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Cultural Diversity and the Police in the United States: Understanding Problems and Finding Solutions

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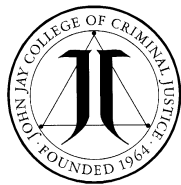


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Cultural Diversity and the Police in the United States: Understanding Problems and Finding Solutions

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Throughout the last one hundred and fifty years, there has been a history of tension and conflict between the police and minority communities in the United States. In principle, the police exist to enforce the law and protect all citizens regardless of race or ethnic background, yet police departments across the country have been repeatedly accused of targeting and harassing racial minorities, and of failing to root out racist attitudes and practices within their ranks. In recent years, high profile cases such as the beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles and the assault on Abner Louima in New York have only served to heighten concerns over the mistreatment of minorities by the police, resulting in widespread calls for major legal and institutional reforms.

In the absence of a coordinated national strategy, state and local police departments have largely been left to develop their own solutions to the problems of policing minority communities and improving cultural sensitivity amongst their officers. Many departments have sought to reform recruitment and selection policies in the hope of attracting greater numbers of minority applicants, while others have instituted diversity training and education programs aimed at improving police understanding of minority cultures and communities. To date, however, these efforts have yielded mixed results. Some departments have achieved notable successes, but on the whole, relations between the police and minority communities across the country remain strained. Almost forty years after the stinging criticisms of the Kerner Commission Report on Policing, there is still a pressing need for more to be done.

In working to develop the Cultural Diversity and the Police (CDAP) model as well as training and technical assistance materials for law enforcement agencies, John Jay College and the Bureau of Justice Administration (BJA) have drawn extensively on the work done by both the police and independent researchers in the field of police-minority relations. We have sought to ensure that our recommendations are informed by a broad range of perspectives on the issue of cultural diversity and the police. This paper provides an overview of the problems facing the police in their efforts to improve relations with minority communities in the United States, as well as a survey of previous research and existing literature on cultural diversity programs.

1. Old Problems and New Challenges

Since the first organized police forces were established during the second half of the nineteenth century, the police have been regarded with a mixture of suspicion and hostility by blacks and other racial minorities in the United States. In many respects, this antipathy is understandable given the role that has traditionally been played by the police. Frequently called upon to uphold laws seen by many as racist and discriminatory, the police have repeatedly found themselves drawn into some of the most divisive racial struggles in American history. Police involvement in the suppression of black riots during the 1930s and 1940s, and open clashes with civil rights activists in the 1960s, severely damaged police-minority relations in America, leaving many convinced that the police exist to protect the interests of only white communities.

Matters have not been helped by the fact that police departments have been slow to acknowledge and eliminate racial discrimination in their own hiring practices. Despite the fact that the numbers of African-American and Hispanic officers have been rising steadily since the 1960s, according to recent figures from the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), both groups together still comprise less than 20 percent of the total number of officers in service. (See Table 1.) There is also continuing evidence to suggest that minority officers still do not receive the same promotional opportunities as white officers (Sullivan, 1987). While it is true that considerable variations exist across different police departments—in Chicago and Detroit, for example, black officers are far more likely to hold supervisory positions than in New York or Philadelphia (Roberg et al, 2000)—only some of this disparity can be explained by reference to differences in local demographics. What is clear is that racial bias continues to play a part in determining what opportunities are available to minorities within the police (Roberg et al., 2000).

Table 1: Race & Ethnicity of Full-time Officers in Local Police Departments by Size of Population Served (1993)

Population served	White	Black	Hispanic	Other*	Total of All Minorities
All sizes	80.9%	11.3%	6.2%	1.5%	19.0%
1,000,000 or more	69.2	17.7	12.0	1.2	30.9
500,000 – 999,999	66.2	21.0	7.0	5.8	33.8
250,000 – 499,999	71.9	17.7	9.0	1.4	28.1
100,000 – 249,999	80.6	12.4	5.4	1.6	19.4
50,000 – 99,999	86.3	7.2	5.1	1.4	13.7
25,000 – 49,000	89.8	5.4	4.3	0.6	10.3
10,000 – 24,999	91.6	5.1	2.6	0.6	8.3
2,500 – 9,999	92.8	4.1	2.6	0.5	7.2
Under 2,500	91.7	5.3	1.9	1.2	8.4

* Includes Asians, Pacific Islanders, American Indians, and Alaska Natives

Source: B.A. Reeves. 1996 *Local Police Departments*, 1993. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics, p.4

Finally, serious and persistent accusations of racial profiling and police harassment have also done much to undermine police-minority relations. Generations of racial minorities throughout the United States have repeatedly complained of being treated more harshly than whites, and while it is notoriously difficult to measure the importance of race on police behavior, there is now an acceptance on the part of both the police and the wider community that racial bias exists. Certainly, figures recently released by the Department of Justice suggest that racial profiling and police discrimination continue to be significant problems. As Tables 2 and 3 show, blacks and Hispanics are more likely to be searched, handcuffed, and arrested during traffic stops than whites, while minorities in general are more likely to be subjected to the threat or actual use of force in contacts with the police. Blacks and other minorities also experience higher rates of victimization than whites—particularly for violent crime and theft (Rennison, 2001)—leading some to conclude, perhaps not unreasonably, that the police are less concerned with protecting minorities and are unwilling to devote necessary resources to the policing of minority communities.

In light of these facts, it is hardly surprising that surveys within minorities communities reveal a widespread belief that differential treatment by the police is simply a fact of life (Morin and Cottman, 2001). According to public opinion polls recently commissioned by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, only 58 percent of blacks said that they held a favorable opinion of the police (as compared with 81 percent of whites), while only 38 percent

reported having ‘a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in the police’ (BJS, 1999; Lagan et al, 2001). Perhaps even more disturbing, however, is the extent to which conflict with the police is regarded as unavoidable by many minorities. For young black men in particular, a dangerous and sometimes fatal encounter with the police has almost come to be seen as a rite of passage (Wycliff, 1987), while within the larger black community, jokes about being stopped for the offense of ‘driving while black’ frequently hide considerable resentment and hostility towards the police.

Table 2: Police Actions during Traffic Stops by Race and Ethnicity of Stopped Drivers (1999)

Race/ethnicity of Stopped Driver	Ticketed the driver	Searched			Handcuffed the driver	Arrested the driver	Used force against the driver	Used excessive force against the driver
		Driver or vehicle	Driver	Vehicle				
White	51.8%	5.4%	3.5%	4.3%	2.5%	2.6%	0.6%	0.4%
Black	60.4	11.0	8.0	8.5	6.4	5.2	1.5	1.0
Hispanic	65.6	11.3	7.0	9.7	5.0	4.2	1.4	1.4
Other	61.9	6.5	3.2	5.4	1.7	2.1	0	0

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Source: P. A. Lagan et al., (2001), *Contacts between Police and the Public: Findings from the 1999 National Survey*, Washington DC: US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics

Table 3: Experience of Force by Race and Ethnicity (1999)

Race/ethnicity	Percentage of all police contacts	Percentage of persons experiencing force in contact with the police	Experience of force as a percentage of all contacts with the police
White	78.25%	58.9%	0.72%
Black	10.56	22.6	2.06
Hispanic	8.10	15.5	1.85
Other	3.08	3.0	0.90

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Source: P. A. Lagan et al., (2001), *Contacts between Police and the Public: Findings from the 1999 National Survey*, Washington DC: US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics

Although the problems of police racism and poor minority-relations have had a long history, there is now an even greater need to address these issues than ever before. According to the most recent national census, between 1990 and 2000 the total population of the United States increased by 13.2%, and while the majority white

population—representing 75.1% of the total—increased by 5.9% during this period, the minority African-American and Hispanic communities increased by more than 15 and 50 percent respectively (Census Bureau, 2001). If Census Bureau predictions prove to be accurate, within the space of a few generations no single racial or ethnic group will hold a clear majority in the United States. Instead, the country will be made up of a collection of significant ‘minorities,’ namely black, white, and Hispanic. (See Table 4.) Unless steps are taken to ensure that police departments across the country better represent and serve the needs of all of these communities, continuing demographic changes will likely leave the police dangerously out of touch, and furthermore make policing by consent—an essential part of a free and democratic society—increasingly difficult.

Table 4: Projected Ethnic Composition of the United States

Year	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Minority Total
1980	80.0%	11.5%	6.4%	1.5%	19.4%
1995	73.9	12.0	10.2	3.3	25.5
2030	60.5	13.1	18.9	6.6	38.6
2050	52.8	13.6	24.5	8.2	46.3

Source: United States Census Bureau. (2001). *Census 2000 Projections of the Resident Population by Race, Hispanic Origin, and Nativity*. Populations Projections Program. Washington D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau

While many of the tensions and problems identified above are commonly grouped together under the heading of ‘cultural diversity issues,’ there has been a tendency for police departments to regard these various challenges as discrete and separable. Reforms designed to eliminate discriminatory hiring and promotional practices, for example, have typically been developed and implemented in isolation from changes to officer training and accountability procedures. As a consequence, many genuine efforts on the part of the police to raise levels of cultural diversity and awareness, and to improve relations with minority communities, have been frustrated by the absence of a comprehensive and coordinated approach to policing a multicultural society.

Any attempt to develop such a coordinated approach must begin by acknowledging that these problems are the product of a complex set of interactions between various institutional and cultural forces, and take account of the experiences and perceptions of both police officers and members of the minority community. In developing the CDAP

model, John Jay College and the BJA have sought to produce a comprehensive and integrated response to the issue of cultural diversity and policing, based on an identification of the underlying causes of police-minority conflict, and a recognition of the need to challenge perceptions as well as practices.

2. Identifying Problems and Causes

One of the most common explanations offered for the poor state of police-minority relations in the United States is racism on the part of individual officers. According to proponents of this view, police officers routinely discriminate against members of racial minorities because they regard them as ‘second class’ citizens, unworthy of the same legal protections and rights enjoyed by members of the majority white community. In support of this view, critics of the police point out that the vast majority of police officers are white and typically drawn from some of the more conservative sections of the community. Armed with racist attitudes before they enter the force, once these individuals become police officers, they are free to harass and discriminate against minorities without fear of reprisals or censure from their presumably like-minded colleagues.

Other critics of police racism contend that it is the police socialization process that plays a critical role in promoting racist attitudes and cultural insensitivity amongst serving officers. As a number of researchers have observed, one of the key characteristics of police working culture is the use of stereotypes when dealing with members of the public (Goldstein, 1990; Walker, 1992b; Roberg et al., 2000). New officers quickly learn from their colleagues how to ‘recognize’ actual or potential offenders, and to discriminate between those citizens who are regarded as generally law-abiding and those who are not. Where these stereotypes are informed by ideas about race and criminality—for example, a belief that black people are more prone to violence than whites—racist attitudes can be passed from one generation of officers to the next in the guise of received wisdom or operational knowledge.

Both of these views of police behavior are, however, overly simplistic, and there is now a vast body of research to suggest that police racism is an extremely complex phenomenon. As Blakemore et al. have observed, police prejudices are often based on ‘a lifetime of personal and professional experience, along with a multiplicity of ideological influences’ (1995: 76). Both predisposition and socialization play major roles in the formation and promotion of racist attitudes within the police, but understanding how they affect actual police behavior and decision-making is extremely difficult, in part because officers may be motivated by reasoning that is subconscious and essentially unknown even to themselves (Lumb, 1995). Police officers are given considerable discretion when making decisions about whether to stop, search, or arrest individual citizens. Although in principle they are expected to exercise this discretion without regard to extra-legal factors such as class, race, gender, or age, in practice all of these factors have a bearing on how individual officers deal with members of the public (Senna and Siegel, 2001).

Police discrimination can also be the result of ‘fundamental attribution errors’ on the part of serving officers and police managers. According to Winkel (1991), there is a tendency for police officers to explain criminal behavior in terms of ‘internal factors’—such as race or membership of a particular ethnic group—rather than by reference to external or situational factors such as poverty or marginal social position. Often based on a genuine misunderstanding of the causes of crime, this type of reasoning frequently lies behind the practice of racial profiling, and is used by officers who do not otherwise consider themselves or their conduct to be racist.

Fundamental attribution errors can also be compounded by ignorance of minority cultures. In Das’s (1993) study of the Canadian police and their views on the policing of minorities, for example, officers complained about what they perceived to be the ‘poor upbringing’ of minority children and of the disregard shown by immigrants from ‘Third World’ countries for traffic regulations and other minor laws. Complaints such as these often mask mistaken assumptions—such as the belief that individuals from certain cultures are inherently less law-abiding—that arise from a lack of cultural understanding on the part of the police. Such assumptions can soon become part of the ‘operating

stereotype' used by officers when dealing with members of particular minority communities. Again, while officers holding such views may not consider themselves to be racist, such stereotypes can provide the basis for unwitting but serious discrimination on the grounds of race or ethnicity.

Of course, tension between the police and the minority community can be attributed to factors other than conscious or unconscious racism on the part of the police. Communication and language barriers can also give rise to serious misunderstandings and conflict, particularly when they are combined with differences in underlying values and cultural expectations (Schneider, 1999). Unable to understand a non-English speaker's explanation of his behavior, the police are often faced with the dilemma of either letting the suspect go free or arresting him so that he can be properly questioned at the police station. In addition, many interactions also involve various subtle but highly significant forms of non-verbal or 'meta-communication' (Vrij et al. 1991; Vrij, 1993; Winkel, 1991). Failure to recognize such signals can lead to serious misunderstandings that can inflame already difficult situations and lead to over-reactions on both sides.

According to a study done by Winkel (1991), some of the most common meta-communication errors committed by police officers involve issues of personal space. One of the key elements of non-verbal communication, the idea of personal space refers to the area around a person that he or she seeks to maintain in order to feel comfortable and safe in the presence of others. When an individual's personal space is violated, he may use certain tactics—such as turning his torso, lowering or raising his head, or covering his crotch with his hands—to restore the feeling of comfortable distance. For white North Americans this comfortable distance averages about two feet (70 centimeters). For certain minorities, however, particularly those from more 'non-contact cultures,' this distance can be considerably greater. Significantly, Winkel found that police officers were inclined to regard the defensive tactics mentioned above as somehow suspect, or as an indication that the individual has something to hide (Winkel, 1991). Given that studies have consistently shown that the police react badly to behavior they regard as uncooperative or disrespectful, it is easy to see how simple non-verbal communication

errors can lead to serious conflicts between police officers and minorities (Worden and Shepard, 1996).

Leaving aside questions of personal space, another important factor in non-verbal communication is eye contact. Social-psychological research has shown that in white culture the social norm during conversation is for the listener to gaze at the speaker for around 40 seconds, and then gaze away for about 20 (Winkel, 1991). Conversely, it is the norm for the speaker to look at the listener for 25 seconds, and then look away for 35. Among black Americans, however, these norms are reversed, with the listener looking at the speaker for about 20 seconds, and then looking away for around 40 seconds. In a conversation between a white police officer and a black suspect, this dichotomy can easily result in an offensive misunderstanding, with the black individual looking away from the officer right at the moment when he is conditioned to expect direct eye contact. As Vrij (1993) has noted, this behavior on the part of the black individual can give the impression of being suspect, uncooperative, and dangerous.

While it is clear that the police must accept responsibility for many of the tensions that exist between themselves and the minority community, they are not entirely to blame for the poor state of police-minority relations. Unrealistic and overly optimistic expectations on the part of minorities can also contribute to the problem. Despite being wary of the police, studies have consistently shown that minorities generally have greater faith in the investigative abilities of police officers than do whites (Alpert and Dunham, 1988). As a consequence, it is possible that one of the reasons why the police tend to receive less favorable evaluations from minorities is because these higher expectations are more likely to lead to disappointment and frustration (Chandek, 1999). Equally, just as non-verbal communication errors on the part of the police can lead to conflict, it is also the case that honest mistakes may be misconstrued by minorities as yet further evidence of racism and discrimination (Morin and Cottman, 2001). While it would be wrong to dismiss the majority of racism charges as misunderstandings, it is clear that the attitudes and perceptions of all the participants in an encounter matter, regardless of whether they are police officers or members of the minority community.

Problems of perception can also arise for other, very different, reasons. Immigrants who have come to the United States to escape political persecution may, for example, view the police with suspicion based on experiences in their home country (Vrij et al., 1991). As one police officer interviewed for Das's (1993:141) study observed, minorities were often 'afraid of the police as they carried at the back of their minds their conception about the police from their countries of origin.' Similarly, for recent arrivals from countries where police corruption and malpractice is rife – such as parts of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union – trusting the police to help them rather than make their problems worse may be extremely difficult. In either case, interactions between these individuals and local police officers are likely to be colored by these beliefs, and possibly fraught as a result.

Finally, much of what is wrong with police-minority relations can be attributed to the fact that many minorities live in poor and crime-ridden neighborhoods. Although minorities living in such areas are likely to have a crucial need for police services, they may be unable to access these services due to a lack of local representation or organization. Effective community policing, for example, necessarily relies on communication between the police and local community groups. Where such groups are either disorganized or do not exist – as is the case in many impoverished neighborhoods – the task of developing policing strategies and providing services that meet local needs is made considerably more difficult. Furthermore, in communities where there is little or no communication between the police and residents about what is being done to combat crime, cooperative initiatives are unlikely to succeed or be sustained for any extended period of time, and much of the impetus for establishing these community policing programs will have to come from the police themselves (Carderelli et al., 1998).

If they are to have any lasting success, efforts at improving police-minority relations must take account of these various problems, and recognize that what is needed is a coherent and comprehensive approach to their solution. Ongoing cultural diversity training, the elimination of discriminatory hiring and promotion practices, and extensive managerial and procedural reform are *all* necessary if positive and significant change is to occur.

3. Improving Police-Minority Relations and Promoting Cultural Diversity

One of the key assumptions behind the design of the CDAP model is the belief that reform is best achieved through a combination of reactive, proactive, and coactive measures. As a consequence, the model contains a broad range of programs, strategies, and policy recommendations designed to improve levels of cultural awareness and sensitivity in almost every aspect of police work. In particular, the model proposes a variety of measures for improving police performance in a number of crucial areas: training and education; communication and community involvement; recruitment and promotion; complaints procedures and police discipline; and management and police policy. In the sections that follow each of these areas is examined, and a number of key issues and challenges for reform are identified.

(i) Training and Education

Over the past fifty years, various efforts have been made to improve police-minority relations in the United States, with the greatest amount of reform coming in the area of police training and education. Although many police departments have also attempted to affect change through the use of internal disciplinary procedures and changes to departmental policies and rules, for the most part training and professional development has been given priority because it seeks to address the underlying causes of racism and discrimination. As Blakemore et al. (1995:71) have observed, 'the preparation of police officers for work in a multicultural society has become a major concern for police departments, local governments, and the general community', with the result that most city and state police departments now provide some form of ongoing cultural diversity training for their officers. The emergence of community policing as the dominant philosophy in contemporary law enforcement has also led to an increased emphasis on diversity training, on the assumption that 'to achieve better relationships, knowledge of people, their motivations, beliefs and behaviors are necessary compliments to officer training and increased understanding' (Lumb, 1995).

For the most part, approaches to cultural diversity training have not changed dramatically since the 1960s (Barlow and Barlow, 1994; Blakemore et al., 1995). As Blakemore et al. (1995:75) have observed, many current programs ‘contain relatively large sections designed to teach individual officers cross cultural communication and conflict resolution skills’ and provide specific information on certain select minority cultures. Although some programs have begun to place a greater emphasis on increasing officer understanding and awareness of Asian and Hispanic norms and values, most however continue to focus the bulk of their attention on the African-American community. As regards content, cultural diversity training programs typically include substantial sections on such issues as race, cultural, and inter-ethnic relations; migration, minority integration, and cultural evolution; the dynamics of prejudice; group traditions, values, and attitudes; police intervention strategies; human rights; and police ethics and behavior (Normandeau and Leighton, 1990; Lumb 1995). Although diversity training aims to challenge police prejudices and assumptions about minorities, sophisticated programs also strive to bring about organizational and institutional changes, and to fundamentally reorient police-minority relations (Lumb, 1995).

As Barlow and Barlow (1993) have observed, police thinking about cultural diversity training has traditionally been based on two key assumptions. First, that police officers can be more effective social control agents if they are able to secure community support through better communication skills; and second, that police officers will be more responsive to all members of the community and less likely to be abusive if they have an understanding of marginalized groups. Furthermore, this thinking has been underpinned by a particularly pragmatic approach to the problem of transforming attitudes and beliefs. Although many programs attempt to explain to officers how cultural stereotypes develop, and go to great lengths to present principled arguments against prejudice, most accept that one of the best ways to promote change is to convince officers that they also stand to benefit from improved police-minority relations (Barlow and Barlow 1993). By demonstrating that police safety and effectiveness can be enhanced by greater understanding and cultural sensitivity on the part of the officers themselves, trainers have recognized that they have a far better chance of bringing about positive changes in police

behavior. Equally, pointing out to officers that improved communication skills can help protect them against departmental discipline and costly civil suits can also serve as an effective incentive (Blakemore et al. 1995).

Although it is dangerous to generalize too readily about diversity training given the range of different programs that have been tried and adopted in the United States, research suggests that many trainers encounter similar problems when dealing with the police. One of the most intractable of these problems is the question of how best to approach the training of experienced officers, and how to confront stereotypes that have been established and entrenched by ‘years on the job.’ Work by Gould (1997) has shown that compared with police cadets and recent recruits, experienced officers are more likely to regard cultural diversity training as unhelpful, and to be unreceptive to new information about minorities or challenges to ingrained attitudes and beliefs. According to Gould’s study, the anger and cynicism expressed by experienced officers in response to such training focused on five main issues, namely: the apparent lack of community appreciation or understanding of police work; the belief that supervisors and police administrators were ‘out of touch’ with the realities of policing; the feeling that senior management and politicians were turning regular officers into ‘scapegoats’ for the problems of police-minority relations; the absence of sufficient resources to deal with problems on the street; and the perceived divergence between what was being taught on the course and what society actually demanded from the police (Gould, 1997). Although some of these officers did admit that they had been unaware of the extent to which methods of non-verbal communication differed according to cultural background – with some suggesting that they might be able to bring this new-found knowledge to their work – many felt that this usefulness would be ‘short lived’. Echoing the comments of a number of his colleagues, one officer said, ‘Sure, I will try this stuff for a while; if it works, fine; if not, screw it.’ (Gould, 1997:348). Overall, it was the general impression of many of the experienced officers that cultural diversity training was ‘a waste of time’ and that they already knew what they needed to know, or that it was ‘too late’ to learn new skills or approaches to their work. In contrast, many cadets felt that such training was extremely helpful and should be mandatory for all officers (Gould, 1997).

While such findings obviously do not suggest that diversity training should be discontinued for experienced officers, it is important for police departments to recognize that in order for training to have a positive and lasting effect, it needs to be tailored to the needs of specific groups of officers. Based on his research, Gould (1997) argues that the training of experienced officers must include time for the venting of frustrations with cultural diversity issues, and that trainers should focus on explaining cultural differences rather than attempt to place the blame for poor police-minority relations on the behavior and attitudes of individual officers. Further, Gould suggests that it is essential for police departments to start cultural diversity training in the early stages of an officer's career, and to ensure that the process of professional development is ongoing and structured. This is a point that has also been made by Blakemore et al. (1995), who note that in the process of attempting to challenge police stereotypes, trainers often fall into the trap of stereotyping the officers themselves, assuming that they all hold similar opinions and that they all have similar concerns.

Another major problem with cultural diversity training has been the tendency of some departments to regard such training as either separate from other efforts to improve police-minority relations, or as sufficient in and of itself. Officer recruitment, departmental policies and discipline, and citizen complaints procedures must also be subjected to scrutiny if training programs are to succeed in helping to change police attitudes and working practices, and there must be a genuine commitment to reform on the part of the entire police organization (Oakley, 1990; Normandeau and Leighton, 1990; and Lumb, 1995). Furthermore, it is crucial that training programs do not single out individual officers or groups of officers for particular attention or criticism. According to research undertaken by Barlow and Barlow (1993), many white police officers feel that they are being unfairly singled out as the problem, despite the fact that from their perspective minorities are as much to blame for the current state of police-minority relations. Finally, it is important that trainers and police administrators keep in mind that underlying social, political, and economic conditions also play a significant role in determining how minorities are treated, and that cultural diversity training can only achieve so much:

In the short run, such training may play an important role in reducing individual incidents of cultural miscommunication, misunderstanding, and mistreatment. It may have a significant impact on improving the surface relationships between the police and the public for a time. However, in the long run, police-minority relations are not likely to be fundamentally altered, because the social conditions that produce racism, sexism, ethnocentrism, xenophobia, and bigotry remain fully intact (Barlow and Barlow, 1993:81)

Central to the CDAP model is recognition of this basic fact. Although cultural diversity training is an essential part of the program, the model is structured to ensure that officer education is also accompanied by a range of other reforms aimed at improving levels of internal accountability and community collaboration. In addition, the model is designed to ensure that lessons learned in the course of ongoing departmental reform are continually reincorporated into diversity training and education.

(ii) Communication and Community Involvement

In order to ensure that the lessons learnt by officers during the course of cultural diversity training are translated into actual practice, it is essential that the police also adopt strategies that encourage police-minority contact and communication. As Blakemore et al. (1995) have observed, ‘the current state of minority communities and of the people within these communities is a moving target that is best understood by a process of continued involvement with communities.’ As a consequence, they suggest that two strategies should be utilized: cultural connection and cultural experience. Through cultural *connection* the officer or agency establishes a relationship either with an individual who understands both the culture of the community and the workings of the law enforcement agency – such as the head of the local African-American police association – or someone within that community who is prepared to cooperate with the police in their efforts to improve mutual understanding. A classic example of a connection strategy would be arranging for a local officer to be introduced to key figures within a particular minority community by a another, well-respected member of the same community, in the hope that this will enhance the officer’s credibility and be taken as a sign that of police sincerity and concern. The importance of establishing such

connections with minority and crime-ridden communities is a point that has also been made by Cox:

Long-term solutions to the problems of high crime areas depend upon the mutual respect and understanding of the police and neighborhood residents. Police officers who continue to serve, and be perceived, as soldiers of occupation in minority neighborhoods are unlikely to be effective in either crime control or order maintenance. They are very likely to continue to regard assignment to such areas as dangerous and unpleasant and to participate in perpetuating the isolation and alienation which exist for themselves and the other citizens they police. (Cox, 1990:171)

In contrast, building cultural *experience* requires individual police officers to initiate positive, cross-cultural encounters as citizens and not as members of the law enforcement community. Example of such encounters may include attending a service at an African-American church, volunteering at a local community organization, or simply spending time walking around the neighborhood out of uniform talking to residents. As Blakemore et al. (1993) argue, the goal of such activities should not be an attempt at some form of assimilation, but rather an appreciation of diversity in all its forms.

Strategies such as these can also be significantly enhanced by providing language training for officers who work extensively with non-English speaking minorities. Foreign language skills have become increasingly important in almost all areas of law enforcement, and for many police officers it is essential that they have a minimum number of basic commands at their disposal to ensure legal compliance and officer safety (Crank et al., 2001). As Allread (1999:47) notes:

While many communities debate issues such as the establishment of English as the nation's official language, or ponder the implications of bilingual education, police don't have that luxury: The bottom line is that Spanish, and other languages, are used with increasing frequency in the United States. Regardless of the law, police work is a de facto bilingual world.

Traditionally, language courses for police officers and other law enforcement agents in the United States have focused on encouraging the rote memorization of particular

phrases, questions, and commands. Vocabulary is frequently taught out of context, and there is often little in the way of true ‘conversational training’. As a consequence, these language courses have proved to be largely ineffective, providing officers with very limited skills and leaving them unprepared to cope with the answers offered to their pre-learned questions or commands (Young and Novas, 1995). According to Luby (1998), greater emphasis needs to be placed on ensuring that officers learn the language in its entirety – including an appreciation of its various nuances and idioms – and that they are also taught about the culture and history of the people who speak it.

(iii) Recruitment and Promotion

In addition to providing training and attempting to improve communications between the police and the minority community, in recent years police departments across the country have also begun to take steps towards ensuring that minorities are better represented amongst their own ranks. It is now generally accepted by most policy-makers and police administrators that part of community policing involves ‘making the police as representative of the community as possible’ (Cox, 1990:172). As Lumb (1995) has observed, for example, if we are committed to the idea that policing should be a community-based activity, then it follows that the police should strive to represent the society they are sworn to serve and protect. Perhaps even more fundamentally, however, it can be argued that the very legitimacy of the police depends on the extent to which they are representative of society at large:

The basis of support for policing our society must come from all citizens. Given this basic tenet, it follows that police agencies should be representative of the populations they serve. To be otherwise diminishes their ability to respond empathetically to many community concerns and reinforces the perception held by some segments of the minority public that law enforcement agencies represent the force of dominant society and are institutionally designed to preserve the status quo (Report on *The Police in the California Community*, quoted in Walker, 1983:215).

In keeping with the recommendations of the National Advisory Commission's *Report on Police* (1973), to date most police departments have sought to increase the number of

minority police officers through the use of affirmative action policies. According to some estimates, almost two thirds of all police departments in the United States now have affirmative action employment policies in place (Roberg et al., 2000: 436). As a number of commentators have argued, however, there is a danger that the practice of hiring or promoting minorities without proper regard to individual qualifications is ultimately detrimental to the officers themselves, their colleagues, and the community at large (Alpert and Dunham, 1988). According to Cox:

Only when all new police recruits meet the same, basic qualifications will there be any chance that race and gender will cease to be the controversial issues that they have traditionally been in American law enforcement (which simply reflects the larger society). If, and only if, this happens, will the difficulties in recruiting qualified women and minorities be eased and the goal of a community police partnership which includes all segments of the community be achievable (Cox, 1990:172)

Regardless of whether one accepts such objections to affirmative action in police recruitment, it is clear much remains to be done before the police manage to achieve ‘a ratio of minority group employees in approximate proportion to the make-up of the population’ (National Advisory Commission, 1973: 329). As has already been noted, despite the fact that significant progress has been made in terms of the recruitment and promotion of minorities, it remains true that African-Americans, Hispanics, and other ethnic minorities remain underrepresented in police departments at both the local and state level. In order to ensure that the police continue to become more representative over time, it is necessary for departments to continue to reassess their hiring and promotion policies, and ensure that all officers are treated equally irrespective of their race or ethnic background. In addition, such attempts at reform should be accompanied by a range of other proactive measures aimed at improving levels of diversity and encouraging understanding within the department. Simply hiring more minority officers is not enough; personnel practices, officer evaluation methods, and disciplinary procedures must all be examined and restructured to ensure that institutional biases and discriminatory policies are eliminated.

(iv) Complaints Procedures and Police Discipline

Historically, the police have been largely responsible for policing themselves. Given, however, that police departments do not keep records on every police-citizen contact – and that it is assumed these contacts are satisfactorily resolved if no official complaint is filed – it is extremely difficult to measure levels of community dissatisfaction with the police (Swim, 1999). This is a point that has also been made by Walker and Bumphus (1991), who have argued that recorded complaints against the police do not accurately reflect the true volume of complaints that could be made. In addition, there is reason to believe that minorities are particularly unlikely to complain about racial targeting or discrimination because many have simply become resigned to being victims of police misconduct. As one minority individual observed when interviewed by the *Washington Post*: ‘[I]f you’re black, most likely you’ll get stopped, you can’t do anything about it. That’s just the way it is’ (Morin and Cottman, 2001:3).

For this reason, in recent years many police departments have looked for alternative ways of identifying police misconduct and racially-biased policing practices, mostly through the use of pre-emptive intervention strategies. For example, ‘early warning systems’ – such as those instituted by the Los Angeles Police Department in the wake of the Rodney King affair – aim to identify problem officers and provide them with corrective counseling and training in the hope that this will reduce the likelihood of future misconduct. While there is some evidence to suggest that these data-driven systems can be effective in reducing citizen complaints as well as increasing trust and confidence in the police, however, these systems are typically highly expensive to implement and place considerable strain on administrative resources (Alpert and Walker, 2000; Walker et al., 2001).

In light of this, it is essential that the police continue to work at improving existing complaints procedures in addition to experimenting with pre-emptive strategies such as early warning systems. Research by Walker (1998) suggests, for example, that police complaints procedures could be enhanced by focusing less on punishment and officer-discipline, and more on healing damaged relations with individual complainants and the

community at large. In his study of citizen complaints in the Midwest, Walker found that many victims of police misconduct did not necessarily want to see the officer in question punished by their department, but rather preferred an explanation or face-to-face apology. Furthermore, research also suggests that for changes to disciplinary procedures to have any effect on police-community relations, they must be accompanied by changes in the way in which police officers are supervised more generally (Hall, 1988; Lumb, 1995). As Lumb (1995) notes, supervisors must take a broader responsibility than just supervising officers; they must also be aware of the concerns of the community, and regard responding to these concerns as an integral part of their own duties. Administering internal discipline alone is not enough. Only by demonstrating an active and personal commitment to improving police-minority relations and eliminating racism are supervisors likely to influence officer practices and attitudes.

(v) Police Policy and Accountability

Ideally, policy should provide a police department with a clear sense of purpose, set specific goals and objectives, and prescribe officer duties and obligations (Gaines et al. 1991). While targeted reforms and programs – such as cultural diversity training – can do much to alter individual attitudes and even general police practices, the overall working culture of any institution inevitably reflects the philosophies and values embodied in that institution’s mission statement and public expressions of policy. As a consequence, efforts to improve police-minority relations and encourage greater levels of cultural diversity must be accompanied by a genuine commitment to policy reform and public accountability.

In addition, research has shown that lower-ranking officers are more likely to respond to reform when it is has the clear support of management (Lumb, 1995; Oakley, 1990). According to Gould (1997), one of the reasons why experienced police officers are often less than receptive to cultural diversity training is because they feel that they are held solely responsible for the poor state of police-minority relations. By making such courses mandatory for administrators and supervisors as well street officers, police management

can help to send the message that the problem is one shared by the entire organization (Gould, 1997). As Artiles and McClafferty (1998) also note, training should begin with a critical analysis of agency-wide procedures, policies, and practices, and avoid concentrating exclusively on the line-officer as the focus for change.

What is clear is that individual programs must form part of an overall strategy for institutional change (Burriss, 1999). Unless this is the case, there is a danger that any specific gains or improvements to police-minority will be short-lived. Although individual police departments must be free to develop policies that reflect local conditions and problems, good police-minority relations are most likely to be achieved when police policy reflects a genuine commitment to communication, consultation, and the importance of treating all members of the community equally (Imbert, 1991).

4. A Comprehensive Approach to Reform: The CDAP Model

In designing the CDAP model, the Bureau of Justice Administration and John Jay College have sought to ensure that efforts to improve police-minority relations and cultural sensitivity amongst serving officers are based on a comprehensive, coherent, and cooperative approach to the issues and challenges outlined above. Central to the model is a belief that for reform to have any lasting effect, police departments must engage in closely coordinated combination of reactive, proactive, and coactive measures. Cultural diversity training must be accompanied by a greater commitment to community outreach activities and police-minority partnerships. Changes to hiring and promotion practices must be part of general program of procedural reform that includes a reexamination of resource allocations, general personnel policies, and methods of accountability.

CDAP MODEL

REACTIVE

Conflicts & Allegations

↓

Early Warnings
Processing
Complaints
Mediation

Community
Review & Oversight

PROACTIVE

Internal Accountability

↓

Recruitment
Selection
Allocation of
Resources
Personnel
Practices
Employee
Input
Issues of
Profiling

Performance
Evaluations

Responding to
Bias Crimes

COACTIVE

Community
Collaborations

↓

POP
Advisory

Community Outreach

↓

Community
Profiling
Immigrant
Communities

Cross Cultural
Populations

↓

Deaf
Mentally Ill
Gay & Lesbian

Culture Clubs

TRAINING

Multi-Cultural
Framework

Community
Education

Situational
Interactive Model

As the above diagram shows, the CDAP model provides for the provision of cultural diversity training that is part of a comprehensive program of reform. All aspects of the model are interconnected and reflexive, with the result that the training curriculum is constantly being adjusted to reflect changing needs and arising problems. For example, by situating both formal complaints procedures and early warning systems within a larger structure of reactive policing practices – such as police-community mediation – the CDAP model aims to ensure that both approaches play an integral part in the ongoing processes of community oversight and review. Ideally, complaints and warning procedures should do more than simply help supervisors to identify problem officers or practices; they should also be used by police administrators as the basis for the formulation of policies that are responsive to specific community concerns and which seek to defuse tensions before they can escalate into major sources of conflict.

As has already been noted above, police-minority relations are rarely static. Instead, they are constantly changing as both the police and the communities they serve change. One particular strength of the CDAP model, is that it allows for experience derived from different departmental programs and sections – such as community outreach, culture clubs, and citizen complaints – to be continuously incorporated into officer training and education. In addition, by specifically recognizing the importance of maintaining coactive strategies improving police minority relations in parallel with more traditional proactive and reactive programs, the model marks a departure from the piece-meal approaches of the past.

Despite approaching the issue of cultural diversity and policing from a wide variety of different perspectives, all of the research cited in this paper points to one thing: that if police departments are to be successful in overcoming the problems and conflicts of the past, they must make a firm commitment to change at all levels and in all aspects of police work and police culture. In developing CDAP model, the BJA and John Jay College of Criminal Justice believe that they have produced a strategy that provides the foundation for such change, and which will help to open the way to a new era in police-minority relations.

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