Abstract: The demographic composition of the Canadian police services in major cities generally does not reflect the diversity of the communities they serve, especially with respect to the representation of visible minorities and aboriginal peoples. As many commissions and inquiries on race relations issues in policing have reported, this lack of representation may be a factor that is hindering the effectiveness of police work in major urban centres across Canada. Hence, many commentators have called for increased representation of visible minorities and aboriginal people in the police services through effective recruitment, selection and promotion strategies. In this article, through the use of both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, the authors identify and assess the various staffing and promotional policies and practices of thirteen police services across Canada. Results suggest that there has been some progress in the representation of visible minorities and aboriginal people in policing over the fifteen-year period of this study. However there is still room for considerable improvement in the policies, practices and culture of police services if they are to become more representative of the diversity of the communities they serve.

Sommaire: La composition démographique des corps de police canadiens dans les grandes villes ne reflète généralement pas la diversité des communautés desservies, particulièrement en ce qui concerne la représentation des minorités visibles et des Autochtones. Tel que signalé par de nombreuses commissions et enquêtes sur les questions de relations inter-raciales se rapportant à la police, ce manque de représentation...
tation est peut-être un facteur qui nuit à l'efficacité du travail de la police dans les grands centres urbains du Canada. De nombreux observateurs ont donc préconisé une plus forte représentation des minorités visibles et des Autochtones au sein des corps de police grâce à de bonnes stratégies de recrutement, de sélection et de promotion. En suivant une méthodologie de recherche à la fois quantitative et qualitative, nous identifions et évaluons dans cet article les diverses politiques et pratiques de dotation et de promotion de treize corps policiers à travers le Canada. D'après les résultats, la représentation des minorités visibles et des Autochtones dans les corps de police aurait connu un certain progrès au cours des quinze années étudiées. Cependant, il reste encore du chemin à faire en ce qui concerne les politiques, les pratiques et la culture des corps de police pour mieux représenter la diversité des communautés qu'ils desservent.

In recent years, public-sector organizations have been required to respond to the often contradictory expectations of various segments of an increasingly diverse public. The 1996 Census of Canada demonstrated that visible minorities and aboriginal people constitute large and growing proportions of the populations of Canada and its principal cities. Visible minorities made up 11.2 per cent of the Canadian population, 32 per cent of the population of Toronto, and 31 per cent in Vancouver, as well as 16 per cent in Calgary, 14 per cent in Edmonton, 12 per cent in Ottawa/Hull, and 11 per cent in Winnipeg. Aboriginal people comprised 2.8 per cent of the Canadian population, with the following representations in metropolitan areas: 7.5 per cent of the population of Saskatoon, 7.1 per cent in Regina, 6.9 per cent of Winnipeg's population, 3.8 per cent in Edmonton, 1.9 per cent in Calgary, and 1.7 per cent in Vancouver.

As the institutional embodiment of state power, police services have been challenged to demonstrate fair and responsive treatment of each of Canada's diverse minority communities as a condition of maintaining public trust. As we write, investigations have been ordered into the way in which police services in Saskatoon and Winnipeg have dealt with aboriginal citizens. These are only the most recent in a series of numerous investigations, public inquiries and commissions over the past dozen years, which have been appointed in response to conflict between police organizations and aboriginal or visible minority communities in nearly every province and in many of Canada's largest cities.

These studies of police–community tension have invariably pointed to the deep and tangled social and institutional roots of such conflict. In a society where inequalities in the distribution of wealth and power are visibly linked to racial and ethnic differences, police organizations become the most obvious local embodiment of the power of dominant groups in the eyes of minorities, particularly as the nature of police work changes in ways that integrate police work into daily life. A 1992 Metropolitan Toronto survey of 417 Blacks, 405 Canadians of Chinese descent, and 435 Caucasian citizens,
commissioned by the Commission on Systemic Racism in the Ontario Criminal Justice System, illustrates the divergence of perception of police performance among these three groups. The percentages of respondents saying that police treat black people worse than they do white people were 79 per cent of black people, 60 per cent of Canadians of Chinese descent, and 50 per cent of Caucasians. A belief that police treat poor people worse than they treat wealthy people was held by 72 per cent of black people, 46 per cent of Canadians of Chinese descent, and 60 per cent of Caucasians. When asked whether police treat non-English speakers worse than they do English-speakers, 57 per cent of black people, 64 per cent of Canadians of Chinese descent, and 47 per cent of Caucasians agreed that this is true. When a regression analysis was conducted to determine the influence of education, age, income, sex, race and other variables on respondents’ assessment of police treatment of minority groups, race emerged as the single-best predictor, even when variation in the other factors was considered.

According to some commentators, then, tensions and distrust between police organizations and aboriginal and visible-minority communities are related to the continuing pattern of low representation of members of these communities in policing.

In Canada and other liberal democracies, police services have become integrally associated with roles and values important for the functioning of society. Apart from the traditional function of maintaining law and order necessary in a civilized community, police services have become more diverse to suit the needs of evolving democracies, and now also provide “social services” and services that may be unrelated to crime such as those that deal with domestic disputes and counselling. While peace-maintenance services, as opposed to law-enforcement services, are on the increase, they are not totally new. In fact, Sir Robert Peel’s “Bill for Improving Police in and Near the Metropolis,” presented to the British Parliament in 1829, emphasized the need to maintain public order and peace. In contemporary society, providing services comprises a large proportion of a police officer’s time. In fact, D. Hill estimates that approximately eighty per cent of calls for police services are for non-crime related activities such as family upheaval, racial discord and problems associated with youth unemployment. D. Dutton reports that order maintenance and service functions comprise over eighty per cent of a police officer’s time, while law enforcement duties take up only about ten to fifteen per cent. Similar figures have also been reported by M. Wycoff, C. Susmilch and P. Eisenbart. Thus, the police service represents a
major governmental institution with which a broad cross-section of the public interacts on a regular basis. Given the changing nature of the Canadian “public,” it is important that the composition of the police service be reflective of, or at least be sensitive to, the wider community it serves.

A strategy of community policing has been adopted by many police services, at least in theory, as one means of defusing tensions by re-defining the relationship between police and minority communities. While there may be no generally accepted definition of community policing, it encompasses structural and cultural changes in police organizations and the development of a more open, responsive and cooperative relationship between police and communities they serve. Because police officers are recruited from the community, and depend on the cooperation and acceptance of the community for the legitimacy and effectiveness of their work, the relationship between the community and the police service is at the heart of the policing function in society. Community policing, whose goal is the integration of police and communities, depends in part on the presence of members of the diverse communities within police organizations—a visible demonstration of integration.

Hence, it is possible to draw a clear connection between a strategy of community policing and a police service that represents within it the diversity of the community. If minority communities are able to become part of police organizations and then to influence their decision-making processes, police organizations, in time, may become less likely to perpetrate behaviour that is oppressive to minority communities. In turn, visible minority and aboriginal communities are more likely to perceive that they have something to gain from cooperation with police organizations. As the gulf between police organizations and their communities narrows with the provision of more responsive policing, and as a result, the image of the police as an instrument of oppression weakens its hold, minority and aboriginal youth are more likely to consider policing as a career.

According to some commentators, then, tensions and distrust between police organizations and aboriginal and visible-minority communities are related to the continuing pattern of low representation of members of these communities in policing. The reports on investigations and public inquiries into police–community conflict, previously cited, invariably point to the pressing need for police services to become more representative of their communities as one means of improving race relations. Yet, H. Jain, and S. Suriya, among others, have reported that the representation of visible-minority officers in selected major urban police organizations across Canada is lower than their representation in their respective communities.

From a police administration perspective, A. Normandeau suggests that a low representation of visible minorities in police organizations helps to perpetuate Caucasian officers’ prejudices against visible minorities; that it cre-
ates a climate of harassment for the few "ethnic" police officers and hinders their professional mobility; and that it fails to provide young people from minority groups with role models.13

The report of the Race Relations and Policing Task Force (Ontario) indicated that success rates in recruitment and selection into policing are heavily skewed in favour of Caucasian men,14 creating the perception within minority communities that police organizations do not welcome them as applicants. In addition, many new immigrants from dictatorial or repressive regimes distrust the police and may not consider law enforcement a respectable profession or may view a police job as having few advancement opportunities.15 Given the obstacles to improving the representativeness of police services, even if there were an organizational commitment to this goal, considerable emphasis needs to be placed on finding more effective ways of increasing visible-minority and aboriginal recruitment and retention as members of police services.

A wide variety of public- and private-sector organizations have taken measures to improve their representation of visible minorities and aboriginal people, as well as of women from all visible-minority groups, in addition to the maintenance of a relationship of trust with their communities. The accommodation of diversity is not just a public-relations exercise, but, as research suggests, it may lead to increased productivity and economic performance.17 The potential benefits to the effectiveness and efficiency of police services that may be realized through human resource management policies and practices designed to improve representativeness and create a culture accepting of diversity deserve further inquiry.

Although there is some published research on the representation of visible minorities in police services in Canada, to the best of our knowledge there has been no systematic research on the recruitment, selection and promotion of visible-minority and of aboriginal police officers, both men and women, in Canada. Nor is there attention in the literature to the need to address the marked underrepresentation of women of visible-minority groups or of aboriginal ancestry. Thus, the main objectives of this article are to examine the following questions:

1. What changes have occurred in the representation of visible-minority and aboriginal women and men in thirteen police services across Canada since 1985? How representative are police services of the diversity of their communities?

2. What policies and practices are used by these police services to govern recruitment and selection of officers? Do these policies and practices contain barriers that may hinder the recruitment and selection of visible-minority or aboriginal applicants?
3. What is the representation of visible-minority and aboriginal people at ranks above the entry level in the thirteen police services? What policies and practices govern promotion decisions? Might these policies and practices present barriers that restrict the promotion opportunities of visible-minority and aboriginal officers?

**Literature review and study background**

In a series of studies of recruitment and selection of visible-minority officers in fourteen Canadian police agencies, H. Jain reports that while minority representation on police services is gradually increasing, it is still far below the proportion of these groups within the relevant labour markets. For instance, in 1987, visible minorities in Metropolitan Toronto comprised 16.5 per cent of the city's workforce but only 3.4 per cent of the police officers; this latter figure rose to 4.7 per cent in 1990. Using census data, S. Suriya also found that visible minorities and aboriginal people were underrepresented in Canadian police services when compared to their presence in the labour market. There appears to be no published research that provides specific analysis of the underrepresentation of women who are members of visible minorities or of aboriginal ancestry.

With respect to the inquiries and commissions, the 1989 and 1992 Ontario Race Relations and Policing Task Force reports, the 1988 Quebec Human Rights Commission Report, and the 1993 Task Force (Corbo) Report all dealt with problems in relations between visible minorities and the police. Testimony from provincial justice inquiries in Nova Scotia, Manitoba, and Alberta highlighted the strained relations between First Nations and the police. The Commission of Inquiry Into Policing in British Columbia dealt with problems in the relationship between the police and both visible minorities and aboriginals. In general, a number of these inquiries have reported that recruitment, selection and promotional policies and practices are skewed in favour of Caucasian men. Further, as noted by the report of the Commission of Inquiry Into Policing in British Columbia, the potential conflicts and inequities that can result from a system of policing that draws recruits from only one segment of the population have been highlighted in many jurisdictions and reports. ... Unless some meaningful steps are taken to make our police agencies more representative, a sense of alienation and antagonism will almost certainly develop between police and minorities. This has already occurred in the United States and, to a lesser extent, in some Canadian cities (most notably Toronto and Montreal). A police chief from a major American city warned the inquiry not to "make the same mistakes we made." He went on to say that in the inner cities, which are largely populated by African- and Hispanic-Americans, "we are the enemy. Nobody gives us any information."
Despite the differing initial reasons for these inquiries, a remarkable similarity is observed with regard to their findings and recommendations relating to the recruitment and selection of visible minorities and aboriginal people in police services. That is, as a result of the various testimonies before the commissions, all the reports stress the importance of some sort of "equity" in staffing and promotional policies in alleviating the troubled relationship between the police and the diverse communities they serve. In fact, U.S. research suggests that the presence of affirmative action programs and court-imposed quotas is the most important factor explaining the increases in the representation of minorities in police organizations and local governments.24

Human rights legislation in most jurisdictions across Canada allows for the development of special programs to reduce the labour-market disadvantages experienced by women, aboriginal persons, persons from visible-minority groups, and persons with disabilities. Therefore, employers are free to mount voluntary employment equity programs, in some cases with the express permission of human rights commissions in their respective jurisdictions, such as in Ontario and at the federal level. Canadian employers are largely protected from the charge of reverse discrimination.25 In turn, the provisions regarding employment equity programs in the human rights statutes are protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Section 15 (2). The Charter, which forms a part of the Constitution Act of 1982, explicitly states that the equality rights guaranteed in Section 15 (1) "do not preclude any law, program or activity that has its object the amelioration of conditions of disadvantaged individuals or groups."26

When they implement employment equity, organizations identify and change policies and practices that impede the access and retention of members of underrepresented groups and work to create an organizational culture that is free of harassment and responsive to diversity.

Specifically, employment equity policy has been adopted by law in the federal (that is, Employment Equity Act of 1986 and 1995 and in the Federal Contract Compliance Program, begun in 1986) and some provincial (for instance, the contract compliance program in Quebec) and some local jurisdictions (e.g., Toronto, Vancouver) as a broad strategy for change aimed at removing discriminatory barriers and assisting organizations to become more representative of the communities for whom they work and from whom they recruit. When they implement employment equity, organizations identify and change policies and practices that impede the access and
retention of members of underrepresented groups and work to create an organizational culture that is free of harassment and responsive to diversity. Employment equity also includes attempts to improve the representation of underrepresented groups, including visible-minority and aboriginal men and women. All three components of employment equity implementation are relevant to our analysis of police organizations, although police services vary as to whether they fall under the requirements of an employment equity policy.

The purpose of an employment equity or affirmative action policy is to effectively counter organizational, institutionalized or systemic discrimination, which W. Taylor has defined as follows:

[A] set of behaviours or institutional acts that create or perpetuate sets of advantages or privileges for whites and exclusions or deprivations for minority groups. It requires, in addition to a set of social mechanisms (institutional practices) and an ideology (policies/norms) or explicit or implicit superiority, the power to implement and maintain systems of privilege or deprivation. Institutional practices, and their support in organizational cultures/norms and power loci, are critical to this definition; they are also vital targets or components of any change effort.

Our research focuses, for the most part, on the employment equity policies of several police organizations in the study and institutional practices that may be linked to improving the underrepresentation of visible-minority and aboriginal women and men in policing.

In a study of institutional practices it is particularly important to consider social scientific and legal analyses of ways in which recruitment, selection and promotion policies and practices may create barriers to the entry and integration of these groups into police employment. Employers may create barriers, either unconsciously or by design, by means of decision-making that involves differential treatment, or adverse impact, or failure to accommodate group-based differences. Adverse impact discrimination is of particular interest in our survey and analysis, since an extensive literature demonstrates ways in which some criteria, such as tests or height standards, that have been used as a basis for decisions about selection or promotion of police officers, may create adverse impacts on women or on visible-minority or aboriginal groups. In other words, the use of criteria that create adverse impact result in a tendency to discriminate against members of these groups in selection and promotion decisions. Courts and human rights tribunals have found that if such discriminatory criteria cannot be demonstrated to be job-related, or cannot be shown to be valid tests that predict job performance, their use cannot be justified.

For example, in a review of court cases related to physical ability tests,
J. Hogan and A. Quigley; L. Hoover; and R. Arvey, S. Nutting and T. Landon found that job analysis often fails to adequately tap the relevant duties and performance requirements for a job and that the relationship between test events and the job is questionable. C. Winters reviewed some of the American court cases related to psychological tests used in selection, especially for minority applicants. He argues that the only way police agencies can use such tests is to make them job-related or have corroborating data and use these tests in conjunction with other selection procedures. In fact, in the Grizzell v. Jackson Police Department case, the court ruled that the Jackson police should no longer rely exclusively on the MMPI (one of the psychological tests used by the police) for psychological evaluation and "that no one will be denied employment as a sworn police officer or refused promotion based solely and exclusively on their MMPI score without a psychological interview and other corroborating data."

In Canada, legal cases have also resulted from similar challenges. In a recent case, British Columbia Public Service Employee Relations Commission v. British Columbia Government Services Employees Union, September 1999, relating to a female firefighter in British Columbia, the Supreme Court of Canada accepted the evidence that owing to physiological differences between men and women, most women have lower aerobic capacity than most men. For instance, most women could not increase their aerobic capacity enough to run 2.5 kilometres in eleven minutes, while most men (65 to 70 per cent) passed the test on the first try relative to few women (35 per cent) applicants. The Government of British Columbia could not provide evidence that the test was related to success on the job. In ATF v. CN (1984), a Canadian human rights tribunal struck down the use of the Bennet Mechanical Comprehension Test for selection into several entry-level positions because the test had a discriminatory impact on women and could not be shown to be job-related. The Supreme Court upheld the tribunal’s decision in 1987. In 1978, an Ontario board of inquiry ruled in favour of the complainant in Mr. Ishar Singh v. Security Investigation Services Ltd. Mr. Singh was refused a job as a security guard because he wore the turban and beard required in the Sikh faith. The board of inquiry found that while the employer had no intention to insult or act with malice, the effect of the employer’s policy, which required that their security guards be clean shaven and wear caps, was to deny employment to Sikhs. It ruled that intention was not necessary to establish a contravention of human rights legislation. In O’Malley v. Simpson Sears (1985), the Supreme Court of Canada found that job requirements that have adverse impact on minorities and women are illegal in the absence of demonstrated “business necessity,” or a valid relationship between job requirements and job performance. Over time, then, a relatively large body of jurisprudence on the need for “fair and equitable” criteria in the recruitment, selection and promotion of visible minorities, aboriginal people, and
Methodology
This study is part of a larger research project in which fourteen of Canada's larger police organizations have been studied over a thirteen-year period (1985–98). In the present study, thirteen of these police services were surveyed to identify current and ongoing recruitment, selection and promotion strategies and assess their effectiveness in increasing visible-minority and aboriginal representation. These police organizations included the municipal services of Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver, Regina, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa-Carleton, Montreal, Halifax, and St. Hubert, as well as the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), Quebec Provincial Police (QPP), and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). These services are not directly identified in our discussion of some of the results so as to protect anonymity of respondents. The Moncton Police Service was dropped from this study because of its recent amalgamation with the RCMP. Aboriginal officers are included for the first time in the present study; previous surveys in the series focused on visible minorities only. Moreover, this is the first study in the series that includes attention to promotion, in addition to recruitment and selection.

The questionnaire was pre-tested using a selected sample of respondents, and appropriate adjustments were made before questionnaires were mailed to the respective organizations (a copy of the questionnaire can be obtained from the authors). Contacts, usually with the chiefs of police or administrators responsible for human resources, were established in each of the police organizations. These contacts helped in completing the questionnaires and provided supplemental information during follow-up telephone interviews and/or site visits.

In addition, focus group interviews were conducted in two waves (a copy of the protocol for the focus groups can be obtained from the authors). The first set of focus groups was with a convenience sample of potential members of applicant pools and involved women and men who are young adults considering their career options. Ten separate group interviews took place in London (Ontario), Toronto and Montreal and included fifty-eight students and members of community organizations who identified themselves as members of visible minorities or aboriginal people, as well as Caucasian women. The ten focus groups of members of the potential applicant pool for police services provided insights into the perspectives of minority youth regarding policing as a career. There is no claim that the potential applicant pool
members who participated in the study are a representative sample of Canadian minority and aboriginal youth: assembling a representative sample was impractical for reasons of cost and difficulty of recruiting volunteer participants. The purpose of these focus group interviews was not to generalize about the perceptions of all Canadian urban minority and aboriginal youth but to identify some of the considerations that may make policing an attractive career or that may present barriers to the recruitment of members of these underrepresented groups.

The second wave of focus groups included visible-minority and aboriginal men and women who were police officers in the RCMP, OPP, two municipal police services, and a First Nations service in Ontario. The focus groups with serving officers dealt with recruitment and selection, mentoring, career development and promotion, the culture of police organizations, and strategies and prospects for change in police organizations. Several individual interviews were also conducted with officers who hold senior ranks and/or who have done extensive work in an effort to improve the representation of visible minorities and aboriginal people in policing. Altogether, twenty-nine serving officers participated in the second wave. All focus groups were tape-recorded, with the consent of all participants, and the tapes were transcribed for analysis.

In addition, one of the researchers went on a ride-along with an officer during her night shift in order to obtain a first-hand experience of police work. This proved to be very valuable as a source of insight into the demands and challenges of police work, thus facilitating a better understanding of the information provided in this study.

Results and discussion

Overall representation of visible-minority officers

As Table 1 below shows, representation of visible-minority and aboriginal officers has increased over the past decade, especially over the last five years. However, the representation rates are still below the percentage of visible minorities in the labour market. This situation is especially noticeable in Vancouver and Toronto, two of Canada’s cities with the highest proportions of visible-minority residents. In contrast, Halifax, Regina and Ottawa-Carleton are approaching representation rates that reflect the visible minorities in the labour market, with the latter two services recording relatively dramatic increases over the last five years.

Visible-minority women’s representation rates remain at less than one percent in all participating police services; two have no visible-minority women as officers. In the case of aboriginal officers, Winnipeg, Regina and the RCMP exceeded the 1991 labour force representation rates, while Edmonton
Table 1. Visible-minority (VM) representation in police organizations (1985, 1987, 1990, 1996/97) and availability of visible minorities in labour market (aged 15 years and over)
approximates the aboriginal workforce representation rate in the city. Again, the representation of aboriginal women is markedly less than that of their male counterparts in all police services.

Recruitment and selection procedures and strategies

The questionnaire survey

The Canadian police services surveyed in this study utilize an extensive array of recruitment strategies, both traditional and innovative approaches. The traditional strategies, such as recruiting through the standard media (used by 85 per cent of the police services in the current study, versus 71 per cent in 1987), walk-ins and personal contact (77 per cent versus 79 per cent), and employee referrals (69 per cent versus 63 per cent) are still very popular. Over the last five years, police recruitment visits to community colleges and minority organizations have also been fairly widely used (by 69 per cent of the services).

With respect specifically to the recruitment of visible-minority and aboriginal officers, the data reveal that there are important changes in some recruitment strategies. That is, while the use of police officers’ contacts with high school teachers and administrators has decreased considerably since 1990 (from 93 to 69 per cent and from 86 to 38 per cent, respectively), the use of visible-minority role models is on the increase (from 71 to 92 per cent). With respect to aboriginal recruitment, the use of qualified and trained recruiters, the use of aboriginal community presentations, consultation with aboriginal organizations, and the use of advertisements in the minority media continue to be widely used by the police services (over 85 per cent). Police services continue to use these strategies for visible-minority recruitment as well (over 85 per cent).

The main index used to capture the effectiveness of the various recruiting strategies was derived from a survey question that directly asked what methods generate the most applicants. Respondents ranked newspapers as the most effective, followed by the use of visible minorities and aboriginal people as role models, community outreach programs/presentations, and job fairs. None of the police organizations surveyed collected systematic data on actual figures for each recruitment method, broken down by the relevant groups (visible minorities, Caucasians, etc.). Thus, no direct comparisons across the various methods could be attempted.

Barriers to recruitment of visible minorities, as reported by the police services, remained generally the same over the past five years: home-country perceptions of police, policing not being an acceptable profession for visible-minority women, better opportunities elsewhere, distrust of police, policing not an “honourable” profession, and high physical requirements. There were, however, some significant decreases with respect to significance of
barriers due to distrust of police, policing not being an "honourable profession," minorities not being welcomed in police services, and policing as being dangerous. For aboriginals, distrust of police and better opportunities elsewhere were reported by police services as the major barriers.

As in other organizations, Canadian police services, at least in this study, use a variety of selection instruments and criteria in screening candidates for positions within the services. In essence, with the exception of one police service, where only a police academy diploma is used, all the other police services in this study use a multiple-hurdle process in screening applicants. Some services require applicants to re-do failed or invalid tests (six services), and others require applicants to do all the tests over again (six services). Table 2 below reveals the failure rates, by group, for the major hurdles (figures are only for the four police services that reported this data). It is evident that the failure rates for applicants from visible minorities are higher than those for Caucasian applicants for most of these hurdles.

The most popular selection instruments used by the thirteen police services include physical fitness exams (100-per-cent usage), background investigations (100 per cent), fingerprint checks (100 per cent), interviews (92 per cent), medical examinations (92 per cent), reference checks (92 per cent), application forms (85 per cent), English tests (69 per cent), and psychological tests (69 per cent). As is evident, two of the most popular selection instruments are the interview and psychological tests (including general aptitude tests). Since many applicants from visible-minority groups fail these tests, it is pertinent that the validity of the tests be assessed. An examination of the data reported suggests that, with respect to the interview, while all the police services have structured formats, only six score the responses. For the psychological test, only four police services have implemented (or are implementing) validation strategies.

As mentioned earlier, in developing a shortlist of candidates for selection, most of the police services utilize a system whereby candidates only proceed to the next stage if they meet the minimum requirements of the hurdles. However, one service uses a top-down procedure to achieve equity priorities; another service adjusts the bio-medical tests for women. Further, in order to encourage minorities to apply (as well as to satisfy some legal requirements), most of the police services have formal and/or informal accommodation policies. For instance, all the respondents stated that they allow Sikhs to wear turbans at work and three have special accommodation policies for visible-minority women.

The choice and development of selection standards varies across police services. However, in general, the human resources division in each service, the police chief, and police services boards feature prominently in the development of these standards, in line with provincial legislation. Ten police services had visible-minority and aboriginal liaison officers, and a similar
Table 2. Failure Rates of Selected Groups in the Multiple Hurdle Process (most recent recruit class)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of hurdle</th>
<th>racial minorities</th>
<th>Aboriginals</th>
<th>Non-minorities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. processed %</td>
<td>No. processed %</td>
<td>No. processed %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police applicant test</td>
<td>86 60</td>
<td>39 46</td>
<td>896 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical abilities test</td>
<td>14 36</td>
<td>33 33</td>
<td>505 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview (2 on 1)</td>
<td>9 0</td>
<td>50 50</td>
<td>343 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview (3 on 1)</td>
<td>6 33</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>222 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police applicant test</td>
<td>56 71</td>
<td>46 46</td>
<td>348 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical abilities test</td>
<td>17 12</td>
<td>28 7</td>
<td>240 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aptitude test</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARE test</td>
<td>6 0</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>142 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5-mile run</td>
<td>6 33</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>82 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>4 0</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>85 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Aptitude Test Battery</td>
<td>410 62</td>
<td>28 50</td>
<td>860 45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written Communication Assessment</td>
<td>410 26</td>
<td>22 23</td>
<td>860 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Readiness Evaluation for Police (PREP)</td>
<td>410 22</td>
<td>22 14</td>
<td>860 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behaviour exit interviews</td>
<td>59 30</td>
<td>6 0</td>
<td>64 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background investigation</td>
<td>29 34</td>
<td>4 0</td>
<td>24 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological interview</td>
<td>17 18</td>
<td>3 33</td>
<td>20 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
number had advisory committees with visible-minority and aboriginal members.

Most Canadian police services in this study also administer employment equity programs, with three exceptions. For those services with employment equity programs, five have recruiting goals and timetables specifically for visible minorities and aboriginals, and three have established future hiring goals to the year 2001 and beyond.

**Focus group interviews**

The first wave of focus groups, in which potential members of applicant pools were interviewed, provided rich data, including powerful images and cogent analyses, related to perceptions of policing as a career. Visible-minority and aboriginal youth reported many negative experiences with police that have created significant barriers to their recruitment into policing.\(^\text{32}\)

While there were some common themes, there were some differences between respondents of visible-minority and aboriginal ancestry.

When asked what phrases came to mind in relation to “policing as a career,” visible-minority participants included the following: authority, interesting job, responsibility, power, racism, harassment, secure career, unwanted, white male, and command respect. Aboriginal respondents mentioned bureaucracy, red tape, racism, discrimination, corruption, tear gas, riot shields, brutality, stereotyping, and judgemental.

---

In addition to the barriers identified by the focus groups of serving officers, the survey data suggest that there are significant problems of adverse impact, lack of validation, issues related to the job interview, and prima facie case of adverse impact/illegal discrimination that arise from the selection systems used by some of the services.

---

Generally, the police were seen as racist and not very knowledgeable of the cultures of First Nations and visible minorities. As one aboriginal participant stated,

The police [are seen as] a bunch of white guys trying to beat up Indian people. My mother was struck when she was pregnant because she was trying to defend my father who was getting beat up by two officers. My experiences as a young child are negative. ... I know the officers that come on the reserve treat them [aboriginals] like children and talk to them like they are children. We don't have the right services. We do not have the money to build nice buildings. We do not have the money to set up and draw up our own resources like the way the municipality can.
A visible-minority respondent commented,

As soon as I came to this country, five months ago, I was walking with my younger brother and some police officers came up to me and said, "Excuse me, sir, where are you going tonight? We just got a criminal call about two black men fitting your description in this neighbourhood who committed a crime." I looked at him, and it was like, "Well, you've got the wrong people - maybe they are further ahead." When he found out I go to [University of] Western [Ontario] and what my dad does - because my dad is a doctor - and because I am well-spoken, he calmed down a little bit. So, it's that kind of experience that had an effect on me.

Yet, participants also conveyed a strong belief in the importance to visible-minority and aboriginal communities of having a representative police force. As one participant stated, "[P]olicing is a form of power. If we are not involved as a people, then we give up the power to govern ourselves."

With respect to ways in which the police services can attract and retain visible minorities and members of First Nations, potential applicant pool participants felt, in general, that these organizations must change their discriminatory and exclusionary practices. More specifically, participants suggested that the following practices would be helpful:
- having more representatives from their communities on the police services may serve as role models in attracting others;
- applicants should be screened on "moral fibre" and "attitudes to minorities" before hiring, in order to ensure that police services do not recruit applicants who have prejudices against minorities;
- mentoring and internship programs for minority and aboriginal youth should be intensified; and
- more informal as well as formal contacts should be established with minority communities.

The serving officers of aboriginal or visible-minority ancestry who participated in the second wave of focus groups generally indicated that their career choice had been strongly influenced by relatives or friends who were police officers or by other positive personal experiences with police in their communities. Among the attractive features of a career in policing are job security, the pay, and, most important, the opportunity to be of service to one's community. Many of the visible-minority and aboriginal officers described how their presence in the police service made contributions to their communities, including serving as role models. As one aboriginal officer remarked,

I saw policing as a way to solve problems in our community. I saw that we did a good job. It was safer to walk on the road. Me, my older brother and older cousin (also an officer) began to paint a picture for the aboriginal community. We can do something good, project a model for other young aboriginal people. Now there are
thirteen or fourteen other young officers at [community name]. I think we had something to do with that.

Similarly, a visible-minority officer stated the following:

My experience has been that whenever I’ve been in the community and I’ve talked with other Black people, they are cognizant of how many other Blacks are on the department. They might not necessarily deal with the police every day, but they are still aware that, “Oh, aren’t there two or three other Black guys,” ... it seems that, by virtue of our skin colour or structure or whatever, that people know how many of “us” there are within the department. So I’ve sort of felt that I was ... carrying the torch, or just standing out as a representative of pretty well any and every minority culture or community, just by virtue of my skin colour. I guess that’s a good thing in a way, because it gives some people encouragement to say, “Yeah, when I grow up I can be like him. He’s Black as well ...” So its kind of nice to know that by just your presence – you haven’t even opened your mouth – that you’re giving a positive impression in your community ... It seems that people are not necessarily more receptive to me, but they are just happy to see that there is a little difference, a little mix.

Visible-minority and aboriginal officers identified several barriers that should be removed so as to improve representation of their communities in police services. There is a perception that some unnecessary physical requirements still exist that present a barrier to women, including in particular, minority women. Other barriers to recruitment include a lack of minority and aboriginal representation on interview panels and a lack of minority role models.

In addition to the barriers identified by the focus groups of serving officers, the survey data suggest that there are significant problems of adverse impact, lack of validation, issues related to the job interview, and prima facie case of adverse impact/illegal discrimination that arise from the selection systems used by some of the services.

As data in Table 2, supplied by the police services, indicate, some of the selection methods used by the police services seem to have a prima facie case for adverse impact on either visible minorities or aboriginal people, or both. For instance, for Case 4, applying the 4/5th rule (or the labour market representativeness of an employer’s workforce that has been applied in numerous legal cases in the United States and Canada, there is a prima facie case for adverse impact on visible minorities in the General Aptitude Test Battery test, the Written Communication Assessment, and background checks; the number of aboriginals is too small to assess such an impact. Further, the police applicant test appears to have a prima facie case of adverse impact on visible minorities in Case 2 and on both visible minorities and aboriginals relative to others in Case 1.
Lack of validation of selection instruments is also a serious concern. Only four police services validate psychological tests, while two others reported that a validation study was in progress. Three police services have validated the RRST, the cadet examinations, and police constable examination. Another police service indicated that they have performed content validation for the job interview and scoring key, physical, medical and driving examinations, while another service has conducted differential validation of the selection instruments (i.e., a selection method having a differential effect in the selection of minorities). The balance of the police services have not assessed differential validity for their tests for aboriginals and visible minorities.

All police services have structured job-interview formats. However, only seven of the thirteen police departments score job-interview responses. Moreover, even though six police departments had aboriginal and visible-minority interviewers, no police service included visible minorities and aboriginal people in the team that does the scoring of job interviews. This is a serious problem, since interviews count for 30 to 100 per cent weight in selection (as reported by the police services). Research indicates that interviews tend to be subjective and to have poor validity unless they are properly structured and validated.34

Promotional strategies and criteria

The questionnaire survey

Of the thirteen police organizations in this study, ten provided data on the ranks attained by visible-minority and aboriginal police officers. The typical hierarchy in the police services is chief, deputy chief, chief superintendent, superintendent, staff inspector/inspector, staff sergeant, sergeant, corporal, and constable. With the exception of one police chief, the highest rank attained by aboriginal and visible-minority officers is that of an inspector and/or staff inspector. Only three of the ten reporting police services had a visible minority or aboriginal officer at this rank; these officers represent less than one per cent of each of the police services that reported having them.

Only six police services provided data on the actual number of visible-minority and First Nations officers promoted. Of the 1,506 promotions made by these police services in the 1996–97 period, 77 (5.1 per cent) were among aboriginals, and 129 (8.6 per cent) were among visible minorities. However, over 98 per cent of these promotions were at the most junior level (constable).

Eleven of the thirteen police organizations in this survey provided information on the strategies and criteria for promoting officers. As Table 3 indicates, promotional examinations, seniority, promotional board reviews, and performance appraisals were most often used as criteria for promotion to the sergeant and/or staff inspector position. For inspector and/or staff inspector positions, promotional board reviews, promotional exams, and performance appraisals were most often used as the promotional criteria.
Table 3. Top Promotional Criteria in Selected (N = 11) Canadian Police Organizations, 1996/97

| Promotional criteria      | Corporal No. | Corporal % | Sergeant/ inspector No. | Sergeant/ inspector % | Inspector/ staff insp. No. | Inspector/ staff insp. % | Chief inspector No. | Chief inspector % | Deput chief No. | Deput chief % | Chief No. | Chief % |
|---------------------------|--------------|------------|--------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|----------------|----------------|-------------|-----------|---------|
| Promotional exam          | 4            | 36         | 10                       | 91                     | 6                          | 55                         | 2                    | 18              | 1             | 9             | n/a        | 1        | 9       |
| Seniority                 | 3            | 27         | 9                        | 82                     | 3                          | 27                         | n/a                  | n/a             | n/a            | n/a           | n/a        | n/a      |         |
| Performance appraisal     | 1            | 9          | 6                        | 55                     | 5                          | 45                         | 2                    | 10              | 1             | 9             | 1         | 9        | 27      |
| Psychological tests       | 0            | 0          | 1                        | 9                      | 1                          | 9                          | 1                   | 9               | n/a            | n/a           | 2         | 18      | 27      |
| Promotional               | 2            | 18         | 7                        | 64                     | 7                          | 64                         | 4                    | 36              | 3             | 27           | 1         | 9        | 36      |
| Promotional board review  | 0            | 0          | 0                        | 0                      | 1                          | 9                          | 1                   | 9               | n/a            | n/a           | 2         | 18      | 18      |
| Promotional individual review | 0        | 0          | 2                        | 18                     | 3                          | 27                         | 2                   | 18              | n/a            | n/a           | 3         | 27      | 18      |
| Assessment centre         | 0            | 0          | 1                        | 9                      | 1                          | 9                          | 1                   | 9               | n/a            | n/a           | 3         | 27      | 18      |

N = 13 (OPP - not available; QPP - not completed)
* Other criteria included: knowledge exam, management exam, in-basket exercises, self development and reference checks.
In several police organizations, officers to the rank of inspector (as in Vancouver) and superintendent (as in Edmonton) are covered by collective agreements with police associations. Hence, the criteria for promotion up to and including these ranks are jointly negotiated. This may have an adverse impact on the promotional chances of visible-minority and aboriginal officers, since seniority is one of the major promotional criteria negotiated in these agreements. Police forces hire only at the constable level and at no other rank, except in rare cases when a police chief’s position is filled from outside the force. In industry and other organizations, a person can join at any rank or managerial position depending on that person’s qualifications and experience. This is not the case in police organizations. No matter how much experience a person has in his or her home country as police chief/high-level officer, he or she has to start at the constable level in any Canadian police organization. It is for this reason that the Race Relations and Policing Task Force and other inquiries recommended not only lateral or direct entry for qualified visible minorities and aboriginals but also faster promotions for qualified visible-minority and aboriginal men and women.

Using seniority as a criteria for promotion blocks the advancement of underrepresented minority groups, since their members were recruited more recently than their Caucasian colleagues. They are less likely than Caucasian male officers, as a group, to possess the seniority that is necessary to achieve promotion. For example, in one service, the average seniority of aboriginal members was 6.1 years, but the eligibility to apply for promotion was eight years. The overall results suggest that the average number of years until promotion can occur was approximately eight years for all police organizations reporting. The use of this arguably arbitrary seniority criterion effectively limits the promotion opportunities of aboriginal officers. Visible-minority and aboriginal officers are more likely to remain as constables or be promoted (depending on their length of service) as junior police officers and not achieve higher ranks relative to their Caucasian colleagues hired by police services.

None of the police services in this study have any mechanism in place for lateral or direct entry for visible-minority and aboriginal persons, other than at the entry level. The only exception is at very senior levels such as chief of police. In addition, there were no career development initiatives directed towards these groups. One police service had lateral entry at the second-class constable level from regional police services, while another reported that they had a First Nations direct appointments policy and have hired one aboriginal officer at the inspector level but could not provide any figures for any other lateral appointments.

Almost all police services stated that they have no special measures directed at visible-minority and aboriginal officers for accelerated promotions, as has been recommended by a number of commissions and task...
forces. The reason cited, in most cases, was that the collective agreement with the respective police associations does not permit any of these measures.

A number of promotional barriers for visible-minority and aboriginal officers are evident in the information provided by the police organizations. They include, but are not limited to, seniority as specified under collective agreements, use of tests, fixed number of applicants per available position, composition of interview panels and other types of decision-making boards, and absence of special measures to promote underrepresented minority groups. Further, there appears to be a lack of proactive communication programs that present diversity at all levels of the organization as a desirable goal for police organizations.

Six of the survey reports indicated that officers could not advance further in the promotion process unless they achieved a "pass/fail" mark (also referred to as a cut-off score). The lowest pass/fail grade was sixty-five per cent. This may eliminate a number of candidates from the promotion process, with a distinct possibility of adverse impact on the basis of race and gender as a result of these promotional tests.

Several of the police organizations made reference to ratios of number of applicants to available positions. This further reduces the opportunities for many officers. For example, in one police service, for one of every five positions available, the service will review seven candidates per opening. Limiting the number of applicants who can apply for an open position eliminates a number of candidates from going further in the promotion process. This may be especially true of visible-minority and aboriginal officers who have lower seniority to begin with.

Boards or panels are extensively used in the final decision-making process in all cases. Most of these boards use three ranking officers to conduct interviews and make assessments on final candidates. Therefore, the decision to form the board is based on rank. A considerable amount of research has looked at the composition of boards and the effects of race in interviewing situations. It has been found that when a person of one race interviews another person of the same race (a Caucasian person interviews another Caucasian person, or a black person interviews another black person, for example), they tend to assign higher ratings to those candidates who are from the same racial group. Therefore, the police services should consider a mix of participants to reflect differences of both gender and race, when selecting the board, so that visible-minority and aboriginal officers, and women, are not faced with only Caucasian men in the interview process. Considering that only a few visible-minority and aboriginal members, and women, are in higher ranks, the composition of interview boards is another serious barrier to promotion for these officers. Finally, there was an obvious absence of special measures to promote underrepresented minority officers in most police organizations.
Three of the police services reported attempts to remove barriers for minorities from their promotional systems. Some of the positive initiatives undertaken by the three police organizations to eliminate biases and barriers towards minorities in the promotion systems may be emulated in the other police services. First, recognizing that seniority was creating a barrier to advancement for minority officers, these police services have incorporated the concept of merit into their promotional system. Thus, an individual's accomplishments and abilities are considered, rather than having seniority as the only deciding factor. The necessary competencies required to perform the job duties for each given level are determined. Each officer is then assessed against the competencies that are required to perform the job, and a composite score of tests, abilities, and, in some cases, seniority is determined (one police service uses seniority as the deciding factor when candidates have the same score). Junior members of the force thus have an opportunity to be considered alongside more senior members.

Second, each of these police forces has been proactive in reporting their new programs to their members. These programs were developed in consultation with their employees. Each of the groups conducted surveys and town-hall meetings or focus-group interviews to elicit information. In many cases, the changes that occurred were as a result of having listened to their employees.

**Focus-group interviews**

A dominant theme in the interviews with visible-minority and aboriginal officers was the existence of barriers to promotion within the police services. The perceived lack of promotion opportunities cast a negative light on their experience with policing as a career. Such barriers included the existence of an "Old Boys" network, a fear of backlash if promoted (that is, allegations that promotions were undeserved when achieved by minority or aboriginal candidates), problems with "fitting in" socially, and the "Caucasian male culture" of police organizations. The following quotes from visible-minority and aboriginal officers illustrate the situation and point out how severe the barriers are to the promotion of women who are aboriginal or members of visible minorities:

I think you're either one of the old boys or you're not. You gotta be one of the boys. The older guys, the guys with more experience. And that's how it works. I'm sure that's a fact to do with promotion and stuff like that. You want to be liked, you want to be part of the boy's club, before you're even considered for promotion. ... Most guys play hockey, and I feel kind of left out because I don't play hockey. Does that mean that I can't be a sergeant someday? It shouldn't be a factor, but you never know.
I know one thing. Once a minority, whether it’s a woman or a Black or a Chinese or whatever, when it comes to promotion, if I get promoted compared to a few other guys, the first thing they are going to say is, “Oh, it must be because you are Black.”

I think I had written on my assessment once about not socializing enough. ... I had my friends within the Black community who I also have to go and socialize with.

The police force is very political, basically to go along with the name of the game that is being played to get ahead. Your intelligence and your knowledge, at times, means nothing. It’s who your friends are, and how well you accept the criticisms that are thrown at you. You do it with a smile and keep on drinking. You go to all their parties and you’re the butt of the jokes, but you take it with a grin and you might succeed, but if you have a mind of your own and are prepared to stand on your own two feet, you will not succeed.

Results from the focus-group interviews suggest that barriers to promotion and lack of career development opportunities were major sources of dissatisfaction to serving officers of minority and aboriginal background. Several officers noted that progress was evident during the brief period when mandatory employment equity was in force in Ontario, but with the Harris government’s repeal of Ontario's Employment Equity Act in 1995, the power of the “old boys’ network” has been reasserted.

In general, there has been progress in the representation of visible minorities and aboriginal people in some police services, as well as improvements in recruitment, selection and promotion policies and practices in some of the selected police services. Nevertheless, there is still a significant need for improvement, since the representation rates generally do not reflect relevant labour markets.

Several officers expressed a sense of optimism that change is happening and that progressive change will occur as new leadership emerges and younger, better-educated officers replace older officers in the police services. However, the participants were under no illusions about the difficulty of bringing about change. As one officer remarked:

I think that nothing is going to be fixed overnight. ... It’s going to take time, and people are just going to have to understand that they should recognize the cultural diversities and intellectual diversities within their own departments. Sure, we all wear the same uniform ... but even though we are all officers, we are all individuals
too, with different backgrounds and understandings of things. And if there is any way that a department or organization can tap into those things, the whole organization will be much richer for being able to tap the energies that lie within a person.

**Conclusions**

We have presented an analysis of data on the recruitment, selection and promotion of visible minorities and aboriginal people in thirteen police services across Canada, using both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. These findings contribute to the literature in several ways. First, this is the first study that has examined promotion as well as recruitment and selection of visible-minority and aboriginal men and women in Canadian police services. Second, this is the first major study of these issues for aboriginal police officers. Third, this study situates current findings within the context of a wider fifteen-year study: longitudinal studies are critical in examining change in organizations. Finally, in using both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, this study provides a richer analysis than previous studies.

Future research should continue to explore these issues over time and with a larger number of police organizations. Further, future studies should address the specific issues of recruitment, selection and promotion with respect to women and persons with disabilities – particularly those of visible-minority or aboriginal ancestry – in police organizations. The lack of data and of initiatives directed towards improving the representation of visible-minority and aboriginal women is noteworthy and needs to be addressed.

In general, there has been progress in the representation of visible minorities and aboriginal people in some police services, as well as improvements in recruitment, selection and promotion policies and practices in some of the selected police services. Nevertheless, there is still a significant need for improvement, since the representation rates generally do not reflect relevant labour markets. The experience of those few police services that have developed progressive approaches, and the experience-based suggestions of members of visible minorities and aboriginal people who have or who are interested in careers in policing, are valuable resources that may be drawn upon to guide future change.

While these findings are of assistance in formulating a current diagnosis of the problem of underrepresentation of visible minorities and aboriginal people in policing, they are neither essentially new nor surprising. As suggested in our introduction, numerous commissions, task forces, investigations and public inquiries have been struck in provinces and cities across Canada to identify the root causes of the recurring crises in relationships between police services and minority communities. Without exception, their reports have recommended that police organizations become more repre-
sentative of the diversity of the communities they serve, as a first step towards the renewal of police-community relations. Yet, our data demonstrate that police services are still far from representative and that few have taken effective steps towards this fundamental objective. As a society, we know the distance we have to travel, we understand the social importance of trust between police and the diverse communities of Canada, and we have identified many of the barriers that impede progress towards more representative police services.

Why do we not get on with the task of removing the barriers, improving the diversity of police organizations, and healing the animosity between them and minority and aboriginal communities? The answer to this perplexing question lies beyond the scope of our inquiry, in the realm of social values, political priorities, and power relations between privileged and disadvantaged groups within Canadian society.

Notes

1 In this article, the terms "aboriginal," "aboriginals" and "First Nations people" are used interchangeably, as are "racial minorities" and "visible minorities." C. Agocs, C. Burr and F. Somerset, Employment Equity: Cooperative Strategies for Organizational Change (Toronto: Prentice-Hall of Canada, 1992).


10 Ibid.


15 Fleras and Elliott, *Multiculturalism in Canada*.


32 For similar findings from focus groups with about fifty black youth in six Ontario cities, see C.E. James, "'Up to No Good': Black on the Streets and Encountering Police," in Vic Satzewich, eds., *Racism and Social Inequality in Canada* (Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing, 1998), pp. 157-76.

