white anymore. It could have been that such a change in opinion would occur between the two first phases and then, remain stable between phases two and three, indicating the social desirability effect. However, and as we will amplify in the conclusion of this article, the fact that disenchantment is still growing while the respondents are active as sworn officers must be considered as a subject that needs closer inquiries by police organisations and public ministries involved in regulating police work in Quebec.

We will now look at the temporal relationship between these ethical indicators in an attempt to determine whether respondents' opinions are already set while they are completing their initial training or if these same traits begin to emerge and solidify soon after they are sworn in. Sets of regression equations give the reader a glimpse of the onset of the moral position expressed by the respondents in the third phase of this ongoing research.

With adjusted R square over 30% for all three equations, the variables used for explanation are globally solid indicators of some strong relationship between these variables. When taken independently, however, we can see how significant the relationships between positions at time two are for explaining positions at time three, but also how insignificant the coefficient of position at time one is. All things considered, if, when included with other factors taken globally, position at phase one contributes to position at phase three for any theme, it is the position at phase two, for example, when the respondents begin work, that seems to be the most significant in terms of onset of the ethical shifts we observed. Another element also emerges from the data illustrated in Table 7: apart from the corresponding opinion at phase two, the variable labelled 'illegal meansP2' is also a significant independent indicator of opinion movement for 'organisations' politics' in phase three and 'gratuities' in phase three. Interestingly enough, especially for those in charge of training, our data

Table 7. Multiple regression equations for all three ethical standpoints at phase three.

	Unstandardised coefficients, B	Standardised coefficients, β	t	Sig.
For dependent variable gratuitiesP3				
Model summary: Adjusted $R^2=0.32$; total $df=255$; $F=21.05$; $p<0.001$				
(Constant)	4.73		3.16	0.002
GratuitiesP1	0.11	0.12	1.80	0.074
GratuitiesP2	0.43	0.41	7.20	0.000
Illegal meansP1	-0.39	-0.16	-1.86	0.065
Illegal meansP2	0.09	0.21	3.48	0.001
Org. politicsP1	-0.05	-0.12	-1.52	0.129
Org. politicsP2	-0.03	-0.06	-0.92	0.360
For dependent variable illegal meansP3				
Model summary: Adjusted $R^2=0.46$; total $df=255$; $F=36.53$; $p<0.001$				
(Constant)	14.03		3.73	0.000
GratuitiesP1	0.12	0.05	0.80	0.423
GratuitiesP2	-0.14	-0.05	-0.95	0.344
Illegal meansP1	-0.01	-0.01	-0.16	0.877
Illegal meansP2	0.70	0.58	10.62	0.000
Org. politicsP1	0.01	0.01	0.17	0.862
Org. politicsP2	-0.29	-0.20	-3.72	0.000
For dependent variable org. politicsP3				
Model summary: Adjusted $R^2=0.41$; total $df=253$; $F=30.42$; $p<0.001$				
(Constant)	15.26		5.30	0.000
GratuitiesP1	-0.11	-0.06	-1.01	0.314
GratuitiesP2	-0.10	-0.05	-0.90	0.368
Illegal meansP1	0.04	0.08	0.99	0.321
Illegal meansP2	-0.19	-0.22	-3.85	0.000
Org. politicsP1	0.09	0.11	1.53	0.126
Org. politicsP2	0.49	0.47	8.37	0.000

thus confirm that the opinion expressed by the respondents during phase one, taken independently, does not seem to be a significant indicator of opinions expressed at phase three. This result, however, points to phenomena that begin to take effect at the moment recruits are officially incorporated into the police organisation. But just how their new employers can take these elements into account remains a question that needs further exploration.

Conclusion

We confirmed, from results gathered through a questionnaire administered once a year to a cohort of police recruits in Quebec, that while the core reasons these young men and women chose policing remain solid throughout their three first years as police officers, some kinds of disappointment are also apparent. We propose that while some of these disappointments originate from the confrontation between an idealised view of the job and its reality, other forms of disappointment are the result of the environment and contacts with colleagues, particularly colleagues who are often not much more experienced than recruits, as is the case in Quebec. We also show that the onset of opinion shifts regarding ethical standards seems to occur not when recruits are approaching the end of their training but a bit later, early in their career as new police officers. As these changes in opinion are not decreasing among our subjects, it appears that there is a lack of integration between formal training and work and further research is needed to better understand the way attitudes and ethical positions are affected by particular organisation situations. We therefore propose that one of the problems our data reveals reside into the fact that, at least as far as ethics in policing is concerned, no one seems to really understand that the police career path is not made out of separate steps, such as initial training, graduating, being hired by a police organisation, getting promoted, and so on, but must rather be seen as a continuum. As such, it would be quite futile trying to identify exactly where and who, in this continuum, might be responsible for the decrease we observed, especially regarding ethical values. It remains to be seen, however, how every and all the different organisations involved in policing, whether the ministry for its politics, the college and the police school, the police forces themselves, are doing their best to understand each other contributions into the building of a police officer's social and professional identity. Our research, which will continue for two additional phases, will provide helpful information to police organisations interested in trying to deal with the problem of training new officers, particularly in Quebec, where the organisation cannot count on experienced colleagues to help recruits integrate the theoretical elements of their training with the reality of policing and its unique contingencies and experiences. While this problem may be seen as rather trivial for the technical aspects of policing – where technology and adapted ongoing training might at least realign the recruits who, over the first few years, have developed unwanted practices – it will never be as such for all the ethical aspects of the job. Policing, however we look at it, will always deal with conflicts among individuals who are generally far from willing to be policed. Therefore, young and inexperienced officers will work through animosity and dissatisfaction from the public quite more often than the contrary. As so, if these same officers are not really in a position to analyse these contingencies with the help of older and experienced officers, they might gradually lose the possibility to develop

a more positive attitude and therefore, develop the growing syndrome of 'we versus them', more as a rule than an exception. And in such a context, it does not take long for someone to gradually develop ethical positions where rules governing what can be done and what cannot is as specific and isolated from the rest of society as one feels detached, isolated and misunderstood.

Notes

1. One side effect of the difficulty of getting into and completing the policing programme is that it has led to the rapid feminisation of the police force. Since, as is well known, young women work harder in high school and get better results than young men, they are more likely to be accepted into policing programmes at both the college level and the Police School. Even without special policies to encourage the hiring of women, Quebec's police forces are gradually being staffed by increasing numbers of women, who currently make up some 30–40% of the force.
2. As all police officers in Quebec must requalify for aspects of police duties at least once every two or three years, the Police School must maintain a very up-to-date record of officers' addresses and coordinates. Participants enrolled in the study signed a voluntary release form in order for us to be granted access to this data.
3. According to Krejcie and Morgan, the minimal sample for a population estimated at 700 respondents is 248 and rises to 254 for a population of 750.
4. Chi-square value for 'gender' is $X^2=2.55$, at $p=0.265$; chi-square value for variable 'college' is $X^2=4.45$ at $p=0.879$; chi-square value for variable 'cohort number' is $X^2=7697$ at $p=0.740$.
5. These tests were also conducted for the analysis of the data gathered in phase two of the study, with the same non-significant coefficients.
6. All interviews were conducted in French and translated by the authors.
7. Even considering the small gap between the novice and the 'experienced', it appears that the distinction between those with more and those with less experience is gradually increasing among the recruits in our study, as we can see in the following quote: 'It's with the recruits that I feel the most discomfort. They are so rude to people! When someone doesn't make a correct stop at a crossroad, I don't yell at him; I say, "let's intercept him, and explain what went wrong", not yell ...!' L.D., female recruit interviewed in phase three.
8. We have already demonstrated in an earlier contribution (Alain and Baril 2005b) that the development of police professional identity does not start at the moment the candidates are recruited but much earlier, somewhere during the beginning of the initial college programme.
9. In Quebec, a special ombudsman's office receives every complaint made by citizens about police conduct. This office, the Bureau du commissaire à la déontologie policière, processes between 1500 and 2000 complaints each year. Only 5–7% of these complaints, however, are found relevant, a proportion far less than suggested by the level of anxiety generated by the mere existence of this institution in Quebec's police ranks. A potential explanation of this anxiety may be that the whole procedure takes quite a long time, between 10 and 12 months, long enough that anyone might become anxious.
10. This includes, although far from exclusively, the police profession. Physicians and other health specialists also show a certain insularity as well as an official capacity to exert exclusive forms of power (see Brodeur 1984).
11. Example of questions: 'Police officers must sometimes rely on illegal means in order to make an arrest', 'Overstating an accusation is correct if it gets the guilty convicted'.
12. Examples of questions computed to construct this score are found in Table 5.

13. In this case, since most of the items used to construct this variable used negative assertions, such as 'I would never go on strike, no matter how bad I found salary and working conditions', we chose to invert the Likert answer scale on some of the items, thus generating an inverse relationship between the obtained total score and compliance compared to the other two variables, 'gratuities' and 'illegal means'.

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