

Diversity in Policing

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Looking at the police force today, you will find police officers of a different race, gender, ethnicity, and age. In the past, diversity on the police force was nonexistent. Policing in the United States dates back to the 1600s. American colonies used British policing as the blueprint to develop their own (Rennison & Dodge, 2017, p. 99). The pre-police era was the first for policing in the United States. The pre-police era lasted from the 1600s to the mid-1800s. At this time there were not any police officers, towns had constables and watchmen. A constable is defined as a “policing agent who operates in smaller towns” (Rennison & Dodge, 2017, p. 100). Constables were usually unarmed and unpaid (Rennison & Dodge, 2017, p. 100). Constables and watchmen during this period were exclusively white. Watchmen worked in larger towns and cities, at night they would patrol their areas to protect the neighborhoods (Rennison & Dodge, 2017, p. 100) It took decades before diversity was introduced into policing. This paper will discuss the importance of diversity in policing, the benefits of having diversity in policing and diversity effect on victims.

There was a small push to diversify the police force towards the early 1900s. However, it was not until the Reform era that diversity in policing began to take place. (Rennison & Dodge, 2017). Diversity is a highly sought-after characteristic in policing because it is effective policing. Police officers from different backgrounds can serve communities better. They can apply their life experiences, perspectives, and skills to their job. Within the police force, officers can learn from one another. Officers sharing their experiences and knowledge with one another can help other officers assess situations differently. Having diversity in policing promotes representation. Representation is important in policing, as it is in any field. Having officers that resemble our diverse society can influence those who dream of becoming an officer make it a

reality. Representation influences the trust between the community and the police. While diversity in policing took decades to achieve it has become a highly sought-after characteristic in policing. Diversity in policing allows for more effective policing. Officers can learn important lessons from one another.

In addition, Diversity in the police force should not only focus on race, gender, and ethnicity, but instead focus on all aspects of diversity, like LGBTQ status, religion, and income. Having officers of a different race, gender, and ethnicity on the force is great, but the police force can be more inclusive. Having officers of LGBTQ status, different religions and income on the force can be very beneficial. LGBTQ officers can comfort and help victims of LGBTQ crimes. Victims may feel more comfortable disclosing information to someone from the same community. Victims would not feel as judged disclosing this information to an officer of LGBTQ status. Having officers of different religious faith is an important characteristic in diversifying the police force. Officers of different religious know certain customs that relate to places of worship and the people of those religions. They can provide insight into what is considered disrespectful and acceptable.

Furthermore, officers of religious faith can serve as a moral and authoritative deterrence to crime. For example, knowing your fellow choir member is also a police officer may prevent those of the same church from committing a crime. Officers of different incomes can provide accounts of crime and experience with police in their communities. They can provide information on how civilians in those communities react to police presence and advise other officers on conduct. Officers may have connections with community members, which can help other officers build relationships. Diversity in the police force should not be limited to gender, race, and ethnicity. Diversity in the police force should be open to all characteristics like

LGBTQ status, religion, and income. Officers of LGBTQ status, different religions and income provide insight into different communities that are helpful in policing.

Lastly, there are many advantages to having diverse officers in law enforcement. Diverse officers can break down language barriers, promote representation and inspiration, build trust with communities, and provide different perspectives and knowledge. These advantages are beneficial to victims. Victims who speak another language can be kept in the loop. Officers can inform victims on with their case and rights; because they speak the same language. Victims are likely to trust someone that resembles them; whether it is based on gender, race, religion, etc. Having someone you can identify with allows victims to speak freely. Victims will be dealt with more understanding by officers because of the many similarities and openness. Diversifying the police force can make interactions with then police less scary for victims. Victims will feel more comfortable to come forward about crimes that have happened. Diversity can help facilitate compliance with the police as well. The main advantage to have diversity in policing is the openness and comfort it can provide to victims. Diversity can help strengthen the relationship between the community and the police.

There are many benefits to having a diverse police force. Police from different backgrounds can provide insight into different communities. They have knowledge that other officers do not. Diversity in policing encourages others to pursue a career in law enforcement. Diversity in policing demonstrates that race, gender, religion, etc., does not limit one's chance of being in law enforcement. Diversity in policing establish trust with communities and victims. Victims may relate to officers from the same background as them and talk more freely. Overall, diversity in policing is a highly sought-after characteristic because it is effective policing. The more backgrounds we allow on the police force they better our police can serve us.

References

Rennison, C. M & Dodge M. (2017). *Introduction to criminal justice: System, diversity and change* (2nd ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE