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Center for Research on
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University of Michigan
219 Perry Building
330 Packard Street
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104

ATTITUDE CONGRUENCE BETWEEN POLICEMEN
AND SMALL BUSINESSMEN IN URBAN AREAS

Howard E. Aldrich and
Cornell University

Albert J. Reiss, Jr.
University of Michigan

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The effect of contact between groups on the attitudes members of each group hold toward the other has received a good deal of attention (cf. Segal, 1965; Jeffries and Ransford, 1969; James, 1955). Less attention has been paid to the impact contact between groups has on attitudes toward a third group or object. This paper reports a study of factors making for a high degree of similarity in the attitudes policemen and small businessmen in metropolitan areas hold toward their city government. We will examine the impact exposure to a common environment has on the congruence of attitudes between policemen and businessmen and then investigate the degree to which personal contact between them increases congruence of their attitudes.

Surveys for the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice (Black and Reiss, 1966; Reiss, 1967b) and for the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (Rossi, et. al., 1968) provide evidence that small businessmen operating in the inner city perceive the problem of crime and neighborhood characteristics in much the same terms as police officers in these same areas. This congruence of perceptions between police officers and businessmen contrasted sharply with those held by some other groups operating in these areas. The National Advisory Commission found, for example, that educators and social workers tend to take positions rather different from those of the policemen and businessmen (Rossi, et. al., 1968). There are at

least two possible explanations for the degree of similarity found between policemen and small businessmen operating in high crime rate inner city areas: (1) exposure to the same, rather hostile, environment leads to similar perceptions of the cause of such things as crime and the quality of law enforcement; or (2) the relatively high degree of interaction between policemen and small businessmen, as compared to that between policemen and other community agents or residents, leads to the transmission of information from policemen to the small businessmen which in turn generates similarity of attitudes. As we shall see below, each explanation is partially correct.

The Study

Two studies conducted for the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice can be used to separate the effect of contact and assumed exchange of information from those of environmental pressures in making for congruence of attitudes between small businessmen and policemen (Aldrich and Reiss, 1969; Reiss, 1967). Interviews were taken in the summer of 1966 with 800 small businessmen and 203 policemen of less than lieutenant rank who operated within high crime rate areas of Boston, Chicago, and Washington, D. C. The responses of white police officers and businessmen to the question: "What about the city government. Do you feel

they are doing a very good job, a fairly good job, or not too good a job when it comes to fighting crime in this city?" are analyzed. The degree of similarity between the distribution of the policemen's responses and those of the businessmen, in each city, is used to indicate the impact of pressures toward congruence. Chi-square is employed as a summary measure for the existence of congruence. The index of dissimilarity, a measure that is one-half the sum of the absolute values of the differences between the distributions, also is reported for each comparison.

Environmental Pressures

Crime is an occupational hazard for both policemen and small businessmen. For policemen, crime is a part of the job definition--combatting crime is something the policeman cannot avoid. We would expect policemen to be highly sensitive, therefore, to the perceived or actual support given them by their city government. For small businessmen, losses from crimes against the business is a cost of doing business. Since losses from crime fall disproportionately upon small businesses in the inner city (Reiss, 1969, p. 96), we would expect small businessmen to be especially sensitive to the protection against crime given them by the city government.

What is of interest to us is the degree of similarity between businessmen and policemen in each city in Table 1. Businessmen and policemen in Boston share a relatively negative view of their city government's capacity to combat crime. Washington, D. C. respondents also have a rather negative view of their city government, whereas respondents in Chicago have a relatively positive opinion of the Chicago city government. The absence of statistical significance for the Chi-squares for Boston and Chicago in Table 1. lend support to the hypothesis that the pressures of facing a common environment and the same city government operate to produce a high degree of similarity in the attitudes of businessmen and policemen. In Washington, D. C., policemen and businessmen are relatively dissimilar in their attitudes. This difference arises because policemen in Washington, D. C. are the most negative of all policemen in the three cities in their attitudes toward the city government. There is some evidence that the lack of home rule for the District affects the attitudes of police toward their "local" government. We are inclined to give weight to this evidence because of the special circumstances that characterized police-government relations at the time of our survey. The President had appointed a special crime commission for the District of Columbia. At the time of our survey, this Commission was issuing reports that were

sharply critical of the District police. One would expect that the effects of such releases would make the police more negative toward the city government than the businessmen who were not under attack, particularly in reducing the proportion of the police who see the relationship with city government as "very good." Such is the case.

This explanation is consistent with a more general presumption underlying this paper--that a third party, city government, acting independently of businessmen or the police, constrains the attitudes of those subject to its activities. The city government of Chicago, through a reorganization of the police department and some other highly publicized innovations, has succeeded in winning the confidence of a substantial proportion of the officers in its police department. Both the Boston and D. C. departments were under sharp attack from government sources, community leaders, and the local media during this period and this is reflected in police officers giving city government much less support.

Police Officers As Boundary Personnel

To a small businessman, the police officer he sees on the beat or the detectives who investigate reports of crimes against his business are generally the only links

he has to the law enforcement agencies of the city. Business personnel are dependent upon the police not only for protection, but also for much information on crime. Business personnel see policemen much more often than they see judges or other law enforcement related individuals. Indeed frequent contact seems high as 30 per cent of all businessmen in our survey claim they talk to a police officer at least once each day and another 30 per cent claim that they do so several times each week. A third reported they help the police by giving them information, and at least a fourth report doing favors for them (Reiss, 1967b:10-18). Given that police officers in a city police department develop a shared set of beliefs with regard to their city government, we would expect them to communicate this view to the citizens with whom they come in contact. We would expect a small businessman's view of the entire law enforcement process to be influenced by his relationship with the police.

Police officers act as boundary spanning agents, linking the law enforcement system with small businesses in the police precincts of the city. Following Thompson's (1962) discussion of the output transactions of organizations, we hold that organizations often employ individuals whose job it is to transact business with the organization's

environment of customers, suppliers, creditors, and so forth. Police officers fulfill such boundary transaction roles for the police department. Many police chiefs are aware of this function, as is shown by the use of "human relations training" and other preparation designed to turn police officers into organizational assets in the field.

In studies conducted for the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (Rossi, et. al., 1968, pp. 103-114), policemen in twelve cities were asked whether particular groups considered them as enemies, friends or were indifferent. "Storekeepers" ranked second behind "old persons" as the group most often seen as being "on their side." Approximately 83 per cent viewed storekeepers as friends, with the proportion dropping to 34 per cent for Negroes and 16 per cent for adolescents. When these policemen were asked about how many people in particular groups they knew well enough to speak with whenever they saw them 89 per cent mentioned six or more shop owners, managers, or clerks. Only 3 per cent reported knowing no businessmen well enough to casually speak with. Thus the portrait of police-businessmen relationships emerging from these Commission studies is that of relatively harmonious cooperation between the groups, at least from the policeman's perspective.

We do not maintain that the picture conveyed to the small

businessman on an officer's beat is necessarily the one publicly held by the police department. What we are asserting is that when businessmen develop personal links with police officers, the links serve as communication channels through which the common attitudes of officers are transmitted. For example, our observations in the field make apparent that almost every small businessman has one or two "horror stories" which he has learned from policemen in the area that he uses to illustrate his point about the perils of doing business in high crime rate areas.

Before examining the impact of personal links with policemen on businessmen's attitudes, it should be noted in Table 2 that businessmen's attitudes toward the city government's capacity to fight crime is related to their attitude toward policemen in their area. Of businessmen holding a highly positive evaluation of the job area police are doing, 32.9 per cent also rate the city government as "very good" and only 22.8 per cent rate it as "not too good." When the impact of personal links with the police is investigated in the following analysis, businessmen's attitudes toward police in the area is controlled.

One measure of personal links between businessmen and police officers is whether or not a businessman knows any police officers who work in his area well enough to talk with them. This measure of contact is related, of course,

to police department policies and practices that affect contact between officers and businessmen. Traditionally, police officers were assigned to small beats they could cover by foot, a fact that facilitated contact with members of the business community, particularly since business areas were patrolled more regularly and frequently. The more modernized police departments today operate without foot patrol, relying almost exclusively on radio dispatched mobile patrol that covers a large territory. The possibility of regular and frequent contact with businessmen is thereby reduced. Indeed it becomes less likely that a businessman will know any officer in a modernized department since contact depends more on unofficial or daily encounters with routine patrol. There may be other department policies and practices that affect contact between police officers and businessmen. In our study, the Boston police department facilitated work contacts between businessmen and off-duty police officers. Any businessman may employ an off-duty police officer to protect his place of business, the contract for such employment being made with the department. Both Boston and Washington, D. C. were more given to foot patrol than was Chicago and their mobile patrol was less modernized.

We would expect, therefore, that businessmen in Chicago would be less likely to report contact with police officers

than would those in Boston or Washington, D.C. That is in fact the case. Only 53.7 per cent of the businessmen in Chicago as compared with 69.9 per cent in Washington, D. C. and 70.8 per cent in Boston reported knowing policemen in their area.

To restate the main hypothesis of this paper in terms of the data to be presented: when businessmen's attitude toward the police in an area is controlled, businessmen who report knowing police officers in the area are more likely to resemble the police in their attitudes toward city government than are businessmen who report they do not know officers in the area.

The data necessary to test the hypothesis are presented in Table 3. A Chi-squared was obtained for each line of the table by comparing the distribution of the line with the distribution for the police officers in that city. Because the expected value for some cells is fewer than 10 cases, all the Chi-squared values have been corrected for continuity. Note that our interest is not in the absolute values of the Chi-squares but in the relative value of the "Yes" (know policemen) line versus the value of the "No" (does not know policemen) line. Whenever the Chi-squared for the former is larger than that for the latter, our hypothesis is supported.

Table 3A includes all respondents who believe that policemen in their area are "doing a very good job." In all three cities businessmen who report knowing policemen in their area resemble city policemen more closely in their attitude toward city government than do businessmen reporting not knowing any area policemen. Table 3B includes all respondents who feel that area policemen are "doing a fairly good job." In two of the three cities, the hypothesis is again supported. In Boston the Chi-squared is smaller for those not knowing any policemen, although the difference between the two is extremely small (.628 versus .577). Finally, Table 3C includes all respondents who stated that area policemen were "not doing too good a job." Only 5 respondents in Chicago chose this alternative and so that part of the table has not been percentaged. In Boston and Washington, D. C. the hypothesis is supported, although the difference between the two values for the latter is not very great.

In seven out of eight possible comparisons, then, the group of businessmen reporting that they know some area policemen are more similar to city policemen in their attitudes toward city government than are businessmen who report not knowing any area policemen. While several of the differences are quite small, the consistency across cities and attitudes toward area police gives us confidence

in the results. It should be noted that when an alternative measure of congruence, the index of dissimilarity, is used, the differences between the lines in the direction of our hypothesis become much larger and all eight comparisons support the hypothesis. We chose not to rest the case for testing the hypothesis on the index of dissimilarity because it cannot be adjusted for the number of cases in a table, whereas Chi-squared can be adjusted (the correction for continuity).

Conclusions

The tests reported in this paper support two positions on the forces making for attitude congruence between groups in a shared environment. The first position argues that when two or more groups are exposed to forces that are highly salient for each and there are similar consequences for each, there is a high degree of similarity in the attitudes of the two groups toward what they share in common. In our study, policemen and small businessmen face a common, and in many ways, hostile environment. Crime prevention is a concern of both small businessmen and police officers. Both groups moreover are dependent on the city administration for the resources and the policies needed to carry out measures against crime. Thus, crime and the city government's response to crime

is a salient issue for both groups. As a result, policemen and businessmen in two of the three cities are so similar in their attitudes toward the city government's ability to combat crime that they appear to have been drawn from a common pool. In Washington, D. C. the groups as already noted are not as congruent in their attitudes mainly because of the extremely negative view which the District of Columbia officers have of the city's administration.

A second position with regard to attitude congruence asserts that interpersonal contact between representatives of two organizations can lead to the transmission of attitudes from one group to the other. In our study we have treated police officers as acting in the role of boundary personnel for the police department. In this role, police officers interact with the population served by the police force and attempt to establish cooperative relations with them. Of course, much of the initiative for the establishment of personal links may come from small businessmen as they attempt to secure every possible protection against crime for their businesses (Aldrich, 1969, Chapter 3).

One consequence of the relationship between police officers and businessmen is that the officer's attitude toward law enforcement in the city gets transmitted to the businessman. The greater such contact, the more businessmen

come to resemble the officers in their attitudes toward such things as crime and the city government's role in crime prevention. When policemen have a rather negative view of what the city administration is doing on the crime front, this attitude is passed on to, and reflected in the attitudes of, small businessmen in the city. This seems to have occurred in Boston and Washington, D. C. When the officers have a positive view, the opposite is the case. Chicago police officers hold a highly positive view of the city administration. Small businessmen in Chicago also have a highly favorable attitude toward the police force.

The above findings have some implications for the current issue of "law and order." Our findings suggest that policemen are related to this issue in a number of ways. First, crime as a political issue seems to affect policemen, who work to prevent losses, as much as it does small businessmen, who must suffer the losses. The same pressures that point toward the city government's role, perceived or actual, in fighting crime affect both groups. Second, the effectiveness of the police force in the various precincts of the city appears to have an impact on the attitudes that small businessmen have toward government. When businessmen are satisfied with the job that area police are doing, or the police they meet report satisfaction

with city government, the businessmen also are satisfied with the city government's role, and vice versa. Third, and perhaps most important, if our assumption is correct, that businessmen are heavily dependent upon policemen for "inside" information about law enforcement, then the police through their contact with businessmen have within their power the capacity to turn "law and order" into a local issue. Our findings allow us to do no more than show that policemen do influence the attitudes of small businessmen. Yet they are consistent with other evidence that the police may create "local support" for the police.

Table 1. A Comparison of the Attitudes of Policemen and Small Businessmen in Boston, Chicago, and Washington, D. C. Toward the Job the City Government is Doing in Fighting Crime.

City		Evaluation of City Government			χ^2	Δ^*	N
		Very Good	Fairly Good	Not Too Good			
Boston	policemen	10.9	39.1	50.0	.354 p>.80	6.4	46
	businessmen	14.8	41.6	43.6			149
Chicago	policemen	41.5	39.0	19.5	.736 p>.70	9.7	41
	businessmen	36.2	48.7	15.1			152
Washington, D. C.	policemen	3.6	46.4	50.0	7.817 p<.05	16.4	56
	businessmen	17.5	48.9	33.6			223

*Index of dissimilarity

Table 2. Attitude Toward Area Police and Attitude Toward City Government					
Attitude Toward Area Police	Attitude Toward City Government			%	N
	Very Good	Fairly Good	Not Too Good		
Very Good	32.9	44.3	22.8	100	246
Fairly Good	13.6	53.8	32.6	100	184
Not Too Good	6.0	34.0	60.0	100	50
All Respondents	22.7	46.9	30.4	100	480

$\chi^2 = 47.636 \quad p < .01$

Table 3. Effect of Personal Relationship with Policemen on Attitudes of Small Businessmen Toward City Government, Controlling for Businessmen's Attitude Toward Area Police							
3.a Businessman's Attitude Toward Area Police: <u>"Police Are Doing a Good Job"</u>							
<u>Attitude Toward City Government</u>							
City	Know Policeman?	Very Good	Fairly Good	Not Too Good	χ^2	N	
B O S T O N	Whites: Yes	24.4	41.5	34.1	2.516	41	
	No	44.4	33.3	22.2	4.068	9	
C H I C A G O	Whites: Yes	45.2	47.6	7.1	1.743	42	
	No	60.0	34.3	5.7	2.758	35	
W A S H D C	Whites: Yes	22.1	45.3	32.6	8.859	86	
	No	24.2	54.5	21.2	9.974	33	

Table 3. Effect of Personal Relationship with Policemen on Attitudes of Small Businessmen Toward City Government, Controlling for Businessmen's Attitude Toward Area Police

3.b Businessman's Attitude Toward Area Police:
"Police Are Doing A Fairly Good Job"

City	Know Policeman?	<u>Attitude Toward City Government</u>			X ²	N
		Very Good	Fairly Good	Not Too Good		
B O S T O N	Whites: Yes	11.6	48.8	39.5	.628	43
	No	9.5	52.4	38.1	1.577	21
C H I C A G O	Whites: Yes	17.9	50.0	32.1	3.084	28
	No	16.7	62.5	20.8	3.470	24
W A S H D C	Whites: Yes	8.3	58.3	33.3	2.180	48
	No	25.0	50.0	25.0	6.790	20

Table 3. Effect of Personal Relationship with Policemen on Attitudes of Small Businessmen Toward City Government, Controlling for Businessmen's Attitude Toward Area Police

3.c Businessman's Attitude Toward Area Police:

"Police Are Not Doing Too Good a Job"

Attitude Toward City Government

City	Know Policeman?	Very Good	Fairly Good	Not Too Good	X ²	N
B O S T O N	Whites: Yes	--	38.5	61.5	.130	13
	No	--	10.0	90.0	3.140	10
C H I C A G O	Whites: Yes	--	--	(2)	*	2
	No	(2)	(1)	--	*	3
W A S H D C	Whites: Yes	--	58.3	41.7	.194	12
	No	10.0	30.0	60.0	.230	10

*X² not computed on 5 cases or less

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