

Legitimacy & Community Relations

Chapter 12

The Major Racial & Ethnic Minority Groups – Hispanics/Latinos

- More likely to experience police-initiated contact
- Growing rapidly
 - Became largest racial or ethnic minority group in 2010
- Extremely diverse
 - Mexico
 - Puerto Rico
 - Cuba
 - Haiti
 - Dominican Republic
 - Central America
 - South America
- Limited/no command of English
- Divided into documented/undocumented

Definition of Police-Community Relations (PCR)

- Refers primarily to the *relations between the police & racial & ethnic minority communities*
- Police need to establish trust & cooperation with all segments of the community they serve
 - Basis for legitimacy
- Policing a Multicultural Society
 - Presents new challenges
- Definitions of Race & Ethnicity
 - Race – refers to the major biological divisions of the people of the world
 - Ethnicity - refers to cultural differences such as language, religion, family patterns, & foodways

The Major Racial & Ethnic Minority Groups – Native Americans

- Higher crime rate on reservations
- Tribal police
 - Understaffed
 - Underfunded
 - Jurisdictional issues

The Major Racial & Ethnic Minority Groups – African Americans

- Long been a major focus of PCR
- Source of tensions
 - Allegations of unjustified shootings
 - Use of excessive force
 - Overly aggressive police tactics in stop & frisk
 - Discrimination in traffic stops (“DWB”)
 - Employment discrimination

The Major Racial & Ethnic Minority Groups – Asian Americans

- Very diverse
 - Divided into:
 - Long time residents & recent arrivals
 - English speakers/non-English speakers
 - Documented/undocumented
 - Vietnamese, Cambodians are newest immigrants

The Major Racial & Ethnic Minority Groups – Arab Americans

- Very diverse group
- Majority trace background to Lebanon
- Most are native-born Americans
- Muslim religion

Discrimination vs. Disparity

- Discrimination
 - Differential treatment based on some extralegal category such as race, ethnicity or gender
- Disparity
 - Different outcomes that are not necessarily caused by differential treatment

The Major Racial & Ethnic Minority Groups

- Immigrants
 - Primary language is not English
 - Report crimes at lower rates than other Americans
 - Calls for bilingual officers to accommodate immigrants

A Contextual Approach to Police-Citizen Interactions

- Experiences with police vary according to dept., type of police action, the departmental unit involved, etc.
 - Some dept.s have better relations with people of color/minority communities
- Interactions are different according to:
 - Location
 - Police unit
 - Enforcement activity

Not Just Race & Ethnicity: Gender & Sexual Preference

- Police-community relations problems also exist with the following groups:
 - Women
 - Gay men
 - Lesbians
 - Transgendered persons
- Problems of:
 - Sexual harassment
 - Disrespect
 - Physical abuse

Public Opinion & the Police

- The vast majority of Americans have a positive attitude toward the police
- Racial & ethnic minorities consistently rate the police less favorably than whites
- A majority of African Americans (76%) & Hispanics give the police a generally favorable rating
- Young people rate the police less favorably than older people
- Poor people, less educated people, & crime victims tend to rate the police lower than others
- There are significant differences in opinions about the police in different cities

Race & Ethnicity

- 2011 survey showed that 24% of African Americans had little to no confidence in police (compared to 6% of whites)
- Attitudes about police roles can vary according to social class, as well as race & ethnicity
 - Thus, middle-class & lower-class African Americans do not share identical attitudes

Age: Young People & the Police

- Age consistently ranks 2nd to race & ethnicity as a factor in public attitudes toward police
- 12% of people between the ages of 18-29 had little to no confidence in the police
 - Compared with only 8% of people between 50 & 64
 - 2011 survey

Attitudes about Police Use of Force

- Hispanics & African Americans are twice as likely to believe the police will use excessive force *in their communities*
- Survey of Cincinnati residents
 - 46.6% of African Americans indicated they had been personally "hassled" by the police
 - Compared to only 9.6% of whites

Other Demographic Factors

- Where You Live: Neighborhood Quality of Life
- Crime Victimization
- Gender
- Level of Education

Social Class

- 30% of people with incomes <\$20,000 had little to no confidence in police
- Compared to 1% of people with incomes >\$50,000
 - 2011 survey

Community Policing

- Community policing has a positive impact on citizens' attitudes toward the police
- Weitzer & Tuch study
 - Found that people who believe their police department engages in community policing in their neighborhood are *less likely* to believe that the police use excessive force

Intercity Variations

- There are important differences in public attitudes among cities that apparently reflect differences in the activities & reputations of these dept.s
 - The Case of Detroit
 - More African Americans indicated they were satisfied with the police than whites
 - African Americans dominated the local political establishment
 - Thus, African Americans are more likely than whites to identify positively with the police & other parts of the political system

Complex Dimensions of Trust & Confidence in the Police

- Stoutland's Dimensions of Trust
 - Priorities: Whether people feel that the police share their concerns about the neighborhood
 - Competence: Whether people feel that the police have the knowledge & skills to achieve their objectives
 - Dependability: Whether people feel that the police can be counted on to fulfill their promises
 - Respect: Whether people feel that the police treat them with respect

The Impact of Controversial Incidents

- Specific cases or controversial incidents can have a short term affect on people's attitudes toward police officers & police dept.s
 - e.g.: Rodney King beating in LA

Complex Dimensions of Trust & Confidence in the Police (cont.)

- Theory of Procedural Justice:
 - People distinguish between the outcomes & the process
 - E.g. - People are more likely to be satisfied if the officer explains the basis for his action, even if the outcome is unfavorable

- [Rodney King Video - Full Version](#)

Three Perspectives on Attitudes Toward Police

- The Police & the Larger Society
- The Police & Other Occupations
- The Police in Other Countries
- Summary of attitudes:
 - Majority of Americans have positive attitude toward police
 - Racial & ethnic minorities consistently rate police less favorably
 - African Americans & Hispanics generally give a favorable rating
 - Young people rate less favorably
 - Poor people, less educated people & crime victims rate less favorably
 - People who view their neighborhood as safe view police favorably
 - Community policing has a positive effect on citizens' attitudes
 - There are significant differences in attitudes among different cities
 - People make important distinctions regarding police actions
 - Attitudes toward police reflect attitudes toward society as a whole

Police Perceptions of Citizens

- Sources of Police Attitudes
 - Selective Contact
 - Officers do not have regular contact with a cross section of the community
 - Low-income & minorities have a disproportionate level of contact with the police
 - Selective Perception
 - Officers are more likely to remember traumatic or unpleasant events
 - Officers tend to stereotype African Americans since they tend to show the most hostility toward officers

Level of Police Protection Continued

- Failures to enforce the law in minority communities has typically involved crimes of vice (gambling, prostitution, drugs)
 - This under-enforcement breeds disrespect for the law & police
 - Exposes law-abiding citizens in minority neighborhoods to criminal activities & lower the quality of life
- Delay in Responding to Calls
 - Studies found that patrol officers often deliberately delayed responding to calls for service, especially involving family disturbances
 - Black citizens perceived greater delays than whites

Sources of Police-Community Relations Problems

- Question: How do we explain the apparent contradiction between the generally favorable ratings given the police by racial & ethnic minority communities & the persistence of public conflict between the police & these groups?
- Answer: We must examine specific areas of policing
 - The level of police protection received by different neighborhoods
 - Police officer field practices
 - Administrative practices
 - Employment practices

Police Field Practices

- Deadly Force
 - Source of major conflict between minorities & police
 - Changed significantly over last 40 years
 - Fleeing-felon rule unconstitutional
 - Trend toward defense-of-life standard
 - Does current disparity between African Americans & whites shot & killed by police represent systematic discrimination?
- Use of Physical Force
 - Public Brutality: excessive use of physical force by the police
 - Most common complaint by minorities
 - Use of force continuum
 - Police use force more often against
 - Criminal suspects
 - Male suspects
 - Black males
 - Drunk & antagonistic
 - Physical resistance

Level of Police Protection

- Too Much or Too Little Law Enforcement?
 - African Americans have been victims of under-enforcement of the law throughout time
 - Four Systems of Justice in the South during institutionalized segregation
 1. Crimes by whites against whites handled as "normal" crimes
 2. Crimes by whites against African Americans rarely prosecuted
 3. Crimes by African Americans against whites received harshest response
 4. Crimes by African Americans against African Americans were ignored

Use of Physical Force

- Fleeing-Felon Rule: Declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1985 (Tennessee v. Garner), allowed police the legal right to use deadly force in apprehending a felon attempting to escape.
- Defense-of-Life Standard: States that police officers are allowed to use deadly force only in situations where their own lives or the life of another person are in danger.

Situational Factors in the Use of Force

- Officers more likely to use force against:
 - Male suspects
 - African American males
 - Drunk citizens
 - Citizens who are antagonistic to the police
- Geoffrey Alpert's Force Factor Framework
 - Examines police officer behavior in relationship to the citizen's actions
 - If an officer used force where there was no resistance or threat on part of the citizen, then the force would be considered excessive

Field Interrogations & Searches

- Field Interrogations: Involve a crime control strategy of both identifying & apprehending offenders, & sending a message of deterrence to people on the street.
 - Young racial & ethnic minority males regard this as harassment
 - The President's Crime Commission found that field interrogations were a "major cause of tensions between the police & minority communities"

Use of Police Canine Units

- Being bitten by a police dog is a form of police use of force
- Minorities believe police dogs are used more often against them, & that they are bitten far more often than whites

Being "Out of Place" & Getting Stopped

- Experts believe that a certain amount of racial profiling in traffic enforcement is the result of a police officer deciding that an African American or Hispanic driver is "out of place" in a white neighborhood.

Arrests

- African Americans are arrested more often than whites (relative to their numbers in the population)
- Officers' decision to arrest is based on situational factors
 - The strength of the evidence
 - The seriousness of the crime
 - The preference of the victim
 - The victim-suspect relationship
 - The demeanor of the suspect
 - Extremely complex
 - No studies which determines the extent to which demeanor is provoked by officer actions

Discussion: Crime Fighting & Stereotyping

- Stereotyping of citizens by gender, age, & race is a problem deeply rooted in policing
- Racial stereotyping can affect a police officer's likelihood of using deadly force

Other Police Field Practices

- Verbal Abuse & Racial & Ethnic Slurs
- Language & Cultural Barriers
- Discrimination Involving Women, Gays, Lesbians, & Transgendered People
 - "Driving While Female"
 - Abuse of sexual minorities
 - Bias against young African American women

Data on Traffic Enforcement Patterns

- National data
 - Males more likely to be stopped than females
 - Young people more likely than older people
 - African Americans & Hispanics more likely to be searched than whites
- State & local data
 - Meehan & Ponder study found that African Americans were more likely to be stopped & queried in predominately white neighborhoods
 - Location matters

Special Topic: Racial Profiling

- Racial profiling: the practice of police officers stopping drivers because of their race or ethnicity & not because of a legitimate law violation.
 - "Driving while black"
 - "Driving while brown"

Interpreting Traffic-Stop Data

- Benchmark for interpreting data was the residential population
- However, population data do not indicate who is actually driving on the roads or who is violating traffic law
- Best method is the rolling survey technique which utilizes direct observation
- Another alternative is internal benchmarking (IB)
 - Compares performance of individual officers with peer officers

Traffic Enforcement Practices

- 59% of all citizen-police contacts involve traffic stops
- Data on traffic enforcement patterns involve several different actions by police:
 - Stopping a vehicle
 - Resolving the stop through an arrest, citation, warning, or no action
 - Searching the vehicle, driver, and/or passengers

Explaining Disparities in Traffic Enforcement

- "Officers act on the basis of prejudicial attitudes"
- A Contextual Analysis:
 - Racial profiling occurs in three different contexts
 1. War on drugs
 2. Citizens who are "out of place"
 3. General crackdown on crime

Police Justifications for Racial & Ethnic Disparities

- Major argument is that African Americans & minorities are more likely to be engaged in criminal activity
- Some argue this involves circular reasoning
 - Minorities stopped & arrested more than whites producing higher arrest rates & thus, justifying higher rates of stops & arrests.

Can Policies Reduce Racial & Ethnic Disparities?

- The U.S. Customs Service developed new guidelines for searching foreigners entering the country
 - As a result, the no. of persons being searched declined by 47%
 - The percentage of people found with contraband rose by 65%
 - Racial & ethnic disparities in persons searched also declined

The Legitimate Use of Race & Ethnicity in Police Work

- Police officer cannot arrest a person solely on the basis or race
- The police cannot use race or ethnicity when it is one element in a general profile of criminal suspects.
- The police may use race or ethnicity when it is one element in the description of a specific criminal suspect

Problem Solving on Racial Profiling

- Importance of developing community & police partnerships on racial profiling:
 - Partnerships foster trust
 - Partnerships are a valuable avenue for two-way communication
 - Partnerships can help police departments reduce the risk of engaging in unacceptable practices that might result in being sued

Policies to Prevent Bias in Traffic Enforcement

- Specific written policy prohibiting racial or ethnic discrimination
- Improve police officer training
- Traffic-stop data collection & analysis

Improving Police-Community Relations

- Several different approaches:
 - Maintaining a representative police force
 - Eliminating employment discrimination
 - Improving the handling of citizen complaints
 - Civilian review boards
 - Creating special police-community relations unit
 - For recent immigrants: "newcomer," "foreign born," & "non-natives"
 - Improving training
 - Assigning officers on the basis of race

Special Police-Community Relations Unit

- PCR Units operate programs designed to improve relations with minority communities
- Ride-along programs: allow citizens to spend a few hours riding in a patrol car
- Creation of neighborhood storefront offices to overcome isolation of the police
- Special PCR programs tend to be more successful with groups of people who already have favorable attitudes toward the police
 - Whites, homeowners, older people

Race Relations & Human Relations Training

- No research has established a direct connection between race relations training & improved police officer behavior or improved public attitudes
- Experts question the value of classroom training
 - On-the-street behavior & communication may be more effective
- Training in Cultural Competence
 - Information may help explain cultural differences that may lead to misunderstandings

Outreach to Immigrant Communities

- The new variety of languages & cultures in American cities presents new issues for police departments
 - Police departments developing new outreach programs designed to help establish closer relations with the police & new immigrant communities
 - Largest number of programs are targeted toward Hispanic/Latino communities

From PCR to Legitimacy: The New Paradigm

- Legitimacy: the belief that the police as a social institution are acting properly & effectively, & deserve public supports
- Winning legitimacy is 2-dimensional
 - First dimension: involves substantive outcomes: controlling crime & disorder & providing services to the public
 - Second dimension: involves *how* police do their job: treating all people with respect, not engaging in misconduct or use of excessive force
- Key difference between PCR & Legitimacy
 - PCR programs are directed only toward one part of the community

Should Local Police Enforce Federal Immigration?

- Many local police officials do not want to be involved in enforcing immigration laws because they argue that policing requires them to develop close relations with the communities they serve
 - The role of immigration enforcement might alienate them from communities with large numbers of immigrants
 - People will become reluctant to call the police to report crimes, etc.

Community Policing & Improving PCR

- Community policing represents a comprehensive philosophy of policing & may better address on-the-street police behavior than traditional PCR programs
- Community policing is directed toward the community as a whole, & not just racial & ethnic minority communities