

**VERTICAL COLLECTIVISM AS AN OBSTACLE TO DEMOCRATIC POLICING
AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IN THE GAMBIA**

Stephen B. Perrott

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Abstract

Vertical collectivism, a cultural orientation that shapes social interaction in many parts of the developing world, is characterized by rigid hierarchies and strict adherence to the power of status and rank. This paper examines the problems this orientation presents for making meaningful progress in the ongoing Canadian-funded 6.5-year “Community-Based Policing in The Gambia” project. Examples of obstacles that emerged during program implementation are cited to demonstrate that vertical collectivism impedes core project goals, including enabling greater autonomy in junior ranks, allowing for meaningful input from the community, and promoting gender equity. The challenge of accommodating vertical collectivism and of avoiding ethnocentrism while remaining true to Western donor goals is addressed.

Introduction

Regional conflicts following the end of the Cold War have focused attention on the need to promote police reform throughout the developing world (Van Der Spuy 2000), typically using some variant of the Western community-based policing (CBP) model. These initiatives have been directed towards areas stricken by civil war such as in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Vejnovic and Lalic 2005) or where governments have largely failed to function as with Haiti (Davis, Henderson and Merrick 2003). Democratic policing reforms are usually introduced in societies rife with corruption and under the thumb of authoritarian or military rule (Davis et al. 2003). Long-term outcomes range from disappointing to complete failure: consider, for example, unsuccessful implementation in Haiti, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

Police reforms in the developing world have usually been directed towards acute crisis situations; instances of capacity building projects in relatively stable nations are rare. One exception is the case of South Africa where there has been a concerted effort to establish CBP initiatives following the end of apartheid (e.g., Marks 1997). Even here results have fallen short of expectations reflecting, in Van Der Spuy's (2000) view, the presence of an "unwieldy, unskilled, underpaid, and demotivated bureaucratic corps ... the main problems remain stubbornly indigenous and ... beyond the reach of even the best police machines" (362).

Western donor countries' interest in various means of conflict resolution for developing countries significantly predates the introduction of Western-style policing reforms. A recurrent theme concerns the need to better incorporate cultural variation in conflict-related development initiatives, from the broadest goal of not superimposing Western models to acknowledging the shifting cultural contexts between regions within a developing country (e.g., Davidheiser 2003;

2005a; 2005b). The work of the Canadian team involved in the policing initiative described herein was premised on the need to address this challenge.

Purpose

“Community-Based Policing in The Gambia” is a capacity building project funded from April 1, 2004 to September 30, 2010 by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). In this paper I focus on how vertical collectivism, a cultural style of interaction characterized by rigid hierarchies, is at odds with intended goals and repeatedly impeded progress.¹ A central question of the subsequent analysis is whether this cultural variable can be sufficiently accommodated while still adhering to the main tenets of community policing, including input from and autonomy for junior officers and the formation of egalitarian and mutually respectful partnerships between the police and the community. Answers to this seeming dilemma are not only practically important for gauging the probability of successful program delivery; the question also involves theoretical and ideological concerns related to all development initiatives.

Project Context

The Gambia is a West African country of about 1.7 million, geographically comprised of a narrow sliver of land extending about 470 kilometers inland from the Atlantic Ocean (Hughes and Perfect 2005). The country is divided by the River Gambia and surrounded by Senegal to the north, east, and south. The total land mass is about 11,000 square kilometers, and one would travel only about 10 kilometers north or south from the river banks, on average, before reaching the borders with Senegal (the exception is a widening of land at the river’s mouth where the capital of Banjul and the nation’s urban sprawl is located). The country is predominantly Muslim

and polygamy is the norm. The Gambia is well known for its tolerance of all religious practices and for its social stability relative to most West African states.

As a former British colony, many traditions of The Gambia's police force are legacies of its past colonial master, the most obvious remaining vestiges of which are seen in the pomp and circumstance that accompany the many official or celebratory events which frequently disrupt the business of police work. As most African police forces are also viewed, the Gambian public sees the police as an unjust and largely corrupt entity. The nadir of police-community relations occurred in April 2000, when the paramilitary unit of the police, accompanied by soldiers, killed 14 of a group of student protesters (Sarr 2007). Added to the charges of corruption and occasional brutality is the perception that the police are largely ineffectual in dealing with the day-to-day problems of the average Gambian.

In Gambian society social status within most ethnic groups is determined by an eroding but still present caste system; social stratification is further amplified by status distinctions between groups (Hughes and Perfect 2005; Wright 2004). Although Senegambian society (comprised of the peoples of current-day Senegal and The Gambia) was structured on the basis of status and rank long before the arrival of European rulers (Wright 2004), colonial influences had a profound effect on the manifestations of, and demarcations used to determine, one's group status. For example, while one's rank in the pre-colonial period depended heavily on status at birth or occupational role, British attempts to document and control the population made ethnicity or tribe the most important grouping variable. In a similar but more specific way, British colonial influences provided the trappings for the rigid rank structure observed in the national police force, where deference to rank, affected gestures of respect, and obsession with military rituals (e.g., saluting, drill) are extremely pronounced.

Project Goals

The Canadian team is headed by Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. The author of this paper, a psychologist and former police officer, serves as Project Director. The other Canadian partners are the Halifax Regional Police Department and the Nova Scotia Department of Justice, which has taken the lead with the Restorative Justice (RJ) component.² The lead Southern partner is the Gambia Police Force (GPF), complemented by the resources and expertise of Gambia College, one of only a few post-secondary institutions in The Gambia.

The project was designed to focus on the development of two main content areas: CBP and RJ. CBP is an umbrella term that covers many different practices (Bayley 1992). In this project it was conceptualized in the broadest terms as a more collaborative and democratic style of policing focused on enhancing general police skills, promoting human rights (especially those of women), activating patrol activities, and fostering police-community partnerships. For these goals to be achievable, it is necessary to have considerable autonomy devolve to the rank-and-file officer and to the average citizen, and to decentralize significant decision-making authority from central police headquarters to the jurisdictions where the initiatives are launched.

The RJ component was viewed as a natural ancillary to CBP: both initiatives were intended to promote peacemaking in a more collaborative and inclusive way, freer from decisions taken on the basis of *a priori* power. Like CBP, the practice of RJ means different things to different people and a variety of models are in play throughout the world (see, for example, Graybil and Lanegran 2004; Wilson, Huculak and McWhinnie 2002). Common to all models is a shift away from retribution and towards reconciliation and healing and, although

government agencies and policy typically are present, away from adversarial court mechanisms and towards processes emphasizing the needs of the victim, the offender, and the community.

The less confrontational and more community-based resolutions that emerge from an RJ model are generally more consistent with sub-Saharan African tradition than with North American culture. The basic approach towards healing and reconciliation has most strikingly been seen during periods of post-conflict and transition by South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission following the end of apartheid, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda following the 1994 genocide, and the Sierra Leone Truth Commission following the recent civil war in that country (Graybill and Lanegran 2004; Llewellyn and Howse 1999). Much conflict within The Gambia is currently resolved at the village level, often during weekly gatherings comprised of the victim, the accused, members of their extended families, and the local "Circle of Elders," a group of respected leaders chaired by the *alkalo* (hereditary local chief). We sought to make these deliberations more democratic and less arbitrary while providing a role for the local police.

Program delivery was designed to first develop field practices that would have the police and the community work from a CBP model followed by a certificate program in Community Policing and Restorative Justice to be delivered at Gambia College. At the time of publication, with about 18 months years of the project left to run, all field activities have been left in the hands of Gambians and the project focus has shifted to finalizing the curriculum for Gambia College. We intend for the first cohort of students in the certificate program to graduate by the time of project completion.

Midterm Project Analysis

Our approach has been based on two goals, both of which involve clear paradoxes. We have developed standardized mechanisms to avoid arbitrary or uneven decision making that has in the past made the police susceptible to charges of discrimination while, at the same time, promoted an approach responsive to the differing cultural contexts and realities that exist from one village to another and from one situation to another. This goal has been aptly described by Davidheiser (2005b:6) as “exploring how to craft an adaptive practice that still minimizes the risks that accompany a lack of structure.” With a police force accustomed to centralized and top-down policy making, the notion that one can simultaneously hold to certain universals while adjusting the specific approach based on circumstances has been a difficult one to convey.

We also focused on developing a “Gambian approach,” trying to avoid superimposing Canadian solutions or values when developing the program, both to enhance effectiveness and to avoid ethnocentrism. This ideological position is not surprising: all contemporary development projects are at least purportedly designed with the goal of not repeating the sins of the colonial past. Some of our Western baggage could be discarded with relative ease. For example, it quickly became clear that we could not decide based on Canadian practice which criminal offenses could be dealt with in an RJ format and which should be referred to the formal adversarial court system. Other matters, however, presented seemingly intractable challenges. Consider, for example, the Millennium Development Goal focused on promoting gender equality, a mandated target for all CIDA funding. At what point does the promotion of Western dictates and values become imposition and respect for indigenous cultural mores result in an abandonment of such goals?

Project Successes

Team members have been repeatedly impressed by the willingness of the public in both urban and rural areas to embrace CBP and to welcome local officers into open partnerships. We have also been pleasantly surprised by the willingness of lower ranking officers to embrace the project and to demonstrate a willingness to work in partnership with the community. Not surprisingly, officers constantly and accurately complain about low wages and the lack of resources. Nonetheless, our initial premise that everyone wants to engage in meaningful work has been confirmed. The constable generalist model generated enthusiasm amongst the lower ranks currently denied autonomy and decision-making powers.

Development workers and media commentators often refer to The Gambia as a “culture of silence,” where sensitive subject areas such as sexuality, child abuse, and intrafamilial violence are simply taboo. Although it is generally inappropriate for any Gambian to broach such topics, women, youth, and children would face particular censure were they to break from this code (see, for example, Bijnsdorp and Montgomery 2003; Walraven et al. 2001). Borrowing from the success of other projects (see Devanney 2005), we employ a drama troupe, comprised of young high school graduates, to “act out” various scenarios. The ability to distance themselves in dramatic roles, combined with real talent and insertions of humor, leave troupe members safe and effective in conveying messages to the police and community about drug abuse, familial violence, gender inequity, and police corruption. We have been successful in generating a large number of police-youth forums in high schools, police open houses, and *bantaba* (public gatherings) style meetings, where the troupe plays an integral role.

More formal training has taken place with three distinct populations: recruits at the police training school, serving officers at police headquarters and rural locales, and villagers living in

the urban and two rural locales targeted by the project. At differing levels of detail and focus, hundreds of police officers and even more villagers have received workshops in CBP and RJ. Modules offered to select groups of police officers and security force members include use of force in a democratic society, preservation of crime scene evidence, and gender equity training. Use of force training was especially relevant for the Police Intervention Unit, implicated in the killing of the 14 students in 2000.

A core of about 15 officers has received focused training, especially in RJ techniques, to a level where they are considered competent facilitators. In addition to enhancing their ability to mediate between parties in conflict, they attended workshops relating to victim needs, improved interpersonal communication, and the role of power differentials in the criminal justice system. Their role is to coordinate inclusive peace-making sessions where appropriate (as opposed to making arrests and laying charges) and to expose other officers at their posts to these approaches.

These officers were taught the central tenets of RJ philosophy and practice and the importance of considering the social context underlying much of the conflict reported to them. The theory is that a better understanding of social context will help them avoid the two most common complaints the public report about the police: doing too much or doing too little. In the domain of “doing too much” the GPF is often criticized for rushing to judgment in making arrests for minor transgressions, thereby unnecessarily escalating the level of crisis in an extended family or tightly knit village structure. Even if the police were trusted to act appropriately, making a criminal complaint that initiates action within the adversarial court system introduced and implemented by the British is culturally inappropriate in Gambian society (see Davidheiser 2007). In the “doing too little” domain, some complainants are unlikely to obtain a fair hearing from the police in the first instance, ending up being doubly victimized. For

example, a female victim of domestic assault is likely to be blamed for not being attentive enough to the needs of her husband and family and in some way causing the assault.

The Challenge of Vertical Collectivism

Members of the Canadian team frequently find themselves enamored of Gambian society's respect for extended family and community at levels higher than seen in the West. The oft-quoted maxim that "it takes a village to raise a child" is clearly evident in The Gambia, evoking images of an earlier more compassionate time in Western society and confirming a romanticized view of the more collectivist cultures of Africa. However, this monolithic view is overly simplistic and does not take into account a major distinction in the collectivism construct. Triandis and Gelfand (1998) distinguish between *horizontal collectivism*, an orientation that emphasizes communal sharing and equality, and *vertical collectivism* which, although also based in communal sharing, focuses on hierarchal ranking and low equality. The Israeli kibbutz has been cited as an example of the former while the caste system in India exemplifies the latter (see Triandis 1996). Some have crudely but aptly described the societal structure of vertical collectivism as "suck up or kick down."³

In my judgment Gambian society represents a clear case of vertical collectivism, which is magnified even more within the paramilitary confines of the GPF (Harb and Smith 2008). I propose that this construct is the single greatest obstacle to success in this project, both on its own and as the single factor common to other areas of friction experienced. Furthermore, as a broadly observed system of social interaction not unique to the GPF or even to West Africa, I suggest that vertical collectivism is a cultural variable that needs to be more widely recognized and accommodated when implementing any development project premised on a foundation of democratic and inclusive dynamics.

Manifestations of Vertical Collectivism

As Project Director I have written and conveyed voluminous letters of introduction to countless, ever changing government officials to gain the requisite audience for the most basic of project activities. My frustration with what seems like excessive protocol undoubtedly reflects a Western cultural bias; I have periodically been reminded (and reminded myself) to keep my expectations regarding timelines in check. Nonetheless, adherence to such protocols hinders progress in ways beyond the simple loss of time. More significantly, denying subordinates the authority to make decisions flies in the face of an initiative premised on empowering officers and citizens at the grassroots level. More ominous was the early realization that senior ranking officers, while publically embracing the project, in truth viewed any initiative that promoted independent decision making or input from lower ranking officers as a threat to their positions of power.

Vertical collectivism also underlies or interacts with other obstacles to development in less obvious ways. One such example is the prevalence of corruption, a commonly cited factor underlying failure of development in sub-Saharan Africa. The link between vertical collectivism and corruption, especially towards out-group members, has been well established (see Li, Triandis and Yu 2006). Even in relatively corruption-free Singapore, a striking exception to this general rule, Li and his colleagues demonstrated that in a sample of Singaporean students, those endorsing higher levels of vertical collectivism were also those associated with higher levels of deceit.

In 2008, Transparency International placed The Gambia in the top quartile of corrupt countries worldwide (of 180 countries it was the 32nd most corrupt), at a level described as “rampant.” Even in the sub-Saharan African regional context, within a group of 47 it was tied as

the 12th most corrupt country. Most Gambians share the view that The Gambia is plagued by corruption. The pervasive graft and corruption within the police force is a widely accepted way of doing business in The Gambia.

Beyond overt acts that would meet commonly-held definitions of corruption, there exists a mindset that promotes constant attempts to bend the terms of this project's Memorandum of Agreement, most typically manifested in attempts to acquire material resources from the Project Director. From project onset, I have emphasized continuously that it was focused on capacity building and that the partnership would not result in capital expenditures for the police or in payment to individual officers. Although these terms appeared to be accepted as legitimate, it quickly became clear they were not really believed. There has been constant pressure to purchase vehicles, provide equipment, and to pay officers for time spent attending to project training.⁴ Although I have been as liberal as possible in the purchase of equipment for capacity building (e.g., the provision of computers and office supplies), these gestures seemed only to buttress the belief that I would ultimately give in over time.

Given the history of foreign aid in Africa the misconception of the police in this regard is hardly surprising. Only recently have donor countries pledged to move away from the transfer of capital and material resources to a capacity-building model as a means of promoting ownership and ensuring sustainability. There is wide variance in how donor countries and UN agencies maintain this approach: CIDA is recognized by my colleagues in The Gambia as one of the tougher agencies in adhering to this position on capacity building and human resources.

Furthermore, like other entities in The Gambia the GPF has learned to play the "Project Game." Projects are deemed useful only as long as they are in place; there appears to be little hope that initiatives will be sustained once project funds are no longer forthcoming. The cynical

moniker “Project Tourist” reflects the reinforcing, self-justifying parallel view that Westerners attached to the projects share this lack of commitment. The goal appears to be to “get what you can get when you can get it:” acquired projects quickly lose priority with the prospect of getting a new one. Particularly salient is the expectation that “getting” will be commensurate with one’s rank, independent of need, merit, or relationship to project goals.

Our attempts to engage additional Gambian partners in this project also encountered this need to monopolize power. Efforts to engage other government departments in the initiative were not viewed by police management and senior government officials as a pooling of resources, talent, and efficiencies but rather as a threat that already limited funding would be withdrawn. While launching our RJ initiative we learned that an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) initiative involving the Gambian judiciary and Bar Association was underway with the Department of State for Justice. The overlap between this initiative and the policing project,⁵ as well as the desirability of pooling resources across government departments, ensured that pursuit of links between the projects was in everyone’s interest. Over a period of a year we failed to make meaningful contact, despite many more letters of introduction and constant assurance from the police that a partnership would be beneficial. In retrospect, it appears that any relationship was resisted from both sides from the onset. It was not until recently that I learned that the ADR initiative was significantly aided by Mark Davidheiser of Nova Southeastern University; this awareness did not come from colleagues in The Gambia. Similarly, since the beginning of the project, I learned from unofficial sources that the Swedes, British, and Germans have contributed resources and training to the GPF. I doubt that any of the Western stakeholders in those initiatives were made aware of the CBP project.

We were fortunate to acquire a Gambian team leader who for almost three years moved the project forward against tremendous odds. During his two trips to Canada he observed Canadian best practices with remarkable insight, interacting with Halifax police officers and justice workers and translating what he learned into a culturally appropriate Gambian approach. In a North American police force his middle management rank would have assured him of significant latitude in decision making vis-à-vis project activities. Instead he was constantly required to provide reports and proposals for almost every move he made, only to find himself repeatedly accused of not documenting his activities or keeping senior management informed. Although his team leader position for this project entailed full-time work and extensive responsibility, his superiors continued to assign him additional duties; his motivation and talents nonetheless continued to move the project forward. Despite assurances that he would remain lead until the end of the project, approximately two years ago he was relieved of his project duties and deployed to a peace-keeping mission in Sudan.

This tremendously effective team leader's greatest error was accepting his superiors' claims that they embraced the project and wanted him to advance the initiative. In actuality he represented a threat: he had captured the respect of the junior ranks and done much to empower them within the framework of CBP. Though unfailingly loyal to his superiors, ironically accusations and rumors abounded that he was compromising command structure and was in receipt of underserved benefits from the Canadian Project Director. No amount of evidence to the contrary seemed to modify this erroneous view.

What about those talented junior officers who bought into the CBP concept? I noted earlier a group of about 15 officers who received intensive training, especially in RJ techniques. Their real sense of pride and eagerness to put learning into action was evident at graduation

ceremonies where they received certificates. A highly motivated and talented group, the junior officers had good reason to be proud. The Canadian team was excited in anticipation of their soon disseminating the skills and knowledge they had acquired.

Unfortunately these officers were never given a real opportunity to display what they had learned; some were even transferred out of the jurisdiction in which they had been developing the project. It was difficult to obtain clear answers about police management's failure to capitalize on officer training and the opportunity to significantly advance project goals. Clearly there was concern about the legitimacy of teachings not directly delivered or endorsed by the most senior levels of command. Aware these junior officers had acquired knowledge they themselves did not possess, they seemed threatened by the prospect of the graduates bringing "new" ideas to the community.

The Special Case of Gender

How gender roles are constructed and affect hierarchical relations within the police force as well as in the broader society is of particular importance in this project. Although the rhetoric has outpaced reality, the Gambian government has made significant moves towards enhancing the status of women. These initiatives have resulted in real changes (such as reduced support for female genital mutilation), yet much talk in official circles amounts to little more than window dressing. Women and "the girl child" remain clearly entrenched in subordinate roles, continuing to assume most of the work and most of the abuse. Clearly the power hierarchy that separates women and men is exponentially stronger than that separating ranks within the police force.

The Gambian government and police management have touted the fact that women are now being hired as police officers at an accelerated rate: the male-female ratio is comparable to that of Western nations. Yet few women engage in standard police work, instead typically

assigned clerical or other specialized roles (e.g., child welfare officer). One might respond that this was equally true in the West just a few years ago and that the matter of equity is yet to be satisfactorily resolved, but the role of most Gambian female officers makes Western police matrons of old appear emancipated. An anecdote is illustrative:

On an upriver trip to a rural community, the Gambian team leader was pleased that he was able to bring all female officers in the region to the day's gender-integrated workshop. One primary objective of the workshop was creating awareness about gender equity. After all, the GPF endorses official policy supporting equality between female and male officers; this would be an opportunity to demonstrate that commitment. With an approximate ratio of men to women in attendance of 3: 1; the workshop scheduled to begin at 9 in the morning finally commenced at about 11 a.m. About 20 minutes into the session, the female officers stood and began to make their way out of the room. When I asked about this I was informed that it was time to prepare the midday meal and that the women could not be in the session and cook at the same time. I quickly objected saying that I would pay for others to prepare our meal. It was too late. The women told us not to worry: they were honored to cook for the group. Further objections would have been considered rude.

This anecdote underlines how Gambian gender roles are widely supported by men and women alike. We need to remain cognizant that for many hierarchies, it is not only those on top who embrace their legitimacy. Although the experience produced exasperation among most Westerners present, it hopefully also led to humility and recognition that differing worldviews regarding appropriate gender roles is naturally the result of culturally-restricted experience.

First, Do No Harm

It is one thing to learn that perhaps overly ambitious efforts have not met expectations; it is quite another to contemplate that one's work has resulted in an iatrogenic-like outcome. As in medicine, development initiatives should be premised on the dictate of *primum non nocere*. When CBP was introduced in the West some scholars criticized the movement as another means by which the state unjustly seeks to co-opt the populace, most especially those already marginalized (see Cashmore 1991; Gordon 1984). For others the critique of CBP reflects a pervasive belief that police cannot ever be anything but an oppressive force in society. The CBP

initiative in The Gambia regrettably has lent credence to both notions while testing the ethical limits of a legitimate attempt to develop a “Gambian approach” developed and “owned” by Gambians.

Concerns about potential harm are best illustrated by project attempts to decentralize policing while shifting to all-Gambian program delivery. The program was initially piloted in the capital of Banjul and in two of the largest and remote rural towns, Farafenni and Basse Santa Su. The operative premise that these rural locales should have the autonomy to develop strategies for solving their own distinctive justice and quality of life challenges seemed to be embraced by those at police headquarters in Banjul. The two geographically isolated rural postings with distinctive cultures were already functioning in relatively independent fashion, but the absence of official policy authorizing their autonomy ensured that unique approaches there would seem haphazard and arbitrary. Interacting with a command structure determined to preserve its control, our intention to devolve decision-making powers unfortunately seems to have resulted in an opposite effect. Our outreach activities have provided the opportunity for headquarters to exert more control, not less, mirroring the response observed by Davidheiser (1997) during an attempt to make The Gambia’s formal court system more responsive to local needs.

After our Gambian team leader was deployed to Sudan and responsibility for field activities completely assumed by the GPF, a move emerged to co-opt community members and further entrench central control. A high ranking officer with no previous experience with the program took charge of community outreach; his actions included conducting nation-wide tours to promote his distorted conceptualization of CBP. The project midterm evaluator and I were invited to attend a police-community forum he led. At best, what we observed could be likened to the public relations events utilized by Western police forces prior to the implementation of

CBP in the 1980s. At worst, the event appeared to encourage public compliance with the dictates of the police and to promote the value of police informers. The event was highly politicized and presented to an audience that did not represent the various constituencies within the community. In addition, it did not promote dialogue between the police and community members. The high ranking police officers in attendance delivered speeches about how they would implement the program, outlining without any community input what would and would not transpire under the program's auspices. Most disheartening was the revelation that these meetings were being used to recruit community members to "vigilant" groups to assist the police in their activities. The formation of vigilante groups was presented as an example of a significant achievement.

Many officers who had attended project workshops would have appreciated the irony of promoting vigilante recruitment as a positive outcome. The introductory level workshop and its accompanying written module emphasized the democratic, collaborative, and apolitical foundation on which CBP is predicated, and workshop students had been advised to guard against supportive community groups' inadvertent adoption of vigilantism. Regardless of such recognizable distortion, no subordinate officers would dare question his or her superior officer's pronouncements. In the GPF's rigid hierarchical system the senior officer moreover is not motivated to question himself: independent of continuing education experience or the need to self-monitor, his rank renders him expert.

No matter how diplomatically and tactfully offered, any signal from Canadian team members that there was a discrepancy would be almost certainly be perceived as insulting and an unacceptable imposition of Canadian values. Beyond the obstacles to project completion that adopting such an authoritarian position would present, Canadian team members hold legitimate concerns about interfering in the process. Herein lies the proverbial rub. At what point does

accommodating a Southern partner's legitimate desire to tailor and take ownership of an initiative cease to reflect a respect for diversity and shift towards compromising the very reasons for providing assistance? Who has the right to define or pronounce which practices or values constitute universals?

Conclusions

In identifying vertical collectivism as the greatest obstacle to progress in this project, I have tried to remain cognizant of my own ethnocentrism. It is important to recall that none of the phenomena discussed in this review are unique to The Gambia or other developing nations. Western democracies rely on hierarchical order, individuals strive mightily to attain and hold onto power, and government agencies often seem to work harder to protect turf than to maximize resources. The distinction is more one of quantity than quality, although there are certainly different manifestations of hierarchy in a vertically collectivist society than in more egalitarian ones. Bringing an essentially Western-generated, inclusive, and democratic model of policing to a country so extremely hierarchically ordered will necessarily result in a clash of world views.

Development projects seek to ameliorate the very injustices that many Western academics demand be remedied. The same academics often condemn project initiators for making what they consider ethnocentric judgments. Others readily recognize the paradox within an ideology that strives to advance project goals without imposing Western views. The divergent views involved well illustrate the complexities inherent in achieving effective assistance. In the final analysis, development project members can only do their best, which entails remaining humble, being cognizant of one's own bias, and never assuming complete understanding of another's culture.

I remain convinced that police reform in the developing world is integral to the promotion of more stable, just, and civil societies. Police scholars and experts must remain aware that implementing reform to change attitudes and practice in the workplace involves far more than presentation of a template. The task requires instead a holistic approach that accommodates all aspects of culture, a tight-wire walk between collaborative partnering and imposition, and much hard work, patience, and time. The same could probably be said about most capacity-building projects in the developing world.

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Notes

¹ The author is grateful for the editorial feedback and keen insights provided by Heather White. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to: Stephen Perrott, Department of Psychology, Mount Saint Vincent University, 166 Bedford Highway, Halifax Nova Scotia, Canada B3M 2J6 Electronic Mail- Stephen.Perrott@msvu.ca.

² The Restorative Justice Program, Nova Scotia Department of Justice, is the partner of record that legitimizes the RJ component of the project. The actual partners are three not-for-profit agencies that hold contracts from the Province of Nova Scotia for the provision of services: Island Community Justice Society, Sydney, Nova Scotia; Valley Restorative Justice Society, Kentville, Nova Scotia; and, Community Justice Society, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

³ For the sake of brevity, the horizontal and vertical dimensions are discussed for only the collectivist orientation. However, the individualist orientation can also be divided into horizontal and vertical dimensions.

⁴ Although the GPF had agreed to pay for officer expenses and certain other minor project costs it became quickly clear that management was unwilling to meet these commitments. We ultimately covered such costs (e.g., travel allowances, meals) because under CIDA guidelines we were allowed to do so. CIDA, however, prohibits the payment of per diems or “sitting fees” primarily on the grounds that such payments compromise the intrinsic motivation needed for sustainable development (an abundance of psychological empirical evidence and anecdotes from development projects supports the agency’s position in this regard). Given that sitting fees are paid by other funders and that this was surely even more the case in the past, it is hardly surprising that an expectation of payment exists. Whether or not one agrees ideologically or on utilitarian grounds with CIDA’s policy, the disparity between policy and expectations presented a significant problem for this project.

⁵ Although Alternative Dispute Resolution programs are distinct from RJ in conception and practice, both approaches embrace reconciliation and peacemaking outside of an adversarial process.