1. Discuss the functions of the police in American society

2. Describe the difficulty associated with attempting to make generalizations about the police and the functions they perform

3. Identify the various levels and types of policing in the United States

4. Discuss some of the current concerns of police in the United States
BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE ROLES AND
FUNCTIONS OF POLICE IN SOCIETY

Where did the concept of public police originate? How did the police evolve and what are their functions in contemporary democratic society? How many different types of police agencies are there? What are some current policing strategies and what are some of the issues currently impacting the police? These and other questions are addressed in the following paragraphs.

The Concept of Police

Every society needs citizens who serve as mediators and arbitrators to settle disputes among its members. The term police is derived from the Greek words polis and politeuein, which refer to being a citizen who participates in the affairs of a city or state. There is no better way of describing the role of the contemporary police officer—he or she is a citizen actively involved in the affairs of a city or state. (State here may refer to the federal level as well as to a specific state, as in affairs of state.)

In all modern societies, if mediation and arbitration fail, specially designated citizens (police officers in the general sense of the word) are appointed to apprehend those who appear to have violated the rights of others and to bring them before other specially designated citizens (prosecutors, judges) who have the authority to sanction undesirable behavior. In a democratic society, the conflicting demands of various groups must all be accommodated (at least to the point of being heard), and these demands virtually guarantee that not all parties can be satisfied at the same time by the police. (For an example, see You Decide 1.1.) Marx (2001) indicated that societies experience a tension between the needs of order and liberty which often results in a paradox involving the need for police and the need for protection from the police. Furthermore, Bittner (1974) argued that the police alone in civilian society can impose, and in some circumstances, force solutions on citizens when problematic or emergency situations arise (such as making arrests on the one hand, and providing services for the physically or mentally ill, on the other) and this virtually guarantees that not all parties will be happy when the police officially intervene.

In the United States, both the desire to protect individual rights and the need to insure an orderly society are apparent. In order to help accomplish the latter, police officers frequently intervene in the daily affairs of private citizens, for example when enforcing traffic laws or dealing with domestic violence. Yet many, if not most, Americans would prefer that the government (represented by the police) not interfere in the regulation of their daily activities, although they may be perfectly willing to have the police intervene in the daily activities of others. Intervention in areas that citizens generally regard as private generates suspicion and hostility toward the police. Yet, citizens demand that the police address increasing concerns over terrorism, criminality, and violence but otherwise leave them to their own pursuits. This often places individual police officers in difficult positions—both intervention and lack of intervention may lead to public criticism. It should also be noted that some types of police agents are far more likely to intervene in the daily affairs of citizens than others. Thus, local police officers (municipal and county) are more likely to investigate domestic violence, simple burglaries, and disorderly complaints than are state or federal officers. While all such officers have the authority to intervene, cooperative relationships are often established that indicate which officers will intervene in what types of cases and in which geographic areas. Consequently, state troopers are more likely to stop speeders on highways and local officers are more likely to perform traffic details within the city (county) limits. Federal officers generally avoid such incidents altogether, but assist in or run certain types of investigations—for example, robberies, kidnappings, drug-related activities, and suspected terrorist incidents. Regardless of the type of agent, police officers are influenced by the expectations of police administrators, courts, residents of the community, other officers in the department, and even by their own perceptions of what is ethical and moral. In most cases, these
expectations hold the police accountable for their chosen actions in performance of their role. However, the job of a police officer is much more complicated and complex than most people realize and often involves resolving conflicts. For example, among the common conflicts police are called on to resolve are complaints related to loud parties and vehicles parked across sidewalks or in front yards. Consider the police officer who responds to a report of a driveway dispute between two neighbors over the location of the neighbor’s vehicle. In this conflict, friends, relatives, and even other neighbors walking their dogs may get involved in an ownership dispute concerning the driveway. According to Kelling, police often settle these types of disputes by “persuading, cajoling, educating, counseling, or ordering” (1993, p. 1).

Societies expect police to achieve a variety of outcomes. Some of these outcomes almost always define the police mission, while others developed on the adoption of a community policing philosophy.

- Reducing crime and disorder
- Reducing the fear of crime
- Solving neighborhood problems and improving the quality of life
- Developing greater community cohesion (International Association of Chiefs of Police [IACP], 2001, p. 2)

In order to achieve these outcomes, and maintain order, and enforce the law, police do intervene in the daily affairs of private citizens. Regulation of morals, enforcement of traffic laws, mediation of domestic disputes, administration of juveniles, and many other police activities require such intervention. Of course, police training and the law does not address nor provide answers for every conflict or intervention encountered by police. As a result, in many cases police officers make choices: warn some individuals, arrest or ticket others, or refer parties in a dispute to a private attorney or professional mediator. However, the challenge for the police in areas they supervise is to determine the conceptions of order in the minds of the residents. “Do residents who live in neighborhoods where crowded apartments lack air conditioning also deplore public beer drinking on a very hot city night” (Skolnick, 1999, p. 5)? Almost all police officers practice some form of discretion with their actions. However, police must also follow department policies that in some cases remove officer discretion and require enforcement—for example that all persons not wearing a seat belt be ticketed or mandate the arrest of any persons they observe committing a serious felony. It should be noted, however, that many early settlers in America came to this country precisely because they did not want government intervention in, and regulation of, their daily activities. Citizens want the police to address their concerns and solve the problems they bring to the attention of the police, but otherwise to leave them alone (Toch & Grant, 1991, p. 3).

Accordingly, those responsible for policing society occupy inherently problematic positions. A brief overview of the history of American policing may help us understand the origins and consequences of some of the issues encountered by police officers in a democratic society. In order to understand why the police encounter some of these issues, however, we should first note that the terms police officer and law enforcement officer are sometimes viewed as interchangeable. In fact, the term law enforcement officer describes very little of what police officers do. The police in the United States are primarily providers of services. Among the services they provide are law enforcement, order maintenance, and crime prevention. As Davis (1978) noted, the police “are members of the public who are paid to give full-time attention to duties which are incumbent on every citizen, in the interests of community welfare and existence” (p. 7). However, large segments of the public prefer to leave some or all of these duties to the police—especially the duty of law enforcement. Police activities in the area of law enforcement tend to be far more exciting and thus are far more likely to receive media attention. As a result, we often evaluate the police on their success in this area rather than on the more frequent activities
of order maintenance and service; the police provide far more than law enforcement to the communities they serve and devote a relatively small portion of their time to law enforcement activities.

To complicate matters further, the police are expected to share in a number of social service functions that require intervention in cases involving domestic violence, mentally ill and emotionally disturbed individuals, and child and elder abuse, to name a few (Crank, Kadlec, & Koski, 2010). This type of police responsibility is occurring at a time when some police have begun “severely limiting the types of calls that result in direct face-to-face responses by officers (Melekian, 2012, p. 1). The police are becoming more involved in networks of security and with counterterrorism, and are increasingly involved in institutions concerned with minimizing risk (Crank, Kadlec, & Koski, 2010; Maguire, 2010). Additionally, terrorism and globalization are tied to the notion of a broader police mandate resulting in the need for increased cooperation across police jurisdictions (for example, see Case in Point 1.1).

In the United States, many citizens have been and remain opposed to the idea of a centralized police force because they fear that such a force might become an instrument of government repression. For the same reason, the police followed the lead of other government entities that were also decentralized (at the levels of state, county, and municipality, for example) because of fear of repression by a strong, centralized government with no local representation. The desire to protect individual rights is strong, yet the need to insure some degree of order in society is also apparent. In a democratic nation, we expect the police to operate within the framework of our defining principles, which include equal treatment, respect for individual liberty, and accountability, among others. When police reflect these principles, they play an important role in social control and the overall well-being of society, which results in a more willing and cooperative public.

■ SIZE AND SCOPE OF THE LAW ENFORCEMENT SECTOR

Every day, tens of thousands of American citizens don uniforms, pin on badges and name tags, and strap on equipment belts that may carry a firearm and Taser, extra ammunition, handcuffs, pepper spray, and baton. These citizens assemble at distinctively marked locations and disperse from these locations carrying radios and cell phones in
clearly marked and equipped vehicles designed to make them easily identifiable. They go forth as police officers to fulfill their tours of duty providing services, maintaining order, and occasionally enforcing the law in large metropolitan, suburban, and rural areas as well as on college campuses, on the borders between the United States and other countries, in airports and harbors, and in dozens of other settings.

At the same time, thousands of other American citizens cover their badges and firearms with street or business attire and assemble at distinctively marked locations, both in and out of the United States, to work on current investigations through the use of phones and computers or to disperse from these locations in unmarked vehicles to conduct surveillance, interviews, and to make arrests.

Additionally, other Americans conceal their identities as police officers, seldom visit the aforementioned distinctive locations, and attempt to pass themselves off as members of groups engaged in criminal activities in order to obtain information that will lead to arrests.

Tens of thousands of different American citizens don uniforms more or less similar to those of the police, pin on badges similar, but not identical, to those of police officers, arm themselves with firearms, pepper spray, Tasers, and handcuffs and proceed in marked vehicles to work in gated communities, shopping malls, industrial areas, and a wide variety of other locations to provide security for people and property. As is the case with public police personnel, these security personnel differ greatly in terms of training, education, and competency.

Simultaneously, thousands of other Americans go to work in police agencies of all types and sizes as nonsworn technicians, communications personnel, administrative assistants, and in dozens of other capacities.

**Levels of Policing**

American police personnel are employed at the international, national, state, county, and municipal levels. Based on data provided by the Federal Bureau of Justice Statistics, in the United States over 800,000 sworn police personnel were employed full-time at the federal, state, and local (city, county, suburban) levels in over 18,000 agencies in 2008 (Bureau of Justice Statistics [BJS], 2011). Another 44,000 sworn officers were employed on a part-time basis. Table 1.1 shows the distribution of public police personnel by type of agency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Agency</th>
<th>Number of Agencies</th>
<th>Number of Full-Time Sworn Officers</th>
<th>Number of Part-Time Sworn Officers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18,050</td>
<td>870,130</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All state and local</td>
<td>17,985</td>
<td>765,246</td>
<td>44,062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local police</td>
<td>12,501</td>
<td>461,063</td>
<td>27,810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheriff</td>
<td>3,063</td>
<td>182,979</td>
<td>11,334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary state</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>60,772</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special jurisdiction</td>
<td>1,733</td>
<td>56,968</td>
<td>4,451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constable/marshal</td>
<td>638</td>
<td>3,464</td>
<td>413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal**</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>104,884</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2011 (http://www.bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov).

**Note:** **Nonmilitary federal officers authorized to carry firearms and make arrests. Data on federal law enforcement officers are from BJS, 2007 (http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/fedle.htm).
Overall, in 2008 there were about 2.5 sworn state and local police officers per 1,000 citizens in the United States. These officers worked in agencies ranging in personnel size from 36,000 (New York City) to agencies with only one sworn officer (some 2,125 such agencies were reported in 2008). Some agencies have no full-time sworn personnel, and instead hire a number of part-time officers or contract with outside agencies to provide their police services. Many agencies have and utilize modern technological equipment, while others lack advanced equipment. Some officers are well trained, others receive very little training. Some routinely intervene in the daily lives of their fellow citizens, others do not. Some are held in high regard by their fellow citizens, others are not.

In addition to sworn employees, state and local police agencies in 2008 reported some 425,000 total nonsworn employees—with 368,669 serving full-time and 56,278 working part-time (BJS, 2011).

Estimates of private security and contract personnel indicate that between 11,000 and 15,000 companies employ at least 1.2 million private security personnel who work in a number of different occupations ranging from private security or contract guards, to executive protection, to private investigators, to industrial security, to contract employees for the military (Gamiz, 2010; Morgan & Morgan, 2011). They are hired to

**YOU DECIDE 1.1**

As we have seen, police in the United States are extremely diverse: public and private, large and small, technologically advanced and not very advanced, and operating in various jurisdictions (federal, state, local, etc.).

- Do you think it is possible for these diverse agencies to engage in cooperative efforts?
- What would be necessary in order for such cooperation to occur?
- How important do you think it is for police agencies to cooperate in order to help insure our security?

Suggestions for addressing these questions can be found on the Student Study Site.
Part I: Foundations of Policing

protect against fire, theft, vandalism, terrorism, and illegal activity and to enforce laws on their employers’ property. The private security industry is considered one of the fastest growing industries in the nation, with an expected growth rate of 17% by 2016 (Gamiz, 2010). We have much more to say about private or contract security in Chapter 15.

Regardless of their status as public or private, police personnel currently find themselves operating in a rapidly changing environment. For example, the use of unmanned aerial vehicles for crime-scene mapping, traffic control, and border-monitoring is slowly increasing, as is the use of global positioning systems, and sophisticated video surveillance (Crank, Kadlec, & Koski, 2010). At the same time, the USA Patriot Act extended government authority to tap phones and computers which may require that police process huge amounts of information. All of these changes are happening at a time when many municipalities are facing declining tax revenues and increasing tax burdens for middle-class citizens, leaving city officials struggling to balance public safety needs with other infrastructure needs. According to Melekian “after 25 years of steady gains in the number of both sworn and civilian personnel serving local, state, or tribal level . . . all indicators point to a downward trend in personnel levels” (2012, p. 16). He reports that projections suggest approximately “12,000 police officers and sheriffs’ deputies (were) laid off in 2011; approximately 30,000 law enforcement positions (went) unfilled; and approximately 28,000 sworn personnel faced work furloughs of at least one week or more” (2012, p. 1). An inevitable question is, “how much police protection can we afford?” (Crank, Kadlec, & Koski, 2010).

As previously noted, police in America have provided and continue to provide an extremely wide range of services, many of which, as we shall see, have little to do with crime or law enforcement. At the federal level, in 1789 United States marshals were the first police established for the purpose of enforcing directives of the federal courts. The United States Secret Service was founded in 1865 as a branch of the U.S. Treasury Department. It was originally created to combat the counterfeiting of U.S. currency—a serious problem at the time. Later, in 1901, following the assassination

CASE IN POINT 1.1

**Racketeering, Drug Conspiracy Charges for 27 in Schenectady, New York**

In April, 2012, “United States Attorney Richard S. Hartunian announced the unsealing of two indictments returned by a federal grand jury for the Northern District of New York in Albany, New York which, in total, charged 27 with a federal racketeering conspiracy and/or federal drug felonies.”

Hartunian praised the outstanding cooperative efforts of the federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies that participated in this investigation and emphasized that his office will continue to work closely with federal, state, and local authorities to prosecute gang members and narcotics traffickers.

Police agencies involved in the investigation included the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the United States Drug Enforcement Administration, the New York State Police, the Schenectady Police Department, and the Schenectady County Sheriff’s Office.

According to New York State Police Superintendent Joseph A. D’Amico “This multi-agency investigation and subsequent arrests extinguished an organized criminal network responsible for infusing illegal narcotics into the Schenectady community. This is a solid example of how collaborative law enforcement efforts work to make our communities safer.”

*Source: Racketeering, drug conspiracy charges for 27 in Schenectady, New York. Targeted News Service (USA)—Friday, April 6, 2012. Record Number: 3833234. Copyright (c) 2012 Targeted News Service. All rights reserved.*
Making Lives Safer—Cop’s Career on the Thin Blue Line

One incident in the career of Sergeant Greg Donaldson stands out as he reflects over his 23 years as a police officer in Australia.

“When I was a dog handler there was a young nine-year-old girl who was abducted by a convicted murderer and I turned up to Mount Druitt and had to drive up to the Queensland border as soon as I could,” he said.

“With the help of two Aboriginal trackers, we tracked for the next 12 hours overnight and recovered the girl safe and well. Given the guy’s form there is no doubt in my mind she would have been killed at some time and we saved her life that night.”

Sergeant Donaldson joined the police force because he has a good sense of what’s right and wrong and he stayed on because he enjoys the diversity of police work. Over the years, Donaldson has been a street cop, an undercover officer, and a dog handler. He notes that in private business you can change employment to enjoy different experiences, while in policing you can do a variety of things while remaining a police officer. “You don’t have to change supers and you accumulate your long service leave. It’s good.”

Donaldson concludes, “No two days are the same, no two jobs are the same, and the mates you make, the blokes who cover your back and back you up and sit by you for hours, there are not many jobs that build those friendships and trust.”


PHOTO 1.3
Federal agencies exercise police powers regarding a specific set of duties. For example, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) is tasked with enforcing controlled substance laws.
Part I: Foundations of Policing

of President William McKinley, the Secret Service was tasked with its second mission: the protection of the president. Today, the Secret Service’s mission is twofold: (1) protection of the president, vice president, and others; and (2) investigations into crimes against the financial infrastructure of the United States.

Numerous other federal agencies exercise police powers, and while each agency has a set of specific duties, there is a good deal of overlap and duplication among them. Four of these agencies are depicted in Table 1.2.

Other federal agencies employing law enforcement officers include the following: Amtrak, the U.S. Supreme Court, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Library of Congress. In February of 2001, the U.S. Commission on National Security/21st Century met and the commission recommended the establishment of a National Homeland Security Agency. Prior to that time, homeland security activities were split between 40 agencies. Executive Order No. 13228 established the Office of Homeland Security (OHS) and the Homeland Security Council (HSC) in October, 2001. The OHS was created to coordinate efforts of local, federal, and state authorities to stop terrorism (Sells, 2012). The Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) mission includes preventing terrorism and enhancing security, managing our borders, administering immigration laws, securing cyberspace, and ensuring disaster resilience. The DHS secures the nation’s air, land, and sea borders to prevent illegal activity while facilitating lawful travel and trade (DHS, 2012). In order to accomplish its mission, the DHS coordinates police activities among agencies at a variety of levels and provides training, grants, and resources. The DHS employs approximately 240,000 individuals in a variety of agencies (DHS, 2012).

Other federal agencies employ more than 104,000 full-time sworn personnel (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2011). For the most part, they do not engage in those activities normally provided by local and county police. Relatively few federal officers (usually referred to as agents) are uniformed, and their primary duties involve investigation and control of federal crimes, such as bank robberies, illegal immigration, and interstate crimes. They are also responsible for protecting federal property and federal officials. Federal agencies provide training and logistical support for state and local police as well.
## ADDITIONAL TYPES OF POLICE

### State Police

At the same time that local and federal police agencies were going through numerous changes, and as the number of highways increased, state police agencies took on the responsibility for traffic enforcement on these thoroughfares, particularly in areas outside the city or township limits. Eventually a bifurcation occurred, with some agencies focusing almost exclusively on traffic control (highway patrol departments) and others maintaining more general enforcement powers (state police investigation departments) (Roberg, Novak, & Cordner, 2005, pp. 56–59). Typically, the state police are empowered to provide law enforcement service anywhere in the state, while the highway patrol officers have limited authority based on their specific duty assignment, type of offense, or jurisdiction.

All states have some type of state police agency. In addition to their basic tasks, many of these agencies provide statewide communications or computer systems, assist in crime-scene analysis and multijurisdictional investigations, provide training for other police agencies, and collect, analyze, and disseminate information on crime patterns in the state. Also, many state police agencies have expanded their services to include aircraft support, underwater search and rescue, and K–9 assistance. State police agencies may also be responsible for state park security (park police or rangers), security of state property and state officials, and regulation of liquor and gambling related activities. The various state law enforcement agencies employed about 61,000 sworn police officers in 2004 (BJS, 2011).

### Special Jurisdiction Police

These types of police include college and university police, public and private school police, and agencies serving transportation systems and facilities (IACP, 2012). In many cases, special jurisdiction police are both sworn and nonsworn police officers assigned to a specific geographic jurisdiction. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2008a), two-thirds (67%) of campus police agencies used armed patrol officers during the 2004–2005 school year. This type of police officer responds to requests for service that cannot be fulfilled by local police. As an example, the University of Illinois at Champaign provides specific class training in the following areas: Active Threat Training, Safe Walk Programs, Crime Prevention Classes, Rape Aggression Defense classes, and courses related to Intolerance/Hate Crime Prevention (Division of Public Safety, 2012).

### Sheriffs and Deputy Sheriffs

Sheriff’s police provide police services to counties and are managed by sheriffs who are one of the only elected law enforcement officials still in existence today. There were 3,063 sheriff’s offices operating in the United States in 2008 (BJS, 2008b). A majority of sheriff’s deputies perform duties similar to those of municipal police officers: routine patrol, criminal investigations, traffic control, and accident investigation. Additional duties and responsibilities of a sheriff include maintaining the safety and security of courthouses, which often involves sheriff’s employees serving as bailiffs. Sheriffs are also responsible for the security of jurors when they are outside the courtroom, serve court papers, extradite prisoners, and perform other court functions (Indiana Sheriffs Association, 2012). Likewise, in most counties the sheriff is responsible for the jail, the supervision of inmates, and the transportation of inmates to court.

### Auxiliary/Reserve/Special Police

Auxiliary, reserve, and special police assist regular police officers. Their employment is usually on a part-time basis; they can be armed or unarmed, and either paid for their services or volunteer. The extent of training varies in many cases based on the duties
assigned, but the training is usually very similar to that completed by full-time sworn police officers. This type of officer is often assigned to vehicle, foot, or even bicycle forms of patrol and serves as an assistant to the police department in the following areas:

- Residential and commercial spaces
- Community festivals, parades, concerts, street fairs, park patrols
- Subway entrances and token booth areas
- Perimeter areas of houses of worship
- Crime prevention activities
- Traffic control (New York City Police Department, 2012, p. 1)

**Conservation Police Officers, Game Wardens**

These types of police officers usually have full police authority and statewide or federal jurisdiction. Qualifications for Illinois applicants for the position of conservation police officer include (1) a two-year degree and three consecutive years of experience as a police officer with the same law enforcement agency, or (2) a four-year degree (Illinois Department of Natural Resources [IDNR] 2012). The enforcement duties of Illinois officers include:

- Enforcement in state parks of criminal laws, vehicle laws, drug laws, and so forth
- Patrolling Illinois lakes and rivers to check boating safety equipment and watercraft registration
- Enforcing fish and wildlife laws
- Enforcing timber buyers and forest products transportation laws, endangered species laws, snowmobile operation and commercial establishments related to taxidermists, fur buyers, and others (IDNR, 2012)
Tribal Police Officers

As of 2008, American Indian tribes operated 178 law enforcement agencies. A majority of these police departments were general purpose police agencies and the others were special jurisdiction agencies that enforced natural resource laws (BJS, 2008c). These agencies provided a broad range of public services, including “responding to calls for service, investigating crimes, enforcing traffic laws, executing search warrants, serving process, providing court security, and conducting search and rescue operation” (BJS, 2008c, p. 1).

It should be clear that given the diversity and breadth of police services in the United States, there is a great deal of jurisdictional overlap. Thus, for example, a college student may be subject to the jurisdiction of the campus police, the city police, the county police, the state police, and a variety of federal police agencies all at the same time. In point of fact, which of these agencies is likely to become involved depends on the type and location of the offense in question and the existence of formal and informal agreements among the agencies. While each agency has some unique qualities, they all face many of the same issues as well. The extent to which American police are prepared to perform the functions discussed previously varies from agency to agency. In the following chapters, we discuss this and other issues as we examine the unique role and function of the police in contemporary American society (for comparison purposes, see Around the World 1.1 for a discussion of the police role in Australia).

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The term police is derived from the Greek words *polis* and *politeuein* and refers to being a citizen who participates in the affairs of a city or state. This is an excellent way of describing the role of the contemporary police officer—he or she is a citizen who is actively involved in the affairs of a city or state. Thus, a police officer is a specially designated citizen appointed to apprehend those who appear to have violated the rights of others and to bring them before other specially designated citizens such as prosecutors and judges who determine whether further action is justified.

In order to maintain order and enforce the law, the police are granted the right to intervene in the daily affairs of private citizens. Yet police intervention in areas that citizens generally regard as private generates suspicion and hostility toward the police. Citizens want the police to address their concerns and to solve the problems they bring to the attention of the police, but would otherwise prefer to be left alone to pursue their own interests. Therefore, police officers occupy inherently problematic positions in our society.

American police agencies come in a variety of sizes in both the public and private sectors. Especially when considering private police and their relationships with public police, the disparities in size and jurisdiction often make it difficult to describe the nature, relationships among, and jurisdiction of American police. Nonetheless, there are overlapping areas of interest and numerous shared challenges among these agencies.

KEY TERMS

- Police
- Police officer
- Law enforcement officer
- Department of Homeland Security
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is it so difficult to discuss and generalize about the police in the United States?
2. Discuss the various levels of public police in the United States.
3. What are some of the problems inherent in policing?
4. What are some of the issues currently confronting American police?
5. Describe the different levels of policing in the United States.

INTERNET EXERCISES

1. Using your browser, locate information on public police agencies in your state. What is the size and jurisdiction of the largest agency? Can you locate any information about your local or county police agency?
2. What, if any, information can you find on the Internet concerning private police in your home state?
3. Using your browser, see what you can discover about order maintenance and law enforcement as police functions.

STUDENT STUDY SITE

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