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SOCIAL ATTITUDES AND PERSONALITY DIFFERENCES AMONG MEMBERS OF TWO KINDS OF POLICE DEPARTMENTS (INNOVATIVE VS. TRADITIONAL) AND STUDENTS

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Because of rising minority group unrest, demonstrations, and increasing conflict between minority group activists and police, attitudes of police have become increasingly important. Though police are often integrally involved in the current "social revolution," and though they are often the objects of protests by dissident groups, little or no empirical data exist concerning characteristic attitudes and personality attributes of police. Yet personality factors and social attitudes are obviously very important in the constructive use of police authority and the general implementation of police functions.

The paucity of research on personality and attitudes is probably due in part to the reluctance of police departments to allow psychological analyses of personnel by independent researchers, and in part to a general disinterest among behavioral scientists in applied research on police. However, the benefits of empirical research are clear. For instance, a strong case can be made that open-minded, non-authoritarian, and non-punitive attitudes in police would help them to function more effectively in sensitive social areas. Smith, Locke, and Walker (1967) argued that a less authoritarian attitude in police would help them function more effectively in areas of civil rights demonstrations and enable them to behave more effectively in accordance with recent Supreme Court guidelines on arrest and search and seizure procedures.

Recognizing that police departments differ in orientation and that all police should not be automatically placed in the same stereotypical categories, the current study represents an attempt to obtain data on attitude and personality characteristics from two quite differently oriented police

departments and a comparison student group. The police departments, chosen with the aid of a well-known criminologist, include (a) a department generally recognized as innovative, with an open-minded and socially aware chief, and (b) a department led by a traditionally oriented chief and situated in a conservative area. A subsequent independent *Los Angeles Times* survey (Cohen, 1969) indicated that the department we chose as innovative is one of three of the most innovative departments in this geographic area. The comparison student group included undergraduate social-psychology class students.

Since little aid could be gained from empirical data existing in the literature, this study was conceptualized as essentially exploratory. The aim was to determine differences among police and non-police on personality measures of authoritarianism and dogmatism and social attitudes towards punishment of criminals and law. Though a wide variety of personality and attitudinal characteristics could have been sampled in the present study, police department time limitations required analyses of only the most likely salient and important differential characteristics.

PROCEDURE

Subjects. Subjects were 40 members of a police department selected on the basis of its innovative orientation (Dept. "I"), 46 members of a police department selected because of its traditional orientation (Dept. "T"), and 116 college students from a junior-level social-psychology class. Two kinds of data indicated that the police and college students were quite similar in educational background and intellectual functioning. Policemen

from Dept. "T" reported a mean of 14.5 years of education, Dept. "T" 14.1 years of education, and students from the junior-level class averaged between 14 and 15 years of education. In addition, all police completed a vocabulary test which is assumed to estimate intellectual functioning (Shipley, 1940). Inadvertently, students were not administered the vocabulary test, but a comparable group of 61 students from a social-psychology class conducted a following semester did take the vocabulary test. Police averaged 3.4 errors while the comparable group of 61 students averaged 3.3 errors.

Attitude and Personality Measures. The first personality measure was a shortened version of the California-F (F) Scale (Adorno, Frankel-Brunswick, Levinson, and Sanford, 1950) containing five reverse-keyed items from the Christie, Havel, and Seidenberg (1958) study of reversed items for the F Scale. The F Scale is assumed to measure authoritarianism and such relevant characteristics as cognitive rigidity and potentiality for aggression. The second personality measure, the Dogmatism (D) Scale, (Rokeach, 1960) is also assumed to measure cognitive flexibility (open and closed-mindedness).

The first attitude measure, the Attitudes Toward Punishment of Criminals (APC) Scale (Wang and Thurstone; see Shaw and Wright, 1967), is assumed to measure the respondent's attitudes concerning the use of punishment. High scores indicate an attitude that punishment effectively deters crime and should be harshly administered, while low scores indicate an attitude that punishment is ineffectual and should be leniently administered.

The Law and Justice (LJ) Scale (Watt and Maher, 1958) is assumed to measure attitudes concerning police, the justness of criminal convictions, the effectiveness of juries, and in general, the existence of justice through the law and its operations. High scores are assumed to indicate positive attitudes toward the above aspects of law and low scores probably reflect the view that justice does not always exist in the operations of law.

The Law (L) Scale (Rundquist and Sletto, 1936) is assumed to measure an attitude toward several aspects of the law. High scores indicate a strong positive view of laws, judges, courts, policemen, and so forth. Low scores indicate a skeptical or negative attitude toward the above aspects of law.

Subjects anonymously completed the above battery of tests and provided several demographic

characteristics. Police were tested at the police station with the full cooperation of the police chiefs. Students were tested in classes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Means of the scores of each attitude and personality measure are presented in Table 1. Analyses of results from F Scale comparisons revealed highly-significant differences between Dept. "T" and Dept. "T" and between the combined police scores and the student scores. Dept. "T" members were significantly less authoritarian ($p < .01$) than those of Dept. "T". Further examination of police department results indicated that the police who had achieved higher ranks in each department accounted for the major F Scale differences. That is, subjects with ranks from sergeant to chief of police differed greatly between departments. Means of the scores of each attitude and personal-

Table 1
MEANS OF ATTITUDE AND PERSONALITY SCALES OF
POLICE AND STUDENTS

Measures	Groups			
	Police Scores Dept. "T"	Police Scores Dept. "T"	Combined Police Scores	Student Scores
F Scale (F)	-3.5	2.8	-.1	-10.0
Dogmatism Scale (D)	-24.5	-22.6	-23.4	-24.8
APC Scale (APC)	5.4	5.6	5.5	4.4
Law Scale (L)	60.4	62.8	61.7	48.0
Law and Justice Scale (LJ)	.87	.88	.87	.59

Table 2
MEANS OF ATTITUDE AND PERSONALITY SCALES OF
POLICE SUBJECTS OF HIGHER RANK*

Measures	Police Scores Dept. "T"	Police Scores Dept. "T"	Significance t
F Scale (F)	-7.7	4.4	$P < .01$
Dogmatism Scale (D)	-34.2	-18.6	$P < .01$
APC Scale (APC)	4.82	5.82	$P < .01$
Law Scale (L)	59.2	61.7	Not significant
Law and Justice Scale (LJ)	.84	.81	Not significant

* Subjects with ranks from Sergeant to Chief of Police.

ity measure of higher rank subjects are presented in Table 2. Dept. "I" subjects with higher ranks had a mean score of -7.7 on the F Scale and Dept. "T" higher-rank subjects had a mean score of 4.4 ($p < .01$). As indicated on Table 1, comparisons on the F Scale of combined police scores with student scores yielded statistical significance ($p < .001$). Students were much less authoritarian than police.

No significant differences were found on D Scale scores between police departments or between combined police scores and student scores. If these results are valid, one could conclude there is little difference in open-mindedness between police and students. However, when results were analyzed among police to see if there were higher-rank differences, it was discovered that Dept. "I" higher-rank officers had a mean score of -34.2 compared to a mean score of -18.6 for higher-rank officers in Dept. "T". While the results only approached significance ($t = 1.94$ $p < .1$) they did indicate a tendency towards a greater degree of open-mindedness among higher rank officers in Dept. "I". These results also indicate that Dept. "I" higher rank officers had a greater tendency towards open-mindedness than students.

The APC Scale scores revealed no significant differences between Dept. "I" and Dept. "T", although attitudes of Dept. "I" members were slightly less favorable toward punishment of criminals than those of Dept. "T" members. However, a highly significant difference ($p < .001$) was discovered between combined police scores and students. Students are much less favorable toward the use of punishment in treatment of criminals than police as a whole. Higher-rank officers in both departments differed significantly ($p < .01$) in their attitude toward punishment of criminals. Dept. "I" higher-rank officers had a mean score of 4.82 compared to Dept. "T" higher-rank officer's mean of 5.82 . Thus, while police as a group had a favorable attitude toward the use of punishment compared to students, higher-rank officers in Dept. "I" were significantly less favorable toward the use of harshly-administered punishment than those in Dept. "T".

Both police departments showed a strong, positive attitude toward law, judges, police, courts, and so forth as measured by high scores on the L Scale. Students showed a distinctively less positive attitude toward the same aspects of law ($p < .001$). It could be expected that police would have a more favorable attitude toward law and the

agencies of the law since they have chosen law enforcement as a career. The wide differences between student and police attitudes may reflect the present crisis in our society over the "law and order" issue. An interesting corollary may be noted in the fact that an age difference occurred among students. Older students (over 30) had a mean score of 51.4 compared to a mean of 47.5 for younger students, indicating a significantly more positive attitude toward law on the part of older students ($p < .05$). Perhaps these results reflect the current "generation gap" and its relation to the "law and order" issue.

Little difference was discovered between police departments in their general attitude toward the existence of justice through our criminal courts procedures, as measured on the LJ Scale. Police, as a group, had highly positive attitudes toward the justice system. However, student scores on the LJ Scale indicated a significantly less positive attitude ($p < .001$). Student scores indicated a negative or skeptical view of the existence of justice in the operations of the law. However, like the L Scale, the LJ Scale includes questions about various instrumentalities of law in addition to the pure concept of law. Low scorers may be responding to the effectiveness of the administration of justice through the various agencies of the law rather than the abstract concept of justice through law.

The differences between higher-rank officers in authoritarianism, open-mindedness and punitiveness toward criminals is probably very important since these are the men who set the standards for behavior and attitudes in the police departments. The chief of police and his senior officers determine which personnel are retained and promoted. In addition, the senior officers are mainly responsible for the training of new members. The whole orientation of the police department is set by the chief of police and his senior officers.

The present research represents the beginning of an understanding of characteristic personality and attitude attributes of police. From a social-value orientation, it is encouraging to learn that the police from two quite differently oriented and small departments are comparable to college students in educational background and intellectual functioning. It is somewhat less encouraging to learn that police are considerably more authoritarian than students and that traditional police are more authoritarian than innovative police. Of course, one could argue that authoritarian char-

acteristics are necessary in police work. But, in our opinion, the negative characteristics associated with authoritarianism, (e.g., rigidity of perception; tendencies toward aggression) outweigh the positive characteristics.

Compared to students, the tendencies of police in general to favorably view the use of punishment and to see law and justice very positively may tell us something about important and potentially growing divisions in our society. Finally, the divisions within traditional and innovative departments between officers and lower-ranking policemen are not surprising. The data of all personnel of both departments confirm what we already had guessed, that the commanders mold and shape the entire departmental orientation.

SUMMARY

Attitudes of two police departments with different orientations were studied and compared with attitudes of college students. One department was selected as an example of an innovative department (Dept. I) while the other was a more traditional department (Dept. T). Members of Dept. "T" were significantly less authoritarian than those of Dept. "I", while students were significantly less authoritarian than all police. A major source of the differences in authoritarianism between police departments appeared to be the F Scale scores of the higher-rank officers.

No significant difference was found between police departments or students in open-mindedness. However, Dept. "I" higher-rank officers showed a greater tendency toward open-mindedness than Dept. "T" higher-rank officers and students although the results were not statistically significant.

No great difference between police departments

was found in attitudes toward punishment of criminals. However, higher-rank officers in Dept. "I" were significantly less punitive than higher-rank officers in Dept. "T". Students were significantly less punitive than all police. Both police departments showed strong positive attitudes towards law and justice through law. Students were significantly less positive towards law and the effectiveness of the administration of justice through law.

The differences between higher-rank officers in authoritarianism, open-mindedness, and punitiveness towards criminals is important since these men seem to set the standards for behavior and attitudes in the police departments. The differences between police and students in attitudes towards the use of punishment and towards the effectiveness of our criminal justice system appear to reflect an important division in our society.

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