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Policing **With** the Community, Dream or Reality:

Perspectives of the Police Service of Northern Ireland in West Belfast

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SIT Ireland: Political and Social Conflict Transformation
Independent Study Project

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Abstract

This report is a culmination of three weeks of intensive primary research on community policing methods suggested in the Patten Report and the perspectives concerning police and policing in west Belfast held by Police officers as well as members of the community. My research question was; is the PSNI policing *with* the community as the Patten Report suggested in 1999? I set out to find if the active partnerships between the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the community were actually being realized. Data was collected through interviews with both the Police Service of Northern Ireland officers from the Woodbourne Station in west Belfast, and also community representatives and activists who work and live within Woodbourne's jurisdiction. The community representatives spoke for The Falls Community Council/West Belfast Community Safety Forum, Community Restorative Justice Ireland, Suffolk Lenadoon Interface Group, Lenadoon Community Council, and Eirigi. An understanding of the culture of west Belfast through informal observation, was also used by exploring the area and collecting data in informal settings such as pubs, shops, taxis, and even as simply as walking through the area to gauge the PSNI's presence. Informal interviews and discussions were also conducted with Professors from Queens University Belfast and University of Ulster Jordanstown.

The findings of this research show that the historical background of the largely Republican area of west Belfast creates issues of trust, respect, and disconnect between the community and those who police it. The Police Service of Northern Ireland feels unwanted and therefore is sometimes unwilling to extend their hand, and the community has found it hard to reconcile their past history with the former Royal Ulster Constabulary, and the hurt that was caused to their community. There are also those issues still alive today such as parades, stop and search, and composition of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, that are present and living in the minds of both the community and police officers, making it difficult for either side to engage. The findings show that there are bridges being built between the State and the community, but there is vast room for improvement.

It became apparent during the research that perceptions within both the PSNI as well as the Republican community in west Belfast are extremely diverse and dynamic. Therefore, this report attempts to portray the perceptions of each organization and individual, as to illustrate this dynamic conflict.

Introduction

The question this research set out to answer is whether or not the PSNI is “policing with the community” in west Belfast, as the Patten Report suggested, or merely policing the community. Recommendation 44 within the Patten Report, published in 1999, reads, “Policing with the community should be the core function of the police service and the core function of every police station.

The topic of community policing, has been a recent interest to me through my studies at Stonehill College. I am a Sociology/Criminology major, and the field of Criminal Justice has always been appealing to me for a career. However, I have recently gone through somewhat of an inner conflict of whether or not communities are made safer by state institutions such as the police, or simply targeted by them as causes, rather than symptoms of societal problems.

Although west Belfast is a long way from my home community of Weymouth, Massachusetts, both physically and metaphorically, I believe I can apply the findings of this project to my own community. I may not be able to apply it through the unique framework of Northern Ireland, but broader issues of conflict regarding the police and class, race, and gender, et cetera are universal. Therefore, this project was as much about self-exploration into a career field that I have been wondering about for quite some time, as it was about researching the specific organizations I contacted.

The academic reason for focusing on this particular area of the ongoing transition towards peace in Northern Ireland is because of its contentious nature and relevance in recent political debate regarding devolution of Policing and Justice to Stormont on April 12, 2010. The motivation to focus on west Belfast is because of that particular area's demographic of a large amount of Catholics, and its history within the Republican movement. Historically, Catholics, and in particular, Republicans, have had an extremely tumultuous history with policing structures in Northern Ireland. The fact that much of west Belfast is made up of the Catholic/Nationalist/Republican community has led to much of its population having, "limited experiences of policing, which was usually confrontational. These communities were unable to identify with the policing and criminal justice system in a positive manner" (Byrne 2009).

Methodology

The research was conducted through a series of interviews in Belfast from April 6th to 23rd, 2010. It was important to gain the perspective of both the Police Service of Northern Ireland, and also the residents they served, as well as to demonstrate the diverse opinions of the Police Service and the residents of west Belfast. All the interview guides that were drawn up had the same basic few issues such as DPPs, devolution, active community engagement, and issues of the acceptance of the PSNI. Each guide also had specific questions to that organization, such as a question about the parades issue when speaking to a representative from SLIG.

My first contact was made with Inspector Emma Mooney of Woodbourne PSNI Station, and she quickly jumped at the chance to assist me in my research. I began by contacting the Police Service of Northern Ireland, because there was absolutely no way I would be able to produce a fair and unbiased report concerning policing in Northern Ireland without their viewpoint. I also knew that given my opinionated nature, if I began by speaking with community representatives who are critical of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the less I would want to hear the other side of the story.

Although Inspector Mooney was not able to be interviewed during my day at Woodbourne, she coordinated multiple interviews with different officers, working in different areas of policing and holding positions in the traffic division, neighborhood division, response division, and the administration. Inspector Mooney also had me collected by two traffic officers for a “ride-along” through Woodbourne’s jurisdiction. This allowed me to gain the perspectives of a diverse group of officers and demonstrated the dynamics within the Police Service of

Northern Ireland. By engaging in the ride-along, I was able to get a small glimpse into what the officer on the ground in west Belfast is up against.

Before my day at Woodbourne Police Station I was sure to educate myself on some of the specifics of policing in Northern Ireland. I had been keeping up to date reading the news regarding devolution of policing powers to Stormont and thought myself to be proficient in that area. I also read a good portion of the Patten Report which at first seemed like a very daunting task. Once I began reading it I realized that it is very well organized and was able to extract the pertinent issues dealing with community engagement and partnership. I extracted bits of Patten that I needed and used them as background for my interviews with the PSNI.

I also relied on a book, *Policing Loyalist and Republican Communities: Understanding key issues for local communities and the PSNI*, which is comprised of a lengthy research report by Jonny Byrne and Lisa Monaghan. This report dealt with issues surrounding community engagement by the police, and also the perceptions held by the Loyalist and Republican communities of the structures brought about by Patten. It served as a backbone for a large amount of my research, as it addressed concerns from officers, DPP members, and citizens.

Informal interview strategies were employed with the Police officers for multiple reasons. The first being that I was moving around the station a lot, traveling in and out of different offices, and some of the interviews were interrupted and not continuous because officers may have had things to attend to in the middle of the interview. I did have somewhat of an interview guide, but it was proven useless when my first interview was in an armored police cruiser driving through west Belfast, and a much more informal conversation about the issues I wanted to address followed. I also was wary that the Police Service of Northern Ireland is very much an institution. I knew I would perhaps have to contend with officers not being comfortable giving

anything besides the institution's response to my questions, rather than their response, which may or may not be different. Because of this I did not even bring my audio recorder with me and decided instead to take copious notes instead.

I was also conscious of the fact that just as I had preconceived notions of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, they may have the same judgments about me. I was very conscious of my appearance as a red haired man with a beard after being told by Sean O'Baoill of Mediation Northern Ireland that I appeared, physically, as a Republican. I also guessed, and my conversations with the officers confirmed this, that as an American, from the Northeast, with Irish ancestry, I would be seen as have a romantic view of Irish Nationalism, and a negative view of British Imperialism. During my interview with Allen, a former reserve in the RUC, now of the neighborhoods division, he was conscious to continually use the term terrorist to describe Republicans, and also compare them to Islamic terrorists who attack Americans. My perception of this was that he was trying to quell any romantic feelings I may have towards Republicanism. Because of these factors, special attention was paid to establishing a certain amount of neutrality in the words and phrasing I chose, and it seemed as though it paid off. I took special care to seem as impartial as possible, and was able to slip behind some officers' institutionalized nature. The interview guide I used was as follows.

- Obstacles PSNI faces in west Belfast as far as acceptance
- Active community engagement. What is being pursued?
 - DPPs, effective or not?
- Devolution, will it affect anyone at a grass roots level?
- How has the restructuring of Policing Districts and District Commands helped active community engagement?

After my interview with Chief Inspector Mark Peters, he was happy to give me the contacts of community workers in the area; he has a working relationship with. I was thrilled by

this as I had been having a hard time contacting people such as Community Restorative Justice Ireland, or other extremely localized organizations. I was now employing snowball sampling and using the key informants of Emma Mooney and Mark Peters to gain more contacts. This method of sampling was also employed through meetings with my advisor, Professor Bill Rolston. Bill was able to give me contacts with other Professors in the area.

I spoke with Graham Ellison and Phil Scraton, of Queen's University Belfast, both of whom are professors in Criminology. They each had different topics they were more comfortable speaking about, and supplied me with articles of their own and from colleagues they felt would be helpful.

Ellison's specialty is on policing in Northern Ireland and was able to talk to me in depth about some of the reasons the recommendations in the Patten Report have failed to be fully implemented. He also e-mailed me journal articles he has authored such as an article from Theoretical Criminology titled, "Security Governance in Transition: The compartmentalization, crowding out, and corralling of policing and security in Northern Ireland". This article was crucial in my understanding of the shortcomings of Patten, and the reasons why this radical document failed at providing radical change. Much of the contents of the article is explained in the historical background portion of the analysis section, but it mainly addresses the "hiccups" as Professor Ellison refers to them, along the way that have watered down Patten.

Scraton gave me a more broad view of community policing, since the bulk of his research is about policing in England. Scraton also gave me multiple works of his and others that he thought would be helpful to my topic. Before interviewing Scraton I had read his article, "Streets of Terror: Marginalization, criminalization, and authoritarian renewal", and it gave me a new perspective on whether or not community policing could even be seen as a positive route for

peace in Northern Ireland. This article seriously shook my understanding of community policing and claimed that it adds up to the police targeting marginalized communities as a problem in society, rather than targeting the problems that cause these people to become marginalized. It was quite interesting to hear Scraton's take on the subject first hand, and I continue to debate the thesis of this article internally. Scraton also recommended a piece he co-authored with Siobhan McAlister along with Deena Haydon, titled, "Childhood in Transition". This piece was good for me to read in order to gain a perspective of the youth in Northern Ireland, because as a population that has no political clout, they are all too often forgotten about. I was also recommended to read Mary O'Rawe's article, "Human Rights and Police Training in Transitional Societies". This article stressed the importance of creating legitimacy in any peace process, and this transition into legitimacy must be holistic, and involve the community.

Professor Scraton told me to get in contact with the Falls Community Council (FCC), and gave me a particular e-mail address to contact. Scraton informed me the FCC had been instrumental in the policing debate and reforms.

I was able to set up a meeting with Chrissie Mac Siacais, of the FCC and she agreed to be audio recorded for her interview. I had not recorded the PSNI fearing they would be more cautious of what they said on tape, but when talking to the community organizations I felt that as they were less institutionalized than the police, they may be less worried about breaking rank and saying something controversial. I was grateful I had recorded the interview, as it gave me a more accurate idea of what had been said, but the transcription process was a daunting one. I decided this was a necessary sacrifice to put in the time to transcribe in order to get as much out of the interviews as possible. Chrissie also gave me a good amount of leaflets and reports on WBCSF, as well as a copy of an evaluation on them by the Criminal Justice Inspection of

Northern Ireland from 2009. The reports given to me by Chrissie proved to be extremely useful as they were both information from inside the WBCSF and also from external bodies wishing to evaluate their effectiveness. I found this useful to gain an unbiased view of what the WBCSF implements, and how useful it actually is.

One thing I found difficult and somewhat embarrassing was going into interviews with community groups and knowing very little about what they actually do. The FCC does not have a website, and very little information was available online about what they do. However, Chrissie seemed to have no problem with my ignorance, and after a summary of what the FCC is, and also informing me that she heads up the West Belfast Community Safety Forum, (WBCSF) which falls under the umbrella of the FCC, she was very willing to engage in an interview. The interview guide was as follows.

- What are your personal experience with the PSNI, as well as the community's collective experience? Is it right to assume this area does not welcome the PSNI?
- Active engagement, what is being pursued?
 - DPPs, useful or not?
- Devolution, will it affect anyone at a grass roots level?
- Has Sinn Fein and SDLP buying in to policing helped to make the PSNI anymore accountable?
- 50/50 recruitment, helpful?
- Are there realistic personal safety issues people need to worry about when they actively engage in any sort of partnership with the PSNI?

The next community representative I coordinated an interview was with Teresa Clarke from Community Restorative Justice Ireland (CRJ). Teresa explained that she did not object to being audio recorded, but they make her very nervous and may clam up, so a recorder was not used in order to maximize data. I instead took very descriptive notes of what Teresa said, and was also given a large amount of leaflets and packets about CRJ. Luckily Chrissie Mac Sicaais is a former CRJ worker, and some of her background story involved a little bit of information

about how CRJ works so I was better prepared for this interview than the last. I was also familiar with restorative justice methods from classes I have taken at Stonehill and from meeting with Greater Shankill Alternatives, a group similar to CRJ that works with the Loyalist community.

Teresa was very helpful and also gave me a good amount of leaflets and literature on CRJ and restorative justice practice. A lot of the literature I was given by Teresa was dealing with the origins of restorative justice. This literature was essential in understanding why CRJ is an important organization in west Belfast because it often used to deal with indigenous people's experience and it is founded in pre-colonial Brehon Law. The points brought up in these leaflets were essential in my understanding of why the community wishes to police itself this way. Other papers also dealt with CRJ's relationship with the PSNI, which I was glad to have clarified, since my understanding was that they did not engage with the PSNI, seeing them as an illegitimate oppressive force. I was shown this was not the case by looking at a particular leaflet, entitled "Community Restorative Justice Ireland, Best Practices and Working Guidelines", which described the step by step process that CRJ uses to deal with a referral. I also used an unstructured interview guide for my interview with Teresa.

- Devolution?
- DPPs
- Engagement with the PSNI? Do you engage at all? Is the PSNI critical of the legitimacy of CRJ and restorative justice?
- Is PSNI willing to engage with a group with so many former IRA volunteers making up the structure?

I was also able to get in touch with the Suffolk Lenadoon Interface Group, through Inspector Mark Peters referral, and was excited about this because they represent the only Protestant estate in Woodbourne's jurisdiction, Suffolk. As it turned out, all the Suffolk

community representatives were busy on the day I came to talk, but I still felt that talking to this group would give my project a little more dimension since it was a more diverse community that they represented. I spoke with a member from Lenadoon, Joe Hamill, who works as an inter-cultural capacity worker, meaning he is responsible for communicating with the Suffolk community. I feel that not talking to anyone from Suffolk creates some weakness in my research, but speaking to someone with Joe's position as an inter-cultural capacity worker, at least, gives me someone who has a working knowledge of Suffolk.

Coming in to my meeting with SLIG, I was able to build up a decent understanding of their mission. The PSNI had talked about them briefly, and their website proved extremely helpful. Another classmate of mine was shadowing workers at SLIG for her research, and I was also able to pick her brain about the organization.

Joe was also able to coordinate an interview for me with Rab Jackson of the Republican Socialist campaign group Eirigi. Joe explained to me that he and Rab have differing views on policing, and gaining Eirigi's viewpoint would be very useful to my project. SLIG does engage with the policing structure of Northern Ireland, and Eirigi sees the PSNI as simply having changed their name and uniform, and still acting as the armed wing of Unionism. I agreed with Joe that this would add an interesting dynamic to my project. I was able to research Eirigi due to their website being very informative and having made multiple videos about their various campaigns.

Joe was happy to give me a packet of information about an upcoming SLIG meeting on policing issues, however told me I would not be able to quote it or utilize it much in my paper as it is still confidential and will not be released to members of SLIG until the end of May 2010. I did read it over, and it gave me a good grasp on the way SLIG mediates contentious issues

between the two communities making up its membership. It also outlined a path forward for engaging with the structure of the PSNI, and it is unfortunate that I cannot utilize this more due to ethical concerns.

Rab from Eirigi also gave me some literature about his organization's stance on policing. The pamphlet he gave me had a split display of an RUC officer and a PSNI officer, both pointing a gun in the reader's direction, entitled "Different Name, Same Aim". It was easy, simply by looking at the cover of this pamphlet, to tell where Eirigi stands on whether or not the PSNI is policing with the community. The pamphlet carefully laid out the concerns Eirigi has with the criminal justice structure in Northern Ireland, mostly focusing on the fact that MI5 and the British Army are still occupying the island, as well as issues of stop and search and the use of plastic bullets. This literature clearly outlined the fact that Eirigi sees the PSNI as nothing different than the RUC. The literature I was given by all the organizations I met with served a great purpose to clearly articulate the position of the group to someone who was still very much and outsider.

For my interview with Joe Hamill of SLIG and Rab Jackson of Eirigi I also used unstructured interview guides.

SLIG

- DPPs?
- Devolution?
- Who has initiated partnership, the PSNI or SLIG?
- Parades, what has the PSNI's role been?

Eirigi

- DPPs?
- Devolution?
 - MI5 and British Army still in Ireland
- Stop and search
- If we woke up tomorrow in Eirigi's united, Socialist Republic what would policing look like?

My last interview was undoubtedly my most difficult. It was with Paddy O'Donnell of the Lenadoon Community Forum (LCF). SLIG is made of the Lenadoon Community Forum, and the Suffolk Community Forum, so Paddy's position was as the leader of LCF. Up until this point I had great success as far as a warm and welcome reception by each of my interviewees; this was not the case with Paddy. It was not that he was openly hostile towards being interviewed, however he was not talkative at all, and simply seemed like he had better things to do. My classmate Mary Beth, who was shadowing the people at SLIG, was sitting in on this interview and when Paddy left the room for a minute I asked her if she had ever met Paddy and if he was always this aloof. She informed me that his cousin had been brutally attacked the previous weekend by a member of the Suffolk community and SLIG was extremely involved in bringing his attacker to justice. This made me feel extremely awkward that I was wasting this man's time when his mind was obviously on more important matters. I also had not planned on interviewing Paddy, but Joe had suggested it and coordinated it on the fly, so I had not done much preparation in terms of an interview guide. This feeling of awkwardness was further amplified when Paddy returned to the room and resumed the interview which was soon interrupted by a phone call. He hung up a few minutes later and explained that he had just been told by a local Sinn Fein councilor that "hoods were going mad" at Half Moon Lake, and had vandalized it the night before. Now there was another thing on Paddy's plate, and he was stuck being interviewed by an American undergraduate student. I put my feelings of uneasiness aside and learned to take all this in as research as well. I observed how thin Paddy was stretched as a community organizer, and also how the community relied on him to get things done, even more

than the police. This was certainly evident when he stated, “He phoned me first before he phoned the Police”, referring to the Sinn Fein councilor.

It was this sort of informal observation that I also relied on in other parts of my time in Belfast. I took a few days when I had no interviews or meetings scheduled to simply walk around west Belfast. It was half tourism and half research, but I wanted to see if I could observe the PSNI and the community interacting. The observation of the how PSNI interacted with the community was not able to be made, because in two days of criss crossing and walking down just about every main road in west Belfast, I did not see one police officer. I did one day see a group of young men who looked about my age drinking on a street corner at 2:00pm, but this anti social behavior seemed to go unprevented and unpunished.

I also paid close attention to how people reacted to me when I told them I was studying the PSNI when I met them in informal settings such as a pub. There was one such occasion where I carefully phrased my reason for being in west Belfast, so as to not seem overly favoring the PSNI, and the young man I was speaking with replied, “Oh you mean the RUC!” This was the common response I got from most people through informal conversation, and it proved worthwhile to take note of it to gauge the public opinion of the PSNI.

All in all, my mixed method research involved interviewing a fairly representative sample through snowball sampling methods, participant observation, and also by reading scholarly literature as well as literature published by the organizations I spoke with.

Analysis

Historical Background

Policing has remained a hot button issue concerning the conflict in Northern Ireland commonly known as the Troubles. It would be hard to find a single issue that has created so much division between the population as a whole, and within individual movements than policing has. After the partition of Ireland, Northern Ireland was policed by the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), but in 1998, when the politicians of Northern Ireland drew up the Good Friday Agreement, one of the resolutions was that the Independent Commission on Policing (ICP) or Patten Report be set up to address concerns of a political police force that had alienated a large portion of the population. Along with the Patten Report, published in 1999, came the devolution of powers to Stormont from Westminster in 1999, the creation of the Police Service of Northern Ireland in 2001, decommissioning by the Provisional Irish Republican Army in 2005, power sharing between Sinn Fein and the Democratic Unionist Party in 2007, and Sinn Fein endorsing the criminal justice structure of Northern Ireland in 2008 (Byrne 2009). A timeline had also been drawn out in the Saint Andrew's Agreement, and set the devolution of Policing and Justice powers to Stormont to take place in May of 2008, but that has only recently been realized as David Ford was just appointed Minister of Policing and Justice this month (BBC News 2010). So it is easy to see that policing has been a pertinent issue throughout the Northern Ireland's history, and right up into recent weeks.

The RUC had been established in 1922 after the partition of Northern Ireland. From its conception, the RUC, and more generally, anything dealing with state action in the Six Counties was viewed very differently by Catholic and Protestant communities. The RUC was seen by many Catholics as the armed wing of an oppressive Unionist government that had at its very core one motive; the maintenance of Unionist supremacy in Northern Ireland. Protestants viewed the RUC as a necessary force of law and order that protected them against and unruly and subversive

Catholic threat (McGarry & O’Leary 1999). This is in fact the viewpoint I encountered from every community representative I interviewed who all fell under the title of Republicans and I will address their individual views later on.

Reasons for the mistrust of the RUC by the Catholic community were plentiful. One of the most important factors contributing to this was the demographics of the RUC. At the highest point, in 1923, Catholics only made up 21% of the RUC. This was obviously not representative of the demographics of Northern Ireland, as Catholics have traditionally made up somewhere around 40% of the population (Weitzer 1995). This issue of composition is something that Patten suggested needed to be changed in order to reform policing in Northern Ireland and make community policing possible.

The ICP recommended that because the RUC at the time was only 8% Catholic and the new service should “be representative of the society it polices” (ICP 1999), and that recruiting reform must take place. The idea that the PSNI should be more representative of Northern Ireland’s population was strongly reinforced throughout Patten, and the reason for that is that this was thought to be a step towards Nationalist and Republicans buying in to policing and in turn actively engaging in community policing efforts.

“Nor is it a matter of having Catholic police officers to police Catholic people, or Chinese officers to police the Chinese community. Indeed we would regard that sort of balkanisation of policing as unhealthy. And the observation was made to us that it is no more pleasurable for a Catholic to be arrested by a Catholic officer than by a Protestant. The point is that communities as a whole should see themselves as having a stake in the police service as a whole. If all communities see the police as their police, there will be a better, cooperative partnership between community and police, and therefore more effective policing.” (ICP 14.3 1999)

This however has not been realized, although steps are being made to provide Catholic citizens with a police service more representative of their community to widen acceptance of the PSNI.

Therefore a main goal of my interviews was to gauge the level of acceptance of the PSNI by the west Belfast community.

The 50/50 recruitment policy (50% Catholic recruits, 50% Protestant recruits) suggested by the Patten Report was in order to balance recruitment now, and not have to worry about composition later (ICP 14.4 1999) Therefore it has not resulted in 50/50 membership of the PSNI, but it is making tangible improvements in composition, and looks as though it will continue to do so.

Of course the change in composition of the police alone would not magically change the way Catholics in Northern Ireland perceive the PSNI, and structural changes were also suggested about the style of policing, including increased community engagement, and checks on accountability in order to further accelerate community acceptance of the police, and effectiveness of the reformed police service the ICP envisioned. After approximately thirty years of open and armed conflict between Republicans and the state, engaging with the Republican/Nationalist community was seen as a risk the PSNI would have to take in order to effectively do their job. Likewise, engaging with the PSNI was a risk for the Republican/Nationalist community in order to improve their quality of life, and create a quality police partnership.

One way in which the community was to have more input and therefore be able to engage more actively was through District Policing Partnerships (DPPs). DPPs were suggested by the Patten Report in order to both allow the community to voice what they feel are the problematic criminal issues of crime where they live, and also as a mechanism to hold individual officers and the entire body of the PSNI to account. This was seen as a new and radical approach to policing, to bring the community to the table as consultants that carry far more clout than in most western

societies. However the creation of DPPs did not solve the problem of embracing policing the way Patten had hoped.

Criminologist Mike Davis has written about how marginalization and exclusion of the community's view can lead to further problems. He uses the example of how gang members of Los Angeles identify "jobs, housing, better schools, recreation facilities, and community control of institutions" as being pivotal in their idea of their own marginalization (Davis 1990). This is not unique to Los Angeles. Indeed, if you exclude any people, anywhere, can you be surprised when they act out against the state which excludes them? For they know not the value that state can bring about in their lives. If the Republican community in west Belfast were to be allowed at the bargaining table through the use of DPPs wouldn't this help to alleviate the tensions between them and the PSNI?

Phil Scraton argues that this is not in fact as progressive and forward thinking as it seems on the surface. When discussing community engagement with police in England, he states, "Demanding active civic participation from people whose life experiences revolve around the personal management of social exclusion and economic marginalization invites reproach and resistance" (Scraton 2004). In other words the use of DPPs and more generally, the Patten Report as whole, as the, be all, end all solution to past community exclusion would be simply naïve. One may argue that the Government of Northern Ireland should have to win this community's trust, before they would be expected to actively engage in any sort of partnership.

Furthering this point is the fact that when community engagement is set up in the manner of the DPPs, it becomes a tool for the middle and upper classes. In a 2008 study, researchers found that "the public were largely unaware of the DPPs and their position within the context of policing and justice" (Byrne & Monaghan 2008). This can be attributed to a class issue because

of the fact that it is only those who have a certain level of education, and the luxury to engage in the political sphere that are the citizens who are engaging with the DPPs. Add this with the fact that a large section of the Republican community comes from working class backgrounds, and the DPPs lose some of their effectiveness (Byrne & Monaghan 2008).

The inefficiencies and shortcomings of the DPPs also manifest themselves in the fact that politicians have behaved in an apathetic way towards them. The criticism has been made that the elected representatives on the DPPs rarely attend meetings, and when they do they are ineffectual, usually siding with the rest of the elected representatives against the community (Byrne & Monaghan 2008). This is backed by quantitative evidence in a study done by Jonny Byrne and Lisa Monaghan, where they monitored attendance, showing that from 2006-2007 elected members of the DPPs in Belfast attended 41% of meetings, while independent members attended 80% (Byrne & Monaghan 2008). While it is commendable that the independent members, many of whom are involved in the community development sphere on the ground in the communities, are actively attending the meetings, if DPPs are to be an exercise in active participation involving many facets of society, they will not work the way they were drawn up to work if any one of those facets opts out.

Along the vein of involvement of elected representatives participating in DPPs, much has been made about Sinn Fein's decision to buy in to policing and take up a role in these partnerships. Sinn Fein has said that holding police to account is one of their ultimate goals in engaging in electoral politics, and this was seen as a step towards Republicans gaining mechanisms for accountability in their communities. One interviewee from Byrne and Monaghan's study stated,

“Of course (Sinn Fein) will question more, ask more, ask questions...as a result existing members will have to challenge more. It will be interesting to take the policing debate into the communities that have never engaged formally with the police” (Byrne & Monaghan 2008).

Of course, mainstream Republicanism being involved with DPPs and the formal policing structures of the British State is a step forward, at this present time it is only a very small one.

There is still a very real hindrance to Republican involvement with policing in the form of “dissident Republicans”. I have put the term in quotations because it is important to realize that it is a blanket term for a dynamic group (some in favor and some opposed to a return to violence) that have turned away from the mainstream leadership of Sinn Fein.

In Mary O’Rawe’s and Graham Ellison’s article, “Security Governance in Transition: The compartmentalization, crowding out, and corralling of policing and security in Northern Ireland”, they speak of why the DPPs and Sinn Fein’s involvement in policing has not had the desired effect on the reality of policing. One reason is that the criminal justice institutions saw a very real threat of people who were formerly involved heavily in the armed Republican movement hijacking policing. This was even mentioned in the Patten Report and attention was paid to watering down new ideas like DPPs. Ellison and O’Rawe write, “The Government’s response at many levels was to put these radical notions firmly back into their box” (Ellison & O’Rawe 2010).

One way the government of Northern Ireland did this was through the practice of compartmentalization. Patten may have been radical, but the criminal justice and anti-terror reports which came out at the same time were not as progressive at all. This meant the police may change slightly, but the framework they exist in would stay the same. Therefore policing is seen by many to have remained top down (Ellison & O’Rawe 2010).

The process of devolution will have to be waited out in order to make any accurate comments as to its effectiveness. If anything can be said, good or bad, it was a goal that was set by Sinn Fein, in order to make policing more accountable, and it was reached. At the very least it may appear as a good thing and convince some stragglers to participate in the policing structure of Northern Ireland.

Police Service of Northern Ireland

The first organization I was able to meet with was the PSNI officers from Woodbourne Station. Most of the officers expressed serious statements of rejection from the community such as the statement from Tanya of the traffic division, “Well, it’s simple, they don’t want us”. Again and again, I ran into quite negative responses when asking about community partnership, such as the afore mentioned. Most of these responses placed the blame not with the PSNI, but with the community. This was reflected in a bold statement made by Davey, of the traffic division, “If they want something they will, you know use you and all of a sudden expect your help” (Davey). This comment shows that Davey fails to realize that if the PSNI truly wants to be seen as a *service* rather than a *force*, this kind of being used is what should be expected with the job.

In my interview with Allen, a neighborhood officer, he expressed frustration towards the community, specifically in the Lenadoon neighborhood. He spoke of how hard it is to offer any sort of pro active help towards that community when only one community group out of about five or six will openly engage with the police. I witnessed some of this non-cooperation first hand on my ride-along with Tanya and Davey of the traffic division, and I cannot say that Allen’s statement was unfounded. Since it was few days after Easter, the high holiday of

Republicanism, there were Tricolors and Starry Plough flags on many of the houses in Lenadoon, and dirty looks on many of the faces when a police car came down their street. There was also a certain corner in Lenadoon where Davey joked, “Now we’ll probably get stoned to death coming up this road”. Tanya then explained to me that no matter what happens, not to get out of the car, and to simply stay put. I felt extremely uneasy at this moment and luckily nothing ended up happening. Once we were in the clear Tanya and Davey explained that especially during the summer months, children will stand on that specific corner, literally all day, waiting for a police car to throw stones and debris at. I realized that this was the reality in which these people were expected to perform their job, and allowed me to empathize a little bit with the officers’ feelings of frustration.

Another particular event during my ride-along struck me as very demonstrative of the walls put up against the PSNI. We stopped at a gas station/convenience store for Tanya to run in and grab lunch, and as Davey and I were waiting in the car three more police vehicles pulled in. I jokingly asked if this was the hang out spot for all the PSNI, and was then told the unfortunate reason for the influx of police cars and jeeps. Davey explained that they will only stop at certain establishments if they need to buy anything while out on patrol because some stores will simply refuse them service. They also feel that by going into a random store they are putting the management in a potentially bad situation to be blacklisted by the community for serving officers, and possibly compromising their safety. Again I was hit with the harsh reality of policing west Belfast, and was wondering how any police officer working a beat in west Belfast (which at this point would be a rarity) would be able to build up rapport with shop owners in his area if he or she was never allowed in the shop. As we drove out of the parking lot a man

walking out of the store shot us a look of pure disdain. Tanya and Davey were able to make light of it, even though it served as another harsh reminder of the still present conflict.

Tanya: Do you know that guy?

Davey: No, why?

Tanya: He had that look.

Davey: What look? The look of love? (Laughter)

Every officer I was able to interview expressed the perception that west Belfast is one of the most difficult areas of Northern Ireland to police. When I asked each one why this was, the answer was always the same: history. Tanya stated, “There is a lot of history here...and a lot of it involves the police” (Tanya). This history is of course referring to issues of collusion, state killings, and harassment. Tanya is not from Belfast, but used to work in north Belfast and she explained to me that five years ago the north would have been seen as almost as difficult to police as the west, but there have been many success stories, stating, “Those small breakthroughs make working in a tough neighborhood, and all the hard work with it all worthwhile”. Lisa, who is an officer in the neighborhood division, fresh out of the academy, told me that she is from north Belfast, and that sometimes simply being in west Belfast, she feels like a “tourist”.

Although it was disheartening to hear about how far behind west Belfast is in bridge building, the statement made by Tanya about the “small breakthroughs” was very encouraging because of the fact that Patten suggests that those small breakthroughs should be the function and focus of every police station and every police officer (ICP). Allen also expressed this feeling of accomplishment when a bridge is built because, “At the end of the day, all you’re trying to do is make people safe” (Allen).

With the issue of community (non)acceptance being what it is, certain structures such as the DPPs still end up being very successful from the PSNI’s point of view. All the officers that

had recently been assigned to Woodbourne, and were coming from different areas of Belfast commented that in other areas you may have a handful of people show up to ask questions or spectator when the DPP in their area holds a meeting, however in west Belfast this is not the case. Large crowds will turn out, and it had been a landmark occasion the first few times a DPP was held on the Falls Road. The officers attributed this to the fact that policing issues are not as alive in other areas such as south Belfast, where the majority of the community has never had experience, good or bad, with the police. The officers also seemed to have a positive view of the DPPs to help them do their job. The key point I brought away from conversations with the officers concerning DPPs is that it helps by allowing you to learn from others and gain different perspectives. Lisa stated, "Listening to the community can be difficult, but it is necessary". Lisa also told me about during her time in training in the Police College, every recruit was made attend DPP meetings, and learn their function as well as the members' roles. This seemed to be an effective way to get the PSNI actively involved in the DPP structures, by teaching them the usefulness of them right out of the gate. This way the new officers can learn how to engage with the community before the old RUC "canteen culture" can manifest itself in their perception of the community. Inspector Peters also pointed out that DPPs have increased the accountability of the PSNI. He likened it to how in America, there are Sheriffs, who are elected representatives overseeing law enforcement. He realizes that the DPPs are not close to that kind of accountability, but he also said it is a step in the right direction towards accountable policing.

Mark also was the only officer who saw devolution as anything more than a political goal set by Sinn Fein, and said that devolution along with active partnerships, like DPPs will create a much different atmosphere of accountability in Northern Ireland (Mark). There were comments made by other officers regarding the pointlessness of devolution from their point of view. I think

the reason for this difference in perspective within the PSNI, between Inspector Peters, of the administration, and the other officers, can be chalked up to the hierarchical nature of policing. Inspector Peters will see more of the impact of devolution from his administrative post, while the average officer on the ground sees the effects of devolution as the same thing they have always done, they will still be simply taking orders from above.

There was talk from some officers about how as much as DPPs can help the community control the way they want to be policed, it can also prove useful to the PSNI to explain why they acted a certain way in a certain situation. Most of the officers talked about how they sometimes seem like bullies by putting on their uniform and doing their job. But they have also had experiences of explaining why they have done certain things at public meetings, like the DPPs, and the community has come away with understanding of why certain situations are treated the way they are treated. In this way, the DPPs seem to be serving their role as an active two-way partnership between the PSNI and the west Belfast community. The fact that DPPs can act as a two way street, also allowing the PSNI to voice concerns and let the community understand their perspective is important, because it may encourage the PSNI to actually engage, instead of seeing them as merely an outlet for complaints against them.

This is where the idea of perceptions kept coming into my head, and was why I decided to make the findings of this project perception based, rather than grounded theory. I realized that along with the issues raised about gaining different perceptions on issues surrounding everyday policing that can be addressed at a DPP meeting, the PSNI officers and the community have drastically different perceptions of the world around them.

I think the interviewee who embodied this disconnect in world view the most was Allen from the neighborhood division. Allen used to be in the RUC Reserve, and still seems to have

very much of the RUC “canteen culture” engrained in his mind. He saw the phasing out of reserve officers as tragic, because people will lose their jobs. He failed to realize that by phasing out the reserve, it was step towards creating a service rather than a force, and getting rid of the remnants of the dreaded B-Specials. I think this along with the statement by Davey, mentioned earlier, about how the community uses them only in times of need reflects poorly on the officers’ transition to a service.

Allen also went on to tell me how the previous weekend he was assigned to a policing detail for the Easter 1916 Commemorations held by Sinn Fein and various other Republican organizations. Allen told me of how he was standing in the street, stopping traffic in order to allow the marchers to get through and get on with their commemoration and he realized that after living in Northern Ireland his whole life, and policing these events almost every Easter since becoming an officer, he still did not know what the Easter Rising was! This was extremely troubling to me as I began to worry, how this man could police *with* a community, that he seemingly did not know the first thing about. With all due respect to Allen, I think he found this somewhat troubling as well, and described how he went home that night and looked up “Easter 1916” on Google from his iPhone. If it was not for some convenient technology, one may wonder, would Allen ever know what the Easter Rising was?

Another thing that Allen said, as well as all the other officers I spoke with that mentioned anything about the IRA that was particularly alarming was the word “terrorist”. I realize that it is most likely the PSNI’s policy to refer to Republican organizations that took military action against the state as terrorists, but this is not helpful to their present situation. If the PSNI is to portray themselves as a service to the people of west Belfast, they should not refer to those people who are commemorated all over the area, with murals and gardens of remembrance as

“terrorists”. What I found particularly damaging about this word was that Allen also spoke of Loyalists as well, who he termed, “paramilitaries”. This showed a terribly political bias of Allen, and for someone whose job it is, as a neighborhood officer, to actively engage with the citizens of west Belfast, I would hope he tones down his rhetoric when speaking with Republicans in his community. So when I speak of the RUC “canteen culture” I am mostly speaking about officers such as Allen, who despite their appearance of trying to keep the community safe, have deep rooted biases that will surely prevent him from truly respecting the community he vows to protect.

The issue of respect was the over arching theme of my interview with Inspector Mark Peters. Mark’s appearance alone caught me off guard. A tall, thin man, with a full beard, who sat slightly insecurely across from me and if it was not for his badge I may have mistook him for some sort of professor or intellectual. The first way in which the issue of skinning off the old attitude and appearance of the RUC manifested itself was through a discussion about restructuring and resources. I asked Mark how he has encountered challenges since the Patten Report because of the decrease in number of personnel by nearly one half. Mark quickly refuted that this was an obstacle at all. He spoke of how the PSNI no longer needs that many officers for a country that has the lowest crime rate in the United Kingdom. Mark also said that the RUC needed all those officers because there were, “terrorist atrocities” that posed a serious security threat, and extra officers were engaged in security as opposed to now when they are able to engage in “active policing”. What Mark was basically saying was that the need for all those officers has gone away if the PSNI is to truly follow through on what he termed “active policing” or policing *with* the community. Now the PSNI is able to focus on crime “treat it as a problem, and see it through.”

Mark also told me some personal anecdotes about how he sees the PSNI and Republican community as being able to coexist in west Belfast after I asked if it is hard to actively engage with certain individuals that in the past would have seen you as a “legitimate target”. He replied by telling me that he used to work in Newry and was there in 1985 when the IRA killed nine officers in a mortar attack. It would have been hard for Mark to engage with the Republican community in Newry, because he would have known some of them to be personally responsible for killing his coworkers and friends. Being able to work in Belfast has given him some distance from the way in which the conflict affected him personally, and he is able to now see that he will, “never agree with what the IRA did. But sitting down with former members and listening to their stories helps me do my job the right way.”

Inspector Peters told me of how just earlier that day he had a man in his office who was an admitted former member of the IRA. He had been convicted of killing two British soldiers, and now works as a community organizer in west Belfast. Mark explained that he does not have to agree with this man politically, but he must treat him with respect and listen to his concerns about policing in west Belfast.

Peters also pointed out that it would be disrespectful for an officer to say he or she is uncomfortable working in an area such as west Belfast with a high concentration of Republicans. This is because although many in the area supported the actions of the IRA, there was only a handful actually involved in the armed conflict. Although it may be naturally easier for a police officer to work in a heavily Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist community, given the communities pro-state political agenda, if they respect and treat the two communities in Northern Ireland differently, then “We are right back in 1966 where the whole thing started with a two tiered police system.” I think it took courage for Inspector Peters to admit, as a former member of the

RUC, that he was part of this two tiered system, but he feels he must admit his wrongs in order to move forward.

This attribute of courage that Inspector Peters displayed was also important to him. He said that “In west Belfast, the community may be Republican. But I must work *for* them. It takes courage and risk taking, but I realize that it is a two way street and the community also displays courage and risk taking when engaging with the police.” He believes that many organizations are doing a great service to their communities by starting to actively engage with the policing structure of Northern Ireland, but also pointed out that the PSNI cannot police some communities because they still do not have the consent to do so. He brought up one particular story of when drugs were found near a playground in Woodbourne’s jurisdiction. He would have wanted to do something about that, and pro-actively tackle the problem of drugs in the area, but the first time he heard about this incident was when he read it in the newspaper.

I ended my interview with Inspector Peters and he walked me down the hall past a Roll of Honor for fallen RUC officers, killed in the troubles. He made a note to tell me that the first and last officers on the list were killed by Loyalists and not Republicans; this demonstrated a somewhat open minded view of the damage caused during the troubles. I then sat in the neighborhood division office while I waited for Davey to round up some people for a patrol and take me back to Stranmillis College.

As I made small talk with two neighborhood officers, I saw that they were both scrolling through a list on their computers entitled, “Dissident Activity”. This type of intelligence gathering and targeting of so called “dissidents” is not what I would think that a neighborhood officer should be spending his or her time on. It served as a dim reminder that after my positive interview with Inspector Peters, the PSNI as a body may not be as respectful of their community

as Peters is. If you are spending your time figuring out how many stop and searches a “dissident” is worth, and who so-and-so hangs around with and what they may be up to, that is not policing *with*, but rather *against*, the community.

Davey, two other officers I had not met, and I got into an armored land rover and headed back to Stranmillis for me to be dropped off. We were all in conversation when all at once they three officers began talking about a gray Honda that had been following us for some time. I could not notice the car, and in fact could barely see out the tiny windows. As we neared the entrance to Stranmillis Davey asked the officer in the back if she had her baton. She replied “Yeah, why?” Davey jokingly responded, “Now when we let Tom out I want you to hit him on the back and yell: Now don’t do that again!” I had to laugh at the idea of this, but also took it as a reminder that being seen as an informer to the police could have put me in real danger. The events of the return car ride reminded me that these officers, while trying to engage with the community do have to deal with a very real dissident threat. This is an obstacle to which I was unfamiliar, and it seemed foreign to my life. I was now ready to see how the community organizations in west Belfast perceive the PSNI.

Falls Community Council/ West Belfast Community Safety Forum

I arranged an interview with Chrissie Mac Siacais of the Falls Community Council, and umbrella organization in west Belfast on the Falls Road for organizations to communicate with each other and provide the community with necessary services. Chrissie’s specific position was as the leader of the West Belfast Community Safety Forum. The WBCSF was, as Chrissie said, born out of “an absence of policing”. There were a few high profile murders in the Ballymurphy area of the Falls, and there was complete inaction on the part of the PSNI. In 2006, Gerard

Devlin was murdered in the middle of the street in front of multiple witnesses, and Chrissie described the complaints made by the community at the time, while she was then a member of Community Restorative Justice Ireland.

“They hadn’t picked up any evidence. They hadn’t arrested anybody. And you have the politicians coming out saying, what are you doing, where is the action? You have a man who has been murdered in front of a whole street of people, and the people who had done it had been named. And still no one was arrested... So myself and a social worker decided we needed to sit down and have a meeting of all the community representatives from the area...Because you didn’t have Chief Executives standing in the middle of White Cliff Parade, monitoring how the police do their work.”

After this murder, the Upper Springfield Community Safety Forum was launched, which later expanded into the WBCSF, because as Chrissie said, “If you don’t have an organized community, you don’t really have an awful lot of anything.” The USCSF started “mapping out how (they) were going to be involved with any formal policing structure”, because if they had been involved with any kind of partnership with the PSNI at this point, the police would not have gotten away with the manner they treated the Gerard Devlin murder. The USCSF asked the question, “How do we make statutory agencies, who are service providers, paid by our taxes, accountable.

This also came at a time when decommissioning was right around the corner, and Chrissie said that the community could feel it. She described how many people’s fear was that if the IRA went away, who would protect them? During “The War”, as Chrissie described the troubles, there was little criminality in this area. “Even with all the bullets and bombs this was still a very safe place to live and work in”, but with the IRA decommissioning, would it remain safe? The Gerard Devlin murder signified to Chrissie, and others, the need to engage with the police actively to bring about an alternative to reliance on the IRA.

But the struggle to gain partnership with the police was also a struggle against Chrissie's own community. She stated,

This was about local people finding resolutions to local issues. But how do you find balance between the community holding on to the responsibility of shaping how they deal with issues? I suppose some would say we got a blank canvas when it came to policing, but we didn't really. There was still a lot of historical stuff there. There is still the issue of collusion. There are still a lot of families living everyday with the fact that the state murdered their family member."

It is clear that even though Sinn Fein had endorsed policing at this time, and community representatives were pushing for engagement, there was still a lot of baggage. Chrissie told of how even though the community voted near 98% Sinn Fein, and a democratic mandate for engagement with policing was there, those who initiated the partnership with the PSNI still were up against a lot of backlash. Chrissie told me how, "A lot of people's necks were on the line for saying the cops need to be allowed to do their job."

So years after Patten had come out, and partnerships such as the DPPs were set up, the community in west Belfast was now actively engaging with the PSNI through the WBCSF and other grass roots groups. Mac Siacais stated,

"It has only started to work now because the community is ready, and brave enough...For me this was a defining moment in terms of community work in this area, we can't go back once we've started this process. The timing was enforced on us by the murders, due to the uproar and outcry against the police. Because everyone was now watching the police to see, have they changed? Is it just their name that has changed?"

Since the WBCSF has partnered with the PSNI and other statutory agencies around Belfast, they have been able to statistically track responses to complaints and issues by these service providers and hold them to account. Now when someone has an issue that years ago would have been dealt with outside the formal policing structure, the WBCSF advises people to go straight to the PSNI, and then monitors their response to the issue, so that they can then come

back later and “have police sitting there, red faced, apologizing” at forum meetings and DPPs. At forum meetings, people and police have the opportunity to sit at the table, as equals and the PSNI has to earn the communities trust by being willing to engage in a local strategy such as the WBCSF.

Another task that the WBCSF has undertaken is to follow up on the PSNI’s nine month reports. These are reports that come out every nine months, naming specific issues of crime in specific local areas. The reports also say that the PSNI’s goal is to reduce these issues by X% over a specific period of time. These are useful reports, and are put together largely by using strategies such as DPPs and community input, but nowhere in them is there any action plan for how they will reduce crime. Chrissie described one of the WBCSF’s jobs as to push the PSNI to develop implementation plans for all of their goals. A lot of times this involves teaming up with community organizations such as CRJ, part of the WBCSF. These are all ways in which the WBCSF has taken ownership for their community, and used the tool of active partnership with the police to hold statutory agencies to account.

To further accountability, Mac Siacais looks towards the devolution of Policing and Justice powers to Stormont, and the appointment of David Ford as Justice Minister. Chrissie was adamant that devolution would affect grass roots community workers such as herself, saying,

“Well it’s going to have to! Because see, at the end of the day David Ford is a service provider as well, and so is Gerry Adams, and they are public servants. And now they don’t have the luxury of sitting in London and hiding anymore. They’re only across the way in that white building over there (pointing in the direction of Stormont). All it takes is us to get a bus, full of angry people, to wait outside David Ford’s office and say, can we have a minute with you? This is about local resolutions, and if that is what Stormont is supposed to be about, then it is going to be very hard to find wiggle room out of that... David Ford owes this community now.”

I think that statement by Chrissie sort of sums up the WBCSF's position on engaging with the formal structures of policing in order to gain partnership with these structures. Sometimes they may have to force their way in, since promises made by institutions such as Patten may never be fully implemented, but they will build bridges to hold those institutions to account. Chrissie told me a particular story of one of these promises that stuck out as it could have potentially been discouraging and thrown the community off from engaging with the police all together. She told me about how every year, during the marching season, there is a small community at the top of Springfield Road that the Tactical Service Units (TSU) of the PSNI come in and block off the Catholic/Nationalist/ Republican residents from coming or going. The parade has nothing to do with them, and there is no way in a democratic society, you can keep people confined like that, and as Chrissie put it, "invade" their neighborhood. The community organizations in the WBCSF negotiated with Woodbourne Station about getting rid of the TSU's and moving the barricade further down the road so it would not completely disrupt this community's life. The community organizations agreed to stand around the estate and make sure their young people do not wander down to disrupt the parade, and they would put on youth diversion programs all day. The officers at Woodbourne agreed, and everyone left the negotiating table pleased; partnership at its finest. But then, when the day of the march came around, in come the TSUs, and down go the barricades to cage the community. When a residents' group member approached a TSU officer to tell him that the issue had been negotiated, and they were not supposed to be there, the officer replied, "I'm not here to talk about it, I'm here to do a policing job." This statement by the TSU could have ruined the community's perception of policing and all the years spent trying to engage that community with the police, and completely burned any bridge of a two way partnership that had been built in the past. It

goes directly against the recommendations of the Patten report, which would suggest that the officer's job as a police officer in Northern Ireland is to do just that, talk about it. The residents got Woodbourne on the phone, and the TSUs were eventually moved. Now this coming marching season the WBCSF has demanded Mark Peters himself be present in this community on the day of the parade down Springfield Road to make sure his officers know that they are not to invade this community.

The perception I gained from interviewing Chrissie Mac Siacais was that the issues regarding police and community partnership involve trust, risks, and courage, very similar to the perception of Inspector Mark Peters. On the issue of trust building Chrissie stated, "It is about building a working relationship, and building up whatever trust you can. In terms of trust, was it with a small t? I don't know. But looking back on it when it started four years ago is it any wonder?" The WBCSF seems as though they are continuing to build a working relationship and operating with a healthy skepticism of the PSNI.

Community Restorative Justice Ireland

I was able to interview a co-coordinator of Community Restorative Justice Ireland (CRJ), Teresa Clarke on her perceptions of community policing in west Belfast. I had heard a lot about CRJ, but had not yet met someone from within the organization. From what people had told me, CRJ did not participate with the formal policing structures, because of the leadership of CRJ being staunch Republicans who did not recognize the legitimacy of the PSNI. This may have been true years ago, but not at the present time. Now CRJ is under the West Belfast Community Safety Forum, and just as described earlier in the WBCSF's section, they report every single case

they get to the police, and follow strict protocol in order to hold the PSNI accountable when they do not respond.

CRJ was founded during the time of the IRA cease fires, when people wanted the paramilitaries to stop policing their community with violence, which is where CRJ stepped in. Restorative justice is used to repair the damage caused to the community as a whole after an offense has been committed. CRJ does engage with the PSNI, the Parole Board, and the Housing Authority to handle cases, but originated out of a lack of a partnership with any of these bodies and the west Belfast community. Teresa explained how she feels her organization needs to be brought in on a regular basis to consult with the PSNI, because they are local people from the area who know the culture of the area. It makes much more sense to have Teresa deciding how to handle a problem in the Andersontown area where she lives and works, than Allen from Woodbourne who did not know what the 1916 Rising was, simply because she can identify with the community.

CRJ sees itself as carrying the torch of Brehon Law, which originated in Ireland's "Golden Age", before colonialism. Teresa explained this to me and also stressed that it is used around the world to deal with indigenous people's experiences with justice. CRJ does not see an effective police service as the, be all, end all solution to the societal problems in west Belfast, there still needs to be partnership and civic engagement by the community.

Clarke explained how some workers who had been involved with the founding of CRJ had left when they decided to engage with the PSNI, and there have been dissident threats against many of the remaining workers. The people at CRJ put themselves in a tough situation, acting "as middle men for the community and the PSNI, so people aren't afraid of being labeled as touts." CRJ attempts to handle the dissident threat, as well as threats by other criminals by

maintaining confidentiality, and even lets the PSNI use their facilities so that witnesses and victims do not have to be seen going to a police station in order to be heard.

CRJ is now accredited by the Criminal Justice Inspection of Northern Ireland, and funded by the Department of Social Development. They have had extreme success in their involvement in DPP relationships, and Teresa showed me a DPP Nine Month Report from Woodbourne to demonstrate this. Although it may not be a great reflection on the part of the PSNI, every pro active program that had been run in the last nine months in west Belfast, besides one, had been thought up by and implemented by CRJ and the WBCSF. Teresa did seem to treat this as somewhat of a victory over the PSNI, but explained how at any program they set up; police are more than welcome and treated as equals.

Teresa also had a very favorable opinion when it came to the process of devolution of Policing and Justice to Stormont. She stated, "It is preferable to be looking towards yourself... it should be us... the people." I think this goes along the lines of the very foundation of CRJ and the WBCSF, local people finding resolutions to local issues.

Teresa told me how CRJ has a good working relationship with the officers from Woodbourne, but there is always a two way issue of mistrust by CRJ and the officers. She said she will never fully trust the PSNI, but she needs to put aside her baggage and work alongside them. She reminded me much of Mark Peters' comments about respect when she said, "We all recognize what we want to recognize in people, but when we sit down and realize the other person doesn't have horns coming out of their head, then that's when progress is made." This also represented in CRJ's motto, from Brehon Law, "Ceart Dom, Ceart Duit." This is literally translated from Gaelic as: what is right for me is right for you. It is interpreted to be the golden rule of, do unto others as you would have done unto you. Again, I would have to say that like

many other groups I interviewed, including the PSNI, CRJ's point of view was all about respecting differing opinions in order to benefit the community as a whole.

Suffolk Lenadoon Interface Group/ Lenadoon Community Forum

I interviewed both Joe Hamill and Paddy O'Donnell of the Lenadoon Community Forum. Joe also works for SLIG as an intercultural capacity worker, bridging the gap between Catholic Lenadoon and Protestant Suffolk. While speaking to Joe, he told me, in no uncertain terms how he views the police.

Are they policing with the community? In a nutshell, no, but there are certain exceptions. Mark Peters would be a case and point, where it is a senior officer who is an example of integrity and commitment... I think as a body they are failing on numerous grounds. I think they are failing to engage with the community and they are failing to embrace community policing. They are also failing to see the effects of their political policing. It makes our jobs very difficult. And when I say we, I mean people who are working to try and persuade our communities to engage with the PSNI."

Joe is someone who has supported the PSNI since their inception, and said he even supported the RUC towards the tail end of their existence. This being said, he is not blind to the failures and faults of the police in his community. He pointed out that stop and search incidents are up to 200 a day, which he also pointed out is higher than during the armed conflict. Joe realizes that some of these searches are targeted towards criminal aspects in society, but the failure of stop and search is that it disproportionately targets the Republican community, a community already alienated by the security forces in Northern Ireland.

Joe described how he, first hand, felt alienated and targeted during the Troubles when he would have to be searched just to come and go in his daily life. He also made note that even

with all this, “the IRA was still blowing things up, basically on a whim.” So in reality the issue of alienation is a moot point if stop and search is first of all, ineffective. In Hamill’s point of view, this does not occur to the PSNI, because they, as a body, are preoccupied with a security agenda, rather than a pro-active community oriented one. He described sitting in an open forum meeting with a few PSNI officers and recalled how they described stop and search as a necessary element of policing.

“I sat there at this meeting somewhat dismayed with police officers. I actually said, listen, don’t get me wrong, if you want to arrest dissident Republicans for terrorist activity, then arrest them, and charge them, and give them due process. But don’t be targeting the whole population of west Belfast because of dissident Republicanism!”

This made me remember how I felt sitting in the neighborhood division office in Woodbourne, as two neighborhood officers scrolled down a list of mug shots and descriptions of “Dissident Activity”. The targeting of a whole community to stop a problem caused by a handful of people will never make the problem better; it can only make it worse.

This adds to the already pressurized job of being a community organizer in west Belfast who backs the PSNI. Joe described how the number of people in his community ready to “give it a go, and support them” does not get any bigger when the people feel as though they are being harassed and targeted. It is because of reasons such as this that some people in west Belfast have the perception that the only thing the police changed was their name and uniform.

The issue of DPPs came up when speaking of how the police target and harass Joe’s community and Joe believes the DPPs are doing what Patten imagined. They give a voice to those who are targeted by the PSNI even if they refuse to enter the meeting, and stand outside to protest. The meetings create a conversation and dialogue about policing, and that is what they were thought up to do.

Joe recalled one DPP meeting when members of Eirigi, a political campaign group, came to speak about how they were confronted on Divis Mountain while attempting to protest the British presence in Ireland. A few members came to the DPP meeting and complained about the treatment they received, and the answer from Mark Peters from Woodbourne was that there were no PSNI on Divis Mountain on that day. Eirigi responded with the argument that if it was not the PSNI there is a real problem, because there is a group of people with guns going around, pretending to be TSUs. It turns out that they were PSNI, but were from a different station and had been called in over Mark Peters' head.

Joe used this example to demonstrate that sometimes the PSNI is simply not all on the same page, and it is inexcusable. The PSNI is the PSNI, Mark Peters and those TSUs are parts of the same organization, and as Joe said, "You can't get off the hook by saying, it wasn't us, we weren't there." This is the kind of lack of communication within the organization, that then leads to community anger and disapproval, and harks back the example Chrissie Mac Siacais told about the TSUs caging in a community on Springfield Road.

Joe said that although the PSNI at DPP meeting cannot go back in time and right the wrongs that the community expresses, it does compare to, "a wee pup, who keeps wetting the carpet, so you rub his nose in it every time he does it." In this vein, DPPs have been able to attempt to reconcile and learn from past mistakes, and move on to the future.

I also asked Hamill about the issue of Suffolk's Orange Parade, and how that is negotiated between Suffolk, the Republican estates surrounding Suffolk, and the PSNI. When the PSNI had originally explained to me the issue of Suffolk's parade on my ride-along, the officer telling me about it downplayed the PSNI's particular role in the dialogue process. Maybe that was because he knew I would find out the way they are policed.

Hamill described the first meeting SLIG had with the PSNI about the parade issue. An officer came in, and right off the bat, began telling the community workers what their roles were going to be in policing the parade. The residents let this go on for a little while, until a leading Republican stood up and interrupted. He politely told the PSNI officer to sit down and listen to the community workers in the room, because they are the ones who would be policing the parade. This is in fact how the communities are policed to a certain extent on July 12, during Suffolk's parade. The PSNI are there, but the Republican communities monitor themselves, run diversion programs, and keep a watchful eye on their youths, and the parade is often less contentious than many others. By the PSNI allowing groups like SLIG to take ownership of their community, and work alongside the police, while telling the police what role they would like them to play, it is a sort of incarnation of the Patten Report.

After all the talk about parades, stop and search, and deeply political topics, Joe also told me his experience of being a father, and how that effects his perception of the PSNI. He said, "I have a sixteen year old daughter, and I would be the first one to tell you, she can be a cheeky wee b----." She often gets into confrontations with officers simply because she attempts to articulate her point and they dismiss her as just a kid. He told me of how he knows his daughter does not engage in anti social behavior, such as drinking in public or vandalism, but every time her and her friends are gathering in a nearby park, they get thrown out by the PSNI.

He described the conversation as it usually happens when his daughter comes home at night.

The cop said, "Move". My daughter then replied, "Why?" His response, "Just move, the park's for kids, you're too old for the park." So she thinks, well it's half nine at night, there are no kids in the park...So we can't use the park even when there are no kids in the park, and maybe some kid may want to use it tomorrow?" And of course the automatic response then comes of, "Just move or I'll have you arrested."

So instead of having a positive interaction with a police officer, his daughter now has the perception that officers simply have the “because I said so” mentality, and what are the chances she will perceive them as sharing a partnership with her anytime soon? Joe said that he has been able to witness some of the training of new recruits to deal with situations like this and believes it is completely foreign to how they act in reality. His explanation for it was that there is still the same old RUC “canteen culture” of disrespect towards his community, and especially to children, who are disenfranchised and have little voice.

Joe also took me on a tour of the interface of Suffolk and Lenadoon and showed me some of the trouble spots where anti social behavior is a real problem. What is disconcerting about these trouble spots is that none of them could be more than 300 yards of Woodbourne Police Station. This demonstrated, physically, the ineffectiveness and non response to some of the community’s issues on the part of the PSNI. Joe pointed out a wasteland type area behind the station simply to demonstrate how oversized the station is, but that area would become infamous in the next few days. The day after I took that tour with Joe Hamill, I picked up the paper to read that a 58 year old man was found beaten to death on that very same wasteland behind Woodbourne. The man was from the Lenadoon community, and had been wearing a Celtic Football Club jersey when he was beaten; causing many to believe it was a sectarian attack. What is so troubling about the location of this tragic death is that the man’s body was dumped in an area right under a PSNI watch tower and surrounded by surveillance cameras, meaning someone would have been watching the attack take place inside the station, but no one was even questioned let alone arrested for over twenty four hours.

After the tour I was able to speak to Paddy O'Donnell, the leader of the Lenadoon Community Forum (LCF). Paddy made a comment referring to routine anti social behavior that I would later look back on to relate to the incident of this man's death.

You've been out at Woodbourne? You know all that stuff going on over the weekend over in front of the shops right by the station? They sit there with all their high tech stuff, and they don't say anything."

Paddy had little positive input about the actions of the PSNI in the area, and seemed to take the stance that the only reason they engage is to appear to be implementing Patten. Paddy stated that most of the community policing that actually ends up taking place is simply intelligence gathering and recruitment of informers.

Paddy was also one of two community representatives (the other being Rab Jackson of Eirigi) who did not see devolution as being positive. He felt as though it is unnecessary, and does not benefit the people who need help the most.

"They're cutting community services left and right but they can find billions to pour into policing and justice. There are areas of deprivation that are still at the forefront of sectarianism. High levels of unemployment, poor levels of mental health, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, domestic violence, et cetera, et cetera. Services aren't directed towards addressing the needs of all those groups... but then all of a sudden they can afford to fund a few more fat cats essentially."

The information gathered from both Joe and Paddy was somewhat conflicting. They both were workers from the Lenadoon Community Forum, and had very differing viewpoints. Joe seemed to view the police as "a wee pup" as he said, and wanted to see this pup mature and grow into something beneficial to all. Paddy on the other hand saw very little benefit in engaging with the PSNI, and viewed the PSNI as making no attempts to engage with the community. This seemed to perfectly demonstrate how diverse and dynamic the perceptions of policing are even within what may be seen as a homogeneous group, the Republican community of west Belfast.

Towards the end of my interview with Paddy he received a phone call. When he hung up, he stated, “That was the local Sinn Fein Councilor. Hoods going mad last night at Half Moon Lake. Phoned me before he phoned the police.” This phone call demonstrates that even though both this Sinn Fein councilor and Paddy attempt to engage with the PSNI, they still would rather handle some things themselves.

Eirigi

Rab Jackson of Eirigi stated his perception of the PSNI very clearly when he asked, “How long would it take you to reform the Ku Klux Klan?” Rab’s perception of the police comes from constant harassment in the form of stop and search over the past few months. Like Joe Hamill from SLIG, Rab expressed concern about the fact that the number of stop and searches is now higher than it was during the armed conflict. Rab, and Eirigi, see the PSNI as the RUC with meaningless cosmetic changes made to appear differently.

The reason for the harassment Rab has received is, in his mind, because he is a member of Eirigi. Stop and search, to him, is a tactic to control the State’s political enemies, of which he is certainly one. Eirigi was founded out of the fact that many Republicans are now leaving Sinn Fein because they feel the party leaders have, “moved away from being any sort of Republican organization to being a sort of Liberal, middle-of-the-road Nationalist organization.” The founders of Eirigi wanted an alternative to Sinn Fein, without joining a violent group such as the Real IRA. One of the moves that Sinn Fein made to encourage people like Rab to leave was to endorse the PSNI and participate in structures like the DPPs.

On the issue of DPPs, Rab said, “To me they’re a farse, they’re a joke. They have held two in this area and there have been more people outside protesting than inside the room

believing there is some sort of accountability mechanism.” Rab sees no accountability mechanisms with the Patten Report, and that is why he, along with Eirigi have begun a campaign called, “Different Name, Same Aim” against the PSNI and those politicians who endorse them. When describing what the Patten Report gave the people of Northern Ireland, Rab portrayed it as a “false new dawn”.

Rab pointed to issues of collusion, emergency legislation, the use of MI5, and the composition of the PSNI as reasons why Eirigi does not support or engage with the formal policing structure in any way. Rab said,

“Loyalists claimed responsibility for 1,041 killings. And anyone who knows anything, or has read anything about the conflict knows that it is widely believed by most people that the RUC colluded and helped them, fed them information...And there is no ability within Patten, or within anything to resolve it.”

This was a large concern for many of the other community representatives I spoke with, but they all had the idea that they can engage, and address issues of collusion in due time.

As far as emergency legislation, Jackson stated that this has become an even bigger issue since the IRA decommissioned weapons, and Patten has begun to be implemented. “They have done nothing, they have enhanced the legislation. The RUC had a wide range of legislation, to control its political enemies. They didn’t do away with any of that.” This use of emergency legislation now allows the PSNI to stop and search Rab at any moment they please because of his past as a political prisoner, and his present association with Eirigi, an organization that would fall under the title of “dissident Republicanism (however nonviolent). He told me of how he was driving by Woodbourne Station one day with one of his children and was pulled over for a “routine Section 44”. Section 44 is the piece of legislation that allows officers to stop and search people without probable cause. Rab was incensed by the term “routine section 44” asking,

“What in the world is a *routine* section 44?” There is nothing routine or normal about targeting a political enemy to harass within a democratic society. It is particular events such as this one that lead Eirigi to believe, there have only been cosmetic changes to the PSNI.

There also are severe shortcomings of the PSNI, even when speaking of cosmetic changes. Rab pointed to the composition of the PSNI stating that 50/50 recruitment of Catholics and Protestants is not working.

“So what you have now is a police force that has its name changed that prior to being called the PSNI it was probably 95% Protestant. Once it has changed it is probably only 80% Protestant... There are those who would argue it is still a Protestant force for a Protestant people.”

Rab also refutes the fact that Devolution will make a difference because of the fact that MI5 and the British Army will still run intelligence, while security policy and finance are still run from London. Now since devolution, the British Government has given a chance of input at a local level that is too far down the hierarchical ladder of policing. Rab said, “They’ve basically given the bottom lower rung on the ladder to a local minister...so that there will be no real accountability in any of it. Accountability will be dropped to the very lowest rung on the ladder.”

Because of the extremely negative perception of the PSNI held by Rab, and Eirigi, I asked what policing would look like if we woke up tomorrow in Eirigi’s united Socialist Republic. Rab responded that he would hope the debate around policing would be much wider than simply concerning police, and rather about the societal framework Northern Ireland exists within. Being a Socialist organization, Rab explained how they wish to not simply campaign against unfair forms of policing, but also the societal issues that create the marginalized people

who are targeted by the police, and the aspects of criminality that manifest themselves within these marginalized communities.

Discussion

After being able to synthesize somewhat of a collective truth from all of these people's experiences and stories I have realized there is no satisfying answer to whether or not the PSNI is policing *with* the community. There is no way one could declare that, yes they are, or, no they are not. There is no way one could argue that it is all the community's fault for not being open and receptive enough, or all the PSNI's fault for not pursuing the community's input enough. One could argue that the police and the community are on the right track, and even with a watered down Patten Report, and a government too scared to bring their clients in to fully consult, there have been drastic improvements in community policing.

I would have to say that after conducting these interviews, everyone is correct in what they have said. They all have had differing opinions on different topics, and they all have been right to hold those opinions based on individual experiences. There are shining examples within the PSNI, such as Mark Peters, who is truly trying to change the way Northern Ireland is policed, and give his community the respect and open door it deserves and needs. There are also discouraging examples of statements made by other officers showing their discomfort in working in west Belfast, and their lack of understanding towards the community. Such positive and negative extremes also exist in the community sphere, where organizations such as WBCSF are truly engaging with the PSNI in every way possible, and also groups such as Eirigi, wish to look down upon the PSNI, but not to engage in an active and productive partnership to right the PSNI's wrongs.

In conclusion I would say that Patten has not been implemented fully, but the RUC for the most part, is gone. There are avenues being created for those who wish to come to the table and engage in dialogue and even avenues for those who wish to protest against their neighbors who are at that table. I feel that the main goal of everyone I talked to, from the PSNI to Eirigi, was to bring about one of the main recommendations concerning policing with the community brought up in the Patten Report. To “go beyond the police service itself, extending to the wider issues of policing and the contributions that people and organizations can make towards public safety”(ICP 1999). This was brought up by Rab Jackson when he spoke of wishing for the community to extend the debate beyond policing and to our societal framework itself, and it was brought up by Mark Peters when he spoke of proactively engaging with the causes of crime and respecting the people who are affected by crime. And if these two men can agree on something like this, even if they may not realize it, it shows that Northern Ireland has come a long way as far as policing.

It is my perception that the PSNI are not all the way there, no community group is all the way there either, but if they continue to actively engage with each other, then little by little Patten will begin to become more than a dream, and a reality. My thoughts can be described well in the words of Chrissie Mac Siacais of the WBCSF, “I want to be able to shape policing; I don’t want what we had. I don’t want what we have now, because it’s not good enough. It will never be good enough. And every time you work at it, then you have to step it up again.” The police/community partnership will never be perfect in west Belfast, but there are structures in place to begin attempting to perfect it.

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