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Alexander B. Smith

Bernard Locke

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AUTHORITARIANISM IN POLICEMEN WHO ARE COLLEGE GRADUATES AND NON-COLLEGE POLICE

ALEXANDER B. SMITH, BERNARD LOCKE, and ABE FENSTER

Alexander B. Smith, Ph.D., is Professor of Psychology, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York. Dr. Smith is a member of the New York State Bar, and received his doctorate from New York University. He has served as supervisor of the Probation Department of the Supreme Court, Kings County, New York.

Bernard Locke, Ph.D., is a Professor of Psychology, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York. Prior to his present appointment he was Chief Psychologist for the Veterans Administration in New York, and received his Ph.D. from New York University.

Abe Fenster, Ph.D., is Assistant Professor of Psychology, John Jay College of Criminal Justice. He received his doctorate from Columbia University and is currently enrolled in the New York University Postdoctoral Specialization Program in Psychology.—EDITOR.

This is the last of three articles dealing with the impact of college education on New York City police. In 1967 Smith, Locke, and Walker published an article in this Journal comparing authoritarianism in college and non-college oriented police as measured by the Rokeach (1960) and Piven (1961) scales. It was found that while these scales measured different facets of personality, the college policemen were less authoritarian than the non-college policemen, and that among college police the older group tended to be more authoritarian than the younger group. The second article, published in this Journal in 1968, dealt with authoritarianism in police attending college and non-police college students. Using the Rokeach and Piven scales it was found that freshmen police officer college students tended to be less authoritarian than the freshman students who were not police officers. No significant difference was found between the non-police freshmen who were oriented toward a future career in police work and those who were not.

Left unanswered was the effect of a four year college degree on the personality of policemen. Was there a significant difference between the authoritarianism of police who had completed their studies for a baccalaureate degree, and a matched group of policemen who had not attended college?

PROCEDURE

Thirty-nine graduates of John Jay College were equated with a group of thirty-nine police officers who had had no college experience. The mean age for the police college graduates was 40.6 years and

that for the non-college group was 40.0 years. The college group had 18.2 years of service in the New York City Police Department while the non-college sample had a mean of 18.3 years of service.

Modified Rokeach (1960) and Piven (1961) scales were combined, as previously, to test for authoritarianism. Each of these scales test different aspects of authority; Rokeach was interested in attitudes toward socialized authority, and Piven was concerned with the authoritative responses of social workers toward clients. The Rokeach scale was used rather than the one developed in *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levenson, and Sanford, 1950) because this latter scale has been criticized for its major focus on Fascist authoritarianism. Rokeach was aware of of this criticism when he planned his instrument, explaining:

... if our interest is in the scientific study of authoritarianism, we should proceed from right authoritarianism not to a re-focus on left authoritarianism but to the general properties held in common by all forms of authoritarianism ... What is needed is therefore a deliberated turning away from a concern with the one or two kinds of authoritarianism that may happen to be predominant at a given time. Instead, we should pursue a more theoretical ahistorical analysis of the properties held in common by all forms of authoritarianism regardless of specific ideological, theological, philosophic, or scientific content.

The questionnaire, which was self-administered, contained instructions which indicated that the

TABLE 1
A COMPARISON OF POLICE COLLEGE GRADUATES
AND NON-COLLEGE POLICE

	Total Scale	Rokeach	Piven
Non-College:			
Mean	-.13	-.20	+.02
σ	.45	.45	.71
σm	.07	.07	.19
College Graduates:			
Mean	-.45	-.77	+.12
σ	.41	.55	.50
σm	.07	.09	.08
D	.32	.57	.10
σ diff	.099	.14	.21
t	3.33	4.07	.48
Sig.	.01	.01	N.S.

responses were confidential. Each of the 57 items were rated on a Likert type scale. The subjects were asked to respond to each item in terms of several degrees of agreement or disagreement, as follows:

1. I agree a little
2. I agree on the whole
3. I agree very much
- 1. I disagree a little
- 2. I disagree on the whole
- 3. I disagree very much

Each item was set up in such a way that the most favorable response earned a value of +3 while the least favorable response was given a -3. For purposes of scoring the responses were converted to values of 1 through 6, with one being the least favorable and six the most favorable.

RESULTS

The findings are presented in Tables 1 and 2. Examination of Table 1 reveals a highly significant difference between the college graduate and non-college populations on the total scale ($p < .01$), and on the Rokeach portion of the scale ($p < .01$), while the Piven items fail to discriminate between the two groups.

These findings are consistent with those found earlier (Smith, Locke, and Walker, 1967) in which men attending college were found to be less authoritarian than those who had no college experience. The present study demonstrates that the completion of a baccalaureate program which takes, typically, six to nine years at John Jay College

since our police students are working full schedules while attending school, has a considerable impact on the authoritarian attitudes of the policeman student as contrasted with his brother officer who does not attend college at all.

Our present findings also serve to demonstrate that authoritarian attitudes may be tempered by age as well as by education. In our 1968 study we found that some age differences existed when the population was divided into two age groups (21-24 and 25-29). Table 2 shows the differences that exist between these younger men and the older group that makes up our present population. Comparing our younger undergraduates with the older graduates shows a highly significant falling off of authoritarianism, and the same thing is true for the non-college groups.

DISCUSSION

In a previous study (Smith, Locke, and Walker, 1967) it was demonstrated that college oriented policemen are significantly less authoritarian than non-college oriented police. Later, (Smith, Locke, and Walker, 1968) it was established that police officers in college were considerably lower on the "authoritarian" scale than fellow students who were not police officers. The present study shows that the completion of a baccalaureate program

TABLE 2
COLLEGE GRADUATION AND AGE AS FACTORS
IN AUTHORITARIANISM

	College Undergraduates (Ages 21-29)	College Graduates (Mean Age 40)
Mean	-.11	-.45
σ	1.81	.41
σm	.02	.07
	Diff.	.34
	σ diff.	.07
	t	4.86
	Sig.	.01
	Non-College (Ages 21-29)	Non-College (Mean Age 40)
Mean	.31	-.13
σ	1.81	.45
σm	.02	.07
	Diff.	.44
	σ diff.	.07
	t	6.29
	Sig.	.01

results in a notable diminution of authoritarian attitudes in a police population as contrasted to a matched group of non-college educated police.

In these days of social unrest, the role of the police officer has become crucial. Improper decisions by police have triggered riots (e.g. Watts) and exacerbated unrest (Lieberson and Silverman, 1965, p. 889). The need for well educated police officers to deal with these complicated social problems is great. In light of our findings, the provision of an opportunity for a college education for the police appears to be a socially advisable course.

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