

ETHNIC AND RACIAL MINORITIES AND THE POLICE: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this literature review, which is primarily based on British research (although an abundance of international data is provided), is to look at the available research on the issues relating to ethnic and racial minorities, and the police, and to provide an overview of what is really known about them. The review starts with the practice of 'stop and search' and continues with arrests, cautions, bail/pre-trial detention before moving on to the police response to the victimisation of minorities, the victimisation of minorities by the police, and the situation with minorities as employees in the police.

Introduction

Since World War II there has been a consistently high level of suspects and prisoners drawn from ethnic and racial minorities all over the world. The over-representation of these groups is so high that, Bosworth (2000: 114) argues, 'there is a troubling relationship between "race" and ethnicity, and punishment . . . despite vast cultural differences'. The level of suspects and prisoners can be explained partly by interaction between the minorities and agencies of the criminal justice system, particularly the police who are the gatekeepers of the process. In Britain a differential treatment of ethnic minorities and especially black people has caused a less favourable attitude towards the police (see Jefferson & Walker, 1993) and a mutual hostility between the two parts to develop. Primarily this differential treatment is a result of the immigration policy of the 1940s and 1950s that created an ideological climate identifying black people as dangerous and likely to undermine British cultural traditions. However, such differential treatment on the part of the police is both a cause and effect of this hostile interaction, the root of a vicious cycle having started years ago with certain practices, for example, the publication of statistics representing black people as heavily involved in violent crime (Lea & Young, 1984), and the heavy policing of major cultural events such as the Notting Hill carnival in 1976, which resulted in a confrontation between

black youth and the police (Solomos, 1988). Moreover, the highly visible presence of police officers in black neighbourhoods, the over-policing of black offences, as well as the under-policing of black victimisation by racist attacks, all created an environment of mistrust and non-acceptance of the police by the black communities (Brogden, Jefferson & Walklate, 1988). Also in the 1970s, and after the media's having established a deterministic link between black youth and 'mugging', 'hard policing' activities were directed towards unemployed black youth in order to turn them into 'productive individuals' (Hall *et al.*, 1978) and stop them from 'giving the area a bad name' (Solomos, 1993: 120), as it was thought by the police.

In other countries the over-policing of ethnic minorities is pervasive. In France, for example, a particular style of policing has been developed, which has been applied especially to North Africans from the ex-French colonies (Carr-Hill, 1987), and in Australia, the police have always acquired great powers beyond the limits of the criminal law when it comes to the policing of the Aboriginal people (Thorpe, 1987). The crucial question that arises at this point is: are minority people the subject of disproportionate police attention because of the nature of policing and the stereotypical and discriminatory action of police officers or because of wider racism within the society? Criminological research especially in the industrially advanced western world is in a position to show quite clearly that the root of the hostile relationship between minorities and the police is embedded in the social structure (Holmes, 2000: 343-4; see also Jackson & Carroll, 1981). There may be, however, cases in which police officers are racially prejudiced as, for example, in the Netherlands where a number of police officers were members of the extreme right-wing political party (Junger, 1989). Many accounts can be provided but it seems probable that a clear answer to the above question 'will remain out of empirical reach' (Phillips & Bowling, 2002: 612). The best way for the debate on ethnicity, 'race', crime and policing to be approached is by comparing and contrasting the three ideological positions of academics (especially in Britain) on the topic: the radical, the liberal and the left-realist. According to the radical position any relationship between crime and minorities is of little significance when compared to the crimes of the powerful groups. Clearly having received a dose of Marxist doctrines, the radical position attributes the minority crime rates, and in consequence the treatment of minorities, to a racist and oppressive police force (Gilroy, 1982, 1987; Hall *et al.*, 1978). The liberal perspective

suggests that there is indeed discrimination towards minorities among the police (and the criminal justice system in general); however, the Afro-Caribbean crime rate has an important role to play in this interaction (Smith, 1994). Finally, the left-realist approach is based on neither racist police (and the criminal justice system) nor high crime rates for Afro-Caribbeans. It attempts to synthesise the available evidence by accepting that the minority (Afro-Caribbean) crime rate is higher than the white crime rate but seeing this as a result of both police prejudice and racism, and the harsher socio-economic conditions of the Afro-Caribbean, which in turn create a situation amplified by the Afro-Caribbean subculture (Lea & Young, 1984). There is evidence, for example, showing that young black people are very often charged with public order offences 'committed' after the police arrive at the scene (Briggs, 1995). All three positions, however, are technical shifting through the insufficient and scanty evidence available.

The purpose of this article is not to provide definite and clear answers relating to the issues of ethnicity, 'race' and the police but to look at the available international research, and provide an overview of what is really known about them. The rationale for providing (and sometimes comparing) data from different countries is simple. Although the same minorities surveyed do not necessarily live in the countries of the western world, the troubled relationship between minorities and the police, and the trend of persecution and exclusion remain the same. Whether Afro-Caribbean, black, Asian, Aboriginal, Moroccan, Turkish and/or Gypsy, all these groups have something in common. Although they belong in different types of 'ethnic-making situations' (Fenton, 1999: 32), they constitute the 'Others' who have been identified with danger, fear and insecurity, and in consequence have become the focus of attention of the police. This is why, as Tonry (1997) suggests, the combination of data and accounts for both ethnic and racial minorities can teach us a great deal on the topic. In this attempt at an overview a number of limitations can be observed which ought to be mentioned at this point. First, the article does not include literature from both English-speaking and non-English speaking countries in equal amounts because of language limitations. Second, there is no available data for every subsection and from every country. In this way, although, for example, there is some information given for police 'stop and search' of minorities in the United States, no information is available on caution and minorities in the particular country. Third, there is the problem of the focus on

certain minorities in every country, their classification, and the mode of collecting the data in different countries. Official statistics on minorities focus on certain groups in different countries. In Britain, for example, official statistics focus primarily on Afro-Caribbeans and Asians, in the United States on black people, and in Canada and Australia on the aboriginal populations. This focus on certain groups has caused several problems for the study of less visible groups, who are classified in very 'abstract' and 'undefinable groups with no common lineage' (Russell, 2001: 157–8; see also Marshall Haen, 1998). As a consequence very little is known, for example, about the Pacific Islanders in the United States, the black minority in Canada, or the non-Aboriginal black population in Australia. Finally, a very important (negative) feature of the official statistics that obstruct us from making viable and useful international comparisons is that each country has its own way of classifying minorities. For example, in Britain there are the Afro-Caribbeans, in the United States the blacks, in Australia the Aborigines, and in Switzerland the non-resident foreigners (Killias, 1997).

Police 'Stop and Search' of Minorities

A significant aspect of police work is that police officers exercise their discretion, and this is thought to account for the over-representation of people from ethnic and racial minorities in the criminal justice system through the process of 'stop and search'. In Britain, this practice, whose 'powers are authorised by the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984' (Bowling & Phillips, 2002: 139), appears to be directly linked to the perception of being treated unequally, and the reduced confidence people from ethnic minorities have for the police (Miller, Bland & Quinton, 2000). It is clear that in most, though not all, of the studies Afro-Caribbean people are more likely to be stopped and searched by the police. The first systematic Home Office study on the experiences of black people with the police did not present any pattern of discrimination in the practice of 'stop and search' (Tuck & Southgate, 1981). According to Smith (1997), however, this study did not reach statistically significant results owing to the small sample used. Moreover, Walker (1987) suggests that Tuck and Southgate's study failed to produce reliable findings owing to the research's having been carried out in a small and heterogeneous area. In 1983, however, a Home Office study showed that the stops of black people, and specifically black youth, in two metropolitan and two provincial police

stations were much higher in proportion to those of the total population (Willis, 1983). Two years later a Policy Studies Institute report verified the pattern by showing that 24% of the people in London who had been stopped by the police in a vehicle or on foot in the 12 months prior to the survey were West Indians, as opposed to only 17% who were white (Smith & Gray, 1985). Skogan's study, which was based on the 1988 British Crime Survey (BCS) findings, also found that Afro-Caribbean people accounted for 20% of those stopped by the police, a significant percentage, even when other socio-economic and demographic variables were controlled (Skogan, 1990; see also Briggs, 1995). It was also found that Asians were almost as likely as white people to be stopped (14% and 15% respectively).

Similar findings come as a result of more recent research. A Home Office study in 2000 showed that out of the 800,000 'stop and searches' that were recorded in 1999/2000, 8% involved black suspects, and 4% Asian suspects. Overall black people were five times more likely to be stopped and searched by the police, even though there were great variations between police forces. In Northumbria, for example, the number of stop and searches of black people was much lower than that for whites (Home Office, 2000). Moreover, Clancy *et al.* (2001) found that 39% of Afro-Caribbean male respondents aged 16–29 were stopped in vehicles by the police as opposed to 32% of Indians, 27% of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, and only 25% of whites. However, what was important in Clancy *et al.*'s study was the use of a demographic model to show whether other variables are correlated to being stopped on foot and while driving. Specifically, being under 25 years and being male, and owning a car and being under 25, were the first two factors associated with being stopped on foot and while driving, respectively. Being black, however, is associated with being stopped while driving to a larger extent than other ethnic groups (see Table 1).

In other countries the trends are almost identical. In the United States the majority of the people believe that the practice of 'stop and search' is directed against minority motorists, because officers think this is more effective for getting results (Gallup Poll, 1999 cited in Zingraff, Smith and Tomaskovic-Devey, 2000). This argument brings to mind Chigwada-Bailey's suggestion that:

the practice of stop and search cannot be separated from the presumption that the vast majority of crimes is committed by

Table 1 Variables predicting foot stops and car stops, 1999

2000 BCS	
1. Being aged under 25	1. Owning a car
2. Being male	2. Being aged under 25
3. Going out after dark more than three times per week	3. Being black
4. Owning a car (reduces risk)	4. Being Pakistani/Bangladeshi
5. Being unemployed	5. Having no academic qualifications (reduces risk)
* Ethnicity, living in an inner city, living in London, earning a low income, social class and education were not significant.	
	6. Going out after dark more than three times per week
	7. Being male
	8. Being unemployed
	9. Living outside London
	10. Earning a low income (reduces risk)
	* Being Indian, living in an inner city, and social class were not significant

Source: Modified from Clancy *et al.*, 2001: 65 and 66, tables 5.3 and 5.4, by permission of the Home Office.

black people, and that for certain types of offences the perpetrators must be black until shown otherwise. (Chigwada-Bailey, 1997: 30)

In Australia Aboriginal and ethnic minority young people are much more likely to be stopped and questioned by the police than other groups of Australian youth (Perrone & White, 2000), and this differential stop-and-search pattern is a reality met in several European countries (see Marshall Haen, 1997; Tonry, 1997). Research in continental Europe, however, has not been conclusive or straightforward, with the exception of the Netherlands where no evidence of police discrimination has been found (Junger, 1989).

However, we should, again, be careful when interpreting the data as, even though there seems to be a tendency towards

stopping and searching people from ethnic and racial minorities at a higher level than the majority population, we are not in a position to know the influence other variables may have on the process, for instance, behavioural variables, the geographical distribution of crime, as well as the public. In respect of the behavioural variables, it was mentioned earlier that the relationship between the police and minorities has 'deteriorated', characterised by mistrust, and by minority people's perception of being unequally treated. This can generate 'combateness' on the part of minorities, and especially minority young people when being stopped and searched, which in turn can lead to further deterioration of the relationship between them and the police, and further stop and search. Although Norris *et al.*'s (1992) observational study did not provide evidence for this, the examples for this process are many. Junger (1989), for instance, presents some pieces of Dutch research where it was shown that Surinamese and Turks were prepared to argue with and confront the police (see also Stol & Bervoets, 2002). In respect of the geographical distribution of crime, it could be argued that the police focus on areas where there is a high offence rate, in consequence areas where results can be obtained and in which minorities tend to live. Therefore, it is not surprising that the percentage of minorities being stopped and searched is much higher than the majority population. Finally, the public themselves influence the process to a great extent by giving directions as to where police resources should be deployed (Jordan, 2000).

Arrests of Minorities

Another aspect of policing which is heavily linked with 'stop and search' is arrests. The British experience is divided into the pre- and post-PACE 1984 era and its introduction of 'arrest on the grounds of reasonable suspicion'. Before PACE 1984 Stevens and Willis's (1979) seminal study on arrests showed that black people but not Asians were arrested in disproportionate numbers to those in the total population. They also found that black people, although they constituted 4.2% of the population in London, accounted for a very large percentage of the arrests for serious crimes, specifically, 37.1% of violent thefts and 28.7% of robbery arrests (Stevens & Willis, 1979). Several explanations were put forward by the authors, such as the black people's being generally younger, or being over-represented in the lower socio-economic strata. However, this study, apart from age, was not able to account for other socio-economic variables. Some years later Smith and Gray (1985) found that black people were

generally more likely to be arrested by the police within five years prior to the survey (12%), and that Asians and 'other non-whites' were much less likely (2% and 3%, respectively). The percentage of arrest for whites was 10%, which makes the difference from black people not so striking. However, this is not the case for younger people, since although 5% of both whites and blacks aged 25–44 were arrested, the equivalent figures for those aged 15–24 were 11% for whites and 17% for blacks (Smith & Gray, 1985).

In the post-PACE 1984 era, Jefferson and Walker (1992) verified the results of the studies presented above. However, they found that the ethnic composition of the area in which the arrests are taking place plays an important role, higher than ethnicity *per se*. Specifically, they found that black and Asian arrest rates in 1987 were lower than those for whites in areas where there was a high concentration of black and Asian residents (more than 10% of the population). The overall high arrest rate for ethnic minorities, however, has been shown also by more recent research (see, for example, Phillips & Brown 1998).

In the United States official statistics showed that in 1985 black people were disproportionately arrested: 26.6% of arrestees constituted only 12% of the population in the country overall (Barri Flowers, 1988; see also Sampson & Lauritsen, 1997). For some offences the over-representation of black people in the arrestee population was even higher, an observation reinforced by more recent research. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (2001) blacks accounted for 51.4% of the homicide and manslaughter arrestees, 53.9 of robbery arrestees, and 21.7% of arson arrestees. These extremely high arrest figures for black offenders, however, must be seen in the light of certain anti-drug policies directed towards black people and areas (see Chambliss, 1994; Tonry, 1994; Bowling, 1999b), or policies against certain forms of drugs which appear to be associated with 'race' (Austin *et al.*, 2001). In respect of homicide, black young people were about ten times more likely to be arrested between 1967 and 1998 than white young people (Messner, Raffalovich & McMillan, 2001). A very interesting finding regarding the relationship between 'race' and arrest in Smith, Visher and Davidson's (1984) study showed that the difference in the arrest rates results both from the deployment of police resources in neighbourhoods of low status and the greater willingness of the police to respond and make arrests in situations where whites are being victimised (by blacks).

In Australia, finally, although there was a significant overall decline in the arrests, Aboriginal people's arrest percentage increased by 3.5% between 1990 and 1994 (from 17.1 to 20.6%) (Broadhurst, 1997). Again, it should be noted that no matter how huge (sometimes) the differences in arrest rates some factors were not controlled, for example personal, psychodynamic characteristics of the officer and the offender (see Smith & Visser, 1981).

Police Caution and Minorities

The post-arrest stage is a very important point in the criminal justice system as it is the time when it is decided whether the suspect is prosecuted or diverted from the criminal justice system. One alternative to prosecution (especially of young people) from the system is formal or informal cautioning, a process which to a very large extent is based on the discretion of the police officers. This has raised issues of possible bias against minorities. In Britain there is evidence that young people from ethnic minorities, and especially the Afro-Caribbean community, are more likely to be prosecuted than cautioned. One of the first comprehensive studies on the issue was that by Landau (1981). The author provided evidence to substantiate that although legal variables play a significant role in the police decision to prosecute, for certain offences such as burglary, crimes of violence and offences against the public order Afro-Caribbean youths were much more likely to be charged immediately rather than cautioned formally or informally (Landau, 1981). Similarly, a study by Landau and Nathan (1983) showed that Afro-Caribbeans were less likely to be referred to the Juvenile Bureau than their white counterparts. These studies, however, are not able to provide an adequate picture of the cautioning practice in relation to ethnic minorities, as they are either based on data from single police forces or are drawn from very small samples (Evans & Wilkinson, 1990). This is probably why they cannot demonstrate the non-uniform pattern of charging a suspect which is not applied uniformly to all ethnic groups. It appears that Asian people in some circumstances are more favoured than black people, and even whites. Jefferson and Walker (1993), for example, found that 72% of Asian young people aged 10–16 years were cautioned by the police, whereas the equivalent percentages for Afro-Caribbean and whites were 31 and 41, respectively. Much of the figures presented above can be explained partly by the fact that black youths tend to have a less stable family background than whites, and in particular Asians

(extra-legal factor), and partly by the ongoing hostility between black people and the police, which results in a non-guilty plea by black arrestees with the consequence of being prosecuted rather than cautioned (legal factor) (Jefferson & Walker, 1993).

In South Australia similar patterns can be observed regarding Aboriginal youth. Between July 1992 and June 1993 only 7.6% of Aboriginal youths were cautioned by the police as opposed to 22.2% of non-Aboriginal youths (Wundersitz, 1998). Identical figures can be viewed in respect of family conferencing; however, Wundersitz (1998) was not able to control for the youngsters' family environment, something that prevents us from drawing accurate conclusions.

Bail/Pre-trial Detention and Minorities

Refusal of bail and remand in custody after a charge has been brought against an individual by the police is a factor that may influence the practices and outcomes of subsequent stages of the criminal justice system, and most notably, sentencing. There is evidence from Britain, United States and continental Europe that people from minorities are more likely to be remanded in custody before being tried by a court. In Britain, Walker (1989), who conducted one of the first studies on the remand of suspects from different ethnic groups aged 17–20 years and 21–25 years, found that in two-thirds of the cases Afro-Caribbeans were much more likely to be remanded before trial than white and Asian defendants. It was impossible, however, to examine the role that other variables play in the decision to refuse bail and remand an individual before trial, such as whether the defendant has ties with the community, a family, a job or, as noted by Bowling and Phillips (2002: 170), the 'legally relevant factors'. Walker's findings were not verified by a subsequent study, that of Brown and Hullin (1993), who after having examined a significant number of contested bail applications in Leeds magistrates' courts reached different results and conclusions. Specifically, they found that out of the 490 contested bail applications in which the ethnic background of the defendant was recorded, 56% of white and 55% of Afro-Caribbean defendants were remanded in custody, a result that is insignificant if not identical. The advantages of Brown and Hullin's study were the control of the possibility of reoffending by taking into account the defendants' criminal record, and the analysis of 'disaggregated' offences. Again, after these variables being held constant no significant differences were found.

This, however, was the case in a more recent study by Phillips and Brown (1998), who found significant differences in the refusal of bail which were related to the defendants' ethnic background. Only 26% of white defendants were refused bail, whereas the equivalent percentage for Afro-Caribbeans was 35%, and for Asian defendants 34%. The last is a very surprising finding considering that Asian people are very likely to have ties with their community, or have a family (see FitzGerald & Hale, 1996). The results in Phillips and Brown's study remained unchanged even after criminal record and seriousness of offence were controlled. However, it was not possible for other important factors to be explained. In the United States, Daly's (1989) study of pre-trial release decisions in New York City reached similar conclusions to Phillips and Brown's study.

In continental Europe, the figures of pre-trial detention of foreigners are astonishing. The high rates of pre-trial detention for foreigners in most of the countries of continental Europe could be attributed to the fact that allocthonous are members of migrant groups rather than settled minorities. Thus the possibilities of their being remanded before trial by a court are even greater for two reasons. First, it is more likely that these groups will have no ties with the community (see Gatti, Malfatti & Verde, 1997), and hence they are more likely to flee the country before trial. Second, and this applies to undocumented migrants, detention assists the police in the process of deportation (Albrecht, 1997).

Police Response to the Victimisation of Minorities

Ethnic and racial minorities generally receive very little attention by the police, and very often feel underprotected from criminal and racial victimisation (see Sampson & Phillips, 1995). In Britain the result has been dissatisfaction and mistrust mainly on the part of the Afro-Caribbean community towards the police. The Asian community has a generally better view of the police than the Afro-Caribbean, and sometimes worse than that of white people (see Webster, 1995). In general, satisfaction with the police varies, some times even considerably, according to the ethnic origin (and gender) of the respondents. Brown's (1984) study, for example, showed that Afro-Caribbeans seemed to be less confident in the police protecting them from racist violence (more than 60% for both males and females), whereas Asians were generally divided into those who were more or less confident (about 50% for both males and females). In 1990, a Home Office study reporting on the findings of the 1988 BCS

showed that among the people who had telephoned or visited a police station an equal percentage of Afro-Caribbeans and Asians (31%) were dissatisfied and gave very low marks to the police, as opposed to only 14% of white people (Skogan, 1990). The same study also showed that 46% of Afro-Caribbeans were annoyed by police behaviour in contrast with only 29% of whites. The percentage of Asian people who were annoyed by police behaviour, however, was much lower than for the rest of the two groups (22%) (Skogan, 1990). Webster's Keighley study, in contrast, showed that it was the Asians who, although they were more likely to report criminal offences to the police than whites, were less satisfied than whites with the treatment they received from the police (Webster, 1995). A more recent study by Bowling (1999a) also found that Afro-Caribbean people are less satisfied with the police. The investigation into the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993, in which 'the police were shown to have displayed institutional racism' (Gelsthorpe, 2001: 114), was what caused Macpherson (1999) to accuse the whole police organisation as racist, something that influences their ability to provide services to the ethnic minorities in the country (see also Sharp, 2002).

The Victimisation of Minorities by the Police

People from ethnic and racial minorities are very often perceived as 'police property' (Reiner, 1992), a perception that is an integral part of police culture. This perception frequently results in their victimisation by the police. Apart from the racial harassment and disrespectful attitudes of some police officers in the job (see, for example, Samuelson & Strelloff, 2001; State-watch, 1996), the victimisation of minorities by the police takes two forms, notably police shootings and deaths in custody. Because the use of firearms by the police is limited by both official restrictions and by low incidence of public use in most of countries, a police shooting is not something that happens regularly. But in countries such as the United States, where the 'routine activities' of the police involve regular firearms use, the percentage of black victims exceeds by far their percentage in the overall population of the country (Fyfe, 1982). The information on the particular topic is not updated and it mostly focuses on the 1980s. Specifically, as Headley (1983) informs us, in 1983 although black people were 12% of the overall population of the country, they constituted 45% of the police shootings victims. It would be wrong, however, to accept these figures uncritically as they may be justified by a higher participation of

black people in activities that justify shootings on the part of the police rather than as the mere result of police discrimination (Fyfe, 1981).

The motive for police shootings against minority groups in Europe seems to be clearer than in the United States, this being the belief they are inferior or dangerous. In Romania, for example, police shootings against Gypsies substantially influence the lives and quality of life of the Gypsy community (Szikinger, 2000).

Deaths in custody have also had an impact on minorities around the globe (see, for example, Human Rights Watch, 1997, and Amnesty International, October–December 2000). As Leigh and colleagues (1998) inform us, in Britain there were 380 deaths in custody between January 1990 and December 1996. The information from Australia is also astonishing as 103 Aboriginal people died in police custodies within an eight-year period (1980 to 1988) (Graborsky *et al.*, 1988; see also Hogg, 2001, and Broadhurst, 1997 for additional information on the topic). However, it is rare that the perpetrators of such acts come to justice. In Britain, for example, only one police officer had been prosecuted up to 1997 (Human Rights Watch, 1997), and in Greece no police officer was prosecuted up to 1998 (Karydis, 1998). Finally, in Israel the police are thought to be responsible for the death of a great number of Palestinians in detention centres (Milton-Edwards, 1997). Drawing a conclusion, however, on whether the deaths in police custodies in England, Australia and/or other counties came as a result of police (mal)practice is extremely difficult owing to the data's being restricted to only simple-figure presentations.

Minorities as Police Employees

The position of ethnic and racial minorities as employees in the criminal justice system and specifically the police is another under-researched issue. The information we have for Britain comes from Home Office figures, which are restricted to providing a quantitative account of the trend. What is apparent from these figures is that ethnic minorities are in general under-represented as employees in the police forces compared to their numbers in the workforce. In Britain, despite reports (for example, see Scarman, 1981) have suggested that the police force should represent the ethnic diversity of the country, in March 2000 ethnic minorities constituted only 2.2% of the force (Home Office, 2000; see also Brown, 1997). The disaggregated percentages for Afro-Caribbean, Asian and 'other' were 0.8%, 0.7%

and 0.7%, respectively. However, there was a huge variation in the employment rates among the different police forces in England and Wales, a variation that we should be aware of. For example, although in counties such as Cumbria or Durham the percentage of ethnic minority officers is as low as 0.10% to 0.13%, in the Metropolitan police the equivalent percentage is 7.51% (Home Office, 2000). In consequence the view that ethnic minority police officers are under-represented should be treated cautiously. What is fact, however, is the entire absence of ethnic minorities from the upper echelons of the force, something that cannot provide balance in the underestimation of ethnic minority officers' facing of discrimination (Holdaway, 1997), and other difficulties by the predominantly white, senior managerial officers (Holdaway, 1996; see also Holdaway, 1995). It is very characteristic that there has never been an ethnic minority Chief Constable in the country. Macpherson in his report was the first to establish that there is institutionalised racism in the British police (Macpherson, 1999), which is an important factor discouraging minority people from joining the police (see also Stone & Tuffin, 2000).

In the United States there appears to be a completely different trend than in Britain. According to Holdaway (1991), during the 1970s the American police forces increased the number of minority officers dramatically, with the New York Police Department increasing it by 50%. More recent evidence suggests that racial minorities are not under-represented in the number of employees in law enforcement agencies. Specifically, in June 1998 ethnic and racial minorities constituted 29.4% of the federal agents with the power to carry a firearm and to arrest (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000).

In continental European countries the evidence about the recruitment of officers with an ethnic minority background is less clear if not wholly absent. Holdaway (1991) reports that no research could be found by France, Germany, Belgium and Italy as well as by the Council of Europe, the European Union and Interpol, regarding the recruitment of police officers with an ethnic background, with the exception of the Netherlands. However, some very positive steps have been taken at a local level in certain European countries. In Frankfurt (Germany), for example, apart from the recruitment of ethnic minority officers, the police introduced special Commissioners for Foreigners (*Ausländerbeauftragte*), and appointed detectives from the Turkish and Moroccan communities in the equivalent German Criminal Investigation Department (Das, 1997).

These figures presented above, however, could not possibly allow us to draw definite conclusions regarding the recruitment of minorities in the police, as they do not account for several other factors that play an important role. Most notable of these is the view that minority people have of the police, their willingness to be employed in the police, or the socio-economic and educational barriers they confront. The negative perception of the police based on direct or indirect experiences of the force (Stone & Tuffin, 2000), as well as the risk of experiencing great difficulties in their own communities and within the agencies (see, for example, Walklate, 1996; Holdaway, 1991), all lead to a circumventory position towards applying for a job in the force. Moreover, educational barriers, as well as the limited knowledge of the language (especially in continental Europe), make it impossible for minorities to be recruited.

Conclusion

This literature review, owing to a lack of completely accurate evidence, and to conceptual and methodological problems surrounding the topic, is not able to reach accurate conclusions and provide straightforward and definite answers regarding the issues relating to ethnicity, 'race' and the police, with some small exceptions. From the beginning the purpose of the review has been to highlight the most important aspects and show what is known so far. This is:

- The over-representation of ethnic and racial minorities in the prison population of the industrially (and not) advanced world can be explained partly by practices such as 'stop and search', arrest, cautioning and pre-trial detention. Although there appears to exist some evidence pointing at discrimination on the part of the police, due to inadequate research with methodological limitations, this is not clear.
- Research has also shown that minorities are the target of police use of guns, as well as those groups largely affected by deaths in police custody. However, no clear indication that the police 'discriminate' against minorities exists as we are not in a position to know whether the police were justified in using a gun in an incident, or whether the police themselves were the cause of the death of minority people in custody.
- Ethnic minorities in Britain are under-represented as employees in the police. In the United States racial minorities

are over-represented as police officers and federal agents, while there is no available evidence for continental Europe apart from some initiatives taken towards the recruitment of minority officers at a local level in Germany.

Our recommendations exist on two axes: one in respect to the criminological research on the topic and one in respect to the police attitudes and practices in relation to minorities. Specifically, what is recommended is:

- (1) more research on the extent to which certain police attitudes and practices play a role in the over-representation of minorities in the criminal justice system in every country;
- (2) research on whether minorities targeted by the police using guns and police maltreatment in custody leading to death, are the effects of police discrimination;
- (3) research on whether the under-representation of minorities as employees in the police is attributed solely to discrimination, to a minority choice, or to educational and cultural barriers;
- (4) comparative research, possibly by an international team, on the issues relating to minorities and the police in order for the conceptual and methodological problems to be overcome to a significant extent and for us to have a clearer picture.

Moreover, and in respect to the second axis, attention should be paid to the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, a development which applies antidiscriminatory principles to public authorities and very importantly the police (see Bowling Phillips, 2002: 257–8). Finally, there should be programmes established and initiatives undertaken for police training on the needs of minority communities, the needs of victims of racist violence, and the needs of minority officers, as well as programmes for the recruitment of minority officers in the police, similar to those proposed by the Macpherson report (see Macpherson, 1999).

Notes

1. The term 'ethnic minorities' means groups of people who share cultural characteristics and consider themselves as a distinct group. Racial minorities are made up of people who share inherited somatic characteristics such as skin colour. Most scientists have long considered the term 'race' to have no scientific meaning and value at all (see van der Bergher, 1978). However, the term is used in this article just to suit the American context.

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