

**Unit Goal: Role of multiculturalism in law enforcement**

**5.1. Discuss the definitions, key concepts, and origins of prejudice.**

Definitions:

- Attitude: a cognitive position based on a person's knowledge, feelings, and experiences about someone or something influencing them to behave in a certain way about that person or thing. Attitudes change because of life experiences. Attitudes and life experience may exist in a correlative relationship. Hence, a particular life experience may lead to a change in a particular attitude.
- Race: generally, refers to groups of people with common ancestry and physical characteristics. Since no "pure" races exist, some prefer to avoid reference to race and instead discuss group differences under the heading of ethnicity. However, the existence of this concept is in dispute.
- Ethnicity: refers to shared culture and background. Members of an ethnic group usually have common ancestry and generally share language, religion, and other cultural patterns.
- Ethnocentrism: the act of regarding one's culture as the "center of the universe," and hence as the basis for all comparisons with other cultures.
- Prejudice: an adverse judgment or opinion formed beforehand or without knowledge of or examination of the facts, i.e., bias.
- Culture: a way of thinking and acting based on tradition, i.e., learned behavior passed down from one generation to another.
- Discrimination: acting on the basis of prejudice.

**Source:** Adapted from the American Heritage Dictionary, 2nd edition

Who is prejudiced? Prejudice is a universal ill. All of us have some kind of prejudice. As we learn about other cultures and people who are different from us, we learn to judge them relative to the norms of our own cultural group. The key is to be aware of the prejudices, to work at reducing their impact in our lives, and to keep our prejudices out of our job performance.

**Lecture Scenario #1:** Ask participants to:

- Give examples of situations where prejudice was evident in the law enforcement arena.
- Identify the possible prejudices and discuss solutions and/or variety of approaches to rectify the situation.

The Functions of Prejudice:

- Ethnocentrism: provides a source of egotistic satisfaction, through comparing others with oneself.
- Stereotype and Categorical Treatment: affords a convenient grouping for people of whom one is not knowledgeable. Lumping or grouping such people together under a popular stereotyped description saves time and provides a convenient grouping.
- Scapegoat: provides a convenient group or person to blame when things go wrong in one's personal life or in the community.

- Projection: provides an outlet for projecting one's tensions and frustrations onto other people.
- Authoritarian personality: symbolizes one's affiliation with a more dominant group.
- Societal Strain: leads to justification for various types of discrimination that are considered to be of advantage to the dominant group.

Four Basic Feelings or Attitudes Harbored by Most Prejudiced Persons:

- **Feeling of superiority:** self-assured feeling on the part of certain individuals that they are superior or better than others are, which is frequently expressed in inappropriate jokes and disparaging remarks directed to those regarded as inferiors (e.g., suggesting that they are lazy, overly aggressive, stupid, tricky, deceitful, clannish, pushy, etc.)
- **Others are strange and different:** feeling that the other group is alien or different which promotes the social exclusion of members of a particular group and blocks any acceptance of a person on individual merit. These feelings foster aversion, dislike, or even open hostility against persons of a different group.
- **Proprietary claims:** as a member of the group, the individual believes he is entitled to exclusive or prior rights in a certain area.
- **Fear:** basic to prejudice. It excites the emotions to the point of overshadowing rational judgment. We believe that someone is trying to intrude and threaten the things that belong to us.

**Lecture Scenario #2:** Utilizing the scenarios or examples of prejudice discussed in Lecture Scenario #1:

- Identify feelings or attitudes experienced in each scenario.

## 5.2. Identify forms of prejudice.

Forms and targets of prejudice:

- Racial
- Ethnic
- Gender
- National origin
- Political affiliation
- Authority figures (e.g., police, government, teachers, parents)
- Sexual orientation
- Differently abled
- Religious
- Age
- Economic/occupational (e.g. working class, working poor, upper class)
- Weight
- Physically challenged
- Individual personal preferences (e.g., family feuds; antagonism between work departments like Vice and Patrol)

**Lecture Scenario #3:** Utilizing the above scenarios or examples of prejudice:

- Have students label the types/forms of prejudice being displayed.

### 5.3. Discuss personal prejudices.

**Lecture Scenario:** Utilize the “Learning Experiences about Race/Ethnicity worksheet found at the end of this resource guide.

- Have the student complete worksheet
- Discuss with class

**Instructor Note:** This can be an extremely emotional topic for students. It is important to be sensitive to opinions and to deal with them in a constructive manner.

Concepts about human relations from the social scientists:

- Every individual is entitled to equal rights and dignities. They are entitled to them by virtue of being human.
- The right to be free implies the right to be different.
- We should try to understand people different from us.
- All people share certain common needs:
  - Social needs
  - Health
  - Employment
  - Shelter
  - Food
  - Positive self-image
- Bill of Rights for Americans and individuals residing in U.S.
- We tend to categorize people and make judgments about them rather than evaluate them based on their individual character. This can lead to stereotyping.
- Democracy cannot work for some unless it works for all.

**Lecture Scenario #4:** Utilizing the above scenarios or examples of prejudice:

- Have students apply the above concepts to the solutions and possibilities in each scenario or example.

### 5.4. Define key functions of discrimination.

Functions of Discrimination:

- Tends to reinforce prejudice concerning the group’s alleged inferiority.
- Discrimination by any group limits the other groups’ effectiveness in business, education, political office, etc.
- Affords an avenue to economic exploitation of the group being discriminated against.

**Unit Goal: Importance of human relations in law enforcement**

### 5.5. Evaluate and discuss the importance of not allowing personal prejudices to affect professional behavior.

The role of the peace officer includes enforcing laws in an impartial manner and supporting the concept that all persons, including criminal justice personnel, are equally subject to the law and will be treated equally by it. Several assumptions about this role underlie the following discussion and the intent of this section. An awareness of these assumptions, even though you may not agree entirely with all of them, is imperative. We assume that impartial enforcement of the law:

- Requires that no person be treated unfairly, unjustly, or with bias or prejudice. It also requires that no person be given treatment that is more favorable by the law. Either by giving better service, more considerate treatment, or more lenient punishment than any other person would receive for the same reason. The critical guideline is not favoring one more than another in the same situation.
- Includes the more general ideas of impartial administration of justice and impartial treatment of offenders by the criminal justice system as a whole. It is by no means limited to the peace officer telling the public, “Don't do that - it's against the law,” or “You must do this - the law requires it.”
- Refers to both the interaction of the law and the citizen and the interaction of citizens when law enforcement becomes involved. The law must be impartial whether the law is confronting a citizen or standing between two citizens who are confronting each other.
- An ideal condition toward which the law, the criminal justice system, and its personnel are what we strive to achieve. Like democracy, it may never be in an imperfect world. Nevertheless, it is the direction in which we must move. No other course of action or substitute ideal will serve the long-range needs of a democracy.

**Lecture Scenario #5:** Discuss whether police officers are objective with all persons.

The peace officer has an especially sensitive position regarding impartial enforcement for several reasons:

- Officers often work alone and makes decisions demanding impartiality on their part with no one (but the citizen) present to witness fairness.
- The temptations provided by citizens for them to be partial can be overwhelming. The acceptance of them can go virtually undetected by a higher authority.
- Deviations from fair and equal treatment are often easily excused as being necessary for maintenance of order, crime prevention, and public relations.
- The impression held by most people of the impartiality of the law and the fairness of criminal justice may well come from the treatment they have received in their contacts with peace officers.

To apply these principles of impartiality, the peace officer should:

- Take necessary enforcement action, basing its intensity on the nature of the situation and the severity of the offense.
- Participate in the processes of justice such as charging and testifying, in ways that do not favor one individual or one group over any others based on factors not related to the crime.

- Communicate by word and action to the public and to other criminal justice personnel, whenever appropriate, that all personnel of criminal justice agencies are equally subject to the law and will not be given preferential treatment if they become subject to criminal justice procedures.

Benefits from impartial role performance:

- The delicate balance which the law provides and protects between those who govern and those who are governed must be preserved, if democracy is to survive.
- More recently, we have seen what the collapse of impartial law and equal justice can bring to individuals, groups, and entire nations.
- One goal of society and criminal justice is the reduction of crime. Regardless of whether punishment and the certainty of punishment are deterrents to crime, the law must be impartially enforced if it is to reduce crime. If leaders of groups who have frequent contact with the law believe that the system is impartial and fair, it builds respect and cooperation among them.
- Benefits to the criminal justice system and its people can be many and varied. Impartiality is a fundamental requirement made of all peace officers. It is not only a moral requirement in our treatment of each individual with whom we deal.

**5.6. Discuss the value of, respect for, and sensitivity to the feelings and needs of others.**

Important skills that should be used:

- Gather knowledge and information about the person(s).
- Be non-judgmental.
- Tolerate ambiguity in messages, approaches different from your own, and differences in general.
- Show warmth, genuine interest, and empathy.
- Be willing to communicate.

Adverse consequences of insensitivity:

- Hurt feelings.
- Anger.
- Loss of personal and professional respect.
- Ineffective performances.
- Behavior.

Positive consequences of sensitivity:

- Respect of community.
- Respect from fellow professionals.
- Support for democratic principles.
- Self-respect.

**Practical Scenarios/Instructor Note:** Role-plays will be very important to the application of the knowledge from this unit. Vary parts and situations until all have had the opportunity to use their new awareness of the importance of human relations in law enforcement. Case studies and problem-solving activities are also recommended.

**5.7. Discuss the public's perceptions of and attitudes toward peace officers.**

**Lecture Scenario #6:** Ask students to estimate responses of public opinion concerning:

- Sensitivity, impartiality, and ethics of peace officers.

**5.8. Discuss cross-cultural communication and its tie to conflict resolution.**

Cross-cultural communication is defined as a field of study that focuses on how people of differing cultures communicate with each other. In a multicultural society, such as the U.S., many scholars believe it is imperative that law enforcement officials have some understanding of these communication principles to facilitate dialogue and reduce conflict.

**Lecture Scenarios #7:** Discuss communication styles and patterns associated with different cultural groups. Highlight what each group values and considers important when communicating with each other and others. Examples of groups to discuss:

- Latin/Hispanic Americans
- Black/African Americans
- Vietnamese/Vietnamese Americans
- Syrians/Syrian Americans
- Native Americans/American Indians
- Pacific Islander Americans
- White/Caucasian Americans

**Lecture Scenarios #8:** Discuss conflict resolution and its impact on cross-cultural communication.

## Sources

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## RESOURCE MATERIALS

### LEARNING EXPERIENCES ABOUT RACE/ETHNICITY

My racial/ethnic group is:

1. Things I was told or encouraged to believe about individuals of my racial/ethnic group.
2. Values that I was taught about how persons of my racial/ethnic group should behave.
3. Individuals of my racial/ethnic group I was encouraged to hold as role models.
4. Individuals of other racial/ethnic groups I was encouraged to hold as role models.
5. Ways I learned to interact with individuals who were of other racial/ethnic groups.
6. Which of the above messages have had the most lasting effect on you?
7. Which of the above messages have had the most negative effect on you?
8. How have you or how can you overcome any negative messages?