CONSERVATISM, DOGMATISM, AND AUTHORITARIANISM IN BRITISH POLICE OFFICERS

ANDREW M. COLMAN AND L. PAUL GORMAN

Abstract The Wilson-Patterson Attitude Inventory, Eysenck’s Social and Political Attitude Inventory, Rokeach’s Dogmatism Scale, and the Lee-Warr Balanced F Scale were administered to 48 recruit police constables at the beginning and end of their basic training, 36 probationer constables with an average of 20 months’ police experience, and 30 control subjects matched with the police groups in socioeconomic status. All subjects also gave open-ended responses to questions on controversial issues. Compared with control subjects, the recruits’ and probationers’ scores were significantly more conservative and authoritarian, and the probationers’ open-ended responses on the death penalty and coloured immigration were rated significantly more illiberal/intolerant. The probationers’ responses on coloured immigration were also rated significantly more illiberal/intolerant than those of the recruits. Among the recruits, basic training was followed by a reduction in conservatism and authoritarianism. The findings suggest that the police force attracts conservative and authoritarian personalities, that basic training has a temporarily liberalizing effect, and that continued police service results in increasingly illiberal/intolerant attitudes towards coloured immigration.

Very little empirical evidence exists regarding the social attitudes, cognitive styles, and personalities of British police officers (Holdaway 1979). Small (1969) reported a study carried out by Clucas on 219 members of a Northern police force in Britain, using Eysenck’s Social and Political Attitude Inventory, the EPI, and a number of other tests. The policemen were found to be relatively extroverted, tough-minded, and conservative according to normative data associated with these tests.

Potter (1977) used the Wilson-Patterson Attitude Inventory and an arbitrarily shortened version of Rokeach’s Dogmatism Scale to measure the levels of conservatism and dogmatism in a sample of 269 police recruits before and after their initial training. The raw recruits were found to be considerably more conservative than the general public according to Wilson and Patterson’s normative data (based on scores obtained more than 10 years previously), but, following initial training, there appeared to be a slight reduction in conservatism. Potter’s findings with regard to dogmatism cannot be interpreted, because the norms, and also the reliability and validity of the arbitrarily shortened dogmatism scale used in his study are not known.

The tendency for police recruits to be significantly more conservative than members of the general public was confirmed by Cook (1977), who applied the Wilson-Patterson Attitude Inventory to 71 police recruits and to 55 police officers who had completed 12 months of service in the force. The mean conservatism score of the recruits was very close to the figure reported by Potter (1977), and the officers who had served for 12 months were also more conservative than the population norm, but slightly less conservative than the recruits.
Previous investigations in this area have been flawed by a failure to include properly selected control groups in the research designs. In particular, since socioeconomic status is known to be highly correlated with the variables in question (e.g. Eysenck 1971, Wilson 1973), a failure to control for this factor renders the interpretation of previously reported findings highly problematical. The question of whether policemen are systematically different from people of comparable socioeconomic status in other occupations is left unanswered. The use of published test norms, which are inevitably obsolete or at least obsolescent, does not solve this problem adequately. The investigation reported below is both longitudinal and cross-sectional and represents an attempt to remedy some of the deficiencies of previous research in this area.¹

**METHOD**

**Subjects**

The following three groups served as subjects:

(a) Recruit constables \(n = 48\). This group comprised 24 men and 24 women drawn from a population of initial course trainees at a Midlands regional police training centre. Ex-servicemen and ex-police cadets were excluded from the sample. The recruit constables were tested three days after admission to the centre, and the four psychometric tests which formed part of the investigation were administered to them once again nine weeks later, after the completion of their basic training.

(b) Probationer constables \(n = 36\). The 26 men and 10 women in this group were drawn from a population of final continuation course trainees at the same training centre. Their mean length of service in the force was 20 months. They were tested three days after admission to the centre.

(c) Control group \(n = 30\). These subjects, 11 men and 19 women, were drawn from a volunteer panel of subjects, all non-university townspeople in Leicester, and from a group of in-patients at a local orthopaedic hospital. They were selected as far as possible to resemble the police samples in socioeconomic status.

**Procedure**

Each subject received an identical set of typewritten instructions which indicated that a survey was being conducted of the attitudes of various groups to issues such as race, religion, and politics. A code number was assigned to each subject, and an assurance was emphatically given that anonymity would be preserved. The subjects first responded to a short demographic questionnaire concerned with age, sex, and education. The following four psychometric scales were then administered in the order shown.

(a) The Wilson-Patterson Attitude Inventory (Wilson 1975). This scale, originally published in 1968 and subsequently modified by its originators, contains 50 items designed to measure the liberalism-conservatism dimension of social attitudes. Conservatism is understood as 'a sense of resistance to change and a tendency to prefer a safe, traditional and conventional forms of institutions and behaviour' (Wilson 1975: 6). Each item in this scale consists of a word or a phrase, such as
'disarmament', 'royalty', 'corporal punishment', 'birth control', and 'Bible truth', and a subject is instructed to indicate which items he or she favours or believes in by circling 'Yes', '?', or 'No'.

(b) Eysenck's Social and Political Attitude Inventory (Eysenck 1971). This is a modified 28-item version of a scale originally developed by Eysenck during the 1950s. It is designed to measure attitudes on a continuum from permissive humanitarianism (radicalism) to authoritarian religionism (conservatism). The items in this scale are statements such as the following: 'Most censorship of books or films is a violation of free speech and should be abolished'; 'The poor will always be with us'. Permissible responses to each item range from 1 (disagree very much) to 6 (agree very much).

(c) Rokeach's Dogmatism Scale (Rokeach 1960). Rokeach developed this 40-item scale as a measure of dogmatism, loosely defined as a closed and inflexible mode of thinking, an authoritarian outlook on life, and an intolerant attitude towards opposing beliefs (Rokeach 1960, passim). Examples of the items in this scale are: 'It is better to be a dead hero than to be a live coward'; 'A man who does not believe in some great cause has not really lived'. Response alternatives are similar to those used in Eysenck's Social and Political Attitude Inventory (see above).

(d) The Lee-Warr Balanced F Scale (Lee and Warr 1969). Following the pioneering work of Adorno et al (1950) on the authoritarian personality, several attempts were made to develop a measure of authoritarianism free of acquiescence response set. The 28-item scale developed by Lee and Warr for use in Britain seems to be one of the most satisfactory of the revised F scales in terms of item-whole correlations, reliability, and validity. The items in this scale include the following: 'The so-called underdog deserves little sympathy or help from successful people'; 'The maintenance of internal order within the nation is more important than ensuring that there is complete freedom for all'. Subjects respond to each item on a scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree).

After they had responded to the four psychometric tests, the subjects were presented with three open-ended questions to which they were invited to write brief replies. The questions were taken from the Wilson-Patterson Attitude Inventory to which the subjects had previously responded in fixed-choice format. The subjects were requested to explain their reasons for the responses they had given, without worrying about grammatical or spelling mistakes. The three issues chosen for these open-ended responses were 'death penalty', 'coloured immigration', and 'mixed marriage'. This part of the procedure was designed to provide a deeper insight into the subjects' thinking on these emotive and controversial issues than could be obtained from their psychometric test scores, and to avoid the 'literal interpretation fallacy' (Dawes 1972).

RESULTS

Demographic variables

Since conservatism, dogmatism, and authoritarianism are strongly related to socioeconomic status (Ehrlich 1973, Eysenck 1971, Maykovich 1975, Wilson 1973),
the control group was chosen to match the police groups on this variable. In order to check the adequacy of this matching, and also to establish the degree to which the recruit constables matched the probationer constables in socioeconomic status, an item relating to occupation was included in the preliminary demographic questionnaire. Control subjects were requested to state their present occupations or, if unemployed, their most recent occupations. The occupation of the police subjects was, of course, predetermined by the nature of the investigation; in order to probe beyond this spurious homogeneity of socioeconomic status, they were requested to state their fathers' occupations and, in line with common procedures in survey research, this information was used as an index of the police subjects' socioeconomic status positions.

The Hall-Jones scale of occupations (Hall & Jones 1950) was used to assign socioeconomic status scores ranging from 1 ('professionally qualified and high administrative') to 7 ('manual, routine') to each subject. The mean scores of the recruit constables and the probationer constables were found to be 4.00 (SD = 1.49) and 4.11 (SD = 1.83) respectively; the mean score of the control group was 3.77 (SD = 1.17). Analysis of variance revealed no significant differences between these three means, \(F(2,111) = 0.43\), n.s.

There are several demographic variables apart from socioeconomic status which are known to be related to the dependent variables in this investigation (Ehrlich 1973, Eysenck 1971, Maykovich 1975, Wilson 1973). In a non-experimental investigation in which subjects cannot be randomly assigned to groups (as in this case), it is of course impossible to control for all possible extraneous variables which may contribute to the variance in scores. A check was, however, made on the comparability of the groups on two of the most important potential confounding factors: age and education.

Analysis of variance revealed that the mean age of the recruit constables (20.76 years), the probationer constables (23.31 years), and the control subjects (25.37 years) differed significantly: \(F(2,111) = 19.40, p<.001\). A posteriori analysis by means of the Tukey-HSD procedure showed that all three differences between the means were significant beyond \(p<.05\).

The mean educational levels of the recruit constables, the probationer constables, and the control subjects, indexed by the number of years in formal education, were 11.10, 10.78, and 12.10 respectively; \(F(2,111) = 8.38, p<.001\). A posteriori (Tukey-HSD) analysis showed that the mean of the control group was significantly higher than those of both the recruit constables and the probationer constables beyond \(p<.05\), but that the police groups did not differ significantly from each other in educational level.

Conservatism, dogmatism, and authoritarianism

The means and standard deviations of each of the three groups on the four psychometric scales are shown in Table 1. The scores of the recruit constables shown in the table are those obtained from the administration of the tests at the start of their basic training. (Their re-test scores are shown in brackets.)
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Scales</th>
<th>Recruits (n = 48)</th>
<th>Probationers (n = 36)</th>
<th>Controls (n = 30)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(\bar{X})</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>(\bar{X})</td>
<td>(\bar{X})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatism</td>
<td>WPA (^b)</td>
<td>48.35 (42.10)</td>
<td>48.64 (10.19)</td>
<td>40.07 (16.39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SPA (^c)</td>
<td>81.00 (79.88)</td>
<td>85.42 (9.07)</td>
<td>78.77 (15.26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogmatism</td>
<td>D (^d)</td>
<td>142.52 (145.50)</td>
<td>134.67 (19.33)</td>
<td>139.97 (23.78)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarianism</td>
<td>F (^e)</td>
<td>101.75 (98.27)</td>
<td>102.00 (8.80)</td>
<td>94.17 (17.97)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) Figures in brackets refer to results of re-test following basic training.

\(^b\) Wilson-Patterson Attitude Inventory (Wilson 1975).

\(^c\) Social and Political Attitude Inventory (Eysenck 1971).

\(^d\) Rokeach Dogmatism Scale (Rokeach 1960).

\(^e\) Lee-Warr Balanced F Scale (Lee & Warr, 1969).

The mean scores on the Wilson-Patterson Attitude Inventory differed significantly: \(F(2,111) = 5.33, p<.01\). A posteriori analysis (Tukey-HSD procedure) showed that the control group was significantly less conservative than either of the police groups beyond \(p<.05\); the mean score of the recruits was not significantly lower than that of the probationers.

On Eysenck’s Social and Political Attitude Inventory the means also differed significantly: \(F(2,111) = 3.39, p<.05\). Once again the control subjects were least conservative and the probationers most conservative of the three groups, but the only significant difference beyond \(p<.05\) to emerge from a posteriori analysis (Tukey-HSD) was between the control subjects and the probationers.

On Rokeach’s Dogmatism Scale, the mean scores of the three groups did not differ significantly: \(F(2,111) = 1.45, \text{n.s.}\). It is worth noting that the mean score of the control group was intermediate between those of the two police groups and that the probationers’ mean was lowest, but the within-group variation was large.

The mean scores of the three groups on the Lee-Warr Balanced F Scale differed significantly: \(F(2,111) = 4.92, p<.01\). A posteriori analysis (Tukey-HSD) revealed that, as in the case of the Wilson-Patterson Attitude Inventory, the control group scored significantly lower (beyond \(p<.05\)) than either of the police groups, but that the latter did not differ significantly from each other.

Changes following basic training

In order to determine whether the basic training programme to which the recruits were exposed was followed by any changes in the dependent variables, matched-group \(t\) tests were performed on the psychometric test scores of these subjects recorded at the beginning and end of the nine-week basic training programme. The
results of these analyses showed that, following the basic training, the recruits became significantly less conservative in their responses to the Wilson-Patterson Attitude Inventory, with the mean score falling from 48.35 to 42.10 (t = 5.13, d.f. = 47, p < .001, two-tailed). They also became significantly less authoritarian on the Lee-Warr Balanced F Scale: the before- and after-training mean scores were 101.75 and 98.29 respectively (t = 2.58, d.f. = 47, p < .05, two-tailed). The mean scores on Eysenck's Social and Political Attitude Inventory before and after basic training (X̄ = 81.00 and X̄ = 79.87 respectively) did not differ significantly (t = 1.00, d.f. = 47, n.s.); nor did the mean scores on Rokeach's Dogmatism Scale (142.52 and 145.50 respectively, t = 1.23, d.f. = 47, n.s.).

Open-ended questions

The responses of the subjects to the open-ended questions were rated independently by two judges on a five-point rating scale from 1 ('liberal/tolerant') to 5 ('illiberal/intolerant'). The 342 responses were presented to the judges in random order, and the judges were ignorant, at the time they made their ratings, of which group each of the responses belonged to. The inter-judge reliabilities for the questions regarding the death penalty, coloured immigration, and mixed marriage were r = 0.88 (p < .001), r = 0.91 (p < .001), and r = 0.90 (p < .001) respectively.

The means and standard deviations of the ratings of subjects' responses regarding the death penalty were as follows: recruit constables, X̄ = 3.49, SD = 1.29; probationer constables, X̄ = 3.97, SD = 0.81; control subjects, X̄ = 3.13, SD = 1.41. The means differ significantly: F (2, 111) = 4.10, p < .05. A posteriori analysis (Tukey-HSD procedure) showed the probationers to be more illiberal/intolerant than the control subjects beyond p < .05; other differences between the means failed to reach significance.

For the question on coloured immigration, the means and standard deviations were as follows: recruit constables X̄ = 3.05, SD = 1.34; probationer constables, X̄ = 3.79, SD = 1.32; control subjects X̄ = 2.37, SD = 1.52. The means differ significantly: F (2, 111) = 8.75, p < .001. The probationers were significantly more illiberal/intolerant beyond p < .05, Tukey-HSD procedure) than both the recruits and the control subjects; the difference between the latter two groups failed to reach significance.

For the question on mixed marriage, the means and standard deviations were: recruit constables, X̄ = 2.42, SD = 1.40; probationer constables, X̄ = 2.57, SD = 1.48; control subjects, X̄ = 1.92, SD = 1.18. The means in this case are not significantly different from one another: F (2, 111) = 2.01, n.s.

The most illiberal/intolerant open-ended responses were in general given by the police subjects. No fewer than 20 of the responses given by the probationer constables, that is to say almost 20 per cent of their responses, received maximum ratings of illiberalism/intolerance from both of the independent judges. Among the recruit constables, 15 responses (approximately 10 per cent), and among the control subjects, 6 responses (7 per cent) received maximum ratings.

A number of the responses of the police groups were however given maximum
ratings on liberalism/tolerance by both judges. Among the probationers, 12 responses (11 per cent) and among the recruits, 33 (23 per cent) were classified in this way. Among the control subjects, in comparison, fully 31 responses (34 per cent) were rated as maximally liberal/tolerant by both judges. The degree of liberalism/tolerance represented by these extreme ratings, and the degree of illiberalism/intolerance represented by the extreme ratings mentioned above, can be gauged only from specific examples.

All but one of the extremely liberal/tolerant responses of the probationers were given in response to the question on mixed marriage. The following examples are taken from this category: 'I simply believe in people doing as they wish provided they are not harming anyone else'; and 'No harm can come of this, if the adults are strong enough to overcome the ridicule they will receive'. Most of the maximally liberal/tolerant responses given by the recruits were also triggered by the question on mixed marriage. The following piquant example was written by one of the recruits: 'I think all women are equal, sorry all people are equal. I had a beautiful relationship with a Grenadan girl that left me stunned. I did however marry a white girl but tend to think of the black girl very frequently'.

The largest single category of extreme responses in terms of illiberalism/intolerance ratings were those of the probationer constables to the question on coloured immigration: this category contained 13 responses which received maximum illiberalism/intolerance ratings from both judges. A few of the extreme comments about coloured immigration made by probationer constables were the following: 'I myself feel prejudice towards coloured people. I can't say exactly why but it seems that it must be something which is inborn'; 'Certain members of the coloured population that I have met are OK but the majority of youths of the W. Indian community are savage ignorant vicious thieving bastards'; 'I have yet to meet an honest col. imm. and although I know many whites who are not completely honest I know more who are!'; 'The area in which I live has practically been taken over by Indians and I will agree that some are good, clean working class people, but the majority I have seen have degraded a good area because the people will not live our way and in the main are unhygienic'; 'The immigration should be stopped immediately to prevent our towns and cities from becoming infested with coloureds. As far as I'm concerned, the coloureds are different, but the politicians who pass the laws concerning them do not have to work with them or live next to them'; 'Coloured immigration into this country has brought with it a society of uneducated, troublesome people who come here only for the benefit that we provide such as social security and housing. The majority are disrespectful of the law and wish people in this country, only harm'; 'Because over 50% of trouble caused today either by niggers or because of them. Most of them are just Dirty, Smelly backward people who will never change in a month of Sundays. In my opinion most niggers especially Rasters should be wiped out of distinction'; 'Why should coloured people come into this country and expect us to convert ourselves into there way of thinking (this is what the majority do). If they got the chips off their shoulders about Racial Discrimination it might be a different story'.

The question regarding mixed marriage evoked four responses from the
probationer constables which were given maximum ratings for illiberalism/intolerance by both judges. Two examples are: 'It is just something I am completely against. TOTALY'; and 'There are nations that I do not believe are equal to the English and therefore are not compatible in marriage or otherwise'. Three of the probationers' responses to the question on the death penalty received maximum illiberalism/intolerance ratings, including the following: 'Because there are people . . . who are animals living who by rights should be dead'.

Among the recruit constables, the following responses, among others, received maximum ratings on illiberalism/intolerance. On the death penalty: 'If a person takes a life he should suffer an equal punishment for that crime (an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth) namely the death penalty, whether by hanging, guillotine, gas chamber or electric chair, does not matter'; on coloured immigration: 'The country is being taken over slowly but surely by coloured immigrants if we continue like this there will be no white people left'; and on mixed marriage: 'I do not mind mixed religious marriages, it is purely the "black" and "white" or inter-racial marriages I object to. This is because from such marriages we are not uniting the two colours but creating a third race, commonly known as half-caste or half breed. Thus a two way racial problem becomes a three way racial problem; white against black against half breed'; and 'Before man travelled the world a Black human would never mate with a white human'.

Discussion

No significant differences in dogmatism scores were found in this study. On the conservatism and authoritarianism scales, and in the responses to the open-ended questions on the death penalty and coloured immigration, however, a fairly consistent pattern of significant results emerged. On the Wilson-Patterson Attitude Inventory and the Lee-Warr Balanced F Scale, the recruit constables and the probationer constables scored significantly higher than the control subjects. The scores on Eysenck's Social and Political Attitude Inventory fell into a similar pattern, except that the difference between the mean scores of the control subjects and the recruits failed to reach statistical significance. The responses of the probationers to the open-ended question on the death penalty and coloured immigration were rated as significantly more illiberal/intolerant than were those of the control subjects. On the issue of coloured immigration, the responses of the probationers were, in addition, rated as significantly more illiberal/intolerant than were those of the recruits. The extremely high reliabilities of these blind and independent ratings lend weight to these latter findings.

These results corroborate and extend the findings reported by Small (1969), Cook (1977), and Potter (1977). It seems reasonable to conclude that the police force tends to attract to it people who are more conservative and authoritarian than those of comparable socioeconomic status in other occupations, since the recruits, who were tested only three days after arrival at the police training centre, scored significantly higher than the matched control group on the Wilson-Patterson Attitude Inventory and the Lee-Warr Balanced F scale. The statistical analyses of the psychometric test
scores lend no support to the view that socialization into the police subculture leads to an increase in conservatism, dogmatism, and authoritarianism among those who have already joined the force, although there was a consistent non-significant tendency for the probationers to score higher than the recruits on the conservatism and authoritarianism measures. It is only in the restricted area of attitudes towards coloured immigration that this view was directly corroborated: the probationers' responses to the open-ended question on this issue were rated as significantly more illiberal/intolerant than were those of the recruit constables. Socialization into the police subculture seems therefore to foster hostile attitudes towards coloured immigration. The depth of prejudice towards black immigrants held by many experienced police officers can be gauged from the responses quoted above.

The significant changes in the recruits' psychometric test scores following nine weeks of basic training were interesting and unexpected. On the Wilson-Patterson Attitude Inventory and the Lee-Warr Balanced F Scale, the recruits' scores were significantly lower following basic training than they were three days after arrival at the training centre. Although they were not predicted in advance, these findings are consistent with those of Potter (1977) and are not difficult to account for in retrospect. A special effort is made by the authorities responsible for the basic training of police recruits to reduce illiberal and authoritarian prejudices by a course of liberal studies, and the findings probably reflect the short-term effectiveness of this policy. The fact that probationer constables, after an average of 20 months of service in the force, produced scores which were at least as illiberal and intolerant as those of fresh recruits suggests, however, that the liberalizing effect of the basic training programme is short-lived. It does not apparently survive the integration of the constables into the police subculture; in the longer term, attitudes of police constables appear to drift in the opposite direction.

The control group was successfully matched with the police groups in terms of socioeconomic status. The three groups were not, however, matched for age. The control group was significantly older, on average, than either of the police groups, and the probationers were (not surprisingly) older than the recruits. These age differences do not undermine the interpretation of results, however, since the significant differences - with one exception - reveal higher levels of conservatism or authoritarianism in the younger (police) groups than the older (control) subjects. Numerous previous investigations have shown age to be positively related to conservatism and authoritarianism (vide Ehrlich 1973, Maykovich 1975, Wilson 1975); the relatively higher mean age of the control group compared with the police groups therefore strengthens rather than weakens the attribution of significant differences to the police-civilian distinction. The sole exception is the finding of more illiberal/intolerant responses to the open-ended question on coloured immigration given by the probationers in comparison with the recruits. The interpretation of this finding as supporting the view that attitudes on this issue become increasingly negative as a direct consequence of socialization into the police subculture, must therefore be qualified: the age difference might conceivably have contributed to this effect. Age was clearly not the sole determining factor, however, since the probationers were found to be significantly more illiberal/intolerant on this
issue than the control subjects, who had the highest mean age of any group. Some aspect(s) of police experience must therefore have played a significant role in shaping the probationers' attitudes on coloured immigration.

A similar comment can be made about the differing sex-ratios of the three groups. The proportion of males was larger in the police groups than in the control group. This uncontrolled factor is, however, extremely unlikely to have influenced the main results in any systematic fashion, since sex differences on the variables measured are known to be negligible. Wilson (1975), for example, comments that the sex difference in conservatism 'is so small that it may be disregarded for most purposes' (p. 37), and Adorno et al. (1950) have something similar to say about prejudice and authoritarianism. In any event, females tend to score, if anything, slightly higher than men on measures of illiberalism/intolerance: vide Wilson (loc. cit.). This means that the unequal sex ratios, if they influenced the results in any way, are likely to have artificially reduced (rather than inflated) the observed differences between recruits, probationers, and control subjects.

In view of the fact that the control group was successfully matched with the police groups on socioeconomic status, it is interesting to note that both the recruits and the probationers turned out to have received significantly less formal education than the control group. This interesting incidental finding deserves further attention from researchers. It suggests that, compared with occupations of comparable socioeconomic status, the police force tends to attract people of relatively low educational attainment. With regard to the present investigation, this finding suggests a possible indirect explanation for some of the attitudinal, cognitive, and personality differences between the police and the control subjects. It is possible that the well-known negative correlation between education and illiberalism/intolerance may lie behind some of these differences. Educational factors cannot, however, account for the differences found within and between the police groups themselves.

The major findings of this study relate to privately expressed attitudes and opinions. Since the relationship between verbal indices of this kind and overt behaviour is known to be neither simple nor direct (Eiser 1980: 45-55), inferences from these data about the conduct of police officers in their day-to-day work must be regarded as partly speculative.

A word is in order, finally, about the generality of the findings reported above. The subjects were drawn from an area of high immigrant concentration in the English Midlands. It is possible that the psychological characteristics of the police subjects, particularly their attitudes on issues related to race and colour, would not have been found if the investigation had centred on a police force rooted in a different social milieu. Any attempt to generalize these results to other areas of the United Kingdom or to other countries is therefore unsafe.

**Acknowledgments**

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Notes

1. It is impossible, obviously, to control for all possible sources of variance, apart from the factor of interest—specifically, membership of the police force—in an investigation of this kind. This arises from the infeasibility of a fully controlled (e.g. randomized) experimental design. But an experimental design is, in any event, unnecessary: we are interested in the psychology of police officers and how their attitudes, cognitive styles, and personalities differ from those of other comparable people, rather than in testing any causal theory. If differences emerge, they are of interest whether or not the causative variables can be unambiguously identified. In order to draw any clear-cut conclusions at all, however, an appropriately selected control group is necessary.

2. The open-ended comments are quoted without alteration; spelling mistakes and orthographic eccentricities have not been eliminated.

References


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