

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN POLICING

Stout, B. (2010). 'Policing Matters' Series, Waddington, PAJ & Wright, M. (Eds.) Exeter: Learning Matters. V + 153pp. pbk. £16 ISBN 978-1-84445-353

This text book was written specifically for students undertaking degrees in Policing and related subjects. It is part of a series on 'Policing Matters', in which all books provide key information and learning activities related to core modules, and follow a common format of chapter objectives, case studies, practical and reflective tasks, with links to relevant national standards and legislation.

This particular volume provides a context for the difficult history of the Police in relation to equality and diversity, lucidly sets out legislative and policy frameworks, and examines diversity issues both between Police and community and within policing organisations and cultures. It benefits from an author with criminal justice experience in both South Africa and Northern Ireland, the latter being of particular relevance in discussing the policing of sectarianism, associated hate crime and restorative justice issues. Therefore, although some of the frameworks necessarily refer to UK law and policy, the primary issues of equality and diversity are internationally relevant and applicable.

The main concern of this book is to encourage existing and potential Police professionals to be reflective about the diversity dilemmas they may face, and to come to understand the importance of promoting fairness and equality in the policing arena. The book rightly emphasises that this is a process which amounts to much more than the 'common sense' rationale with which it is sometimes dismissed.

Six of the book's eight chapters are built around what are described as 'the six strands of diversity', these being categorised as age, disability, gender, race, religion and sexual orientation. Although a function of the book's deliberate structure, the reader might have benefited from hearing before, rather than after these categories were introduced, that diversity is a

nuanced term which embraces any state of potential oppression, such as poverty, unemployment, homelessness (one might add to these the innocent victims of terrorism), and so on. Similarly, an earlier explanation of social construction (or labelling) theory would have provided a comprehensive underpinning of the entire subject matter, rather than appearing first in Chapter 3 on disability. The other difficulty, which pervades most contemporary writing on criminal justice is that, having exhorted its readers to refer to, for example, the disabled, as 'disabled people', the book goes on to use the label 'offender' rather than 'a person who offends'. Just as in practising diversity, in writing about it there are no easy answers!

These are minor criticisms, however. In each of its chapters, this book provides reliable information and cogent argument surrounding each of its identified strands of diversity. Particularly useful is the inclusion of very recent examples of discrimination such as, in England, the bullying of Fiona Pilkington and her 18-year old daughter Francecca, because of Francecca and her brother's disabilities, leading to Ms Pilkington killing herself and Francecca. This had gone unrecognised as 'disability hate crime' by Leicestershire Constabulary, which has since developed a definitive policy on this type of crime.

Within this volume, Police students and other readers are encouraged to access websites and to think hard about how they might behave and apply the law in similar circumstances to that described above. This type of reflection has become even more important in the UK since the increase in hate crime, following the referendum decision to leave the European Union. Conscious that Police activity in relation to discrimination is often portrayed in a negative light, however, the book's author is at pains to balance this with accounts of more positive developments in recent times, such as the progress which has been made in countering racism since the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry in 1999. (This was a high-profile inquiry into the racially-motivated murder of an 18-year old young man in London, where the killers were not brought to justice, found to have been mishandled by Police because of institutional racism)

As impressively up-to-date as the material in this book is, publications involving legislation are always at the mercy of enthusiastic politicians. Since the book was published, 'Stop and Search' measures (always disproportionately perpetrated on black people) have been under review, and controversial Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (which did not constitute an offence other than in their breach) have been abolished in the UK. To an extent, this has limited Police discretion in relation to apprehension based on race and age, both of which are addressed in this book. However, as noted in the very last paragraph, it is 'easy to predict that the Police will deal with new and unpredictable diversity issues in the months and years ahead' (p.147). Indeed it is, and this publication has provided a most welcome body of knowledge and understanding from which to perceive, reflect and act upon equality and diversity in policing not only in the UK but world-wide.

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