CRIME, COMMUNITY SAFETY AND THE POLICING OF MARGINALISED POPULATIONS: A REVIEW OF RESEARCH

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Introduction
This paper draws upon the very large body of research into the relationship between policing and ‘marginalised’ communities. It draws primarily upon research literature from the UK and USA, although where appropriate some references will be made to evidence from other countries. The overall aim is to draw some broad conclusions about what kinds forms of policing and security provision best promote equity, safety and access to justice for all parts of the population. The paper is divided into four main sections. The first briefly outlines the meaning of the term ‘policing’ in this context, and discusses what groups we include under the mantle of ‘marginalised communities’. The second section examines the nature of relationships between policing and marginalised groups across a number of different dimensions. The third section looks at the measures which have been adopted to address problematic relationships, and including some examples of innovation and good practice. The final section summarises the overall themes and provides some general conclusions.

1. Policing and marginalised communities

Policing and the police
Policing involves the regulation and control of social conflict, and thus inevitably involves adversarial contacts with some members of the population at certain times and in certain places. Almost by definition, the job of policing can never receive total universal approval in any society. However, it clear that there are very significant differences in both the nature of police organisations and in the nature of policing between totalitarian dictatorships and liberal democracies, between poorer developing countries and richer industrialised ones, and between relatively homogeneous and integrated societies and those which are deeply divided. Indeed, it is possible to argue that the behaviour of the police is a critical indicator - perhaps the definitive one - of the essential character of a state. As Reiner (1993) has pointed out:

The police are the specialist carriers of the state’s bedrock power: the monopoly of the legitimate use of force. How and for what this is used speaks to the very heart of the condition of a political order. The dangers of abuse, on behalf of particular partisan interests or the police themselves, are clear and daunting (Reiner 1993: 1)

Until recently, criminologists have tended to focus exclusively upon the public police; that is: ‘institutions or individuals given the general right to use coercive force by the state within the state’s domestic territory’ (Klockars 1985: 12). In recent years, there has been growing interest in the enforcement, investigation and peacekeeping activities of a range of bodies outside of the public police (Jones and Newburn, 1998, Johnston 1992, South 1988,
Shearing and Stenning 1987). This work has shown that ‘policing’ actually refers to a number of interlinking activities undertaken by a range of bodies. These include state police forces, but also the private security industry, and public officials with specific regulatory and law enforcement functions. Although the primary focus of the current paper is upon the activities of state police forces, we will make some reference to ‘privatised’ forms of policing, and discuss their implications for members of marginalised or deprived communities.

**Marginalised communities**

The concept of accountability to ‘the community’ has been a central theme in British police rhetoric, although the notion of exactly what is meant by community in this regard is highly problematic. As far as policing is concerned, there is not one ‘community’ but many, and policing can impact upon these in sharply contrasting ways. In recent years, the idea of ‘community’ has been invoked by the police - and by a number of other criminal justice agencies - as one means of reorienting itself (Lacey and Zedner, 1995). In particular, ‘community policing’ has become a fashionable term to describe a range of initiatives in the USA and Europe aimed at improving relationships between police and public (Fielding, 1995; Rosenbaum, 1994). However, although ‘community policing’ is an attractive concept, there are a number of practical problems with its implementation. For example, many of the functions of policing are by definition adversarial, and difficult to reconcile with the notion of consensus. Second, in any locality the police must deal not with one community but with several, which may have sharply conflicting views and experiences of the police. However, local crime surveys have provided some grounds for cautious optimism about the possibility of building up consensus about policing issues. While confirming that different groups place different demands upon the police, they also illustrate that common ground often exists. For example, the Islington Crime Survey (Jones et al 1986) found that most groups agreed on the basic need for order and safety and the need for the police to respond promptly to crime and to deter it effectively. A central task for police forces therefore is to determine what common ground exists locally, to build upon it and yet to be able to enforce what it determines to be its essential operational priorities.

There has been a growing recognition in Britain, and other European countries, that the police operate within an increasingly diverse and heterogeneous society made up of a range of different ‘communities’. Willmott (1987) outlined various different notions of ‘community’ which require consideration. The **territorial** community is defined by geographical location and meaning the people who live in a particular area. Second, there is the **interest** community, which means a set of people with something in common other than just territory (eg. the Gay community, the black community). Third, there is the more elusive **attachment** community, which is built on social interaction or a shared sense of identity. The urban unrest which occurred in many US cities during the 1960s, and similar disturbances in Britain during the 1980s, focused attention on deteriorating relationships between the police and some ethnic minority communities. Thus, much of the research and writing examining problematic relationships between the police and the community, both in the UK and USA, has focused on ethnic minority groups. More recently there has been a growing interest in other distinctive populations who habitually experience difficult relations with the police, including the Gay community, New Age Travellers, environmental protestors, young people,
and trade unionists. As societies have become less homogeneous the police have been increasingly drawn into conflict with particular groups. The primary focus of this paper is upon research about ethnic minority groups and policing. However, where possible, we also make reference to research on other ‘marginalised’ groups, including the gay community, and victims of domestic abuse.

2. Relationships between policing and marginalised groups

a. Under protection
Crime and disorder significantly diminish the quality of life for many citizens. Since the mid-1980s, there has been a growing awareness that crime (and the fear of crime) impacts most harshly on already disadvantaged groups in society (Jones et al. 1986). Crime surveys have found that the pattern of victimisation is strongly skewed towards certain geographical areas, and certain groups of people within those areas. Successive British Crime Surveys have indicated that the risk of victimisation is substantially higher for people who already suffer from social/economic disadvantage. People who live in deprived inner-city areas, council housing, members of ethnic minority groups, and lone parents are particularly vulnerable to criminal victimisation. These findings apply across most offence groups, but members of these groups have particularly high risk of being victims of burglary, car crime and violence (Hope, 1996). Recent research has further shown that not only are people living in areas of high social deprivation generally more likely to be victims of crime, they are more likely to be victimised again and again. Multiple victimisation is significantly more common in high crime areas (Trickett et al. 1992).

Victimisation studies show ethnic minority people are substantially more likely than white people to be victims of crime, and have substantially higher levels of fear of crime. Analysis of the British Crime Survey has shown that Caribbean and South Asian people have persistently high rates (compared with white people) of victimisation in the case of burglary, car and bicycle theft, assault and robbery (Smith, 1997). Mayhew et al (1989) show in their analysis of the 1988 British Crime Survey that black and South Asian people are substantially more likely than whites to be victims of crime, both for household crimes and crimes against the person. Researchers have tried to shed light on the factors behind these patterns. The general conclusion from this research is that high rates of victimisation of ethnic minorities are strongly related to the socio-economic characteristics of specific minority groups, and the spatial distribution of the ethnic minority population. They are relatively highly represented in ‘high risk’ groups such as the unemployed or low income-earners, and on the whole are more likely to live in higher crime areas (Fitzgerald and Hale, 1996). Thus, higher overall rates of victimisation are cannot be entirely explained by racial hostility, in that higher risks of victimisation are shared by white people living in similar social and economic circumstances. However, particular concerns have been raised over recent years about an apparently growing incidence of crimes and harassment directed specifically at ethnic minority people.

There is a widespread perception that racially-motivated crimes in general, and racial violence in particular, have been growing over recent years (Virdee, 1997). There are a number of difficulties in measuring the true level of such crimes. These include the fact that
many such incidents are not reported to the police, and many incidents that the victim regards as racially-motivated are not recorded as such by the police. Although there has been a large increase in the numbers of racially-motivated crimes recorded by the police since the mid-1980s, it is difficult to know how far this represents a ‘real’ increase, or how far it simply demonstrates increased willingness on the part of victims to report such crimes, and on the part of the police to record them. Victim surveys have indicated a much higher overall level of racial harassment and violence, but a smaller level of increase. However, victim surveys have a number of important limitations with regard to measuring the extent and nature of racial harassment. Bowling (1993) has pointed out that victim surveys have significant limitations when it comes to attempting to estimate the extent and nature of racial harassment. In particular, he argues that the ‘snapshot’ provided by crime surveys by its very nature ignores the processual character, and the often low-level nature, of much racial harassment and violence. Ethnic minority people are victimised by a sequence of racial incidents, not all of which, taken individually, would count as ‘crimes’, but the cumulative effect of which is to substantially reduce the quality of life of the victims.

In the early 1980s, research based on police records suggested that black and South Asian people were substantially more likely than white people to be victimised in incidents of racially-motivated assault (Home Office, 1981). On the basis of these calculations, the authors estimated that there were 7,000 racially-motivated incidents reported to police forces annually in England and Wales. The 1982 PSI survey of ethnic minorities in Britain suggested a very much higher level of racial assaults than was estimated from police records (at least 10 times as high). The survey showed that a majority of black people, and a substantial minority of South Asian people, believed that the police could not be relied upon to protect them (Brown, 1984). A number of local studies have been undertaken since that time. Research in Newham (London Borough of Newham, 1987) found that approximately one quarter of minority ethnic council residents in the borough had experienced racial harassment in the previous year. Two years later, Home Office researchers working in the borough found that one fifth of African Caribbean men and a slightly smaller proportion of Asian men had experienced a racial attack in the previous year and a half (Saulsbury and Bowling, 1991). Crucially, these surveys found that only a very small proportion of the incidents (five per cent in the 1987 survey) had been reported to the police. A key reason in this was the view that the police would not be able to, or would choose not to do anything in response. Such a view was included in the Institute of Race Relations in their evidence to the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure in 1979 when they argued that ‘the failure of the police to protect the black community leaves it exposed to racial violence. At its worst police practice reinforces that violence’ (quoted in Holdaway, 1996:58).

Given higher levels of overall victimisation, and the growing focus on racially-motivated crimes, this concern about the lack of police protection for minority communities has been a constant source of criticism of the police over recent years. It has been suggested, for example, that racial attacks have been subject to police indifference or even hostility. Some sources have suggested that not only have the police failed to deal effectively with those who perpetrate such crimes, but compound this by taking action against those people who attempt to defend themselves (Greater London Council 1984). The police have been criticised for the way they define and conceptualise the problem of racial violence and
harassment. It has been argued that the police have tended to overlook the crucial element of racial motivation to incidents. Thus, racially-motivated attacks are not aimed purely at individuals, but constitute attacks against members of a particular category or group. The police have therefore been criticised for subsuming racial attacks under any criminal incident when the victim and offender happened to be of a different ethnic group (Virdee, 1995). The police have attempted to address some of the criticisms, including modifying their definitions of racial incidents. ACPO published a standard definition in 1985, which was based on the perception of the reporting officer or the victim of some racial motivation. However, more recently this definition has itself come under criticism for its subjectivity.

Despite heightened official concern about the police response to racial attacks and a number of attempted reforms of police practices, the death of the black teenager Stephen Lawrence in April 1993 and the subsequent public inquiry has once again focused public attention on fundamental inadequacies in the police response to racially-motivated crimes (Macpherson 1999). This report has been seen as a potential watershed in police-ethnic minority relations in Britain, and has directly or indirectly fostered a flurry of activities intended to improve the response of the police service to the needs of ethnic minorities and other marginalised communities.

Although public concerns about police responses to racially motivated crimes have been voiced for some years, a more recent focus has been upon the relative under-protection of another marginalised group, the gay community. Derbyshire (1990) notes that the police have been strongly criticised for failing to take steps to protect gay men against violent assault. Whilst gay men in particular have complained of being unfairly targeted by law enforcement (see below), they also feel that the police fail to provide proper protection for gay people who have been victimised. There are no reliable sources of information about homophobic attacks, but there is a strong impression among the gay community that the incidence of such attacks remains high. It remains the case that many victims of ‘gay-bashers’ do not have confidence to come forward to the police partly for fear that they themselves will may be abused, disbelieved or even prosecuted, rather than have their complaints taken seriously. Derbyshire reports three linked sets of problems: ‘The first is that violence against gay people is not taken seriously by the police and... officers often express the attitude that “they had it coming to them”’ (1990:1145). The second is that when assaults are reported either no action is taken or the officers are more concerned with the possibility that the victim has committed and offence. Finally, ‘in the case of the murders of gay men, it is a recurrent criticism that the police act in an insensitive and cavalier fashion toward witnesses, friends or sexual partners of the deceased; have a prurient regard for the victim's sex life; harass men in the victim’s circle; or disclose sensitive or confidential material to employers or the press’ (ibid).

Another area in which the police in a number of countries have been criticised for ‘under protection’ concerns women victims of domestic abuse. The last 20 years or so has seen increasing attention paid to the difficulties faced by women victims of sexual assault or domestic violence within the criminal justice system (see Jones et al. 1994). During the 1980s, there was growing criticism of the way that the police in Britain deal with female victims of sexual or domestic abuse, criticism which reached a high-point following the 1982 BBC Television documentary about Thames Valley police which showed the victim of an
alleged rape being subject to particularly insensitive treatment by interviewing police officers (Edwards, 1994). It is widely accepted that domestic violence and sexual assault between known parties poses extremely complex problems for the police. Investigation of such cases can be hugely time-consuming, and ultimately frustrating for the police in that a number of factors discourage full cooperation by the victim. In particular, such case require sensitive handling of the victim, given that the gathering of evidence often takes place at a time when the victim is still living with, or economically dependent upon, the offender (Edwards, 1994). However, the overwhelming conclusion of research into the policing of domestic violence, both the USA and the UK, has been that the police do not treat victims with the required degree of sympathy and understanding, they do not take a sufficiently serious view of the offence of domestic violence (indeed, they may not regard it as a criminal offence at all), and they may regard the victim as in some way responsible for what has happened to her. In response to growing criticisms of their response to domestic violence, and official government circulars requiring reforms, the police have taken steps to improve policy and practice towards dealing with such offences.

**Over policing**

Whilst members of many marginalised and disadvantaged communities feel under-protected by the police, a parallel difficulty is that these communities often feel ‘over policed’ in that they are more likely to be the targets of adversarial police attention. Research evidence from Europe and North America shows that members of certain groups have a far greater likelihood of having adversarial contact with the police. Whilst much of this work has focused upon policing and ethnic minority groups, it is clear that other social characteristics can also have an important influence on the likelihood of being on the receiving end of police powers. For example, Smith and Gray (1985) observed a large number of police stops and assessed differing factors affecting the police decision to stop. Where there was no specific reason, the criteria that police officers used were ones associated with the chance of getting a result (ie. finding evidence of a criminal act). ‘They tended to choose young males, especially young black males, people who look scruffy or poor; people who have long hair or unconventional dress; and homosexuals’ (Smith and Gray, 1985).

There is a large body of research from both the US and Britain which shows that black people are substantially more likely than white people to be stopped, searched and arrested by the police. The most recent research from Britain suggests that this general pattern continues to be the case. Surveys have consistently shown disproportionate police stop rates of some (but not all) ethnic minority groups. In the US and UK, the primary focus of this has been upon black (African-American or African Caribbean) people, rather than members of other visible minorities. Not only are black people more likely to be stopped by the police, they tend to experience a much higher average number of stops than whites. Most British studies have shown that people of South Asian origin have lower overall stop rates than all ethnic groups (including whites). Local studies show that black people form a much higher proportion of people arrested than they do of the general population (Jones 1997). This pattern varies between different kinds of offence, but is particularly marked for robbery and drug offences. A number of factors might explain these very marked differences in stop and arrest rates.
The most frequently-cited explanation relates to racial discrimination on the part of police officers. A central theme within a large number of studies of police occupational culture has shown that negative, stereotyped and hostile attitudes to black people are rife amongst police officers (this consensus is visible across all the main North American and British studies of policing). Despite almost two decades of official concern about this issue, there is still strong evidence that racial prejudice among working groups of police officers remains remarkably persistent (Graef, 1989; HMIC 1997; HMIC, 1999).

What causes racially-prejudiced attitudes is clearly important from the viewpoint on what can be done practically to counteract them. However, views about the origins of such attitudes differ. Some argue that the police occupation attracts unusually conservative and authoritarian personalities (see for example, Coleman and Gorman 1982). Others argue that police officers simply reflect the prejudices of the social group from which most police recruits are drawn, the manual working class. There is strong evidence that the day-to-day experience of police work in societies characterised by racial disadvantage, in tandem with the strong occupational culture of work colleagues, imparts such prejudices to those recruits who do not initially have them, and reinforces them amongst those who already do (Holdaway 1983, Smith and Gray 1985). A number of studies suggest that police occupational culture tends to reproduce intolerant attitudes. The explanations are clearly not mutually exclusive, and perhaps the most plausible conclusion is that of Reiner (1992) who argued that police prejudice is most likely to be ‘a reflection of the racism prevalent in British society and the social groups from which the police are drawn, as well as the situations in which many police-black encounters occur (themselves the product of racism within Britain)’.

The high levels of stated racial prejudice amongst working groups of police officers strongly suggest that direct discrimination is a key factor behind differential stop and arrest rates. However, it has also been argued that the relationship between attitudes and behaviour is not a straightforward one. For example, some observational studies of police officers (eg. Smith and Gray 1995, Norris et al. 1992) have suggested that despite the apparent pervasiveness of racial prejudice within the police organisation, many police officers appear to interact with black people in a relaxed and unbiased manner. Such studies have been criticised for ignoring the possibility of an ‘observer effect’ upon police behaviour, but nevertheless suggest that we cannot make assumptions about behaviour based purely on stated attitudes. There are other factors aside from direct colour-discrimination which also play a part in explaining differential rates of stop and arrest.

It has been argued that many of the studies finding proportionately higher police stop and arrest rates for black people often fail to control for housing and social characteristics of the area of residence (Jefferson and Walker 1993). They noted that black people are more likely to live in areas of greater social deprivation when compared to whites, which may account for higher stop and arrest rates and different attitudes towards the police. A study in inner city Manchester (Tuck and Southgate, 1981) found little difference between stop and arrest rates based on ethnic group. This may suggest that differential police action is strongly related to class as well as race. In the words of Jefferson and Walker the differences in other surveys ‘are almost certainly accounted for by the fact that whites tend
to live in more well-to-do areas, and are likely to have fewer experiences of the police of any kind (and certainly fewer unpleasant experiences) than non-whites’ (1993: 265).

In relation to higher rates of arrest of black people, two key questions need to be asked. First, is ethnic group, rather than other factors of known significance (such as age, gender, class, demeanour) the central determinant of police behaviour? Second, how far is differential treatment necessarily discriminatory treatment? (Jefferson and Walker 1993). It is difficult to distinguish the ‘race’ effect from the ‘class’ effect in police stops, since higher proportions black people than white are working class. However, given the evidence about the attitudes which characterise police occupational culture it is highly probable that there is strong element of direct racial discrimination. While it is the case that controlling for age, area of residence, and social class considerably reduces the differences between ethnic group in terms of police stop rates, the difference does it not disappear altogether.

As is the case with high relative levels of victimisation, it appears that certain key structural features exert an important influence on the nature of police relationships with some ethnic groups. In particular, the greater likelihood that members of some ethnic minority groups will be poor, unemployed, live in high crime areas etc increases their likelihood of coming into conflict with the police independently of their ethnic group.

A number of studies in the USA have highlighted adversarial relationships between the police and gay people (Bayley, 1974). Poor relationships between the police and gay community in London have been highlighted by GALOP (the Gay London Policing Group). Derbyshire (1990) has noted how police officers stigmatise gay people, often assuming that an offence is being committed when there is no real evidence. There is also a tendency to feel contempt and distaste for gay people, which is used to justify harassment. The enforcement of the Sexual Offences Act 1967 is at the discretion of the police, and it is argued that they exercise this discretion in such a way as to discriminate against the gay community. Particular criticism is made of the police policy of engaging in surveillance operations of public toilets, acting to entrap offenders rather than deter criminal acts. There have been allegations of the police acting as agents provocateurs, and also fabricating evidence. As well as harassment and unfair attention by the police, the gay community receives insufficient protection from the service, as noted above.

**Hostility towards the police**

We have seen that there is strong evidence of hostile attitudes towards some minority groups within police culture. There is equally strong evidence of hostility towards the police on the part of members of such groups. Public satisfaction surveys suggest that black people hold far more negative views of the police than members of other ethnic groups. Satisfaction with the police is a function of a range of factors, and is influenced by who calls the police, why they call the police (in particular whether the incident is ‘crime-related’ or not), and the way in which the police respond (in particular, how seriously they are perceived to take it). Taking ethnicity, the 1988 BCS found that of those who had contacted the police, 14% of whites, 31% of Afro-Caribbeans and 31% of Asians gave them low marks. The differences are large and Skogan suggests that `the aggregate effects of why they contacted the police, the police response, and the character of their encounters, were divisive in nature’. Similarly, in
a series of surveys on public attitudes to the police, conducted at three monthly intervals beginning in August 1991 Southgate and Crisp (1992) found that three quarters of whites thought the police did a ‘very’ or ‘fairly good’ job, whereas only six out of ten Asians and five out of ten Afro-Caribbeans held this view. In addition, the surveys showed that not only did ethnic minorities initiate less contact with the police (the types of contact which are more likely to result in satisfaction), but they were less often satisfied and more often dissatisfied with the results of the contact they did make. Smith (1983a) found a strong correlation between the amount of contact with the police (of any kind), and critical views about the police. Police stops are the main adversarial contact which is associated with critical views of the police. In Britain, there is some limited evidence that black people are less likely to help the police in terms of reporting observed incidents or appearing as a witness in court on the basis of hypothetical questions (Smith 1983a, Jones et al. 1986).

There is little evidence about the attitudes of gay people towards the police, although it is generally accepted that relationships between the police and gay community have tended to be characterised by suspicion and lack of trust. Police forces are increasingly focusing upon quality of service delivery across a range of areas, and are currently being pressured to revise their approach to the gay community, both in terms of responding more effectively to homophobic attacks, and in a more sensitive approach to the policing of public sex environments (HMIC, 1999). Research currently being undertaken by one of the authors had indicated that a substantial number of police forces in England and Wales are making attempts to set up specific consultation arrangements with the gay community in their areas.

More negative attitudes towards the police on the part of some groups within the population may well simply be a reflection of more broadly-based disaffection with society and its institutions. Within this, the police may be targeted as a particular symbol of social authority, but the underlying problem clearly goes deeper than just relationships with the police. The key question here then is how far does the disaffection of particular groups relate to the wider society of which they are a part rather than being specifically related to the way in which they are policed or to some aspect of the police organisation itself.

The outbreaks of serious public disorder in inner-city areas of Britain during the 1980s contributed to a growing sense that, at least among some elements of the population, the legitimacy of the state itself was coming under question. Researchers examined how far negative attitudes towards the police among young black people simply reflected a more generalised negativity towards society as a whole. This research has tended to find that negative views about the police can be explained within a police-specific rather than a ‘generalised disaffection’ framework. For example, Gaskell and Smith (1985) found that young black people actually expressed more positive views than their white counterparts about a range of British institutions such as parliament, local government and the courts. However, these young black people has markedly more negative views about the police, views that were related only indirectly to personal experience of the police. Young black people tended to have views about the police based on shared stereotypes, formed on the basis of information from family, friends, newspapers and television. Similarly, Smith (1991) found that hostility towards the police among some young black people was more ‘akin to a political force: it is part of the assertion of identity by a social and cultural group’. Smith
further found that even among young black people who expressed strongly negative views of the police, there was little evidence of a complete rejection of the police as an institution. In practice, most people accepted the need for a police force, and were prepared to use its services when necessary, even if they remained strongly critical of its actions.

**Involvement in crime and disorder**

One possible explanation for the more adversarial relationships between the police and certain sections of the community is that some populations are more likely to come into conflict with the police through a greater involvement in crime and disorder. Robert Reiner has argued that the disproportionate black representation in the criminal justice system has become ‘the single most vexed, hotly controversial and seemingly intractable issue in the politics of crime, policing and social control’ (1985: 5). He contrasted two positions at the opposite ends of the political spectrum: on the one hand, the suggestion that there is a growing black criminal class (Powell, quoted in Solomos, 1988) and on the other, the suggestion that young black people are being criminalised by a racist criminal justice system. In the middle, The ‘left realists’ (Kinsey, Lea and Young, 1986) have suggested that an interaction between the two processes is the basis for a more thorough (and realistic) explanation. The police perceive the higher rates of attention given to certain groups as justified by higher rates of offending amongst those groups. In both the UK and USA, as we have seen above, black people are far more likely to be stopped, searched or arrested by the police than white people. These patterns are visible at all stages of the criminal justice system, with black people disproportionately convicted and sentenced to prison for criminal offences (see Smith 1997). The degree to which this difference arises from cumulative discrimination at each stage of the criminal justice process, or elevated rates of offending among some ethnic groups, has been hotly contested.

Reiner (1989) argues that the argument about greater black involvement in crime is impossible to resolve conclusively, because of the limitations of crime statistics. Drawing any conclusions in relation to the two distinct positions - criminal over-involvement versus racial discrimination - have therefore to be treated, as Reiner would have it, as ‘tentative speculation’. The most likely interpretation is that prejudice and discrimination by the police and criminal justice system on one hand, and black crime on the other, reinforce and feed off one another in a ‘vicious circle of amplification’ (Reiner 1989: 17). According to Reiner, the basic trigger for this circle is societal and institutionalised racism, which place members of some ethnic minorities in circumstances where they acquire those characteristics upon which ‘normal’ policing bears down most heavily.

Research in the Netherlands on the relationship between the police and ethnic minority people has found similar developments to those in the UK and USA. Bovenkerk (1993) examined new developments in criminality arising from the development of multi-ethnic societies within a broad framework, including not only crimes committed by members of minority groups, but also crimes of racial violence against them. Like other authors, he attributed much of the crime associated with multi-ethnic societies to the interaction effects between various segments of society. He placed the interest in race and crime in a historical context, noting the ‘gloomy predictions’ which were made across Europe during the early days of immigration which were largely based on the US experience and US dominance.
over criminological theory. The author reminded us that ‘the remarkably low crime figures among first generation immigrants have never attracted as much scientific interest as the always-expected second generation explosion’ (1993: 274). Differential recorded crime rates between immigrant groups were interpreted in different ways. From the radical viewpoint, they were presented as police/media inspired moral panics, which underplayed the atypical age and gender distributions of some groups, the effect of social class, and the crime profile of the neighbourhoods in which ethnic minorities tend to live. However, there remains evidence of higher rates of offending. Jungar (1989) found Dutch people of Moroccan or Turkish descent were disproportionately involved in certain kinds of crime, in particular property crimes and violence to the person, even when such factors were taken into account. Bovenkerk concluded that ‘there is evidence of both higher crime rates and discrimination, the problem being to determine the relative contribution of each’ (1989:275).

Although some authors in the UK and US literature do note that it is certain kinds of crime in which recorded rates for some groups seem higher, this often seems to be overlooked in discussions about race and crime. The overall picture is highly dependent upon the kind of offence being considered, and as Bovenkerk found, ethnic minority groups often score disproportionately low on many kinds of offence. For example; ‘How many members of ethnic minorities engage in white collar crime, in fraud or the violation of environmental regulations, how many of them can be held responsible for acts of corporate crime?’ Bovenkerk noted some parallels with the emancipation hypothesis; that as women have participated more fully in public life, the labour market and other spheres, their crime profile has become more similar to that of men. The same interpretation can be applied to differences in crime rates between ethnic minorities and white people.

It would not be surprising if there were higher overall rates of criminal offending amongst some ethnic groups, given the link between certain kinds of crime, deprivation and unemployment, and the over-representation of black people in such disadvantaged groups. Thus, there is a vicious circle in which both police and black youth deviance are amplified:

Police enter encounters expecting trouble and act aggressively to pre-empt it. Black youth similarly expect trouble and create the necessary (‘disrespectful’) mind set to cope. The resulting ‘trouble’ demonstrates well how the increased racist oppression of a society in crisis is reproduced, in street level encounters, between the state’s agents and a chosen folk devil, in what can be a deadly dynamic of mutual distrust, tension, hostility, and, eventually, hatred (Jefferson, 1987: 537).

Evidence from a Home Office study of crime and young people (Graham and Bowling, 1995) questioned the argument that black people are disproportionately involved in crime. The study found that white and Caribbean respondents had very similar rates of overall participation in offending, and each of the South Asian groups had substantially lower rates of participation. The findings were broadly consistent across offence type. There was, however, wide variation in the types of offences committed by each group. Whites, for example, were considerably more likely to be involved in fraud and theft from the
workplace. Respondents from ethnic minority groups were significantly less likely than whites to have used drugs.

Turning to the gay community, it is true that in Britain and many other countries, the criminal law has provided a framework which makes it likely that high proportions of gay men will commit sexual offences. The Sexual Offences Act 1967 provides that ‘homosexual acts’ between males may still be offences unless certain conditions are observed. Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 prevented the ‘promotion’ of homosexuality (Newburn, 1991), and Section 31 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 made provision for the imposition of harsher sentences on those convicted of ‘serious sexual offences’. Perhaps unsurprisingly in this context, it is still argued that many police officers see homosexuality as synonymous with criminality, and as a legitimate target for suspicion. McKenzie (1993) linked the resistance to the notion of openly homosexual officers in the police force to a number of factors; ignorance about sexual orientation and fear of HIV, concerns about ‘corruption’, and associations with illegal sexual behaviour.

3. Improving the policing of marginalised communities

Societal reform
Policing does not occur in a vacuum, and in a society characterised by institutionalised oppression, it is perhaps inevitable that reforms which focus upon the police organisation alone will ultimately be superficial measures which fail to address fundamental sources of disaffection and hostility. Where fundamental structural inequalities exist, large scale social, political or cultural reform is likely to be required. This applies most obviously in the case of fundamentally divided societies, such as pre-democracy South Africa, or, to a lesser extent, Northern Ireland. However, even in the case of more stable liberal democracies, it remains important to understand the degree to which the problems and prejudices of ‘wider society’ are simply reflected in the policies and practices of policing organisations. Without attempting to divorce the practice of policing from the realities of stratified unequal societies, it is important to note that certain styles or aspects of policing can exacerbate already-present sources of inequality and conflict and lead conflict to become entrenched and endemic. As Reiner (1992: 479) has argued: ‘The police are reproducers rather than creators of social injustice, although their prejudices may amplify it’. It is to this amplification effect that reformers must address their efforts.

In some societies, such as pre-democracy South Africa, the conflictual relations were so deeply-institutionalised that substantial reforms within the then existing political context were unthinkable. To a lesser degree, the example of Northern Ireland shows that police reform is severely constrained by the wider political context. The problems faced by liberal democratic societies in which there is increasing alienation of certain sections of its population are not unrelated to the conditions for reform in divided societies. In all cases it is important to recognise the basis of problematic relationships and introduce reforms which are relevant to them. In this section we consider a range of responses to problematic relationships between policing and deprived communities. In general, such responses have attempted to increase the equitable distribution of policing services, to improve the quality of service of policing to marginalised communities, and ultimately reduce the basis for hostility.
It is important to note that developments in wider society have crucially impacted upon the relationships between the police and marginalised communities. It is generally accepted that prejudice and discrimination in wider society act as the crucial trigger which sets the vicious circle of discrimination-alienation-hostility-offending into operation. In Britain, although on many indicators the national reached unprecedented prosperity by the 1990s, it was clear that this prosperity was not equally shared. From the 1950s to the 1970s, economic inequality as measured by the distribution of income increased markedly. Whilst average incomes have continued to rise, low income households have become ever more geographically concentrated in certain areas, leading to concern about the social exclusion of particular disadvantaged groups who tended to suffer from a linked set of social disadvantages. Concern about ethnic minorities has been a key part of the discussion on social exclusion. However, there was some evidence at the end of the 1980s of improvements in the socio-economic circumstances of some groups (Jones 1993). However, these did not include the ‘black’ groups who tend to be the focus of problematic relationships with the police. Research has shown that Muslim Asian people - in particular Pakistanis and Bangladeshis - on average live in substantially poorer conditions than any other ethnic groups. On a more positive note, whilst the problem of racism clearly persists, there is evidence that social attitudes towards ethnicity and sexuality are becoming more informed and less conservative. This must have some impact upon the police organisation in the longer term.

**Self-policing initiatives**

In some societies, one response to the inadequate protection afforded by the state police has been for marginalised communities to organise their own forms of policing. This has been particularly evident in fundamentally divided societies, where because of their wider political role, the police may not be used for dealing with routine policing of ‘ordinary crime’ and order maintenance. For example, there has been a long tradition in South African black communities of vigilantism, self-policing and informal social ordering (Brogden and Shearing 1993). Similarly, in relation to Northern Ireland, Hillyard (1997) described the rise of self-policing forms in the areas where the RUC were largely absent from routine policing activities. Clearly, such areas still suffer ‘normal’ crime, but the ability (and the inclination) of the RUC to do anything about such crime is, he argued, strictly limited.

Within liberal democracies, until fairly recently most commentators assumed that policing was an essential state monopoly. However, recent decades have seen a growing recognition of the ‘limits of the sovereign state’ in respect of crime control and security (Garland 1996). Successive governments have employed ‘responsibilization strategies’ in response to the growing recognition that the state alone cannot, and should not, bear exclusive responsibility for the crime control and for the maintenance of personal security. Central to such governmental strategies are appeals to ‘community’ which seek to emphasise the responsibilities of ordinary citizens in the maintenance of order and the prevention and detection of crime.

It is undoubtedly true that policing has been subjected to strategies of dispersal, one aim of which has been to enhance citizen participation. This much is confirmed in a recent
comment about the development of citizen patrol and neighbourhood watch in North America: ‘While once [volunteer policing] was thought of as vigilantism, it is now popular with the public and actively encouraged by the police’ (Bayley and Shearing 1996: 587). In Britain it is also clear that those who once regarded themselves as passive recipients of a public service are now prepared to contemplate alternative modes of service delivery. A 1993 MORI poll found that 55 per cent of respondents supported residents setting up, or paying for, local security patrols, while 27 per cent expressed a willingness to take part in such patrols (Police Review 6th August 1993).

Yet, the more citizens participate in the dispersed provision of security, the more policymakers will be faced with dilemmas about the legitimate boundaries of citizenship. In the field of crime control this process of devolution has involved a wide range of activities geared towards increasing public participation, though the nature of this participation varies. Thus, in the 1980s indirect participation (through involvement in consultative groups and crime prevention panels) was encouraged, while in the 1990s more direct forms of participation (through membership of new forms of neighbourhood watch and through the recruitment of an enlarged Special Constabulary) was emphasised. Attention has also been focused on ‘street-level’ policing through the provision of residential patrols by commercial security companies (Milne 1997; Jenkins 1998) and through citizens’ direct membership of street patrols and vigilante groups. More recently, the Labour Government has invested in Community Safety initiatives where responsibility for security lies with local partnerships composed of statutory, voluntary and commercial agencies.

The most visible form of ‘self-policing’ emerging in western democracies has been the growing tendency of individuals and organisations to pay for their own policing, resulting in a burgeoning private security industry (Johnston 1992, Jones and Newburn 1998). The growth of private security has raised the spectre of a new feudalism (Shearing 1992) in which private providers supply policing to those who can afford it, whilst the public police are increasingly drawn into conflict with the criminalised poor in deprived and dangerous urban areas (Davis, 1990). In the USA, Bayley and Shearing (1996) highlighted what they see as a growing ‘dualism’ in the provision of policing, a key part of which is the growth of privatised forms of security provision. They argue that the restructuring of policing poses significant problems for the equitable distribution of policing. In short, poorer communities are excluded from the ‘security market’ and increasingly subject to harsher forms of policing by the public police, whereas richer communities purchase their own policing from private providers. Other research in the USA has highlighted the growth of privatised ‘gated communities’ whereby middle and higher income residents retreat behind the walls of privatised communities, and contract in their own security and other services (Blakely and Snyder 1995). This exacerbates the disadvantage of poorer residents, by displacing crime and disorder further towards deprived areas, and by reducing available resources for publicly-provided services in these municipalities.

For humane systems of just, equitable policing to develop, Bayley and Shearing argued that poorer communities need to be enabled to participate in the ‘market’ for security. Thus, they argued that funding for policing should be reallocated to allow block grants to be given to poor communities, perhaps under a ‘voucher’ system, to allow them to purchase policing
services from a range of providers, both public and private. This is, in effect, an explicit recognition of the mixed economy in policing. However, other authors continue to argue that many aspects of policing are inherently ‘public’ goods (Jones and Newburn 1998, Loader 1997) and that there remain significant problems with a model based primarily on market provision, even with the redistributive reforms suggested by Bayley and Shearing.

**Community policing**

Whilst debate continues about the degree to which problems with public policing are contributing to the growth of self-provision and other policing forms, a significant amount of energy continues to be devoted to the reform of public policing organisations. One of the key reforms which continues to play a central part in police rhetoric, on both sides of the Atlantic, is the development of what is termed ‘community policing’. This has involved attempts both to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the police but also, and more importantly, to bring the police closer to the communities they police. As crime continued to rise, despite the increase in resources devoted to policing in the early 1980s, one of the key messages emanating from the police was they could not be expected to carry responsibility for the prevention of crime unaided. As a result, increasing emphasis came to placed upon the ‘community’ both in relation to policing generally and, more specifically, in relation to crime prevention (cf Willmott, 1987). In Britain, the development of ‘community-policing’ approaches is most closely associated with John Alderson, the one-time Chief Constable of Devon and Cornwall, who emphasised the importance of close relationships between police and public and, consequently, the broad service role of his constabulary (Alderson, 1979). Community-focused policing initiatives were many and varied during the 1980s, and although little rigorously collected evidence is available, there is little to suggest that much success has been achieved.

In the US the origins of community policing lie in a number of attempts to repair what were perceived to be poor, and declining, police-minority relations. The whole history of community policing has been characterised by definitional problems; there is rarely agreement about what should be included under its rubric. Its popularity, as Eck and Rosenbaum (1994) have put it, derives in part from the fact that it is a plastic concept, meaning different things to different people at different times. Fielding (1995:25) suggests three conceptual possibilities for community policing: that ‘it may mean a contrast to rapid response and enforcement-oriented policing, so that constables are closer to the community and can represent its norms; a process by which crime control is shared with the public, as in neighbourhood watch; or as a means of developing communication with the public and interest groups’.

Given the pliability of the term it is perhaps not surprising that there is little hard and fast information that allows developments of this order to be assessed. The majority of evaluations that have been undertaken in the UK have been disappointing and have shown considerable resistance within forces to the types of organisational restructuring and changes in working practices demanded by such a new philosophy of policing (Dixon and Stanko, 1994). Much of the research on community-based policing initiatives has suggested that a number of the key problems have been associated with implementation; the majority of problems that have been identified have stemmed from programme failure (Hope, 1985).
rather than, it is argued, fundamental flaws in the philosophy that underpins them. Smith (1987) goes further than this and identifies five sets of problems which he suggests underlie the relatively poor results of community policing. These are that: ‘police-initiated activity is mostly adversarial; consensus-building activity is hard to plan; policing impinges on different sections of the community in contrasting ways; decentralisation conflicts with the universal framework of law; formal controls are hard to control formally; and the ideal of community cannot cope with the distribution of resources’ (Smith, 1987:61). However, despite the limited results that have been achieved thus far, there remains much faith in the community policing model. Willmott in his introduction to a collection of quite critical pieces about community policing nevertheless argues that ‘there is no real alternative to a community-based approach to policing’ (Willmott, 1987:4) and Fielding argues that: ‘the point is not that community policing routinely and generally delivers what is promised of it, but that, under some circumstances and in certain respects, some community police did deliver’ (Fielding, 1995:197).

**Improved accountability of public policing**

It may well be that inequitable or poor policing of marginalised communities reflects ineffective mechanisms of police accountability, so that the voices of members of such communities remain unrecognised by the police policy-making process. The need for policing to be broadly congruent with the needs and wishes of the community has been recognised for many years, with the debate surrounding police accountability reaching a height during the 1980s. In England and Wales, radical authors argued that the police needed to be made more directly accountable to local representative bodies, with special provision for inclusion of the voices of marginalised or disadvantaged communities (Jefferson and Grimshaw 1984). However, these kinds of models have been criticised for failing to include adequate safeguards to ensure proper law enforcement and to prevent control over policing by partisan interests (Jones et al. 1994). As noted at the beginning of this paper, the concept of ‘community’ is an extremely slippery one, and in reality there is not one community but many, often making conflicting demands upon the police.

With regard to the specific minorities in question, there is strong evidence that certain policing policies and practices have tended to bring the police into more conflict with the black community. This was particularly apparent prior to the Brixton disorders in 1981, when a major stop-and-search operation randomly targeted black youths, and heightened hostility and tension. Stop-and-search and its disproportionate impact on black youth continues to be a source of tension between the police and black community. With regard to racial attacks and harassment, we noted above that the police have also been criticised for what is seen as a failure to take effective action against these crimes. It is possible to argue that if the police were properly accountable to the community, then they would be forced to take appropriate action to review the use of policies such as stop and search, and to respond more positively as an organisation to racial attacks.

There is a large body of research on police accountability, and the main conclusion seems to have been that the opportunities for external bodies to influence the pattern of policing are rather limited. This is related primarily to the nature of police-work, which is an often hidden process taking place away from the gaze of both senior police managers and external
bodies. One of the key features of the police organisation is that discretion increases at the lower ends of the hierarchy. In both US and UK police systems there is a degree of accountability to external bodies. In England and Wales, chief constables is ostensibly accountable to a police authority consisting of a combination of elected representatives and appointed ‘experts’ for the policing in his/her area. Despite attempts to bolster the influence of police authorities, it appears that the chief constable remains relatively autonomous in deciding the operational policy of the force, and in any case, minority representation on external bodies is rather low. In the US, a more direct form of accountability exists in city police departments where the chief of police is answerable to an elected mayor, and be removed from office relatively easily. The political mobilisation of the black population in many US cities has resulted in growing black influence in local government, and some commentators have argued that this has led to a noticeable improvement in police-black relations in many cities (Sherman, 1983). Since the mid-1980s, there have been growing pressures upon the police to develop consultative mechanisms to provide a regular forum for discussion of policing and an exchange of views with local communities. In recent years, specific consultative mechanisms have been developed to liaise with particular marginalised communities, such as ethnic minorities or the gay and lesbian community. Research on police consultative committees has suggested that in the past they have tended to be unlikely to include members of groups who tend to be critical of the police, and have too few resources and experience to effectively influence local policing policy. This is not to underplay the symbolic importance of such committees, which show some attempt by the police to listen to the views of the community. More significant in recent years have been attempts by the police organisation to adapt standard market research techniques to tap into views of ‘hard-to-reach’ populations. There is currently a growing programme of activity within forces, in which such developments as citizen’s panels, focus groups, and regular customer surveys, are increasingly being used to shape and inform policing priorities (Elliot and Nicholls, 1996).

Changing organisational culture
As noted before, the over-policing and under-protection of some communities has been associated with the pervasiveness of prejudiced attitudes within the police organisation. In general, attempts to address the negative aspects of police occupational culture have focused upon two main types of approach. The first involves trying to improve recruitment procedures in order to remove prejudiced individuals at an early stage in the process, and to increase numbers of police officers from specific minority groups. The second type of approach involves the introduction of a range of training programmes designed to challenge and change prejudiced attitudes among serving officers and new recruits.

In Britain, concerns about the relatively low levels of ethnic minority representation in police forces dates back over two decades, but gathered pace following the inner-city disturbances of the early and mid-1980s. A raft of initiatives have been introduced to try to encourage the recruitment of more ethnic minority officers. For example, special recruitment drives have been targeted on areas of high ethnic minority population, forces have removed minimum height requirements which indirectly discriminated against some ethnic groups, and others have introduced special access courses to increase numbers of ethnic minority people who pass the initial recruitment test. Despite a range of activities, progress has been rather slow,
and by the late 1990s, ethnic minorities remain significantly under-represented in British police forces. In the aftermath of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry (Macpherson 1999) the Home Secretary has announced that police forces in England and Wales will be required to meet specific targets for recruitment of ethnic minority officers. Research has suggested that one of the key factors discouraging applications to the police from ethnic minority communities is the widespread expectation of racial prejudice from future colleagues. These expectations are largely supported by research into the experiences of ethnic minority police officers (Holdaway 1996). Nevertheless, many ethnic minority officers oppose positive discrimination fearing that such developments will stigmatise them as second class police officers in the organisation. Increased recruitment of ethnic minority officers will therefore crucially depend on improved race relations generally within the police organisation and better relationships with local black and Asian communities. In any case, it is important not to place too much hope in the effects of an increased representation of ethnic minority officers. This is probably best justified as a self-evident good in itself (ie. that police forces should broadly represent a cross-section of the communities that they have to police), and as part of improving equal opportunities in employment in general for ethnic minority people. Research suggests that increased recruitment of ethnic minorities (or for that matter, other groups such as women or gay people) would have to be done at very significant levels indeed before any effect on occupational culture could be detected. Such developments alone are unlikely to bring about significant improvements in the relationship between policing and marginalised communities such as some ethnic minority groups. For example, studies have shown how officers who are members of stigmatised groups feel marginalised by the dominant working culture of their colleagues tend to adopt coping strategies. Paradoxically, these may involve an exaggerated embracing of some of the more negative aspects of occupational culture. Thus, there are examples of female officers being ‘tougher’ on rape victims in order to prove themselves to cynical male colleagues, and of black officers being derogatory about fellow black people. Over half of the gay police officers interviewed by Burke (1993) reported that they were leading double-lives. This, naturally, leads to considerable tensions for the officers concerned. Indeed, some lead ‘double-double’ lives because of mistrust from both their fellow officers and other members of the gay community.

In terms of training, there has been a general trend in police forces in Europe and the USA, visible across the last 20 years or so, of training oriented around enforcement and the criminal law, and towards a more socially aware interpretation of the police role. Especially since the 1980s, a range of training initiatives have been introduced, many of which attempt to address prejudice and ignorance and make officers more culturally aware. Police responses to criticism of prejudiced attitudes towards women, ethnic minorities or gay people have been largely based around introducing training designed to counter such views and perceptions. There is a large body of literature examining the details and effects of such training. Although beneficial in many respects, we should perhaps caution against expecting too much from training alone in terms of challenging occupational culture. In particular, training tends to individualise prejudice, and view it as primarily a product of personal dispositions that the individual brings to the job. In fact, research on cop culture presents such prejudice as a more complex collective phenomenon, being produced and entrenched by the practice of working within groups of fellow police officers in a socially stratified
society. Although better training may play an important part in improving service delivery, training cannot be effective in isolation from wider organisational commitment within a positive framework of equal opportunities. Finally, we should again note that there is no simple or direct relationship between attitudes and behaviour. Even if training is successful in improving stated police attitudes towards marginalised communities, this will not automatically translate into improved behaviour towards them.

**Redress**

Another possible way of improving police approaches towards marginalised minorities concerns having effective systems of redress against the police misconduct. Much attention in Britain has focused upon the formal system of police complaints. In common with many Western police complaints systems, that in England and Wales has been criticised as having only a limited and indirect impact on the police organisation. They key feature of complaints systems is that they tend to mimic the criminal justice system in being individualistically-based. They operate reactively to complaints from individuals, and try to solve problems by blaming and punishing individual officers. Critics have argued that such systems need to find ways of impacting more directly upon the police organisation, rather than simply upon the individuals within it (Maguire and Corbett, 1991). In Britain, the Police Complaints Authority (PCA) was established by the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. This is an independent body that supervises the conduct of investigations into the more serious complaints of police misconduct. Certain incidents, such as deaths in police custody, or the use of lethal force by police officers, are automatically subject to PCA investigation. It can also comment on a regular basis upon certain police practices and policies. Because the standard of proof was for many years that a case must be proved beyond reasonable doubt, it was extremely difficult to substantiate a case against a police officer. This changed to a standard of ‘reasonableness’ and this has led to an increase in substantiation rates. Research into the police complaints system has cast doubt upon the whether it actually applied sanctions which genuinely deter rude or overly-aggressive behaviour by police officers. Most police-public encounters continue to occur in low-visibility situations, and complainants and potential witnesses still tend to be people with low social standing. The system is still perceived as police-dominated, since the actual investigation itself is conducted by police officers, albeit with independent supervision.

Regarding use of the police complaints system by marginalised communities, the only information available relates to ethnic minority people. Surveys have suggested that the level of knowledge about the complaints system is lower among ethnic minorities than among white people (Reiner, 1992). There is also evidence that ethnic minorities have less confidence in the effectiveness and impartiality of the system, and that complaints by black people tend to have a lower substantiation rate than complaints from other ethnic groups (although rates for all groups are low).

Another form of redress, and one which is increasingly used in Britain and the USA over recent decades, is civil litigation. This trend has been cited as a major reason behind improvements in police behaviour towards ethnic minority groups in the US (Sherman, 1983). In Britain, there is a growing tendency for people who feel they have been mistreated by the police, to take legal action rather than use the formal complaints system. Large
amounts of money have been paid to complainants by police forces, most particularly the Metropolitan Police, either in civil damages or out-of-court settlements. If high profile damages cases continue to be successfully pursued by complainants from minority groups, this may have the effect of further pressuring the police service into organisational reform. In addition, there have been a number of high profile tribunal cases in which black officers and women officers have taken their forces to tribunal alleging racial or sex discrimination. Again, a large number of these cases have been settled out of court. Whilst it remains the case that legal redress is possible for only a few, given the amount of resources that legal representation may cost, this may be a growing avenue of redress in the future.

4. Conclusions
There is clear evidence of problematic relationships between the police and disadvantaged communities in western democracies. This partly reflects structural inequalities in wider society; as Reiner (1992: 101) points out, ‘police activity has always borne most heavily on the economically marginal elements in society’. In the latter part of the 20th Century, we have seen how groups who are also marginalised in other ways - in particular those who suffer from wider disadvantage related to gender, ethnic group or sexual orientation - may be inadequately-protected and/or over-targeted by the police. The view that many of the problems of policing are shaped by factors outside the direct domain of the police organisation has also been emphasised by other authors. For example, Cooper writes with regard to the conflictual relationships between the police and residents in deprived urban areas in the US: ‘The police are but a cog in a much larger wheel. As goes the wheel, so go the police...the police, like the people of the ghetto, are locked into a social constellation that predicts, if not requires, a certain behaviour from them’. Thus, an essential precondition for improved relationships between the police and many marginalised communities is a reduction of sources of inequality and disadvantage in society as a whole. However, this is not to argue that significant improvements are possible within the framework of policing alone. There is clear evidence that the police continue to impact unequally on certain sections of society. In particular, attention continues to focus upon the disproportionate stopping and arresting of young black men, and inadequacies in the police response to racial and homophobic attacks. The strong evidence of past studies of police culture suggest that direct discrimination continues to be an important factor in such patterns, and that prejudiced attitudes tend to be fostered and entrenched by occupational cultures and the daily experience of policework in unequal societies. Whilst major improvements in police relationships with marginalised communities lie in the easing of antagonism in other parts of society, we have seen a number of developments intended to address problematic relationships. Although much faith has been placed in new forms of recruitment procedure and better training (and more of it), taken alone research suggests that these reforms can only have a rather marginal impact in changing police culture, although are clearly beneficial in other ways, in particular in their symbolic significance. However, such developments need to be part of a broader commitment to equal opportunities within the police service, and in particular better efforts to control and shape the pattern of policing, in order to improve service delivery to disadvantaged groups, and to reduce as far as possible the number of adversarial contacts between the police and members of such groups.
References


Hope (1996)


