

**Politics of Law & Order**  
**The Politics of 'Race' and Policing in Urban Communities**

Paul Connolly  
*Magee College, University of Ulster*

“Race” and Policing in the Inner City: An Ethnographic Study<sup>1</sup>

---

## Introduction

According to Michael Keith<sup>2</sup> the existing literature on ‘race’, riots and policing has been dominated by a theoretical paradigm that has laid stress on the diagnostic role of research. In this, specific incidents of disorder and particular events have been explained through recourse to a broader set of more general assumptions concerned most frequently with black community life and/or police cultures. Here the emphasis has been to draw up a common set of factors which, when added together, provide the central ‘ingredients’ with which to predict the making of disorder and civil unrest. This ‘recipe approach’ as Keith terms it, because of its emphasis on the construction of generalisations, has the effect of constructing a theoretical framework that inevitably ‘creates the raw material for insidious stereotypes’ (p.17) and either tends towards the pathologising of black communities or of police cultures. This literature, borne from and expressive of the heated political struggles concerning representations of ‘black criminality’ and ‘police racism’ respectively is, according to Keith, indicative of a ‘common academic fraudulence’ (p.17) that takes us little closer to understanding the complex web of social processes that articulate in the specific manifestation of civil disorder.

In contrast Keith contends that there needs to be an introduction of a notion of process in research on ‘race’ and policing. ‘Riots’ never simply happen as an unproblematic response to a set of external stimuli (whether they be factors such as high unemployment, police racism, poor housing) but always have a history. The strength of Keith’s own analysis of the disorders in Brixton, Hackney and Notting Hill during the 1980s is the emphasis he lays on the importance of process. Through a detailed and rich study of the three events he successfully draws attention to the way that relations between the black communities and the police develop over time and through space; how levels of antagonism enters into these relationships and come to inform and reproduce the perceptions by each in relation to the other; and how these perceptions so constituted develop a certain degree of autonomy and come to act upon, reproduce and consolidate antagonistic relations between police and the black communities. What is particularly valuable in Keith’s work is his analysis of how these relations come to be ‘inscribed in time and space’ (p.95); that is how the sense of historical process is compounded by the constitution and reproduction of the symbolism of the built environment, witnessed most starkly through notions of the ‘front-line’, in such a way as to be both expressive of whilst also contributing towards the unfolding nature of social relations.

---

<sup>1</sup>This is a working paper. Please do not quote without the author’s permission. Comments are very welcome.

<sup>2</sup>All references to Keith in this paper relate to M.Keith, *Race, Riots and Policing*, UCL Press, 1993.

According to Keith, it is only through the adoption of such a distinctly qualitative focus that particular incidents of disorder can be fully understood within the context of how social relations in that locality have developed and become inscribed, or 'sedimented' over time and through place. In this, Keith's work is expressive of the broader structurationist approach found in the work of Berger and Luckmann and developed more systematically by Giddens.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, and this point forms the basis of this paper, not only has Keith inherited some of the rich and important insights offered by such a tradition but he has also inherited some of its basic weaknesses. The emphasis that Giddens has placed on the individual through his concept of the 'duality of structure' has had the effect, as has been widely noted elsewhere, of the lack of 'ontological depth' to his analysis and the neglect of any wider notion of systems. Unfortunately these problems are also reflected in Keith's own analysis. Here there is a strong and disappointing sense in which Keith has crudely bolted on a more 'macro analysis' to the end of his detailed qualitative study. Whilst the first ten chapters offer a rich and detailed analysis of the three localities studied, the eleventh and final chapter makes a gaping paradigmatical jump to explaining social relations in these localities within the broader theoretical framework advocated in the seminal work of Hall et al's (1978) *Policing the Crisis*.<sup>4</sup> This conceptual rift can be most succinctly illustrated in the following quote from his last chapter which sits very uneasily against the general thesis of the book with its emphasis on the spatial and temporal specificity of social relations:

'it is suggested here not only that criminalisation is the logical outcome of the racialisation of British society but also that this process of racial criminalisation is in part consonant with the restructuring of the British economy in the past decade, that it lends a legitimacy to the measures of social control this restructuring requires and also that the very reproduction of racial divisions in society is in part a function of this process'.<sup>5</sup>

It is not the validity of these comments that this paper is primarily concerned with but with the inconsistencies in Keith's theoretical framework and its inability to accommodate such a broader, macro-analysis. The central problem for this paper is the desire to develop a theoretical framework capable of taking on board the valuable insights offered in Keith's rich ethnographic analysis whilst also being able to locate it within a broader analytical framework. For the remainder of this paper I will tentatively suggest one possible way of doing this through the critical adaptation of the work of Pierre Bourdieu and its application to the area of 'race' and policing. In the following I will begin by introducing the three central concepts employed by Bourdieu, namely 'habitus', 'capital' and 'field', before drawing upon my own recent ethnographic study of an inner city council estate to illustrate how these concepts can be taken up and used.

---

<sup>3</sup> see P. Berger & T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, Penguin, 1967; A. Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, Polity Press, 1984.

<sup>4</sup> S. Hall et al, *Policing the Crisis*, Macmillan, 1978.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p.232.

## Habitus, Capital and Field

This paradigmatic rift manifest in Keith's work is largely due to the way in which the effects of the macro-processes, outlined so successfully by Hall et al, on particular localities are simply stated and taken for granted rather than drawn out and proven. What is therefore missing from this analysis is any detailed and explicit consideration of how discourses of 'race', manifest at other levels of the social formation, come to specifically act upon individuals in other locales. Thus whilst Keith offers a number of important insights into the way that 'race' comes to influence individual people's perceptions and actions, he fails to develop this analysis to explicitly drawing out the consequences of this for an understanding of human agency. This, in turn, leaves unresolved an understanding of the actual dynamics through which racialised relations within specific sites come to be forged and reproduced. It is with these concerns in mind that I want to introduce and critically refine Bourdieu's three inter-related concepts of *habitus*, *capital* and *field* as a way of tentatively addressing these issues. What I will argue here is that they offer a more systematic and theoretically-coherent set of analytical tools with which to approach the study of racialised relations in specific locales. In this I would see it as tentatively adding to and developing the important analysis offered in Keith's work rather than simply standing in opposition to it.

The habitus can best be seen as an analytical tool for understanding human behaviour. In essence it refers to the way we have developed and internalised ways of approaching, thinking about and acting upon our social world. Over time we come to successively learn from and incorporate the lessons of our lived experiences which helps to guide our future actions and behaviour and disposes us to thinking in certain ways. This is what Bourdieu refers to as our 'habitus'. As our experience comes to be consolidated and reinforced, the habitus becomes more durable and internalised as we 'habitualise' the way we think and behave. According to Bourdieu the habitus, then, is a system of:

'durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures, predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organise practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them'.<sup>6</sup>

In essence, the habitus acts unconsciously to organise our social experiences and encourage us to think and behave in certain ways – similar to Giddens's notion of practical consciousness.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the way in which the habitus comes to progressively structure the actions and perceptions of individuals inevitably results in its embodiment, that is, the manner in which individuals physically express themselves. This embodiment of the habitus is what Bourdieu refers to as the 'bodily hexis' and represents the way the habitus is:

'realised, embodied, turned into permanent disposition, a durable manner of standing, speaking, and thereby of feeling and thinking'.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> P. Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, Polity Press, 1990, p.53.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> P. Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge University Press, 1977, 93/4.

The habitus then provides the essential analytical tool for bridging the structure and agency divide. Whilst people come to make sense of and internalise their social position through the effects of various structures, these structures only have meaning and an existence in the way that they are reproduced through individuals acting upon their habitus. As Bourdieu argues, structures ‘do not exist and do not really realise themselves except in and through the system of dispositions of agents’.<sup>9</sup> Of course if we left it there, which is what many commentators do, then Bourdieu’s work would be rightly open to charges of determinism and being too simplistic. How can change be understood within a theoretical framework that appears to be inherently self-fulfilling? Where has human agency gone? and how can we make sense of the contingent and inherently complex and contradictory nature of individual identities? It is here however, that many commentators have demonstrated their failure to fully engage with, and understand, Bourdieu’s method for, in order to fully understand this notion of habitus, we need to examine its relationship to those of capital and field.<sup>10</sup>

In essence, capital can be understood as a range of scarce goods and resources which lie at the heart of social relations. The struggles over such resources provide the main dynamic through which social stratification and change can be understood. Bourdieu conceived of four basic types of capital. These are, as Jenkins summarises:

‘economic capital, social capital (various kinds of valued relations with significant others), cultural capital (primarily legitimate knowledge of one kind or another) and symbolic capital (prestige and social honour)’.<sup>11</sup>

As Bourdieu outlined in his early work on education, these four types are deeply inter-related and partly transposable.<sup>12</sup> Economic capital enables a person to send their children to private schools and so learn and appropriate certain valued forms of cultural capital. This cultural capital makes it possible to develop valued relationships with others (social capital) and acquire certain positions within society that is associated with particular aspects of symbolic capital and so on.

Finally, a field can be best understood as a ‘field of forces’, the social arena where struggles take place over specific resources. A field is defined primarily, therefore, in terms of the particular forms of capital present and secondarily through the relations developed around that as people struggle to acquire and/or maintain that capital. The boundaries of any particular field in terms of what is at stake and who is drawn into its domain are not fixed but inherently contested by those within the field. It stands to reason, therefore, that there are as many fields as there are forms of capital. Any specific field, so identified and defined through empirical research, can be located within and/or across a number of levels of the social formation and may be quite inclusive or exclusive in terms of its size and reach.

It is through these notions of the field and capital that enables us to re-evaluate the concept of habitus in Bourdieu’s work and address charges of it being too simplistic and deterministic. In essence, the habitus is defined and constituted within

<sup>9</sup>Quoted in Brubaker, ‘Rethinking classical theory: the sociological vision of Pierre Bourdieu’, *Theory and Society*, 14, 1985, p.758.

<sup>10</sup>See, for instance, R.Jenkins, *Pierre Bourdieu*, Routledge, 1992.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid*, p.85.

<sup>12</sup>P.Bourdieu & J.Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, Sage, 1977.

particular fields as individuals come to learn about and internalise their position within struggles over particular forms of capital. As such a person has as many habituses as the number of fields they inhabit. Before exploring the implications of this, however, I want to complete this preliminary discussion by referring to how Bourdieu understands the relationship between the habitus and the field. As he explains:

'The relation between habitus and field operates in two ways. On one side, it is a relation of *conditioning*: the field structures the habitus, which is the product of the embodiment of the immanent necessity of the field (or of a hierarchy of intersecting fields). On the other side, it is a relation of knowledge or cognitive construction: habitus contributes to constituting the field as a meaningful world, a world endowed with sense and with value, in which it is worth investing one's energy.'<sup>13</sup>

## Critically adapting Bourdieu's account

It is true to say that Bourdieu's conceptions of the various forms of capital in his empirical research have been predominated by notions of class. As such the relationship between economic capital and the acquisition of other forms of capital for working class and middle class people has remained a central preoccupation in his work.<sup>14</sup> This focus on class has also, I would argue, led to confusion as to whether Bourdieu understood habitus to be a universal element that people took with them to specific fields or, in the more pluralistic conception outlined above, whether each person was constituted through a number of habituses. Whilst he certainly argued the latter, his focus on class and its transposability between the various forms of capital can lead one to interpret his work, in practice, as being more towards the former conceptualisation. However, regardless of how Bourdieu has made use of his three concepts of field, habitus and capital, they can be appropriated and re-worked to offer one of the most sophisticated and useful means with which to understand cultural formations more generally and 'race' and policing more specifically. The concepts of field and capital can be significantly developed to take on board the complexity and contingency of social relations. This then provides the framework where the habitus can be radicalised as a concept and the charges of determinism and simplicity can be addressed. It is with this in mind that I want to briefly return to the concepts of capital and field.

As discussed above, when Bourdieu thought about capital he did so primarily within an analysis of class relations. As such notions of cultural and symbolic capital, for instance, related to those factors necessary to acquire to be successful within a capitalist society. Implicit within this is the suggestion that the working class are simply 'without' significant forms of cultural, symbolic and social capital. As a result, this creates an analytical vacuum within which the forms and dynamics of working class and/or black culture, together with how it is produced and reproduced, are overlooked. Their social position and ways of thinking about themselves and others is simply determined by their lack of cultural and other

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Wacquant, *Ibid*, p.44.

<sup>14</sup> See P.Bourdieu, *Distinction*, Routledge, 1984.

forms of capital. I want to suggest, however, that Bourdieu's notion of capital can be developed to understand how certain subordinate groups come to develop and value their own forms of cultural, symbolic and social capital which are not only at variance with the broader forms of class-related capital but are, often, in direct conflict. How and when these forms of capital become significant depends upon the specific context – that is the particular field – in which individuals are located. Black cultural forms may, for instance, be valued amongst young peer-groups but not within the wider context of student-teacher or young people/police relations.<sup>15</sup>

It is in this radicalisation of Bourdieu's notion of capital that we can begin to unravel the complexity and contingency of each individual's lived experience. For working class young people, for example, it enables us to identify a number of different and competing forms of capital that exist both within and beyond their constitution as working class. I have already touched upon one specific way in which 'race', through black cultural forms, can intervene within working class youth's culture. Of course gender, and specific forms of masculine and feminine cultural forms, also form the basis around which certain forms of capital and their related fields are constructed. Within the field of female peer group relations, the dominant and valued cultural and symbolic capital relating to femininity are transformed, within broader male-dominated peer group relations to signify the lack of significant forms of (masculine) cultural forms. In terms of 'race', what we are principally interested in is the way that these specific fields become racialised and how they then, consequently, articulate with and over-determine specific social relations in other fields.

The contingent nature of any one person's habitus or identity can be understood in the plurality of fields within which they are located and how these come to complexly over-determine and influence each other. As with Waddington et al's 'Flashpoints' model, we can envisage a number of fields, manifest at all levels of the social formation which act to affect and structure each other.<sup>16</sup> However the notion of field offers both a flexibility and an understanding of the dynamics of change absent in Waddington et al's account. What fields are identified and studied through particular ethnographic work and why, will depend primarily on their analytical usefulness. Many fields and forms of capital can be essentially 'bracketed off' in a way that the static set of levels within Waddington et al's 'Flashpoints' model cannot. Moreover, in the sense that each field is constituted and continually reproduced through the struggles over particular forms of capital, then we can now gain a greater understanding of the central dynamics through which the unfolding racialised relations within each field can be understood.

Moreover, within this sense of the unfolding nature of social relations, I want to suggest that the concept field can be developed through the incorporation of notions of space and time. Here, specific sets of relations within any particular field come to be expressed in and through the spatial, temporal and organisational structures that have developed over time. These structural elements come to be both formed by the realisation of people's habituses whilst also acting to reproduce them. These are themes that I now want to elaborate upon a little further, in the final section of this paper, through a case study of police/black relations on an

<sup>15</sup> see R.Hewitt, *White Talk, Black Talk*, Cambridge University Press, 1986; S.Jones, *White Youth, Black Culture*, Macmillan, 1988.

<sup>16</sup> D.Waddington et al, *Flashpoints*, Routledge, 1989.

English inner city council estate.

## **'Race' and Policing in the Inner City**

Because of the constraints of space what follows is simply a brief overview of a much more detailed analysis set out elsewhere.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless it will suffice in terms of an illustration of how Bourdieu's method, so adapted, can be applied to the study of 'race' and policing in the inner city. Returning back to my critique of Keith's work, what I am primarily interested in is setting out how we can understand the ways in which 'race' comes to be expressed and reproduced at various levels of the social formation and how, consequently, it acts upon and over-determines police/black relations on Manor Park estate. In doing this we need to begin by examining how the estate has come to be spatially and temporally constructed against the backdrop of broader discourses on 'race', crime and the inner city prevalent within the field of politics.

Most basically, the field of politics is defined in terms of those sets of social relations developed in terms of struggles over the control of the state and its institutions. What counts as the state and which particular institutions come under political control are not fixed but are actively contested by those located within the field. The complex nature of the state dictates that there will be numerous sites within the political field (national, European, international, local etc.) through which struggles exist over particular aspects of the state. At the site constituted through national politics, the primary form of cultural capital required to successfully gain political control can be understood as the ability of certain individuals or parties to 'nationalise themselves' that is to transform and portray their own sectional interests as being in the interests of the nation as a whole. As such it centrally involves the ability to appropriate and re-work significant aspects of people's lived experiences into a broader and more coherent political philosophy of the nation.<sup>18</sup> This, in itself, points to the dialectical relationship between various fields of social relations where specific localities are not simply structured by broader, national discourses expressed through the field of politics but also act to over-determine their nature and form.

It is with this in mind that the work of Hall et al at this level of analysis becomes pertinent. Not only was 'race' a primary mode through which broader national political discourses came to be expressed and understood but, in Hall et al's political economy approach and the central emphasis they gave to the economic crisis, such an analysis also strongly suggests ways in which we can understand the articulation between the political field and the basic field of economics. Thus the success of the New Right from the late 1970s onwards has been precisely in their ability to re-work people's direct experiences of the global recession and profound economic restructuring partly through the lens of 'race'. In this sense it could be argued that 'race' has formed part of the political habitus historically developed out of successive political struggles where Britain's colonial history has provided the back-cloth against which the post-war experiences of Britain's black populations have been re-worked and understood by the wider (white) population.

---

<sup>17</sup> P. Connolly, *Growing Up in the Inner City*, Open University Press, forthcoming.

<sup>18</sup> see A. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Lawrence & Wishart, 1971.

It is not surprising to find, therefore, that the moral panics over black criminality formed a staple ingredient of attempts to secure political hegemony following the crisis. The way that 'race' is continually worked and re-worked through the political habitus in this way ensures that debates around the inner city and urban policy will inevitably become racialised. The announcement by the then Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, of the first inner city government policy initiatives closely following Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speeches is more than testimony to this.<sup>19</sup> Moreover the struggles of the black communities themselves, witnessed most starkly in the urban disorders of 1980-1 and 1985 inevitably acted to reproduce these links between 'race', crime and the inner city problem.

It is against this backdrop that social relations on Manor Park estate have come to be constructed and reproduced. Manor Park can be seen as a specific site within the broader field of economic relations; representing a relatively homogenous fraction of the working class primarily defined in terms of their relation to economic capital, that is, the majority being unemployed or economically inactive. Sharing a similar economic and social position, many of the residents have come to develop specific alternative forms of cultural, symbolic and social capital developed through their experience of life on the estate as will be discussed shortly. The estate itself, both spatially and temporally, can be seen as being the cumulative product of the over-determination of a number discourses on 'race', crime and the inner city manifest within the field of national politics. Manor Park itself is relatively self-contained with main dual-carriageways located at its four extremes separating it off from its surrounding area. It is visually dominated by two high-rise tower blocks which overlook a succession of two storey maisonettes which dominate the rest of the estate. The estate became the first, and one of the only ones, to be built on an area that was slum-cleared in the 1950s. This, together with the style of the housing and its contrast with the surrounding neighbourhoods that remained, dominated by rows of terraced housing, provided the basis from which Manor Park became a distinct and easily identifiable growing symbol of the inner city.

The type of housing available compared to the newly constructed housing estates on the peripheries of the city, dominated by larger semi-detached properties with gardens, ensured that it was never a popular option for council tenants. Moreover the typically one- and two-bedroomed flats and maisonettes were also more suited to smaller, young single parent families. These factors came together to create a housing policy of the local council where single parents and young single adults more generally became housed on Manor Park. This slowly acted to enhance the social construction of the estate as an inner-city problem area, seen by many local people as a 'sink estate' set aside for problem families. Over time the spatially distinct nature of the estate ensured that it provided the lens through which periodic national and local political discussions over crime, poverty and 'race' were rehearsed. During the present field work, for example, the local newspaper carried a front page headline: 'Sad picture of life on an inner-city council estate' with an accompanying subtitle: 'Manor Park: Report paints a picture of an estate hit hard by unemployment and other problems'. These headlines refer to a local campaign by the medical practice serving the estate to build a new health centre. This provides a good example of the way that the symbolically constructed

<sup>19</sup> See, for instance, A. Sills et al, *The Politics of the Urban Crisis*, Hutchinson, 1988.

and spatially distinct nature of Manor Park lent itself to encouraging a number of social campaigns amongst professional and community workers in relation to the estate who saw it as something small and distinct enough to actually gain positive results. Over time, therefore, each successive campaign, in drawing upon and appropriating the 'deprived inner-city' image of the estate only ensured that such symbolism became reproduced and consolidated further. Moreover, over the last ten to fifteen years the number of black, and particularly African/Caribbean people living on the estate has increased markedly to the point where Manor Park contains one of the highest portions of African/Caribbeans in the city (a total of 8 per cent). The development and reproduction of these discursive themes of crime and the inner city therefore paralleled the rising number of black people living on the estate and inevitably came to partially be reproduced through the lens of 'race'.

This symbolism relating to the estate that had progressively developed also provided the context for understanding the local authorities urban policy initiatives. The funding available to individual authorities from central government has always been relatively small and successful bids for funding have largely relied on local authorities highlighting certain small and distinct areas that can be regenerated and thus can stand as symbols of central government involvement. In a period of fiscal crisis, this type of 'pepper-pot approach' provides central government with the means of showing it is doing something for the 'inner cities', especially following periods of urban disorder, without actually spending large amounts.<sup>20</sup> For the local authority, keen to attract any additional funding however small, it was inevitable that localities such as Manor Park would be prime sites for the attraction of this type of funding his type of funding. One of the biggest grants successfully won by the local authority in recent years was a £17 million grant from the Department of the Environment's 'Estates Action Funding' to improve the external appearance and security of the estate. The main result of this funding was the introduction of new security doors for the maisonettes, the blocking off of most internal walk ways and the erection of 18 foot high black iron railings that ran along large parts of the estate's perimeter and helped to enclose central pathways through the estate. For many residents the estate had been transformed into a 'prison' which only helped to increase its physical isolation from the surrounding neighbourhoods and the sense of criminality and alienation experienced by the residents. Overall, the building programme can be seen as only the latest stage in the discursive construction of Manor Park as an 'inner city problem estate'.

For those living on the estate this physical isolation from the larger city, together with their commonly shared social and economic position created the conditions through which specific alternative forms of cultural, symbolic and social capital emerged on the estate. These forms of capital, so acquired in one form or another, form part of their common sense and taken-for-granted modes of behaviour, that is their habitus, which has been learnt over time and has come to structure the way that individuals on the estate perceive and respond to future incidents and events. In other words the various forms of capital and the habitus developed in relation to the acquisition of these can be most basically seen as part of the 'tried-and-tested' way of life for many people on the estate which 'works' on a pragmatic day-to-day basis and ensures their survival. For many young males liv-

---

<sup>20</sup> See Sills et al, *Ibid*, P.Lawless, *Britain's Inner Cities*, second edition, Paul Chapman Publishing, 1989.

ing on the estate, such cultural capital tends towards involvement at times in petty street crime. In the absence of any prospect of work this forms one proven mode of survival. Continued success in this however revolves around the competent development and outward display of a 'hard', street-wise image and it is this form of cultural capital that, whilst only being successfully appropriated by a minority of young men, predominates on the estate and is at least aspired to by the larger number. Of course the discursive constitution of young African/Caribbean men through successive national political discourses as street-wise and violent pimps and muggers has the effect, for some young black men, of providing them with the symbolic capital necessary to more easily maintain and reproduce this street-wise identity which is so central to the cultural capital developed by those young men on the estate. Moreover, as will be seen shortly, it is also precisely because of these broader racialised discourses reproduced at the national political level that those living and/or working on the estate (including the police) come to associate street-wise identities, and thus criminal activity, with young black men in particular which then forms part of the self-fulfilling process.

For the police covering the city centre the Manor Park estate has gained a particular notoriety. The various social processes discussed above combine to construct the estate as a problem area which is then reinforced by the police in their criminal statistics. A map of the city centre dominates one of the walls in the community policing room and the profile of the estate is clearly visible by the constellation of different coloured dots marking the places where criminal incidents have taken place. There were more crimes committed on Manor Park during the previous year than any other area in the city centre. Such discourses on 'race', crime and the inner city form the back-cloth against which those officers policing the estate come to make sense of their experiences and slowly construct their habitus. Entering Manor Park on a call, with all the symbolism of its high-rised tower blocks and bleak large iron railings, together with the stories and notoriety that run along side an estate like this, is enough to conjure up a set of taken-for-granted assumptions about the area and its residents, especially the young male residents. Whilst the handful of community police officers whose specific job it is to work and develop relations with local residents have fostered some positive relationships with local people, the 'area cars' that respond to specific events are regarded universally as being 'heavy-handed' and over the top. As Keith draws attention to so well in his own work, these officers have to respond quickly to particular incidents, have little detailed knowledge of the estate or its residents and, as a consequence, are far more likely to draw upon and be influenced by the symbolism and discourses that have been developed and reproduced through the estate.

As I have documented in more detail elsewhere, a number of young black men and women have complained about what they see as the discriminatory policing tactics and harassment.<sup>21</sup> As one black woman said: 'if you're black you're a druggie ain't ya? ... That's just how they [the police] are. Or, if you're out late, you're a prostitute' And, inevitably, the more these young people experience relations with the police in this way the more they will come to develop and embody a certain habitus that is by default defensive and hostile to the police which, in turn simply acts to re-inforce and legitimate the police in their actions. As the police sergeant in charge of the community policing team argued: 'Drug dealing [is] a

<sup>21</sup>P.Connolly, *Ibid.*

big problem. It's mainly your 18 to 25 West Indian male on Munster Road, quite blatantly. I say, they're not dealing blatantly, what they're doing is they're hanging around the streets, sitting round the streets in the sun, pulling up in cars'.

## **Conclusions**

What I have tried to do in this paper is to tentatively suggest ways in which detailed ethnographic studies of 'race' and policing can be theorised and understood within a broader 'macro' context. In beginning with and hopefully developing the work of Michael Keith I have suggested that the theoretical insights offered in the work of Pierre Bourdieu can help us maintain a central focus on context and process whilst maintaining a theoretical purchase upon broader social processes. In many ways much of the detail of my own ethnographic study resonates very clearly with that found in Keith's own work. I am not therefore particularly setting out a case for originality of argument at this level. Rather I have attempted to show through a brief discussion of my own research how Keith's work could benefit from more analytical and conceptual clarity which would, in turn, help him to overcome the theoretical rift evident in his work.