BALANCING OVER- AND UNDERPOLICING IN DEALING WITH MULTIPLE COMMUNITIES

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MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

How does Community Policing does (not) take shape in everyday interactions between the police and ethnic minorities?
How interactions are perceived by both parties (police & ethnic minorities), which expectations they have & to what extent these are congruent with CP, which possibilities and problems they see concerning CP in this context?

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

Social constructionism: looking at who calls 'something' a (social) problem and how they define (and explain) this problem (Burr, 2003, Clarke, 2006). Assumption that this construction manifests itself in practice and affects social (inter)action.
Reformulating our research question:
How (& Why) police officers build up their view of the world & people and categorise & label on the basis of these constructions? How does this meaning attribution affects social action?

METHODOLOGY

Police
Interviews: Perceptions, Expectations towards CP & EM
Observations: Routine tasks/incidents
Police on the beat
Intervention teams

Ethnic Minorities
Interviews: Perceptions, Expectations towards CP & P

Roundtable Police
Ethnic Minorities
CP= Community Policing; EM= Ethnic Minorities; P = Police
SELECTED SITES

5 x 1 case study in 1 neighbourhood in 1 police zone

Criteria for the selection of 5 neighbourhoods:
1. Police zones in both the Flemish (2) and the French (2) part of Belgium + Brussels (1)
2. Degree of urbanization of the police zones meaning big (approx. 200,000 inhabitants) versus smaller cities (approx. 50,000 inhabitants)
3. Agreement of the Police Chief to do the research
4. Neighbourhoods with different migration flows (short versus long residence history)
5. Is it researchable? Analysis of the context taking into account the work area of the policemen on the beat, the heterogeneous nature of the neighbourhoods & the social sector being active in the neighbourhood.

Impression of the neighbourhoods being studied...

MAIN FINDING

Visual representation of COP –
Poor relationship of police / community

IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

1. 'Over and under policing' of groups, not neighbourhoods
2. 'Over policing' of regular (tough) costumers and not along ethnic boundaries
3. 'Over and under policing' are two sides of the same coin
4. Aversion to the COP discourse, yet policemen/women are still acting in accordance with it
5. There is a complex relationship between internal representation and approach in the field
**THE CHALLENGE OF COMMUNITY POLICING**

Visual representation of COP –

1. Poor relationship of police / community
2. Optimal relationship of police / community

**OVERPOLICING UNDERPOLICING**

- **Contacts with?**
  - Known groups
  - Tangible
- **Images?**
  - Labeling, categories
  - Lack of context information
  - Clichés
- **Context information**
  - Pessimism, suspicious, dominant negative perception
- **Way of acting?**
  - Choice out of different practices
  - Fall back on consensus approach, leans closely to underlying perceptions
  - Differentiated approach
  - Less differentiation

**SUPPORT FOR DECISION MAKING**

1. Validating knowledge & approaches in the field of known problematic communities.
2. Facilitating and stimulating knowledge on lesser known (problematic) communities.
3. Two-way communication between communities and the police.
4. Reconsidering community policing.