

# POLICING DIVERSITY: THEMES AND CONCERNS FROM THE RECENT BRITISH EXPERIENCE

**MICHAEL ROWE**  
*University of Leicester*

*The aim of this article is to provide an overview of the recent development of the notion of “policing diversity” in England and Wales. In addition to outlining why policing diversity has become a preeminent theme in current debates about policing, the article explores central conceptual issues and argues that it does represent a fundamental break with long-standing notions such as “policing by consent.” However, it argues that, taken to its logical conclusions, the concept might raise serious problems for the police service.*

Although concern about police relations with sections of the community in the United Kingdom has been particularly salient since the urban unrest of the 1980s and, arguably, has become the single most important issue of debate in the aftermath of the public inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence, it is worth noting that police-community relations have been fraught with difficulty since the foundation of modern police forces in the mid-19th century. Similar concerns have applied in many other societies and have been a major issue in the United States for many decades (Barlow & Barlow, 2001). Historians have demonstrated that various sections of the public in Britain have been understood as problematic for the police during particular periods (Emsley, 1996; Reiner, 2000). In the early decades of the modern policing era, the “dangerous classes” located in urban slums were widely regarded as a threat to the police and to “respectable society” more generally (Morris, 1994). In the century or so between the foundation of the modern police and the beginning of large-scale migration to Britain from the Commonwealth, Irish people, Jews from Eastern Europe, and Arab and African seaman, among others, were in various ways understood as difficult

groups for the police (Rowe, 1998). That concern about police relations with minority communities is often regarded as a relatively recent phenomenon is perhaps because contemporary problems are understood against the background of the perceived “golden era” of British policing that followed World War II (Reiner, 2000). If a long-term perspective is taken, then a rather different picture of police-community relations emerges.

Although the types of problems widely identified in the current period have been perpetual concerns for the police, it should be noted that, despite its ethnic diversity, Britain remains a relatively ethnically homogeneous nation. The White population of England and Wales, according to the 1991 census, makes up 94.5% of the total. Whereas the minority ethnic population of the major cities is often considerably higher than this nationwide figure suggests, it is equally the case that many parts of the country have an even greater proportion of White people and are notable for their ethnic homogeneity, not their diversity. Issues relating to police-minority relations are not significant because of the numbers involved but because of the matters of fundamental principle that are raised in a society with a tradition of policing by consent. The nature of these concerns is considered at greater length later in the article.

Particular concern about police relations with minority ethnic communities can be traced back to the early 1970s. Detailed histories of such relations are available elsewhere (Fryer, 1984; Keith, 1993; Rowe, 1998) and cannot be fully recounted here. In recent times, the most significant occasion on which police relations with minority communities had a sustained impact on the national political agenda was the publication of Lord Scarman’s report into the 1981 disorders in Brixton, South London. The Scarman Report argued for a series of changes to policing that would have the overall effect of bridging the gulf with sections of the public that had led to the “outburst of anger and resentment by young Black people against the police” (p. 45), as Scarman characterized the unrest. To this end, Scarman suggested changes to police recruitment and training, the discipline code for officers, and methods of local consultation and accountability, the collective impact of which, he argued, would be to reinvent principles of policing by consent that had informed the foundation of the Metropolitan Police in 1832.

Scarman’s restatement of the importance of policing by consent and community policing did not occur in a vacuum. Other influential commentators, perhaps most notably the former Chief Constable John Alderson, were also arguing that post-World War II British policing had become too

isolated from the public and that officers had come to regard themselves as a group separate from society at large (Alderson, 1979). One high-profile report into police-community relations, published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC, 1997), notes that during the 1970s and 1980s,

Police force amalgamations created larger and sometimes impersonal service providers where policing strategies were decided upon, implemented and changed with a minimum of internal and external consultation. The traditional foot beat system had in many instances been replaced by unit-beat systems supported by "panda" cars providing less continuity in personal contact between the police and the public. In many areas, particularly those within inner cities, reactive "fire brigade" style policing had become more and more prevalent. (p. 7)

In addition to concerns that the style of policing as delivered to the public was serving to isolate officers from routine contact with members of the public, debates were also taking place about formal systems of accountability. The relative powerlessness of local police authorities vis-à-vis Chief Constables and the Home Secretary, within the tripartite framework laid down by the 1964 Police Act, was causing some to argue that a democratic deficit existed in governance of the police (Jefferson & Grimshaw, 1984; Scraton, 1985). Whereas relations with minority ethnic communities were only one aspect of these broader debates about policing, a series of incidents involving alleged police mistreatment of Black people provided many examples that fuelled arguments about the proper role of the police (see Institute for Race Relations, 1987, for discussion of a wide range of incidents, and Cashmore & McLaughlin, 1991, for analysis of key issues in police-minority relations during the 1970s and 1980s).

#### THE IMPACT OF THE LAWRENCE INQUIRY

Whereas the police had been subject to a series of criticisms with regard to interaction with minority ethnic communities in Britain for several decades, there can be little doubt that the enquiry by Sir William Macpherson into the murder of Stephen Lawrence marked a significant watershed. Although the facts of the murder of 18-year-old Lawrence are relatively straightforward and incontrovertible, the impact that the case has had in terms of policing in Britain and society's attitudes toward racism has been wide-ranging and fundamental. Because much of the discussion of

particular developments in policing diversity are overtly rooted in the aftermath of the Lawrence murder and the subsequent report by Sir William Macpherson, it is important to provide an overview of the case and the developments that followed.

The details of the crime itself, although horrific and dreadful to the many victims, are not, in themselves, without parallel—no doubt other terrible murders of this nature have occurred since. Stephen Lawrence, a Black teenager with ambitions of becoming an architect, was waiting for a bus in Eltham, south London, accompanied by his friend, Duwayne Brooks, when a group of White youths shouted racist abuse and charged them from across the road. The group engulfed Lawrence, stabbing him repeatedly. Brooks fled, shouting for Lawrence to follow him, which he did. Bleeding heavily, though, Lawrence collapsed some 130 yards from the scene of attack and died soon after on the pavement. The jury at the subsequent inquest into Lawrence's death returned a verdict of unlawful killing in "a completely unprovoked racist attack by five White youths" ("Lawrence Family to Sue Men," 1997). In the years that followed the murder, two police investigations were conducted into the case by the Metropolitan Police and another, under the auspices of the Police Complaints Authority, by Kent Police. Subsequently, the Crown Prosecution Service decided against bringing a case against five suspects, which led the family of Stephen Lawrence to bring a private prosecution against the same men, a very unusual development with respect to a murder, and one that failed to bring any conviction in this case. Although the report of the official inquiry clearly rejected allegations that the failure to adequately investigate the murder was a result of police corruption or collusion, the conclusion that was arrived at offered scant comfort to the police (Macpherson, 1999):

The conclusions to be drawn from all the evidence in connection with the investigation of Stephen Lawrence's racist murder are clear. There is no doubt but that there were fundamental errors. The investigation was marred by a combination of professional incompetence, institutional racism and a failure of leadership by senior officers. A flawed Metropolitan Police Service review failed to expose these inadequacies. The second investigation could not salvage the faults of the first investigation. (p. 317)

At least now many of the failures and flaws are accepted. For too long the family and the public were led to believe that the investigation had been satisfactorily carried out. The belated apologies offered at this Inquiry acknowledge the truth, but there is no remedy for the grief which the unsuccessful investigation piled upon the grief caused by the murder itself.

One of the central features of the impact that the report had has been in terms of the added impetus it has given to the development of policing diversity models. Prior to the publication of the report, it might be argued, the predominant policing approach was one predicated on a "race relations" or equal opportunities model: broadly based around the provision of a similar level and style of policing to all members of society. The key focus was to ensure that minority ethnic communities received an equitable service to that delivered to all members of society. This perspective characterizes the role of the police as essentially neutral, in which officers' proper concern is to enforce the law in a professional, even-handed, and effective manner. Often the goal was to assure that officers refrained from behaving in certain ways considered to be illegal or morally and ethically undesirable.

Post-Lawrence, conceptualization of the police position in respect of minority groups has become one in which antiracism is a central theme. In summary, the previous position was one in which the police occupied a largely neutral inert role whereby social racism was a given problem to which the police responded, and members of the public, whether victims, witnesses, or suspects, were to be treated equitably and in a uniform manner. Perhaps the most significant dimension of reconceptualizing the police role has been an emphasis on policing as an explicitly antiracist activity: one in which a proactive interventionary role is taken to challenge the problem of racism. A guide to combating hate crime, published by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) (2000), describes the implication of antiracism in the following terms:

To confront prejudice outside the police service and to eliminate it within it, at work, every member of staff is expected to subscribe to a code of active conduct, which requires far more than strict compliance with the law. (p. 3)

The key features of the race relations and policing diversity models are outlined in Table 1. It is important to recognize that the two models are simplified representations and should be regarded as heuristic devices rather than indications of a wholesale shift in direction "on the ground."

One factor that should be evident in Table 1 is that the policing diversity model requires greater commitment and activity from police leaders. In several of the cells of the table, the phrase "in addition" is included, suggesting a wider role for police leaders in more recent approaches to police community relations. Recognition that the active pursuit of good community and race relations is central to contemporary police leadership is evident in the remarks of the president of the U.K. police Superintendent's Association,

**TABLE 1. Models of Police Community Relations**

	<i>Race Relations Model</i>	<i>Policing Diversity Model</i>
External problem is located in . . .	. . . Communities that are problematic, or present difficult or unusual challenges to the police.	. . . Social, political, and economic structures that discriminate against minority ethnic groups; and socioideological beliefs and stereotypes prevalent about them.
Internal problem is located in . . .	. . . A minority of explicitly racist staff—who should be disciplined or sacked once identified.	. . . In addition, the unwitting prejudices and attitudes of all staff need to be confronted; training and the monitoring of performance indicators used to bring about change.
Role of police in relation to racism . . .	. . . Passive; neutral arbiters of the law.	. . . Proactive, interventionist.
Role of police leader . . .	. . . Ensuring that staff fail to behave in a manner deemed unacceptable; preventing certain subcultural patterns developing within the organization.	. . . In addition, encouraging or requiring staff to develop attitudes and behavior that confronts racism, and other unacceptable behavior; encouraging a culture in which stereotypical attitudes and behavior within police organizations can be effectively challenged.

who noted that “if you are not delivering on this [policing diversity] you should not be a BCU [basic command unit] commander” (“President Delivers Race Relations Warning,” 2001, p. 6).

## TWO DIMENSIONS OF POLICING DIVERSITY

Since the mid-1990s, a host of policy statements, strategy documents, and reports have been issued by almost all of the major organizations concerned with policing in England and Wales. Partly, the range of these documents reflects the number of agencies variously involved in police governance, but it also illustrates the growing importance of policing diversity to the future of the service. Table 2 represents an incomplete catalog of the principal official publications relating to this subject that have appeared in recent years (full details are contained in the reference list).

Although each of the publications listed in Table 2 has a distinct focus, and there are issues of where they diverge from one another, considerable

**TABLE 2. Policing Diversity: Recent Official Publications**


---



---

Macpherson, 1999, <i>The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry</i>
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, 1997, 2000, <i>Winning the Race: Policing Plural Communities</i> (II and III)
Home Office, 1999, <i>Dismantling Barriers to Reflect the Community We Serve</i>
Home Office, 2000d, <i>Auditing Organisational Culture Within the Police Service</i> (HOC 14/2000)
Home Office, 1999b, <i>Stephen Lawrence Inquiry: Home Secretary's Action Plan</i>
ACPO, 2000, <i>Policing Diversity Strategy</i>
ACPO, 2000, <i>Guide to Identifying and Combating Hate Crime</i>
Metropolitan Police, undated, <i>Protect and Respect: Diversity Strategy</i>
Metropolitan Police, 2000, <i>Policing London—Winning Consent: A Review of Murder Investigation and Community and Race Relations Issues in the Metropolitan Police Service</i>

---

areas of overlap can be identified between them. In particular, they tend to be premised on the notion that good relations with all aspects of the community are central to effective policing. For example, the report by HMIC (1997) argued that

the real test of a force's community and race relations strategy is not whether it exists in written form but whether it falls out of its policies and practices as well as its organisational strategies at every level. Not only should considerations of community and race relations have a major influence on all aspects of force activity and organisation, but force effectiveness in turn should be measured in terms of its impact on community and race relations. (p. 19)

Beyond this general agreement that the promotion of good community relations is essential to the delivery of a high quality policing service, each of the documents referred to above has its own focus. Many of the issues raised in them have particular implications for police leaders. One of the more influential reports, the ACPO *Policing Diversity* strategy, distinguishes between issues pertinent to external police community relations and those of internal importance to the police service; the former refers to operational policing issues, and the latter people management dimensions. Both raise a host of factors relevant to individual police officers and civilian staff at all levels of service and have explicit implications for police leaders. This section will outline a number of these and discuss the challenges raised in terms of police leadership. In particular, attention is focused on issues relating to stop-and-search, and recruitment, retention, and training.

## POLICING DIVERSITY: STOP AND SEARCH

Reflecting on the position of minority ethnic communities in the criminal justice system, David Smith (1995) points out that “among those offenders who are processed . . . a considerable proportion are drawn into the net through the exercise of discretionary powers by the police, particularly stop-and-search” (p. 1064). Although the use of these powers is widely held to be vital to the prevention, detection, and deterrence of crime, it is also apparent that the practice of stop-and-search and its application to minority ethnic communities is a matter of considerable controversy. As with many of the issues discussed in this article, the question of police use of stop-and-search in relation to minority ethnic communities was brought to particular public attention by Scarman’s (1981) inquiry into the Brixton disturbances. In explaining the background to the disorders, Scarman outlined the manner in which Operation Swamp had been conducted on the streets of Lambeth in the days prior to the unrest. In particular, the operation was intended “to detect and arrest burglars and robbers” (Scarman, 1981, par. 4.39, p. 57). One commentator noted that “the lack of success of the operation in dealing with street crime was matched by the tension it created in the saturated area, and the anger it generated in the minds of law-abiding citizens who resented the manner in which they were dealt with by the police when stopped” (Greaves, 1984, p. 66).

A key factor that complicates simplistic arguments that stop-and-search is conducted in a disproportionate way against minority ethnic groups is the age profile of those concerned. Whereas aggregate figures do tend to indicate that non-White people are overrepresented in stop-and-search data compared to their proportion in the overall population, closer examination often reveals that young people, of all ethnic origins, also figure more prominently and that males, of all ages and ethnic backgrounds, too overfeature (Beck & Rowe, 1994). Explanation of the impact of stop-and-search on various sections of the community is also made more difficult because there are considerable differences between minority ethnic groups—Asian and Chinese groups, for example, are often underrepresented—suggesting that straightforward racism is unlikely to be the sole factor (Beck & Rowe, 1994). In addition, studies have examined the relation between stop-and-searches carried out in areas of high minority ethnic residence and those implemented in areas of low minority ethnic residence (Jefferson, Walker, & Senevirantne, 1992) and distinguished between “high discretion” stops initiated by police officers and “low discretion” stops instigated by the

public (Fitzgerald, 1999). Although a lack of space means that a discussion of the findings of these studies, and the debates they fuel, cannot be offered here, an outline of some key data is provided below before an examination of some of the major policy developments in recent times is considered. Before that, though, Table 3 shows some of the recent findings concerning police use of stop-and-search as it relates to ethnicity. The data indicate that the overall use of stop-and-search has declined: Some 800,000 cases were reported in 1999/2000 that amounted to a decrease of 14% compared to the previous year, and in the Metropolitan Police Service area, the decline was considerably greater at 41%. Within this overall perspective, it is apparent that Black people remain considerably overrepresented compared to other ethnic groups, as do Asians to a lesser extent. In 1999/2000, 81 in 1,000 Black people, 26 Asian, and 16 White were stopped and searched by the police.

Table 3 also indicates that the percentage of cases that result in an arrest has increased as the overall number of stop-and-searches has declined. This is broadly consistent with one of the key themes emerging from recent research on stop-and-search, which has been that the powers are more effective, and less damaging to police legitimacy, when used in a highly targeted manner. This and other central themes are discussed in the section that follows.

#### *Key Issues in Stop-and-Search*

The report of the inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence (Macpherson, 1999) made four recommendations with regard to stop-and-searches. Namely,

- that the powers of the police under current legislation are required for the prevention and detection of crime and should remain unchanged.
- that the Home Secretary, in consultation with Police Services, should ensure that a record is made by police officers of all “stops” and “stops and searches” made under any legislative provision (not just the Police and Criminal Evidence Act). Non-statutory or so called “voluntary” stops must also be recorded. The record to include the reason for the stop, the outcome, and the self-defined ethnic identity of the person stopped. A copy of the record shall be given to the person stopped.
- that these records should be monitored and analysed by Police Service and Police Authorities, and reviewed by HMIC on inspections. The information and analysis should be published.
- that Police Authorities be given the duty to undertake publicity campaigns to ensure that the public is aware of “stop and search” provisions and the right to receive a record in all circumstances. (pp. 333-334)

**TABLE 3. Stop-and-Searches by Ethnicity, 1998-2000**

	<i>Stop-and-Search<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>% of Stop-and-Searches Resulting in Arrest</i>
White		
1998-1999	20	11
1999-2000	16	13
Black		
1998-1999	118	13
1999-2000	81	17
Asian		
1998-1999	42	12
1999-2000	26	14
Other		
1998-1999	21	14
1999-2000	15	17
Total		
1998-1999	22	12
1999-2000	18	13

*Source:* Home Office (2000a).

a. Per 1,000 of population aged 10 and older; under s1 of 1984 Police and Criminal Evidence Act and other legislation.

Responding to these recommendations, the Home Secretary accepted the first, that powers remain unchanged, and established a program of research to pilot and evaluate the implications of the other three. Results of this series of studies were released in September 2000 and focus on ensuring that stop-and-search is used in a manner that ensures public trust and confidence, legality, and effectiveness (Home Office, 2000b). A series of recommendations arose from the research, and these are outlined in Table 4.

Discussion of some of the measures included in Table 4 reveals many of the central issues and controversies that have surrounded the impact of stop-and-search on minority ethnic community relations with the police. By ensuring that incidents are properly supervised, managers can identify potential situations in which officers are acting on the basis of stereotypical attitudes and/or where the legal basis for a stop-and-search is unclear. Attempts by police managers to target stop-and-search at particular crime problems, and so avoid using the power as a blanket means of "controlling the streets," efforts to improve the manner in which officers handle encounters, and improvements in the monitoring of stop-and-searches, including the provision of a written record provided to members of the public that outlines the reason why they were selected, all seek to provide greater clarity and informa-

**TABLE 4. Police Stops and Searches: Maintaining Legitimacy**

<i>Dimension of Legitimacy</i>	<i>Recommended Action</i>
Public trust and confidence	Improved supervision of searches Identifying ethnic bias in search practice Effective targeting of stops and searches to crime problems Improved handling of encounters Raising public awareness Involvement of the community Improved monitoring Measuring disproportionality Review of searches not requiring reasonable grounds for suspicion
Legality	Clarifying PACE Training guidance on reasonable suspicion
Effectiveness	Making the best use of intelligence Improving the reliability of suspect descriptions Monitoring the quality of arrests

*Source:* Home Office (2000c).

tion to the public. In this way, it might be that police managers can improve the situation reported by a recent Home Office study of public attitudes toward stop-and-search (Stone & Pettigrew, 2000):

Respondents broadly supported the principle of stops and searches as a tactic. However, the aggravation, distrust and resentment caused by the way encounters are currently handled by officers outweighs any of the positive effects they were perceived to have. As a result, respondents accepted that stops and searches might have a role but only if there were fundamental changes in:

- the way they are used;
- how they are targeted;
- the attitude of officers; and
- reasons given.

The most important focus for change requested by members of all ethnic groups, was for officers to give credible explanations for each stop or search. (p. vii)

#### POLICING DIVERSITY: RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, AND TRAINING

The HMIC (1997) report *Winning the Race* makes it clear that the effective policing of diversity relies heavily on firm management and leadership. The report argues that

the question of leadership is essential, and Chief Constables should consistently make it clear that inappropriate language and behaviour . . . will not be tolerated. Force senior management also need to demonstrate that the performance of all personnel will be judged on criteria which include their sensitivity to issues of community and race relations and the positive contribution they make to their improvement. For these purposes ethical arguments are well supported by the business case which demonstrates that discrimination and harassment can have a substantial cost to the organisation and the individuals within it. (p. 49)

An issue of considerable concern has been the underrepresentation of certain groups within the police service. Particular attention has been paid to the dearth of women and minority ethnic groups employed as police officers. In 1983, Boateng (1984) records, the Metropolitan Police contained some 25,000 officers, of whom 183 were Black or Asian. By 1991, there were 430 minority ethnic officers in the Metropolitan Police (Imbert, 1991), and by 1999, 865 of the 26,106 officers were of a minority ethnic background. This makes up 3.3% of officers, a very clear underrepresentation of the 25% of the London population of whom are of minority ethnic communities (Home Office, 1999a). Whereas the population of the capital city is considerably more ethnically diverse than for other parts of the country, Home Office figures released in 1999 revealed that minority ethnic groups were underrepresented in all but three of the forces of England and Wales; the proportion of minority ethnic officers employed in the five biggest, excluding the Metropolitan Police, and the five smallest forces is shown in Table 5.

In addition to being underrepresented in general terms, statistical evidence also indicates that minority ethnic staff tend to be concentrated among the lower ranks of the police service. Explanation of these data is difficult—it might be that minority ethnic officers are relatively new to the service and thus have not had the career experience to gain promotion “up the ranks.” In addition, as will be discussed at greater length below, the explanation might lie in the greater propensity for minority ethnic recruits to leave the service more quickly than their White colleagues. Finally, policy, practice, and culture surrounding the police promotion procedures might make it harder for minority ethnic officers to progress. It should be noted that these explanations are far from mutually exclusive: Indeed it seems likely that they serve to reinforce one another. Table 6 indicates the situation as of March 31, 2000, at which point the highest ranking minority ethnic officer was an Assistant Chief Constable.

**TABLE 5. Minority Ethnic Representation in Selected Police Forces, England and Wales, 1999**

	<i>Size</i>	<i># of Ethnic Minority Officers</i>	<i>% of Ethnic Minority Officers</i>	<i># of Ethnic Minority Special Constables<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>% of Ethnic Minority Special Constables</i>	<i>% of Ethnic Minority Population</i>
West Midlands	7,215	300	4.16	55	7.01	16.11
Greater Manchester	6,890	166	2.4	18	3.17	7.58
West Yorkshire	5,065	134	2.64	43	7.28	9.45
Merseyside	4,270	73	1.7	5	1.08	5
Northumbria	3,802	31	.81	9	2.5	1.47
Gloucestershire	1,090	12	1.1	0	0	1.57
Bedfordshire	1,050	36	3.4	9	5.1	10
Dyfed Powys	1,013	1	.09	0	0	1 <sup>b</sup>
Warwickshire	923	23	2.49	3	.92	4
City of London	792	19	2.3	10	14.49	7.3

Source: Home Office (1999a).

a. Special Constables are unpaid officers who have the full powers of a constable but are part-time volunteers.

b. Figure is less than 1% but has been rounded up.

**TABLE 6. Ethnicity of Staff in Police Service by Rank, 2000**

	<i>Total Staff</i>	<i>White</i>	<i>Black</i>	<i>Asian</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Total Ethnic Minority</i>
Constables	94,747	92,452 (97.6)	889 (.9)	693 (.7)	713 (.8)	2,295 (2.4)
Sergeants	18,432	18,150 (98.5)	103 (.6)	89 (.5)	90 (.5)	282 (1.5)
Inspectors & chief inspectors	7,456	7,370 (98.8)	24 (.3)	30 (.4)	32 (.4)	86 (1.2)
Superintendent & above	1,407	1,396 (99.2)	3 (.2)	5 (.4)	3 (.2)	11 (.8)
Total	122,042	119,368 (97.8)	1,019 (.8)	817 (.7)	838 (.7)	2,674 (2.2)
Civilian staff (incl. Traffic wardens)	55,133	52,581 (95.4)	1,185 (2.1)	667 (1.2)	700 (1.3)	2,552 (4.6)

Source: Home Office (2000a, p. 62).

Note: Percentages are in parentheses.

Women and ethnic minorities are clearly underrepresented throughout the police service, and to a greater extent in higher than lower ranks. It may be notable that the ranks of civilian support staff include greater proportions

of both groups; women in particular are overrepresented in such grades. The data included in Table 5 indicate that, in 6 of the 10 forces listed, minority ethnic special constables make up a higher percentage of the total than fully sworn officers. Explanation of these aspects remains tentative, but Home Office data indicate that the general position of minority ethnic staff and women is broadly similar in that government department itself, and in other institutions of the criminal justice system, such as the Crown Prosecution Service and the Forensic Science Service, although the overall proportion of ethnic minorities is greater than that in the general population in the case of the latter two organizations.

The number of women in the police services of England and Wales is also considerably lower than their representation in the population as a whole. Again, the explanation for the picture indicated in Table 7, which shows the proportion of women at the various ranks of the police service, is fraught with difficulty. At the time these figures were compiled, three women Chief Constables were the highest serving female officers.

Whatever the reason for this pattern of underrepresentation in the police service, there has been a widespread expression of commitment to increase minority ethnic recruitment. Whereas a recent development has been the introduction of a detailed series of targets identifying precise number of minority ethnic recruits that each police service is required to attract (Home Office, 1999a), campaigns intended to boost recruitment from minority ethnic communities have been mounted for many years. Keith (1993) describes a police advertising campaign of the late 1980s that sought to attract minority ethnic recruits (p. iv). Earlier than this, in the wake of the urban unrest of the early 1980s, the Home Office sought to encourage forces to boost minority recruitment. Holdaway (1996) describes the nature of some of the initiatives developed in this period:

The West Midlands Police, for example, whose officers serve a large Black and Asian population, planned an educational access course for intending applicants, street-to-street leafleting campaigns, public meetings at community centres used by Black and Asian people, and a range of other initiatives. Leicestershire Constabulary planned a year-long recruiting campaign which included many different types of initiatives, public meetings, leafleting, radio and television broadcasts, and so on . . . . The Thames Valley Police produced a promotional video and organised weekend courses for enquiries from ethnic minorities who might later apply for appointment to the force. All these activities and many more in other forces were initiated by the police, who have probably carried out more specialist recruitment work than any other organisation. (pp. 139-140)

**TABLE 7. Gender of Police Staff by Rank, 2000**

	<i>Total Staff</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>
Constables	94,747	18,003 (19)	76,744 (81)
Sergeants	18,432	1,628 (9)	16,804 (91)
Inspectors & chief inspectors	7,456	465 (6)	6,991 (94)
Superintendent & above	1,407	79 (6)	1,328 (94)
Total	122,042	20,175 (17)	101,867 (83)
Civilian staff (incl. traffic wardens)	55,133	33,768 (61)	21,365 (39)

*Source:* Home Office (2000b, p. 41).

*Note:* Percentages are in parentheses.

Although Holdaway suggests that these developments led to an increase in applications in some instances, it is clear that, in general terms, there has been little progress in terms of improving the numbers of Black and Asian people entering the police service. One reason this may have been the case is a perception that minority ethnic officers are likely to face racism from colleagues within the service and a degree of hostility from the population at large. A study conducted in 2000 included 290 qualitative interviews with 18- to 30-year-olds from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds and found a variety of positive factors associated with a career in policing, which included a stable career, the respect and authority of the job, and the chance to contribute to society. Despite these, a range of negative factors appears to outweigh these perceived advantages. The study suggested that a career in policing is regarded as undesirable for the following reasons (Stone & Tuffin, 2000):

- The isolation of minority ethnic police officers in a predominantly White male culture leading to them having to deny their cultural identity in order to fit in.
- The danger of the job and having to deal with unpleasant situations coupled with a lack of confidence in (racist) colleagues assisting them in circumstances where their life or physical safety were at risk.
- The anticipated reactions of friends or family, who they thought might be disappointed, fearful for their safety, and perhaps hostile; they also felt that minority ethnic police officers might be put under unreasonable pressure to reveal sensitive and confidential information.
- Concerns over pressure from the local community to decide where their loyalties were and, for Asian Muslim women with strong religious beliefs, whether the job was appropriate for a woman.
- Black and Asian women were anxious about being subjected to both sexism and racism if they joined the police.

- A perception that minority ethnic police officers have little or no promotion prospects, which in turn would limit their chances of getting the financial rewards associated with the higher ranks of the police service. (pp. 7-8)

Along with the establishment of targets for forces to recruit minority ethnic officers, the Home Office (1999a) has set goals with regard to retention and promotion. The aim relating to the former is that minority ethnic officers will leave the service at the same rate as their White counterparts, rather than at a greater rate, as has been the case. Similarly, a series of targets has been identified (Home Office, 1999a) that sets progressive goals designed to ensure that minority ethnic officers are promoted at the same rate as their White colleagues and are represented in specialist posts in the same way (p. 9). One omission from these targets is that, with the exception of those relating to recruitment, no mention is made of the position of civilian staff.

#### POLICING DIVERSITY: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND IMPLICATIONS

In many respects, the notion of policing diversity appears to encapsulate and further the principle of policing by consent that has informed the development of policing in Britain since the establishment of modern police forces in the first half of the 19th century. Although the need for some of the developments outlined above appears to indicate that policing by consent has not been achieved in practice, as an organizing principle, it has featured fairly consistently for many decades. In the past, consent was understood as a relatively straightforward concept: If the police acted in a way broadly consistent with the expectations of the public, if they used minimal force, tackled crime with reasonable effectiveness and efficiency, and treated non-criminal members of the public with courtesy and respect, it was held that consent would be forthcoming—it would be conferred upon the police for a job well done. Reiner (2000) argues that securing public consent for the police in the 19th century partly was the result of a deliberate set of policy decisions focusing on bureaucratic organization, the rule of law, minimal force, nonpartisanship, accountability, the service role, and effectiveness (pp. 50-58).

The emphasis on policing diversity might be understood as a subtle renegotiation of this traditional principle because it recognizes that consent cannot be gleaned simply by treating all members of the public in the same manner: The public no longer has a consistent, or even a coherent, set of

expectations for the police to fulfill. Given that society is increasingly diverse and culturally heterogeneous, the demands placed on the police are no longer straightforward, and it may be increasingly recognized that the police cannot satisfy all of the expectations with which they are faced. It might be that the development of policing diversity is partly a response to the introduction of new managerialism, such that mission statements, targets, and goals feature heavily in the commitments that police organizations make to their clients and customers. Recognition of the diverse requirements of the client-base is a fairly fundamental principle of free market provision, and in an age where the police service is increasingly understood as one provider of "law and order" services among many, it is perhaps the case that retaining market share requires that the service attends more carefully to the varied needs of the community. Whereas these broader trends might provide an important context that has encouraged the development of the principle of policing diversity, it is also clear that there has been a significant political agenda that has driven the type of changes outlined in this article.

Police concern with community and race relations, prior to the Lawrence Report of 1999, was generally focused on ensuring that all ethnic groups received an equal level of service delivery. The notion of diversity recognizes that the needs and demands of ethnic groups differ, and so the provision of an identical service, one that was designed, unwittingly, for the majority ethnic population and assumed to be applicable to all, is no longer tenable. Delivery of an "off the shelf" policing service to the public at large effectively means that those groups whose priorities and concerns are divergent from the mainstream receive a less than satisfactory service, even though it might be considered identical to that provided to all.

These conceptual concerns have underpinned the type of reforms outlined in this article. However, it might be argued that the policies that have resulted represent a beginning and not the end of a process whereby social diversity is properly reflected in the service provided by the police. Almost without exception, policing diversity strategies are focused on meeting the needs of an ethnically heterogeneous society. Cultural diversity is conceived in terms of ethnic and racial differences, with gender and sexuality occasionally featuring in strategy documents and the like. For political reasons, it might be that prioritizing improvements in police relations with minority ethnic communities is understandable; pressure groups of various kinds have campaigned around police racism, racist violence, and the like for decades, and the Lawrence case certainly provided the major impetus for the renewed emphasis on policing diversity. Notwithstanding the *realpolitik*

of recent developments in the United Kingdom, though, the concentration on ethnicity as the key to diversity strategy presents conceptual problems because it implicitly downgrades other factors that shape diverse communities. Although it is laudable to improve services provided to minority ethnic groups and to seek to address a series of problems that have been of long-standing concern, it is unclear why this principle should not be extended to other groups who are marginalized according to other variables. To an extent, of course, this is already being done—as has been mentioned, the position of women and the lesbian, gay, and transgender communities are incorporated, to some extent, in the measures briefly outlined above. The main focus though, in recent experience in Britain, has remained largely on issues relating to race: Although it might be common, for example, to refer to police “community and race relations” training, it seems that this usually pays considerably more attention to the latter than to the complexity of issues surrounding the former. The specific recent context of British society might explain this, but it is not clear why this imbalance ought to remain, or why other minority groups ought not to be more fully incorporated into the policing diversity rubric.

Once this principle is acknowledged, it is hard to identify where its consequences might end. Recent debates on the extent of and response to rural crime seem to indicate that rural communities have different policing needs than their urban counterparts. Other research (e.g., Dhalech, 1999, on rural racism) suggests that minority ethnic communities living in rural areas experience different levels and forms of racism and discrimination compared to those in towns and cities. Equally, the experience of the elderly, women, gays, and lesbians suggests that still other sets of variables need to be factored into the equation when it comes to providing policing services that reflect the diversity of the community. In addition, those who are unemployed, have mental health problems, sleep rough, or have problems relating to addictions of various kinds are also likely to have certain specific requirements of the police. The types of “communities at risk” (Johnston, 2000) are endless in their permutations. It is certainly not being suggested here that the police should ignore such diversity in favor of a “one size fits all” approach: Clearly, for policing to be both appropriate and effective, it is vital that the complex needs of various groups are met. What is being raised, though, is the fact that a number of practical problems arise relating to the provision of training on the needs of diverse communities, which could be almost limitless, the expectation that recruitment and retention issues will

be adjusted to reflect diversity issues, and that police performance will be monitored to ensure that service provision is appropriate.

In addition to these practical difficulties, the identification of a particular trait as an organizing principle around which policing or any other service can be delivered is a simplistic and limited approach. Although minority groups of different kinds are likely to have certain specific needs in relation to their disproportionate experience of certain types of crime, or because they need particular types of treatment from officers, it is not necessarily the case that this will extend into all aspects of the service that they might require from the police. Put simply, diverse groups are likely to have more in common than they do apart when it comes to the provision of police service in response to many incidents. Although minority groups, for example, might have specific cultural requirements in terms of the manner in which they are dealt with, the broad framework of their needs is likely to be fairly consistent with those of the mainstream.

As well as suggesting that detailed consideration of the notion of diversity raises complications for policing, it is also the case that the notion of community, as it is usually understood, is becoming problematic. Just as the term *diversity* is usually used simplistically as a metonym for *race*, so too the term *community* is used in an ill-conceived manner in much debate about policing. A number of authors (e.g., Brogden, 1999) have noted that the label *community policing* seems to be applied to a very wide range of policing systems and practices to connote a certain virtue and legitimacy. In broader terms, Bauman (2001) introduces his discussion of the concept of community by outlining the more general “feel good” factor that surrounds the term:

Words have meanings: some words, however, also have a “feel.” The word “community” is one of them. It feels good: whatever the word “community” may mean, it is good “to have a community,” “to be in a community.” If someone wandered off the right track, we would often explain his unwholesome conduct by saying that “he has fallen into bad company.” If someone is miserable, suffers a lot and is consistently denied a dignified life, we promptly accuse society—the way it is organized, the way it works. Company or society can be bad; but not the community. Community, we feel, is always a good thing. (p. 1)

The breadth of policing styles apparently contained within the field of community policing might be one reason that the meaning of community in this context remains relatively unconsidered. Most simply, it often appears that the term is used synonymously with *public*, in which case it is pretty

meaningless (because what else is to be policed except the public?). Often the word community implies a level of proximity: a local community, distinct in certain ways from the general population at large. This use of the term community is consistent with what Trojanowicz and Moore (1988) suggest is the original use of the concept. They argue that the term community was originally used to refer to those residents in a geographically distinct area, which could be anything from a small village to an urban neighborhood. The term was used as a means of conceptualizing a social unit larger than the family and provided a way of explaining how elements of simple, often rural societies, characterized by close kinship ties, a homogeneous culture, and traditional customs and practices, were retained in industrial urban settings. This geographically centered use of the term community is consistent with the spatial organization of policing: focused as it is on the provision of services to a bounded area, be it a Basic Command Unit, a Sector, an Area, or a Constabulary. In light of this, it has generally been straightforward to suggest that the community are those within a certain territory on whose behalf the police service of that area operates. There are two reasons, though, that this framework of community policing is beginning to unravel. The first reason is the process of *disembedding*, whereby the routines and organizing principles of everyday life are increasingly divorced from the territory in which individuals are based (Giddens, 1990, pp. 21-29). If the space in which individuals are located is increasingly less important in the shaping of their identity, then the centrality of territory as an organizing principle of community policing is also undermined. The implications of this are recognized by Trojanowicz and Moore (1988) when they argue that the traditional conceptualization of community requires further development because

the three major technological changes mass transportation, mass communication, and mass media have played a great role in the divorce between geography and community. And while some researchers have touched on the effects of one or more of these factors, it is almost impossible to overstate the impact this trio has wrought. (p. 18)

The second reason that the traditional framework of community policing appears to be creaking takes this discussion back to the issue of diversity. As currently enacted in the British context, as has been shown, the notion of diversity is primarily concerned with questions of race and ethnicity. It has been argued here that this focus ought to be broadened and that other variables ought to be more centrally considered under the mantle of policing diversity. In any case, these factors are not generally organized along spatial

lines in the manner in which policing, in general, and community policing, in particular, are organized. Whereas policing structures have traditionally been determined by territory, many of the communities that might be incorporated in policing diversity are predicated on other factors, be it ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, or whatever. As Johnston (2000) argues,

Nowadays, the singularity of “community” has given way to the plurality of communities: moral communities (religious, ecological, gendered); lifestyle communities (of taste and fashion); communities of commitment (to personal and non-personal issues); contractual communities (consisting of subscribing consumers); virtual communities (joined together in cyberspace); and so on. Such communities, far from being homogenous, are diverse, overlapping, pragmatic, temporary, and, frequently, divided from one another. (pp. 54-55)

Communities of interest can now be identified, alongside geographical communities. Such communities tend to rely on self-ascription, whereby individuals choose to associate with others rather than simply having their identity assigned by others. One implication of this is that individuals belong to many communities: based on residence, but also employment, ethnicity, religion, leisure pursuits, health problems, and so on. Recent British discourse on policing diversity has not begun to come to grips with this proliferation of communities; the overwhelming focus on ethnicity as a source of identification serves to obscure other dimensions that might prove to be of equal significance. Furthermore, the whole territorial basis of contemporary and historical policing systems seems ill-suited to an emerging era in which geography and space are of declining importance.

## REFERENCES

- Alderson, J. (1979). *Policing freedom*. Plymouth, England: Macdonald and Evans.
- Association of Chief Police Officers. (2000). *Guide to identifying and combating hate crime*. London: Home Office.
- Association of Chief Police Officers. (2000). *Policing diversity*. London: Home Office.
- Barlow, D., & Barlow, M. (2001). *Police in a multicultural community: An American story*. Illinois: Waveland.
- Bauman, Z. (2001). *Community: Seeking safety in an insecure world*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.
- Beck, A., & Rowe, M. (1994). *Police and the people of Leicestershire: Ethnic representation in police force data*. Unpublished report. Leicester, UK: CSPO.
- Boateng, P. (1984). The police, community and accountability. In J. Benyon (Ed.), *Scarman and after: Essays reflecting on Lord Scarman's report, the riots and their aftermath* (pp. 152-159). Oxford: Pergamon.

- Brogden, M. (1999). Community policing as cherry pie. In R. Mawby (Ed.), *Policing across the world: Issues for the twenty first century* (pp. 167-186). London: UCL.
- Cashmore, E., & McLaughlin, E. (Eds.). (1991). *Out of order: Policing Black people*. London: Routledge.
- Dhalech, M. (1999). *Challenging racism in the rural idyll*. London: National Association of Citizen's Advice Bureaux.
- Emsley, C. (1996). *The English police: A political and social history* (2nd ed.). London: Longman.
- Fitzgerald, M. (1999). *Searches in London under S1 of the police and criminal evidence act*. London: Metropolitan Police.
- Fryer, P. (1984). *Staying power: The history of Black people in Britain*. London: Pluto.
- Giddens, A. (1990). *The consequences of modernity*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.
- Greaves, G. (1984). The Brixton disorders. In J. Benyon (Ed.), *Scarman and after: Essays reflecting on Lord Scarman's report, the riots and their aftermath* (pp. 63-72). Oxford: Pergamon.
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary. (1997). *Winning the race: Policing plural communities*. London: Home Office.
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary. (2000). *Policing London: Winning consent*. London: Home Office.
- Holdaway, S. (1996). *The racialisation of British policing*. London: Macmillan.
- Home Office. (1999a). *Dismantling barriers to reflect the community we serve—The recruitment, retention and progression of ethnic minority officers*. London: Author.
- Home Office. (1999b). *Stephen Lawrence inquiry: Home secretary's action plan*. London: Author.
- Home Office. (2000a). *Statistics on race and the criminal justice system*. London: Author.
- Home Office. (2000b). *Statistics on women and the criminal justice system*. London: Author.
- Home Office. (2000c). *Police stops and searches: Lessons from a programme of research*. London: Policing and Reducing Crime Unit, Home Office.
- Home Office. (2000d). *Auditing organisational culture within the police service* (HOC 14/2000). London: Author.
- Imbert, P. (1991, March-April). Preparing police to deal with a multicultural society. *International Contemporary Police Review*, pp. 2-8.
- Institute for Race Relations. (1987). *Policing against Black people*. London: IRR.
- Jefferson, T., & Grimshaw, R. (1984). *Controlling the constable: Police accountability in England and Wales*. London: Methuen.
- Jefferson, T., Walker, M., & Senevirantne, M. (1992). Ethnic minorities, crime and criminal justice: A study of a provincial city. In D. Downes (Ed.), *Unravelling criminal justice* (pp. 138-164). London: Macmillan.
- Johnston, L. (2000). *Policing Britain: Risk, security and governance*. London: Longman.
- Keith, M. (1993). *Race, riots, and policing: Lore and disorder in a multiracial society*. London: Macmillan.
- Lawrence family to sue men cleared of racist murder. (1997, February 14). *The Times* (p. 3).
- Macpherson, W. (1999). *The Stephen Lawrence inquiry*. London: HMSO.
- Metropolitan Police. (n.d.). *Protect and respect: Diversity strategy*. London: Author.

- Metropolitan Police. (2000) *Policing London—Winning consent: A review of murder investigation and community and race relations issues in the Metropolitan Police Service*. London: Author.
- Morris, L. (1994). *Dangerous classes: The underclass and social citizenship*. London: Routledge.
- President delivers race relations warning to BCU commanders. (2001, February 16). *Police Review*, Vol. 109, No. 5609.
- Reiner, R. (2000). *The politics of the police* (3rd ed.). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Rowe, M. (1998). *The racialisation of disorder in twentieth century Britain*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Scarman, Lord. (1981). *The Brixton disorders*. London: HMSO.
- Scruton, P. (1985). *The state of the police*. London: Pluto.
- Smith, D. (1995). Race, crime and criminal justice. In M. Maguire, R. Morgan, & R. Reiner (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of criminology* (pp. 1041-1118). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Stone, V., & Pettigrew, N. (2000). *The views of the public on stop and searches*. Police Research Series Paper 129. London: Home Office.
- Stone, V., & Tuffin, R. (2000). *Attitudes of people from minority ethnic communities towards a career in the police service*. Police Research Series Paper 136. London: Home Office.
- Trojanowicz, R. C., & Moore, M. H. (1988). *The meaning of community in community policing*. Michigan State University: National Center for Community Policing.

*Michael Rowe is a lecturer in policing at the Scarman Centre, University of Leicester. His research interests include police community relations, police training, and the policing of racism. He has published widely on these issues and on the topic of racism and antiracism in football. He is director of the University's MSc in Police Leadership and Management.*