Dialog and (Dis)order-Keeping: Police organizational sensemaking in Stockholm, Sweden and Oakland, California

Public scrutiny of law enforcement agencies across the country has pushed scholars to reexamine the importance of police culture in shaping police encounters and outcomes. While much of this work has used attitudinal data to connect officer characteristics to patterns of policing, the present study develops a tighter theoretical linkage between police organizational culture and action. Drawing on comparative ethnographic findings on the policing of restricted entertainment activities in Oakland, California and Stockholm, Sweden, this research applies the Weickian concept of organizational sensemaking to illustrate how police organizations extract and enact meanings in carrying out control. The findings reveal two distinct meaning-making logics which, in turn, give way to different police organizational outcomes in terms of prevention, repression, and efficacy. The research informs existing debates on the study of police culture, the sociology of organizations, and the divide between legality and legitimacy.

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Carlos Bustamante, PhD is a Postdoctoral Research Associate in the School of Criminal Justice at State University of New York at Albany. He received his PhD from the Department of Sociology at the University of California, Berkeley. His dissertation was a comparative ethnographic study of the policing of restricted forms of entertainment in Oakland, CA, Stockholm, Sweden, and Lima, Peru. It investigated how different penal systems addressed “problem” activities and how targeted groups responded to and resisted these interventions. He is broadly interested in the social and racial underpinnings of legality and legitimacy, the logics guiding police organizations, and the relationship between control innovations and criminal justice reform.

Friday, February 1, 2019, 12:15 pm
Husted Hall, Room 106A
UAlbany Downtown Campus, 135 Western Avenue

This event is free and open to the public.

Event hosted by the School of Criminal Justice.