

BOOK REVIEW

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A Review of *Law Enforcement: A Human Relations Approach*

REFERENCE: Coffey, A., *Law Enforcement: A Human Relations Approach*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ. 1990, 377 pp.

The author fails to set forth in the Preface to this book who the target audience is. After a review of the material, I was unable to determine what types of individuals such an audience should consist of. The topics are too general for its utilization as a text for a police course and too specific in some areas for a survey work. Perhaps that is the reason for my disappointment with an author who is an expert in this field yet appears to have let my expectations down.

The underlying theme of this book is that the police must be aware of the different ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the people they encounter in the task of enforcing the laws. The first section of the text discusses general police topics and the role of the police in the community. These topics are given too much print, as they really do not support the title of the book. The reader who expects to learn about community relations should not have to deal with the details of the criminal justice process nor with the impact that police concerns for their own image has on that process.

The reasons for unrest in the community are not set forth in sufficient detail and development to act as a main point of focus for the reader, which would allow the book to serve as a text for orienting the student of law enforcement. Such material is lacking in the detail required to be of aid to the police science student or the citizen eager to learn of the conflicts within the community which act upon the persons attempting to enforce the laws among groups of diverse backgrounds and apparent goals. For example, the book devotes less than ten pages to the topic of prejudice.

The only use that I could determine for this text is as an introductory work to the vast topic of law enforcement and the public. The coverage of community relations is given less than 50 pages and needs far more detail to be of use. Perhaps that is the problem: the text is too general in coverage without being specific enough in any area to be of much use.

I attempted to view the book as aimed at a reader with no knowledge of law enforcement of human relations and felt that it failed to impart enough understanding of the topic to be of value. To the author's credit, he does not attempt to bias the reader with his viewpoints on who is right or wrong in the community. However, he does little to encourage the reader to develop a personal feeling of the problems.

The text does not stand up to prior works of this author on this topic (notably, *Human Relations: Law Enforcement in a Changing Community*) and does not serve a useful function in the library of anyone interested in law enforcement or in applying human relations to the goal of crime control.

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