Chapter 13
Community Relations in the Context of Culture

- Culture is the way of life shared by members of a society.
- It includes not only language, values, and symbolic meanings, but also technology and material objects.
- Americans share a common culture based on a national heritage of personal freedom and democratic principles.

- The United States is culturally diverse.
- There are numerous ethnic groups, religious groups, and many age and sex attributes of communities across the United States.
- Immigrants comprise still another culturally diverse group.
The Cultural Context of Community Relations

- Context—a framework for understanding meaning
  - It is the environment or the condition in which something is said or done.
- Contexts are very important.
- Without them, what people mean by what they say and do would rarely be clearly understood.

Being Culturally Appropriate

- It is possible to make decisions precisely by the letter of policy and procedure and to commit acts that are inappropriate and inhumane.
- In order to deal with people of different cultures, one must seek to examine the context of that particular culture.
- The seeking of contextual understanding of different cultures is defined by sociologists as cultural relativism.

- Cultural relativism—we seek to understand different cultures from their particular perspectives or on their own terms rather than imposing preconceived standards from our own cultural development.
- Cognitive scripts refers to the application of past experiences to new situations or encounters.
- Ethnocentrism refers to how we perceive cultures other than our own as flawed or inferior.
- Xenophiles are people who are ashamed of who or what they are.
- To deal fairly and objectively with other people within a culturally diverse society, one must be both accepting and understanding of their own culture.
- We must be sensitive to the norms and traditions of others.
- People must come to terms with their own moral and social perspectives, as well as understanding how compatible their views are within society as a whole.

Understanding Crime
- In order to understand crime in minority communities we must take into account the ideas, feelings, and experiences of the people in the community.

Providing Services to the Community
- New immigrant communities and other communities in transition need special police attention.
- Police officers can help to ease the shock of entering a new culture by offering protection and informal education.
• Services to any community must be matched to the citizen’s perception of need and to the resources of the community.
• Many new immigrants suffered abuses at the hands of government officials in their native lands.
• A product of those abuses is a strong distrust of government institutions in general and the police in particular.

Overcoming Stereotypes
• Stereotyping of police by the community and of the community by the police interferes with effective community relations.
• Stereotyping is often based on prejudice.
• Prejudice creates and is created by hostility and mutual fear, and distrust is intensified in the process.

Discretionary Decision Making
• Three major factors that influence decision making in the field:
  • Space
  • Time
  • Appearance
Characteristics of Culture

- Culture comprises all of the following characteristics:
  - It is organic and supra-organic
  - It is overt and covert
  - It is explicit and implicit
  - It is ideal and manifest
  - It is stable and changing

Cross-Cultural Factors

African-Americans

- The term black can be misleading.
- They are no longer the majority minority within the United States.
- Despite considerable progress in regard to race relations within U.S. society, they continue to be dramatically overrepresented within the U.S. correctional institutions.
- African-Americans have experienced more difficulty in becoming assimilated into U.S. society than have many other ethnic minorities for two primary reasons:
  - Clearly notable racial characteristics
  - The legacy of slavery

Hispanic-Americans

- They comprise the majority ethnic group.
- They are categorized not by race but by ethnic heritage.
- There are many differences among the ethnic subgroups that they comprise.
- They place greater emphasis on the welfare of the group rather than of individuals.
- **Mexican-Americans**
  - They are the largest Hispanic group in the United States.
  - They see themselves as quite distinct from other Hispanics both in racial composition and cultural history.
  - Their cultural development was shaped by early Spanish and Native American historical events.

- **Puerto Ricans**
  - They make up the second largest grouping of Hispanics.
  - Their lands were incorporated into the United States.
  - All Puerto Ricans are considered U.S. citizens.
  - Approximately one-third of all Puerto Ricans are black.

- **Cuban-Americans**
  - They are mostly concentrated within southeast Florida.
  - The initial Cuban immigrants were:
    - Well educated
    - Members of the upper and middle class
    - Either spoke English or learned to speak English
- **Later Cuban Immigrants**
  - Fleeing from Cuba’s Communist society
  - Less affluent
  - More racially diverse
  - Few spoke English

- **Asian-Americans**
  - Highly diverse group.
  - They have suffered from discrimination due to differences in race, religion, culture, language, and social organization.
  - They were used as cheap labor during the 1800s.

- **Chinese-Americans**
  - They were the earliest of the Asian groups to begin immigrating to the United States.
  - They are one of the largest groupings of any new immigrants.
  - They have strong family ties, strict discipline, and a deep seated respect for heritage and traditions.
Filipino-Americans
- They are the second largest grouping of Asian-Americans.
- Clustered in California and Hawaii
- They are more racially diverse
- Predominantly of Malayan descent

Asian-Indians
- They comprise the third largest Asian group.
- They have dark skins but Caucasian features.
- They are not readily assimilated into other groups.

Vietnamese-Americans
- They are the fourth largest Asian group.
- The initial wave of refugees were upper and middle class, predominantly Catholic.
- The second wave was less educated, poorer, younger, Buddhist, and less prepared for entry into American society.
Korean-Americans
- Korean immigration has taken place in three waves.
- They have experienced difficulties similar to those of other Asian immigrants.
- They have been relatively successful in adapting to American society.

Japanese-Americans
- They have been mistreated and suffered prejudice at the hands of the white majority.
- They were objects of bigotry and discrimination.
- They were very industrious and sought to attain both educational and economic success.

Native Americans
- Pacific Islanders
- Hawaiian-Americans
- Samoan-Americans
- Guamanian-Americans
- American-Indians
- Eskimos and Aleuts
White Americans
- The power in the United States has been predominantly white.
- There is no cohesive “White America.”
- They are as culturally diverse as any other racial category.

European-Americans
- The original immigrants were from the colonial powers of England.
- WASPs controlled the political and social environment of early America.
- Irish Catholics were the recipients of severe harassment and oppression.

Jewish-Americans
- They do not identify with a common homeland.
- They can not be identified as a distinct racial group.
- They have achieved economic success and considerable political power.
Middle-Easterners and Northern Africans
- Immigration from Northern Africa and the Middle East has been a fairly recent phenomenon.
- They have received considerable attention in recent years due to the hostile relations that the United States has had with Iran and Iraq and due to terrorist activities.

A Perspective on Diverse Cultures
- The United States is comprised of numerous ethnic groups.
- Racism, ethnocentrism, and discrimination continue.
- We will always have individuals who fear and hate people who are different from them.

Improving Community Relations in the Context of Culture
- The following elements must exist in order for strategies designed to improve community relations in the context of culture to be successful:
  - Appreciating culture
  - Understanding language
  - Getting involved in meaningful ways
  - Affecting public policy
  - Making a firm, full commitment
  - Creatively overcoming barriers (new and old)
Specific Targets

- Recruitment
  - Must reflect the racial/cultural makeup of the community.
  - The agency must seek the best candidates within these groups.
  - They should assist them to be culturally appropriate.
  - They should translate their understanding of their culture into positive action.

Training

- All police training must reflect the demographics of the community.
- Language skills may be taught through the use of key words and role-play situations depicting cross-cultural incidents.
- Crash courses usually have little long-term use.

Public Information Bulletins for language minorities
- Ongoing Community Participation
- Community Relations Service (CRS)
- * Police Community Relations Committees
- Advocacy