A comparative analysis of the quality of Community Police Forums in local Cato Manor & Glenwood communities, South Africa

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Abstract: Policing multiracial communities represents an important and contemporary challenge for police, since culturally diversified local environments raise many social and organisational issues regarding community relationships, problem-solving and ensuring safety and security. Furthermore, the quality of community policing in local communities is an important research topic in the fields of criminological and police studies and requires special competencies. The estimation of the quality of police work gives an insight into which extent the strategic goals of police organisations are met and what the next steps towards improving their efficiency and legitimacy are. The purpose of this paper is to compare the results of Community Policing Forums (CPFs) in Cato Manor Township and Glenwood Suburb, Durban, South Africa. This was done by exploring the quality of Community Policing (CP), especially CPFs from different perspectives, which included community leaders, business and general community. A qualitative research approach was adopted, to explore such perspectives in the study areas. The findings collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with the South African Police Services personnel, Community Police Forums’ members and general community members discovered differences between perceptions of police work and CPFs between the township area and the suburban area. Overall, the findings indicate that members of the suburban community perceive problems regarding disorder
and crime as more severe than the township one, while members of the township setting express more satisfaction with police and CPF work in general.

**Subjects:** Criminology; Social Sciences; Social Policy; Criminal Law

**Keywords:** community policing; Community Police Forum; South African Police Service; community-police relations; Durban; South Africa

1. **Introduction**

Regardless of its enviable status in the practicing of policing and years of practicing in the post-apartheid South Africa. Where in the private sector businesses invest considerable resources in supporting local police station projects and poor black townships organize civic street committees to combat crime at the local level; crime remains a permanent feature of daily existence in South Africa (Marie-Singh, 2008; Minnaar, 2009). South Africa remains one of the worst affected countries by crime. As at 2016, South Africa is ranked third on the global crime index. According to an online collaborative database Numbeo (2017), Durban is one of the top three cities highly affected by crime, after Pietermaritzburg and Johannesburg. The damaging impact of crime on the safety and security of communities, peace and stability in the country as well the country’s reputation is well documented. Together, these affect the social and economic well-being and the general quality of life of ordinary citizens. Owing to the historical legacy of apartheid, which created economic, social and structural imbalances in societies, South Africa remains generally a dual economy that is characterized by two opposite extremes of the richness and poverty in plush white suburbs and poor black townships respectively. For the purposes of this study, Glenwood will fit in the richness context and Cato Manor in poverty context. Such areas are reflective of South Africa. Therefore, in modern-day societies, one of the ways in which the lives of ordinary citizens can be improved is for police agencies to involve communities as active partners in the fight against crime. It is precisely in this context that the primary objective of this paper is to compare the results of Community Policing Forums (CPF) in both Cato Manor and Glenwood, Durban. Furthermore, this paper aims to suggest evidence-based strategies to improve the police and CPFs’ strategies to combat crime.

2. **Community policing: International perspectives**

Since its introduction in the United States of America during the 1970s, CP has achieved an enviable position and is now a standard ideological and policy model guiding mission statements, goals, and reform programs of most police forces across the world (Marenin, 2009). Nevertheless, CP as a strategy remains ambivalent, as there are competing views on the role that communities should perform in the policing framework (Wisler & Onwudiwe, 2009). This lack of clarity accounts for misunderstanding and inconsistencies when it comes to the implementation of CP in different countries. Globally, there are different models of CP and different police agencies have implemented it differently.

2.1. **The Chicago strategy: United States of America**

The Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS) was started in 1993 as a pilot programme in five diverse neighbourhoods in Chicago in the United States (US). The goal of CAPS was to encourage community members and the police to work together to reduce crime. During this period, the crime rate was on the rise, the public was growing increasingly fearful of crime and the police were frustrated by their inability to control crime while working in isolation from the community. Relations between the police and the community were strained and there was no trust between the police and the community (Skogan & Hartnett, 1995). The Chicago Police Department, in conjunction with other city agencies and the community, sought to engage the public in community policing (Stevens, 2002). The establishment of CAPS was based on an understanding that, if police, residents and other agencies worked together, crime rates could be reduced. The motto of the strategy became “Together We Can.” Crime declined in the period after the partnership was formed significantly, and the quality of life improved. The community and the police trust each other and work together on solving problems.
| Table 1. Table for selected study sample |
|-----------------------------------------|
| Community Safety & Liaison Officials:  |
| Assistant Director crime prevention &  |
| partnerships (Key Informant Interviw-KII) | SAPS Officials:  |
| Station Commanders                       |
| Sector Managers                          |
| Patrol Officers                          |
| CPFs Leaders:                            |
| Chairpersons                            |
| Secretaries                             |
| Community engagement                    |
| (Key Informant Interviews-KIIs)          |
| Community Leaders:                      |
| Counsellors (Key Informant Interviews-KIIs) | Community Members:  |
| Business                                |
| Ordinary Citizens                       |
| (Focus Group Discussions-FGDs)           |
| Community Members:                      |
| Business                                |
| Ordinary Citizens                       |
| (Focus Group Discussions-FGDs)           |
| Total                                   |

| 1 | 3 (Glenwood) + 3 (Cato Manor) = 6 | 3 (Glenwood) + 3 (Cato Manor) = 6 | 1 (Glenwood) + 1 (Cato Manor) = 2 | 20 (Glenwood) + 20 (Cato Manor) = 40 | 55 |

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CAPS is a community-oriented philosophy of policing and crime prevention involving the police, community, and other government agencies working together to identify and solve crime. The strategy was designed to meet the specific needs of Chicago (Stevens, 2002). Four key elements define the strategy namely: expanded police presence on the beat, community involvement, support from other agencies and proactive problem solving. Five districts in Chicago were selected to pilot the strategy. The strategy was a great success and, based on this, was later expanded to other districts. CAPS set an example of what effective partnerships can accomplish.

Policing is arguably an institution characterised by challenges and obstacles often difficult to overcome. Therefore, many countries have had trouble in decisively dealing with crime, owing to global technological advancements and developments. Furthermore, developments and advancements in crime have also overwhelmed technological resources in a strange and indescribable way. Therefore, the reason the above international country was chosen as an example is that policing strategies, policy frameworks, systems and models are forced to assume the status of flexibility as in the case of global markets, to meet the demands of evolving flexible criminal activities. Hence, to determine whether South African policing systems, policies, models and frameworks are effective and workable, it was necessary to compare such with worldwide trends and systems in policing.

3. Community policing in South Africa
Contemporarily, the police have come to realise that their work can be made easier when the community provides them with information concerning crime. This is not only the case in South Africa, but has been a norm in other countries as well. CP has been a platform for organising the police, the community and other role players to form partnerships in policing.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 prescribes that CP must be adopted so that the SAPS can obtain greater public legitimacy and acceptance and in general improve service delivery to all South Africa’s citizens. Through these provisions, the Ministry of Safety and Security developed and implemented several policies, plans and strategies to give meaning to the precepts of the Constitution.

CP has generally been viewed as the responsibility of a particular function within the South African Police Services (SAPS) (Pelser, 2002, p. 24). This responsibility is interpreted at various levels, primarily in terms of the establishment and maintenance of the CPFs and CP has been interpreted by SAPS members as an add-on function to the other responsibilities of the police (Pelser, 2002). This is an indication why, in some police stations in South Africa, CP is not regarded as an important component of policing. The result of this attitude is that CP cannot be sustained in the long term. Oliver (2004) opined that for CP to be effectively implemented, there is a need to plan for its short, medium and long-term sustainability.

Koning (2000) argues that the government has the moral and constitutional obligation to guarantee a safe and secure living environment for the society by upholding law and order. This is usually done through the establishment and implementation of policing structures, programs and strategies together with adequate delegated authority to implement these. Thus, CP was established in the post-apartheid South Africa to help in securing a safe and secure environment for its people.

4. Methodology
This paper adopted a qualitative research approach. This approach used a phenomenological design that is both descriptive and exploratory in nature. For this study, the use of a qualitative research approach enabled an in-depth appreciation of the participants’ responses and a detailed understanding of the CPFs and CP in Durban.
4.1. Study population
The data for this study was collected in two locations in Durban namely: Glenwood suburb and Cato Manor Township. The sample consisted of fifty five (55) participants. They consisted of members of the SAPS, Community Safety and Liaison officials; CPFs and community leaders; and ordinary community members. Their complex and detailed understanding of the views of CPFs and CP in the study areas was explored.

4.2. Sampling procedures
To select the participants of this study, purposive sampling was used. Researchers rely on their experience, ingenuity and previous research findings to obtain participants deliberately to ensure that the sample obtained may be regarded as representative of the relevant population (Huysamen, 2001). Purposive sampling involved hand picking participants from the target population. This sampling was relevant to this study because the participants selected informed the researcher’s understanding of the area of investigation. The information collected provided the appropriate and relevant data required to illuminate the researcher’s understanding of CPFs and CP in the study areas.

4.3. Data collection techniques
The study required the participants to be able to express their views and perceptions freely, therefore, it utilised interviews to collect data. Interviews are a method of gathering information through oral transformation using an interview schedule. Shneiderman and Plaisant (2005) highlight that using interviews has the following advantages:

- They allow for the obtaining of detailed information.
- Direct contact with the participants leads to specific and constructive suggestions.

The study used a semi structured interview schedule as it allowed the researcher to use the schedule that is pre-planned, and it allowed for elaborate discussions between the participants and the researcher. The interviews were done on a one on one basis, this was done to solicit detailed information from the participants. The interviews took place at locations that were chosen by the participants and the duration ranged from 20–40 minutes, this was dependent on how much information the participants were willing to share.

4.4. Data analysis
Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data as it organises and describes data in detail (Braun & Clarke, 2006). At the heart of thematic analysis, the familiarisation of data by the researcher is important. Data familiarisation was possible because the researcher personally conducted audio-recorded interviews and transcribed them. This process allowed the researcher to familiarise with the data for an expedited and insightful analysis.

Following this thematic transcription, the scripts were analysed using NVivo version 8 software. This software organised the raw data so that it was possible to link and compare thematic issues within and across documents. The list of “starter nodes” was generated from an initial entry in a project journal in the software where the questions and assumptions brought to the report were outlined. The software gave results that allowed for a deeper examination and management of the qualitative data that might not be possible in traditional coding. Two distinct types of coding were used in the analysis. The first was descriptive coding, which described the cases in the study. This process related both to the coding of information in categories and the creation of attributes to clarify them. The second type was analytical coding, which was done by selecting source content to interpret and reflect on the meaning of the data to arrive at new ideas and categories. The process entailed gathering material that could be re-thought and reviewed given the growing understanding of the inter-relationship of the categories in the data.
5. Findings and discussion

Data interpretation was conducted with the purpose to establish the perceived quality of CPFs and CP in both Glenwood Suburb and Cato Manor Township, Durban.

5.1. Understanding of community policing

The meaning of CP has seen a variety of interpretations. It was, therefore, important to have a common understanding of concepts related to CP. The researcher attempted to find out the level of understanding by participants through the key informant interviews. The legislative framework such as the South African Police Service Act and policy frameworks such as the NCPs guided the process of establishing their understanding of CP. The South African Police Service Act 68 of 1995 provides for CP and other related matters. According to the Act, the police are required to explain to role players what CP entails. Similarly, the NCPs provides a framework for a multi-dimensional approach to crime prevention. It also defines CP. The NCPs provides a means by which the SAPS and other government departments, the private sector and NGOs can integrate their approaches to CP. In addition, the police are required in terms of the South African Constitution to establish CP, and the philosophy is defined in the Constitution.

CP encourages the community and the police to establish partnerships to address the issues of crime, fear of crime and disorder. Trojanowicz and Bucceroux (1994) argue that police organisations should not rush into the implementation of CP without a full theoretical understanding of the concept. They state that people jump on board without a full appreciation of what CP is, and what the know-how is to make it work. Morale of police officers working in an environment where relations with communities are not good is often low (Makaudi, 2001). The data for this study showed that those who are actively involved in CP have different levels of understanding the philosophy as well as their roles and responsibilities.

A participant from the Key Informant Interviews had the following to say:

Community policing is a partnership between the communities with their local police stations. The community must take ownership of what is happening in their community and together with their local police station must form a partnership. Whereby we all look out for the interests and safety of the people in our community, however, general community members do not understand the notion of community policing, they expect everything to be done by the police alone.

In expressing their understanding of what CP is, most of the participants in both study settings were clear about the theoretical aspects of CP. They indicated that they have a very good understanding of the concept. For them, CP means that the police and the community should establish a partnership. The participants believed when there is a partnership which is built on mutual trust, honesty and respect, then it will be easy to deal with issues of crime in both study areas. The participants' understanding of CP appears to be in line with the definitions in both the legislative and policy frameworks mentioned above. It became evident during the interviews that the level of understanding of what CP entails depends on how actively involved participants are in this type of partnership.

5.2. Quality of contact between police and society

The results show inconsistency in the perceptions by the participants in both study areas regarding the quality of contact between the police and the citizens. In Cato Manor, the participants were more satisfied with the quality of contact between the police and the society, whereas in Glenwood the situation is mostly reversed. The participants from the Key Informant Interviews had the following to say:

Yes, we are satisfied. However some of the police do not respect us as community members, the way that they speak or handle our matters can sometimes be disrespectful.
The police try their best to serve us as the community, sometimes, I think, us as a community tend to be unfair to them, especially when we engage in violent protest actions, etc. even when we do that, they still communicate with us (Cato Manor).

I think most of us in the community have lost faith in the SAPS because of the way they treat you when you need their help.

The thing is that they do not care that we as the community are trying to work with them and assist them so they can help us prevent crime in our area (Glenwood).

The above shows that the township setting perceive the quality of contacts between police and citizens better than they are perceived by the Suburban setting. Furthermore, the observed consistency in the estimates show that more participants from Cato Manor perceived the quality of contacts between police and citizens as positive as compared to Glenwood.

5.3. Perception of crime and disorder
The formulation of CPFs as a CP strategy can be a positive initiative in crime combating and prevention activities. How the participants viewed the perception of crime and disorder in their areas is an important indicator of community participation in crime combating and prevention. Furthermore, the crime rate is a major concern in society as it negatively affects people’s lives since different crimes are committed in different areas every day.

In expressing their understanding of the nature and extent of crime in their area, most of Glenwood participants were clear that there is an increase in crime in their area. They went further to indicate that sometimes these crimes can be violent in nature. In order to curb crime in Glenwood, participants indicated that they are working on increasing the communication between the community and the police. Furthermore, the participants highlighted the need to encourage crime reporting and strategic planning (on the side of the police, and working together with the community) as some of the strategies of crime combating in the area. Consequently, it was also expressed that the area faces different types of crimes, with property-related crimes such as vehicle hijacking, housebreaking, and theft out of a motor vehicle being most prevalent in the area. Prostitution and drugs were also highlighted as crimes that are common in the area. The participants indicated that crime combating and prevention is the responsibility of everyone within the community. This means that there is no single entity that must deal with crime as it is the responsibility of every individual within the community. There was a convergence of views in this area that the community is necessary and adds value to policing in the area, through collaboration with the law enforcement agencies, such as the SAPS.

Crime in Glenwood has consistently increased for a couple of years now and most violent, such as carjacking

Simply put it is property related crime, fortunately, we do not have serious crimes like murder. I am sure that there are rape cases just that suburban’s tend to put that one in their closets but I still think that there is rape. Not that I am propagating for them, but if nationally we are saying that rape is one of the serious issues we need to deal with, gender-related crimes are issues but then in our area when you look at the stats you hardly see any

On the other hand, most of the participants from Cato Manor indicated that crime fluctuates in the area, depending on the seasons of the year. However, during the time of the interviews, they felt that it was on the rise despite various measures that had been put in place to combat it. Furthermore, they indicated that these crimes can be violent in nature. To mitigate crime, the participants expressed that ensuring communication between the community and the police is one of the measures they have adopted. Furthermore, strategizing on the part of the SAPS was indicated as one of the measures to combat crime in the area. Consequently, it was also expressed that the area faces different types of crimes. Violent and abuse crimes are the most common
crimes in the area, and these include murder and assault. Similar to Glenwood, the participants indicated that crime combating and prevention is the responsibility of everyone within the community.

For me, I can say that the extent of crime in our area fluctuates. A lot of measures have been created to address crime in our area but it continues to occur. The most prominent thing that occurs is that people from outside our area who are criminals choose to come and hide in the informal settlement of Cato Crest that is within our area. Cato Crest used to have a very high rate of crime but due to the developments that have been made and the partnerships of various stakeholders such as the police, councillors, CPF and so on

What is really common in our area and urgently trying to address in our area is murders, common robberies for example, smash and grab. We have done different awareness programmes to address this, we gave out pamphlets that tell them which are the crime hot spots in our area but people just seem not to be interested until they are directly affected. Also common to our area are assaults GBH, what I have noticed about assaults is that people get hurt normally when they are returning from places where they consume alcohol

5.4. Quality of Community Police Forums
Section 18 (1) of the South African Police Service Act 68 of 1995, clearly outlines the purpose of the CPFs as follows:

- Establish and strengthen the partnership between the community and the police.
- Improve the delivery of police service to the community.
- Promote cooperation between the police service and the community in fulfilling community needs for policing.
- Promote joint problem identification and problem-solving.
- Ensure police accountability and transparency.
- Ensure consultation and proper communication between the police and their clients.

Considering the above, responses from the participants in both study settings indicated that not all community members know about the CPFs in their areas. This has resulted in the utilisation of media, social networks, brochures and strong visibility as measures that have been developed to make the CPFs known by the communities. Studies have found that CP, especially the CPFs are not always implemented with immediate success. Problems may come from the police service or the community, and in the implementation of the initiatives. Robinson (2003) argues that the absence of strong leadership and encouragement may have an impact on the CPFs and their effectiveness in crime combating and prevention. Therefore, the participants in Glenwood highlighted lack of communication between the executive members of the CPF and the community as a challenge that affects the functioning of the CPF in the area. This has resulted in community members being reluctant to seek and develop a sustainable partnership with law enforcement.

What I have observed is that in this area people are somehow too busy for community involvement. It is not just the CPF meetings they are too busy for but even general community meetings that are called by the councillor. There is a lack of motivation to attend. People are too busy in their own lives to attend community meetings. It has been normalized for people not to participate in community events in this area

In the past, I believe that there was a very good CPF in our area, which worked together with the Umbilo police station. Currently, the CPF is not really helpful as we do not even see them. Another thing is that as the Umbilo community we do not have a great relationship with the SAPS as they never respond in time or sometimes they do not even come when we call, so being part of a CPF will not assist you. In some cases, we have resorted to calling the Metro Police rather than the SAPS
For Cato Manor, the participants added that politics hinder the proper functioning of the CPF. Furthermore, barriers from within the police organisational structure and the organisational culture or climate was expressed as a challenge for the effective functioning of the CPF. The complexity of police cultures can impede the development of more responsive and advanced approaches to crime management and reduction (Fraenkel, 2004). Police cultures need to change to build relations with the communities. Senior police officers who have been involved in community policing have a better understanding and relate well with community members than low ranking officers. This often affects CP, especially in terms of CPFs matters.

The challenge that we have is that some members of the community think that we trying to enter the political race and use these programmes to become councillors, yet all we try to do is to fight crime and ensure that Cato Manor is safe. Some members of the community tend to forget that we advocate for social crime prevention in our area and we do not involve ourselves in politics.

It is important to create an understanding and a relationship of trust among the police, the community and other role players. Trust is regarded as a cornerstone for effective CP especially, within the South African context. Furthermore, where there is trust, there is less suspicion between role players and this provides an opportunity for collaboration. The police should treat citizens with respect, and the citizens have an equal responsibility to respect the police. Once there is trust, it becomes easier for the citizens to provide information about crime to the police. The relationship can be bad, indifferent or good, depending upon the attitude, action and demeanour of every member of the police both individually and collective.

6. Conclusion
In conclusion, the aim of this paper was to compare the results of CPFs strategies in both Cato Manor and Glenwood, Durban, South Africa. CP scholars worldwide have recognized that one of the major hurdles for successful community-based programmes are misperceptions, as inaccurate as they may be, between the two major actors involved: police and citizens. The overall findings were that the participants in general have more favourable views of the overall mission and understanding of CP. Secondly, participants in both the suburban and township areas held more positive views of the utility and value of CP. However, participants showed favourable attitudes towards citizen-police cooperative efforts and CPFs in the township area as compared to the suburban area. This suggests that it is fair to conclude that generally, the CPFs in Durban do promote CP ideas. In a democracy, law enforcement agencies attempt to deliver unbiased services and the police are held accountable to the public they serve. If this does not happen for any reason, the police and CPFs should regularly check whether they still meet their mandate. Moreover, when conducting research challenges are said to arise. The way the researcher mediates these challenges needs to be accurate and concise with-out compromising the validity or reliability of the study. For this study, obtaining a gatekeeper’s permission from the SAPS was problematic. The approval process was prolonged due to the miscommunication between various units that were entrusted to review and approve the application. Furthermore, when one conducts a qualitative research, the inability to generalize the research findings is an issue that deserves attention. However, the usage of a qualitative research approach enabled an in-depth appreciation of the participants’ responses and detailed understanding of the CPFs and CP in the study areas.

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