INTERVIEW WITH JACQUES DUCHESNEAU

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Are there adverse impacts of perceived linkages among religion, ethnicity/race and/or security/policing issues (e.g. racial profiling)?

When it comes to both security and policing, any perceived linkages between the policies, procedures or measures in place and religion, ethnicity or race, have adverse impacts. In fact, it does not matter whether these linkages are real, or perceived. The impact on the concerned communities, and the public at large, will be detrimental and damaging in both cases. These realities pose unique challenges for the law enforcement and policing communities that must be addressed consistently and robustly at first detection.

The practice of racial profiling has absolutely no place in either law enforcement or security. It has been proven in many jurisdictions that racial profiling is an ineffective program to achieve the desired result. It is a practice which undermines trust in authority and which erodes public confidence. Both the police and security officials are providers of public safety and have been entrusted to uphold the fundamental values and freedoms of all those they serve, including integrity, fairness, respect, accountability, transparency and competence. Directly targeting specific communities because of their religion, race or ethnicity is contrary to these beliefs and detrimental to progressive and effective security and policing.

Of course, one must take into consideration the reality that when it comes to law enforcement, police officers working the beat may need to take into account race or ethnicity to do their jobs effectively. One specific example when this is the case is when skin colour or ethnicity are part of a physical description of a subject committing a specific crime at a specific time. Oftentimes, such descriptions are used to help police officers find their suspect successfully. They are not used discriminately or without due care and consideration.

Having said that, it is clear that the problem of racial profiling remains, whether real or perceived. The focal point of this problem is not that it targets criminals committing crimes, but that it targets a community inaccurately, unjustifiably and in such a way that it spawns mistrust, resentment, and a wide-variety of security and law enforcement-related problems.

The most damaging impact that a perceived linkage between religion, ethnicity or race and security and policing is that of increased tensions – increased tensions between the affected communities and the authorities and increased tensions in the affected community itself. These increased tensions in turn make the role of policing and security infinitely more difficult, as they may also lead to increased violence, backlash, extremism, and general instability.

Real or perceived linkages between religion, ethnicity, race or sexual orientation and security and policing also inspire feelings of mistrust and incompetence, complicating the work of security and law enforcement officials. It is imperative that the citizenry at large have trust and confidence in the quality and effectiveness of the security measures in place to protect them, as well as that of those enforcing the law. If this trust and confidence is absent, authorities cannot do their job effectively.

What can be done at the federal, provincial and territorial levels to address the issue of racial profiling?

In order to uphold public confidence and trust, and to improve the overall relationship with the communities they serve, law enforcement and security officials, as well as governments, must address any concerns over the existence of racial profiling. There are a number of ways that this can be done, but the most important thing is that the initiatives are continuous, comprehensive, robust and above all else, coordinated and collaborative.

It should be noted that the problem of racial profiling is rooted in the very foundations of the community itself. It is a social problem that stems from general misunderstanding and a lack of knowledge. The issue must therefore be addressed not only by the police, but by the community as a whole. It must also be addressed at the very roots – in families, at school and in the workplace.

The single most important first step in addressing the issue of racial profiling is to ensure an accurate and complete picture. Misperceptions and speculation must be replaced by concrete facts and sound analysis. This necessity makes data collection vital. In the law enforcement domain for example, we can gain an accurate picture of whether racial profiling is in fact a problem by collecting and analyzing data on such things as citizen complaints. This data collection process will help ensure any problems are detected as early as possible and will also serve as a mechanism to help identify any problematic organizational policies or procedures that may also need to be addressed.

Secondly, when it comes to law enforcement in particular, it is critical for police departments to develop comprehensive written policies on racial profiling, strictly prohibiting its use. Education and training on racial diversity and cultural awareness for all personnel is also essential. This training, which should reinforce departmental policies and procedures, must be a coordinated and collaborative effort, involving not only law enforcement personnel, but also community groups and advocacy groups. Open dialogue and discussion with these groups will help ensure a joint effort and a sense of ownership of the program, greatly enhancing its chances of success.

However, without clear direction from the Chief of Police and senior police officers, even robust policies and comprehensive training will not be sufficient. Senior police officers must actively show their support of policies by developing strong relationships with influential community leaders, who in turn can assist in alleviating problems that arise from time to time. Police officers must also demonstrate that members of these communities are always welcome in the department. This is another simple way of showing that there is no racial profiling being conducted and this will also help build confidence within the community.

Having an effective, efficient and fair citizen complaint system in place is also a necessity. By providing such an access for the community and by openly engaging them in discussions on racial profiling, we can help eliminate uncertainty and ensure trust and confidence in authorities is maintained.

The most important thing to keep in mind is that this is an issue of respect. As a government agency, or as an organization tasked with delivering a public service, it is critically important that we act in an ethical and just manner and treat all our clients with respect. The acronym I like to employ is FAIR – we need to respect fundamental values and freedoms and employ the ethical principles of ***F**airness – **A**ccountability – **I**ntegrity – **R**espect*.

How do we respond to links made by some Canadians between immigrants and security concerns?

Immigrants come to Canada expecting opportunity, respect for fundamental human rights and a better way of life. However, sometimes they are confronted by racism, discrimination and fear instead. This feeling can readily develop when immigrants come from a country where police is a brutal and feared arm of the government of which they have been victims. Racism, discrimination and fear can also develop during times of significant political and social challenges, or because of domestic and international events, as witnessed in the period following the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States. Because all of the 9/11 hijackers were men of Middle Eastern descent, this community tends to be mistreated and discriminated against.

The most effective way to respond to any tendency to link immigrants with security concerns is to focus on *fear reduction*. This unfounded link between immigrant communities and security concerns is based on fear, misinformation, mistrust and lack of communication. It is for these reasons that we must make a concerted effort to ensure immigration is not viewed through the lens of fear. Fear only serves to inspire more fear, more problems, and more mistrust.

We need a robust commitment to working together to address the root causes of fear to diminish anxiety over increased security measures. Effective intervention must include attacking the actual terror, and not just the terrorists. How specifically can we actively reduce fear? By providing citizens with lots of information – accurate, complete and useful information. This information must be devoid of politics and devoid of rhetoric. It must be timely and consistent and provide them with the facts they need to make their own objective decisions. If we fail to keep the public informed, security cannot be effective.

In addition, fear can be reduced by actively involving citizens in security. By partnering with the public and making them a critical part of the security architecture, we can help them feel empowered rather than powerless. For example, activating an airport guard program, whereby airport employees are encouraged and specially-trained to seek out and report suspicious activity, involves people in the counter-terrorism model and rather than feeling afraid, they feel important and involved.

More specifically, when it comes to addressing the links made by some between immigrants and security concerns, we need to make a concerted effort to manage immigration by fostering integration. Successful integration of new Canadians into the mainstream of society is absolutely essential to manage fears, to promote healthy community relations and foster trust. Integration is a cross-cutting task that must involve all levels of government, as well as community groups.

Racial profiling is directly linked to fear, which in turn is the direct result of misinformation or ignorance. Knowledge is power, and when we provide knowledge to police on communities and communities on the police, and when police officers get to better know their communities and vice versa, all are less fearful of one another. Under these circumstances, it is less likely that racial profiling issues will arise.