

POLICING IN A DIVERSE SOCIETY

POLICING IN A DIVERSE SOCIETY

ANOTHER AMERICAN DILEMMA

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Dedicated to the East Carolina University criminal justice students who helped me prepare this textbook; all of us had to overcome our fears of being labeled racist or homophobic in order to participate in class presentations and discussions.

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PREFACE

American-authored texts will often, consciously or unconsciously, reflect American perspectives to the point of using biased language such as racism, majority population, dominant population, ethnic identity, mainstream, and impoverished. Not only is such terminology biased and judgmental, but the propensity of ideas and thoughts initiated by image are based on dominant or majority values. For example, while popular thought has moved away from the melting pot metaphor toward a mosaic, those groups that strive to become pluralistic by clinging to ancestral heritage are often labeled militant, separatist, or un-American. Law enforcement officers and criminal justice students must not only remain abreast of the ever-changing terminology, but must try to understand society's cultural diversity.

This text is not intended to equip students with the skills needed to formulate intervention strategies when working with diverse populations (however strategies may arise indirectly as students become aware of how diverse, and yet how similar, Americans really are). This text is not meant to place blame, formulate a paradigm for practice, or discuss policy implications related to policing in a diverse society. Finally, this text is not meant to be just another piece of incomprehensible scholarly work. The intent of this text is to:

1. Provide students with information about minorities in the hopes that the next generation of law enforcement officers, correctional officers, attorneys, and parole/probation officers will function more effectively in America's diverse society;
2. Raise awareness amongst students and law enforcement officers not only of the existing societal diversity, but of key historical events that have impacted individuals and/or groups;
3. Familiarize students with stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination that can impact individual and group attitudes and behaviors;
4. Encourage students to develop self-awareness and understand how personal, racial, and ethnic biases can impact decision-making and performance; and

5. Teach students to think about people different from themselves, considering how distinct views might impact their fulfilling their duties as law enforcement officers or agents of the court.

Once criminal justice students are aware of diversity amongst individuals, groups, and historical perspectives, they will likely feel more comfortable discussing strategies for working with these specific populations. Furthermore, students will have a better sense of their own limitations as well as a greater appreciation for diversity, which should enhance job performance.

While this text provides an overview to the many racial and ethnic groups, it is anticipated that students will learn two primary concepts: first, the differences in racial and ethnic backgrounds and American ideologies; and second, how such diversity plays an important role when working with colleagues, suspects, and defendants.

The first two chapters discuss diversity and components involved in community policing, to demonstrate to students and those interested in law enforcement how diversity can impact the performance of their duties. The next nine chapters focus on different minority groups (Native Americans, Asian Americans, African Americans, Hispanics, Elderly, Hate Groups, and Gays and Lesbians) with regard to their interactions with police. Discussion highlights events influential in shaping minority groups' perceptions of and relationships with law enforcement agents. Finally, the last chapter discusses the Crime Bill, Affirmative Action, and future projects.

It is important, when reading, to keep in mind that my overall objective is not to ensure political correctness, but to initiate discussion on relevant issues that can no longer be ignored by criminal justice professionals.

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