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# POLICE SCIENCE

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## THE INTEGRATION OF NEGROES INTO THE URBAN POLICE FORCE

WILLIAM M. KEPHART

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### BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

As part of a larger study involving racial aspects of law enforcement and crime in the City of Philadelphia, the writer gathered a variety of data dealing specifically with the extent to which Negroes had been or were being integrated into the Philadelphia police force.<sup>1</sup> The attempt was made, for example, to discover something of the interaction between Negro policemen and white offenders, between Negro policemen and white communities, and between Negro and white policemen. An investigation was also made to discover whether racial discrimination existed with respect to appointments, duty-assignments, promotions, etc.

To gather the necessary material a series of preliminary interviews was held with policemen of all ranks. On the basis of the preliminary series, interviewing schedules and printed questionnaires were constructed. Interviews were held with all administrative personnel (commissioner, deputy commissioners, chief inspectors) as well as with the large majority of commanding officers (lieutenants, captains, inspectors). On the average the interviews lasted about an hour each. Printed questionnaires—dealing with attitudes toward Negro policemen—were distributed to the 2,101 white patrolmen assigned to foot-beat and patrol-car duty. In addition, extensive interviews were held with a 30 per cent random sample of Negro policemen, the average time per interview being about an hour and a half. (Questionnaires and interviewing schedules are too lengthy to include in the present article. Readers desiring copies can procure them by addressing the writer.)

While space does not permit a full description of the findings relating to the integration pattern, in general, it was found that Negro policemen are experiencing little difficulty in their associations with white community members or with white offenders. The relationships between Negro patrolmen and white commanders, and between Negro and white patrolmen seem to be satisfactory; at least, when such relationships are compared to those found in other areas of employment.

There was only one area wherein a major problem could be said to exist—and that pertained to the matter of appointments and promotions of Negroes to police posi-

<sup>1</sup> The present study would not have been possible without the aid and generous cooperation of Dr. Martin P. Chworowsky, Director of the Albert M. Greenfield Center for Human Relations, University of Pennsylvania, Dr. Jeremiah Patrick Shalloo, Chairman of the Philadelphia Crime Commission, and Thomas J. Gibbons, Police Commissioner of Philadelphia.

tions. On this subject Negro interviewees were puzzled, hurt, resentful, and in some cases bitter. To the writer it appeared that this was one area where Negro integration into the police force had broken down. On the entire Philadelphia Police Force—numbering 4,224 men—there were, at the time of the study (August, 1953) only 149 Negroes on active duty.<sup>2</sup> Exclusive of the acting ranks there was only one Negro policeman higher than the rank of patrolman when the present study began, and this man—a sergeant—has since died. Pending future promotional examinations, Negro police in Philadelphia hold no permanent rank of any kind above the level of patrolman.

In view of the obvious importance of the issue, therefore, a great deal of time was spent investigating the problem of appointments and promotions. In addition to questioning the administration, the commanders, and the Negro policemen themselves, the writer gathered material from the Philadelphia Civil Service Commission and Personnel Department, and also collected police employment statistics from other cities in the United States. The purpose of the present paper is to analyze and interpret these data.

#### APPOINTMENTS AND PROMOTIONS

On the interviewing schedule for Negro policemen the questions referring to appointments and promotions were: (1) *Why do you think there are so few Negroes on the force?* (2) *Why do you think Negroes are so seldom promoted?* Among the various answers were the following: (a) "Low salaries," (b) "The Negro doesn't want responsibility," (c) "The physical examination penalizes the Negro," (d) "The Negro is more likely to have a criminal record," (e) "The Negro doesn't take the examination," (f) "Politics and race bias," (g) "The examination lists are rigged," and (h) "Lack of education among Negroes."

Perhaps the best way to sift the various response categories is to eliminate those which apparently have no basis in fact:

(a) *Low salaries.* This can hardly have any application to the issue at hand; in fact, in view of the general Negro-white salary differential, Philadelphia police salary scales might have served to attract relatively more Negro than white applicants.

(b) *The Negro doesn't want responsibility.* Not true. Negroes do take the examinations for police appointments, and while there are some Negro patrolmen who have no desire to advance, this is also true of some white patrolmen. Based on the questionnaires returned by the white patrolmen together with interviews of Negro patrolmen, it appears that about 75% of the men desire promotions, irrespective of their race.

<sup>2</sup> Subsequent to the present study a civil service examination for the rank of patrolman was held. While the completed list of appointments has not been made, the following figures will be of interest: 2,057 applicants completed the examination, of which it is estimated that one-half were Negroes. Of the 634 who passed the test, a total of 322 have been appointed. Thus far 56 of the appointees have been Negroes. Promotional examinations have also recently been held although the results were not available as of the date this article was written.

(c) *The physical examination penalizes the Negro.* In a limited sense this may be true, since general health conditions are better among whites than among Negroes. But as nearly as could be determined gross racial differences on the physical test failed to emerge. It is on the mental test that striking differences have been found. Furthermore, the physical examination would have little or no bearing on the lack of Negro *promotions*, where physical factors are not used as criteria.

(d) *The Negro is more likely to have a criminal record.* In individual cases this factor, too, does operate against the Negro. However, the large majority of both races do not have criminal records. To the writer, differential criminality is an unconvincing argument. It has no relevance, again, to the lack of Negro promotions.

(e) *The Negro doesn't take the examination.* The writer was unsuccessful in tracing this allegation inasmuch as past records of the racial background of Philadelphia police *applicants* are not available. The Personnel Department at City Hall states that in recent times "... about fifty per cent of the applicants for a position in the Police Department ... are of the Negro race." As has been stated, most of the Negro police interviewed said that they had taken the promotional examinations.

(f) *Politics and race bias.* These are important areas and must be examined in detail. Discussion follows below.

(g) *The examination lists are rigged.* This is a paraphrase of (f)—to be discussed below.

(h) *Lack of education among Negroes.* Although this was mentioned by only one of the Negro interviewees, the writer believes it to be an important consideration. Educational and background differences will be discussed in detail in a following section.

#### POLITICS AND RACE BIAS

In view of the rather weird political history of Philadelphia, and in view, also, of the close tie-up that existed between political bosses and city police, there can be no doubt that in times past, police appointments and promotions often depended upon "who you knew." Many of the people the writer talked with in the course of the study stated that they knew of instances where an appointment or a promotion was based wholly on a political preference or was simply a matter of putting cash on the line. Persons on the present Civil Service Commission and in the Personnel Department informed the writer that they had seen old Civil Service Examination papers that bore unmistakable signs of having been tampered with. There can be no question as to whether such things happened; the only question is how often they happened, and an inquiry along these lines lay outside the scope of the present survey.

With regard to the present Civil Service Commission, Personnel Department Heads, and Police Administration, no one the writer talked with—policeman or civilian—has ever questioned their integrity. Some raised questions about policy, but not about honesty.

However, the question at hand is, "Would the *past* corruptive practices account for the present paucity of Negro policemen, both in terms of total numbers and in

the ranks above patrolman?" While it is impossible to adduce irrefutable evidence, the writer would be inclined to answer the question, "Not entirely."

To begin with, apropos of "total numbers" it should be mentioned that in the days when police appointments were supposedly based largely on political connections, Negroes had a higher representation on the police force than they do today (August 1953). Furthermore, it can be argued that so long as politics governed police selection, it was tactically inexpedient to discriminate against Negroes.

For what it is worth, the writer was told by persons with some knowledge of local civil service procedures that in the last ten years the examinations have been "honest." In 1947, G. G. Brown, writing on law administration and race relations in Philadelphia, stated that ". . . it is likely that, after the trial and conviction of a Civil Service Commissioner in the trials of 1940 to 1943, the practice of changing the ratings of favorite candidates after the examiners have made their report no longer obtains."<sup>3</sup>

In an effort to gather more information on the relative scarcity of Negro police appointments, the writer sent letters with attached questionnaires to the police commissioners of the 25 largest cities in the United States. The questionnaires asked for: (1) The present numerical strength of the police force; (2) A numerical breakdown by rank and race; (3) A statement as to the current procedures governing (a) the recruitment of *new* police personnel, and (b) promotion policy within the police department.

Of the 25 cities polled, all but two—Memphis and New Orleans—returned the questionnaires, although four others—Houston, Boston, Indianapolis, and Baltimore—failed to include the requested information on race. The large per cent return is an indication of the widespread interest in the problem; in fact, most of the police commissioners requested a copy of the results of this portion of the survey. Table 1 shows the extent of Negro representation on the police forces of nineteen of the largest U. S. cities compared with Negro population percentages of those cities. (Police figures are those reported to the writer as of 1952; population figures are drawn from 1950 U. S. Census data—Series PB.)

It can readily be seen that Negro underrepresentation on the police force is not simply a local matter.

To the question relating to the *method* of police recruitment, all of the police commissioners stated that civil-service-type examinations were being used. No one can say for certain, however, just what the figures in Table 1 signify. It may be that civil service eligible lists in many cities are being rigged and that Negroes are thereby being discriminated against. It is possible that in most cities the lists are fairly derived, but that in the final appointment the selecting authority has sufficient legal leeway to effect a convenient "passing over" of Negroes. Or it may be that the Negro fares poorly under any competitive system wherein the results are derived largely from written examinations.

The writer believes that while the true story of the Negro's underrepresentation in police positions would encompass all three of the foregoing explanations, the relatively poor showing made by Negroes on competitive-type written examinations

<sup>3</sup> G. G. BROWN, *Law Administration and Negro-White Relations in Philadelphia*, Bureau of Municipal Research, 1947, p. 82.

TABLE 1  
NEGRO POLICE REPRESENTATION IN MAJOR U. S. CITIES

City	Total Population	Size of the Police Force	% Negroes in Population	% Negroes on Police Force
Buffalo, N. Y.....	580,132	1,216	6.3	0.5
Chicago, Illinois.....	3,620,962	7,023	13.6	3.9
Cincinnati, Ohio.....	503,998	818	15.5	7.5
Cleveland, Ohio.....	914,408	1,812	16.2	4.3
Dallas, Texas.....	434,462	496	13.1	0.8
Denver, Colorado.....	415,786	529	3.6	0.8
Detroit, Michigan.....	1,849,568	4,232	16.2	2.4
Kansas City, Missouri.....	456,622	554	12.2	4.0
Los Angeles, Calif.....	1,970,358	4,207	8.7	2.9
Milwaukee, Wisconsin.....	637,392	1,480	3.4	0.6
Minneapolis, Minnesota.....	521,718	645	1.3	0.6
New York, New York.....	7,891,957	19,478	9.5	3.1
Newark, New Jersey.....	438,776	1,219	17.1	2.0
Pittsburgh, Penna.....	676,806	1,311	12.2	4.7
St. Louis, Missouri.....	856,796	1,912	17.9	5.0
San Antonio, Texas.....	408,442	328	7.0	3.4
San Francisco, Calif.....	775,357	1,579	5.6	0.3
Seattle, Washington.....	467,591	672	3.4	0.7
Washington, D. C.....	802,178	2,044	35.0	10.8

is something that cannot be changed overnight. In the case of Philadelphia, it is the writer's judgment that in the foreseeable future—so long as police recruitment and promotions are based on the present civil-service-type examinations—Negroes will continue to be underrepresented both numerically and in the higher ranks. It should be pointed out that at present about half of all applicants for police jobs are Negroes. In view of the need for Negro policemen, and in further view of the fact that the final selection involves some choice as to specific individuals appointed and promoted, it is probable that during the present administration Negro representation on the Philadelphia police force will increase. Nevertheless, to believe, simply because appointments and promotions are taken out of the realm of political chicanery and placed solely under the aegis of civil service, that the Negro will achieve police parity, is to believe in what may be a philosophically desirable but currently unattainable turn of events.

Before examining the various reasons underlying the writer's foregoing opinions, it might be well to examine the police promotional records of our larger cities. These data are contained in Table 2.

All of the above-listed cities utilize civil-service-type examinations as the basis for promotions, except for the ranks above inspector (deputy commissioners and commissioners); in a few cities the rank of inspector is also an appointed rank.

Data in Table 2 indicate that, as was true for Philadelphia, few Negroes are to be found in the ranks above patrolman. Out of 347 police sergeants in Detroit, for example, only 3 are Negroes. In New York City there are six Negro sergeants to 1,133 white sergeants. For all of the cities reporting, only one Negro police captain was listed. He is George Redding of New York City, who was promoted to the rank

TABLE 2  
NUMBERS OF POLICEMEN\* BY RANK AND RACE IN MAJOR U. S. CITIES

City	Patrolmen		Sergeants		Lieutenants		Captains		Inspectors	
	White	Negro	White	Negro	White	Negro	White	Negro	White	Negro
Buffalo.....	904	6	35	0	76	0	20	0	3	0
Chicago.....	5,927	260	474	7	148	1	59	0	1	0
Cincinnati.....	607	51	43	2	35	1	11	0	7	0
Cleveland.....	1,448	67	125	5	68	0	24	0	15	0
Dallas.....	289	4	46	0	14	0	21	0	3	0
Denver.....	366	4	39	0	—	—	25	0	1	0
Detroit.....	3,565	96	344	3	167	1	—	—	42	0
Kansas City.....	359	18	57	1	14	0	11	0	6	0
Los Angeles.....	3,263	102	540	10	147	2	38	0	8	0
Milwaukee.....	1,130	8	90	0	18	0	9	0	4	0
Minneapolis.....	420	4	32	0	14	0	8	0	5	0
New York.....	16,577	564	1,133	6	645	6	166	1	36	0
Newark.....	1,030	19	71	1	57	0	20	0	1	0
Pittsburgh.....	1,087	58	45	0	41	1	3	0	8	0
Saint Louis.....	1,240	75	196	5	36	1	22	0	1	0
San Antonio.....	253	11	39	0	11	0	10	0	4	0
San Francisco.....	1,178	5	194	0	42	0	13	0	107	0
Seattle.....	537	5	82	0	—	—	17	0	6	0
Washington.....	1,378	205	68	0	75	1	26	0	11	0

\* Totals in the above table will not necessarily correspond to the totals in the preceding table. Excluded from the above figures were such categories as policewomen, corporals, investigators, deputies, etc. The rank of "Inspector" listed above is classified by various cities as "Supervisor," "Chief," etc.

of captain on January 30, 1953. Although there are no published records available, Redding may be the first Negro in American police history to have attained captain's rank.

#### THE EXISTENCE OF INNATE MENTAL DIFFERENCES

The writer believes that one of the chief reasons for the lack of Negro police representation in Philadelphia has been the failure to qualify on the written examination. This statement might also apply to the absence of Negroes in the higher ranks, although the present analysis, for the most part, will pertain to the former situation. Failure of the Negro applicant to qualify on the written police examination, in the writer's opinion, cannot be attributed entirely to race discrimination or to political rigging of the examinations, even though such malpractices might very well have loomed large under certain previous administrations. The gross underrepresentation of Negro police might also be explainable on the following grounds: (a) Either there is an innate racial difference in test intelligence between Negroes and whites, or (b) lifelong environmental differences between the Negro and white tend to handicap the former from the examination standpoint.

The possibility of differential test intelligence was not mentioned by any of the interviewees in the present survey, as, indeed the matter is not regarded seriously

by most social scientists. Racist doctrines—assumptions of innate racial superiority or inferiority—have never made much headway in the United States. Today the large majority of social scientists reject the assumption of innate Negro inferiority, and this rejection by social scientists has become a cornerstone in the thinking and policy-making of “social actionists;” i.e., individuals and groups who concern themselves with the improvement of race relations (college teachers, interracial conference groups, F.E.P.C., etc.). Factually, the existence of inborn differences in intelligence among races has never been demonstrated. Nor, on the other hand, has it been proved that such differences do not exist. For intelligence tests standardized on U. S. whites (which tests comprise almost all of the intelligence tests now in use in this country), Negroes, as a group, make significantly lower scores than whites. It is also true that among the whites the educated classes score significantly higher than the uneducated groups. In both instances—class and race—differential test score results are usually interpreted as being largely a reflection of educational and cultural inequalities. In other words, while the term “intelligence test” is still widely used, all psychometrists affirm that such tests do not measure native intelligence *per se*.

Even if it could be demonstrated that innate intellectual differences between Negroes and whites do exist, there would be a great deal of overlapping; i.e., some Negroes would score higher than some whites. Moreover, the existence of innate intelligence differentials, racial or otherwise, could never negate the democratic principle that men should be hired on the basis of their ability, and social action groups are on firm ground when they base their programs on this principle. It is not necessary for such groups to operate on the supposition that all races are equally endowed in all things. As a matter of fact, it is probably unwise to base a “race-betterment program” on the denial of the possibility of innate mental differences among races, since, among other things, the uncovering of such differences might then have the effect of a boomerang. The writer believes that until such time as inborn racial differences in mental potential have been proved or disproved, the possibility should be held in abeyance. Failure to acknowledge the possibility is hardly in keeping with the scientific viewpoint.

So-called “culture free” tests have been constructed over and over again with the same result: they are not “culture free.” And in the present context, any discussion as to whether Negro police representation relates to the existence of unproved inborn mental differences is simply unrewarding. The question not only cannot be answered, but until the cultural level of the Negro approximates that of the white, there is little likelihood that the answer can be found. On the other hand, there is evidence that the written civil service police examination now in use tends to penalize the Negro applicant, in the light of the latter’s experiential background.

#### EDUCATIONAL AND BACKGROUND DIFFERENCES

Intelligence tests are assumed to be valid to the extent that the persons taking the test have had equal opportunity to learn the answers. However, the fact that persons taking the test may have had “unequal access to the answers” does not mean that the test is valueless. The value of any test depends on the use to which it is put. For example, intelligence test “batteries” (or “entrance examinations,” which

are a combination knowledge-and-intelligence test) are often administered to college aspirants for the purpose of predicting whether a given applicant can master college-level material. Here the tester is not concerned with the applicant's background; it is assumed that some applicants come from excellent high schools, and some from inferior schools; that some come with excellent home backgrounds, and some with inferior backgrounds. It is also assumed that some applicants have an intellectual capacity so high that they have overcome discouraging home environment, and that some have an inherent mental potential so low that no amount of "background" could raise it to the level of college entrance. The college entrance selector simply wants an indication of the *present* mental level of the applicant, and in this sense the intelligence test has prediction value. Such tests have by no means been perfected; psychometrists are constantly working at improving them. Nevertheless, when compared to other criteria such as high school records, written recommendations, or personal interviews, the intelligence test is clearly superior; therefore, its use by the college is justified.

The current civil service examination used in the selection of policemen is similar in many ways to the intelligence test just described. The Philadelphia examination contains items relating to memory and observation, vocabulary, Philadelphia geography, and the comprehension of verbal material. Other things being equal, a college graduate will score higher than a high school graduate; a high school graduate will score higher than a person who has not gone beyond grammar or junior high school; a person with a superior home environment higher than a person raised in the slums, etc. Test procedure of this kind is equitable in view of the purpose of the examination. It is true that this test will not measure such traits as courage or tenacity or character—traits indispensable to good police work. Such traits can not yet be measured by any known instrument, and in the absence of such instruments, the present examination is justifiable in terms of its prediction value. Over a large number of cases, men who score high will make better policemen than those who score low, on the reasonable assumption that the unmeasurable traits (courage, etc.) are equally distributed along the mental continuum.

It is also true that testing procedure of this kind, while justifiable, will differentiate between Negroes and whites. To begin with, while the educational level of Negroes is rising, it is still substantially below that of whites. 1950 Census figures for Philadelphia had not been released at the time of the present survey, but in 1940 the median school year completed for Philadelphia native white males (age 25 and over) was 8.7, while the corresponding figure for Negroes was 6.9.<sup>4</sup> The only 1950 Census figures available pertained to the State of Pennsylvania as a whole (age group 25 and over). These figures showed the median school year completed for urban whites was 9.6, for urban non-whites, 8.2.<sup>5</sup>

In Philadelphia, racial identification of police applicants is not permitted, hence there is no way of comparing the educational backgrounds of Negro and white candidates. All that is known is that at present each applicant must have completed at least two years of high school, in accordance with local civil service ruling. How-

<sup>4</sup> U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1940, *Population*, Vol. II, p. 213.

<sup>5</sup> U. S. Bureau of the Census, 1950, *Series PB, Pennsylvania*, p. 77.

ever, it is probably safe to assume that there are relatively fewer high school graduates ("and above") among Negro applicants than among whites. For the patrolmen who took part in the present study, a racial difference in education was apparent, the percentage of high school graduates among the whites being almost twice as high as among the Negroes.

There is little doubt in the writer's mind that so long as the Negro educational level lags behind that of the white, the entrance of the former into civil-service-type jobs will be relatively limited. Furthermore, formal education is not the only sphere wherein the Negro is handicapped. Remember that intelligence tests are valid (that is, they measure native intelligence) to the extent that the persons taking the test have had equal opportunity to learn the answers. A Negro who graduates from a non-segregated high school cannot be said to have had "equal opportunity" with a white graduate of the same school. For example, most civil service tests are strongly weighted with items dealing with vocabulary and reading comprehension. By virtue of coming from a relatively low socio-economic background the Negro would be expected to have been exposed to fewer books, to have acquired a smaller vocabulary, to have less familiarity with written material, etc., than the white, even assuming equality of formal education. It is believed, also, that many Negroes lack the incentive for the assimilation of verbal material; they see little connection between such things and the manual or menial jobs that have been traditionally open to them. There are young Negroes who leave school because they believe their education will not pay dividends, only to discover that their early departure has made it more difficult than ever to raise their economic status.

Test constructors are well aware of the above factors; these men are fully cognizant of the importance of background factors in the interpretation of intelligence test results. The writer was somewhat surprised to learn, however, that the Negro interviewees, almost to a man, were unaware of the points discussed above. To the questions regarding the lack of Negro police appointments and promotions, only one respondent answered "lack of education." No one mentioned differences in economic or cultural levels, home background, unfamiliarity with verbal material, the incentive factor, etc.

In terms of police morale, it would seem that some of the assumptions underlying the civil service examination might be officially explained to Negro policemen. In his Report to the Police Commissioner the writer recommended the adoption of some such explanatory or liaison policy.

Data in Tables 1 and 2 suggest strongly that the appointment-promotion factor may constitute a morale problem for Negro policemen in all the larger U. S. cities. If this assumption is correct the issue probably will have to be faced sooner or later by these municipalities. The sooner the possibility of the problem is recognized the easier it will be to formulate definitive policy.