THE ORIENTATIONS OF POLICE ATTITUDES
TOWARD LAW COMPLIANCE AND POLITICAL TRUST AMONG
SELECTED COLLEGE STUDENTS

SENIOR HONORS THESIS
UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM
by
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... no prince is secure without his own troops, on the contrary he is entirely dependent on fortune, having no trustworthy means of defence in time of trouble.

- Machiavelli
I. INTRODUCTION

A fundamental principle of a stable government is the legitimacy of political authority as accepted by the citizens of the government.\(^1\) This generally accepted maxim has motivated political scientists to study those characters in the political system who entrench societal attitudes toward political authority and compliance with the law, both requisites for regime stability. These agents in the American political system perform crucial socialization processes between the citizen and the polity. This acceptance of external authority as legitimate is believed to be critical in the development of obedience to the law and political trust.\(^2\)

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\(^1\)David Easton and Jack Dennis, *Children In The Political System*, p. 221.

II. PROBLEM

Studies into political attitude formation have largely overlooked one crucial and very visible character in the American political system, the policeman. The saliency of the policeman in our system makes him a very significant political figure concerning attitude formation. Knowing what aspect he does play in this problem is essential to a fuller understanding of governmental stability.

In a recent study, political scientists David Easton and Jack Dennis concluded that,

the policeman plays an important role in imbuing pre-adults with a sense of legitimacy of external authority and that the policeman remains an important symbol of the legitimacy of the political system throughout the pre-adult years.3

What they are intrinsically saying is that the policeman performs an indirect function of providing legitimacy for the political system by indoctrinating the child to external authority. Easton and Dennis further hypothesize that:

If as children nature they come to despise, distrust, scorn, or reject the police, the probabilities could be considerable (assuming no compensatory mechanisms come into operation in later years) that acceptance of the whole structure of authority at all levels would suffer.4

3Ibid., p. 72.
4Easton and Dennis, op. cit., p. 212.
If this is the case the problem merits research to find out the extent of its truth and also how these attitudes can be developed in a positive manner. Furthermore, it holds importance in understanding the strengths of these childhood police attitudes and their relative significance in carrying over into the adult years.

This is both an interesting and largely untapped area of study dealing with the policeman. It is taking a comparatively low-status civil servant and bringing him into a focal point in the American political system. That particular point being the acceptance of political authority outside of the family structure. The implications of this acceptance or rejection by the child are significant, but even more important is the effect it may have on the post-adolescent's support of the political system through authority-acceptance.
III. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Several studies on children and their attitudes toward the police and political system in general tend to support the preceding view. Research in this area by political scientists Charles Bullock and Harrell Rodgers, Jr., has consistently shown that for children, the policeman represents a very powerful and salient authority, moreso than the President of the United States. Richard Engstrum, Assistant Professor of political science at Louisiana State University, has noted a marked relationship between a child's perception of the policeman's powers and his tendency to comply with the law. It has further been expounded that children pick the policeman and President as the most commonly visible political characters over such other likely choices as the teacher, Senator, soldier, mayor, fireman, and Judge.

As Dean Jaros has sensed, "studies in political socialization which differentiate their findings by race are rare."  

---

5Edward S. Greenberg, "Orientations of Black and White Children to Political Authority Figures," in Black Political Attitudes, p. 12.
6Ibid., p. 38.
7Easton and Dennis, op. cit., pp. 150-162.
From a growing number of studies it can be concluded that significant differences between black and white attitudes can be found. A thorough research study was conducted by Edward Greenberg of Stanford University, dealing with the attitudes of Philadelphia school children selected from grades 3, 5, 7, and 9, toward political authority figures. Results showed that both black and white children tended to be highly supportive of political characters in the lower grades, but exhibited diminishing support as grade level progressed upward. A particularly interesting point in the study was the fact that black and white students were more supportive of the policeman than of the President of the United States. Concerning the President, Jaros has further found that black children manifest as much hero-adulation for the President as white children. Another study, by Robert Fortune, reveals that early contacts with the police adversely influence the attitudes of early adolescents. He also found that "... whites had more favorable attitudes than nonwhites, that antagonistic attitudes increased from grades seven through nine, and that those in the academic had the most favorable attitudes..." It is typically the lower class black child that shows the most serious decline in respect toward the police. According to Dr.
Greenberg,

It is the lower class black children, to be sure, who are most likely to become members of a street, peer culture, and to 'get in trouble' with the agents of social control. 12

Statistics compiled by the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice also purport marked differentiations between black-white attitudes toward the police within the adult community. The National Opinion Research Center survey exposes that ...

... non-whites, particularly Negroes, are significantly more negative than whites in evaluating police effectiveness. ... (the) differences are not merely a function of greater poverty among non-whites, they exist at all income levels. ...

Other surveys have similar findings: A Louis Harris poll showed that 16% fewer Negroes than whites, a single majority of 51%, felt that the police did an "excellent or pretty good job;" In Watts, it was found that 47% of the Negroes believed the police were "excellent or pretty good" in their work, but 41% concluded that they were "not so good" or "poor." A poll taken in Detroit in 1965 found that 58% of the Negroes in the sample did not feel that policemen acted fairly. In contrast, a 1951 poll found that 42% of the Negroes believed that law enforcement was "not good" or

12 Bullock and Rodgers, op. cit., p. 12.

"definitely bad." In a recent survey conducted throughout fifteen cities, over 50% of black males from the ages of 16 to 19 believed that the police used "insulting language" and "frisk without good reason." In this same group, 49% concurred that the police "rough people up unnecessarily."  

In all these surveys, white attitudes were generally more positive. Weighing present findings, it is feasible to conclude that adult Negroes in the general community tend to have a more negative attitude structure toward the police than do white adults.

Trust in the political system and compliance with the law seems to also be on a downward trend. Survey data collected nationally shows that political trust is decreasing, regardless of race. Studies done by the Center for Political Studies at the University of Michigan show a steady decrease in political trust for whites and a sharp decrease for blacks. Since 1971, distrust of the government has been the norm for the black population of Detroit as "... they (view) government as the protection of white men's interests, not something to be granted a black man's faith." The

14Ibid., pp. 125-126.
16Joel D. Aberbach and Jack L. Walker, Race In The City, p. 209.
apparent question to be addressed is the matter of where does trust in political authority begin to erode.

A study conducted by Dr. Schley R. Lyons of the University of North Carolina states that the political trust variable begins to drop in affect as children grow up and become more in touch with the realities of a political atmosphere. His study concerned students in grades 5 to 12 and found that general interest in politics was fairly similar among the two races. As Dr. Lyons noted,

Students in both subsamples (black and white) experienced a similar de-idealization of politics and politicians with increased age . . . . Negro children regardless of where they lived had a lower sense of efficacy and higher feelings of cynicism than white students . . . . Negroes felt less efficacious in high school than whites felt in junior high and Negroes were about as cynical toward politics at the elementary school level as white children were in senior high.18

As far as actual causes of youth attitudes toward the police, political system, and law compliance, little is known. From the nature of crime reports and increasing disobedience to the law, it appears that the public's general attitudes have undergone a significant shift in the past decade.19

Within this area of study, a serious void in the literature becomes apparent concerning attitudes toward the police and their possible effect upon law compliance and


19 Robert Fortune, Changing Adolescent Attitudes Toward Police, pp. 4-5.
political trust. These attitudes have been studied of populations on the elementary and secondary school levels, and the general adult community. Thus, we are consequently ignoring a very specialized subsample of the adult community, that being the college population. It is the purpose of this paper to test a localized section of this population and note the linkages, if any, of attitudes toward the police upon law compliance and political trust. Then the population will be broken down by black and white subsamples for racial analysis. By testing this hypothesis I hope to expand upon the generality of support theory.20

20Peter Wall and Robert Binstock, America's Political System, pp. 11-14.
IV. METHODOLOGY

The data for analysis consists of responses from randomly selected students currently enrolled at Ball State University. The sample was drawn from the Ball State directory of student names. The black population was obtained from a file at the Office of Special Programs, and appropriate names were marked in the directory so that a subsample of blacks could be drawn. The cover letter and questionnaire (see Appendix) was sent to 100 black students and 100 white students for a total of 200 people. It was sent out in early December, 1975 and collected throughout December and early into the first part of January, 1976. The white group returned 64 questionnaires and the black group returned 41, for a total return of 105 usable questionnaires.

The survey consisted of 21 questions taken, for the most part, from sources in the realm of attitude study. The political trust and law compliance questions (nos. 1-10, 12), and the questions on political efficacy (nos. 13-15) were standard Survey Research Center items. The police attitude questions (nos. 16-20) were pulled from the previously cited study by Easton and Dennis. Classifications were taken from Kohlberg's typology of moral development for question number 11, with some adaptations of my own for additional relevance.
on the collegiate level. The last item, a demographic question, is also a standard SRC item.

Since all variables in this study are either of nominal or ordinal level of measurement, the majority being ordinal, the more elaborate statistical techniques cannot be fully utilized. For those cases involving two ordinal scale variables, Kendall's tau will be used to measure the degree of the relationship and the accompanying significance figure will determine whether the relationship is statistically significant. In analyzing those relationships between nominal and ordinal scale variables, chi-squared will be used for a test of significance and lambda will provide a measure of the degree of the relationship. In accordance with the general policy of social science research, the cut-off point for non-random relationships will be .05 and below; the degree of the relationship will be 10% or higher (independent variable explaining at least 10% of the variation in the dependent variable).

An inherent limitation of the study is that only 41% of the questionnaires from the blacks were received and but 64% of those from the white sample. Chance dictates, naturally, that the results could be exactly opposite of those presented,

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22E. Terrence Jones, Conducting Political Research, pp. 116-123.
if a total sample had been obtained. But, since the majority of the questions were dispersed symmetrically, I do not believe findings would vary greatly granted an entire sample.
V. FINDINGS

A. General Attitudes Toward the Police

The four police attitude questions can be explained separately and then generalized upon. All the questions showed a wide variance as the dispersions were fairly symmetrical. Frequency distributions by case and percentage are listed in table one. All percentages are adjusted.

Concerning honesty of the police compared to most men, 77% agree that the policeman is "as honest" as most men while a perplexed 12% answered "don't know." A simple majority of the respondents (51%) disagreed and 26% strongly disagreed that most policemen like to give a person like themselves a "hard time." On the other hand, almost one-fifth, 19%, could "strongly agree" or "agree" that the policeman does like to give a person, such as themselves, a "hard time." Trust in the police when in trouble brought a 50% support level when combining the two most positive categories; and, a 72% combined positive level of "strongly agree" and "agree" was concurred upon concerning reliance on the police for help.

The general sample seems to purport a fairly strong value of positivism toward the police. Generally, the sample showed a strong trust in the police for help, but were more uncertain as to whether they would trust the police if they
### TABLE 1

**GENERAL ATTITUDES TOWARD THE POLICE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16. Most policemen like to give someone like me a &quot;hard time&quot;</td>
<td>7% (7)</td>
<td>12% (13)</td>
<td>51% (54)</td>
<td>26% (27)</td>
<td>4% (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Trust in police when personally in trouble</td>
<td>11% (12)</td>
<td>39% (41)</td>
<td>20% (25)</td>
<td>6% (6)</td>
<td>20% (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Police officer is only following orders when carrying out duties and can't be blamed</td>
<td>8% (6)</td>
<td>24% (25)</td>
<td>36% (37)</td>
<td>27% (28)</td>
<td>6% (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Reliance on police for help</td>
<td>9% (9)</td>
<td>63% (66)</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>14% (15)</td>
<td>13% (14)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>More Honest</th>
<th>As Honest</th>
<th>Less Honest</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17. Honesty of police compared to most men</td>
<td>3% (3)</td>
<td>77% (61)</td>
<td>8% (8)</td>
<td>12% (13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
were personally in trouble. The extent to which this group feels the policeman should be blame-free in his duties vividly demonstrates that the policeman is not automatically and blindly worshipped on a political pedestal. Concerning this, 37% of the respondents "disagree" and 27% "strongly disagree" that a police officer is only following orders when carrying out duties, and cannot be blamed for what he does.

**Black and White Attitude Toward the Police**

The black group consistently showed a slightly less positive attitude toward the police than did its white counterpart. The black respondents could "strongly agree" or "agree" by 34% that the police do like to give someone like themselves a "hard time," while 44% disagreed with this statement. The white subsample disagreed or strongly disagreed by a count of 86% that the police like to give someone like themselves a "hard time."

The general consensus for both races was that the policeman is "as honest" as other men with 66% of the Negroes and 84% of the whites concurring on this response. None of the blacks felt that the policeman was "more honest" and only 5% of the whites responded in such a positive manner.

Confidence in the police if the respondent was personally in trouble varied widely among the blacks with 22% agreeing and 37% disagreeing. Among the whites, 50% agreed and 16% disagreed. In both groups, 20% simply didn't know,
TABLE 3

GENERAL ATTITUDES TOWARD LAW COMPLIANCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
<th>No (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10. Do you think people should always obey laws?</td>
<td>50% (53)</td>
<td>50% (52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Reasons*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Personal Judgment</td>
<td>17% (17)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Moral Principles</td>
<td>12% (12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Antiquated or Ridiculous</td>
<td>16% (16)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Rule Conformity</td>
<td>18% (19)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Avoid Punishment</td>
<td>4% (4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Moral Principles</td>
<td>1% (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Social Order</td>
<td>16% (16)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Other Reasons</td>
<td>17% (18)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Which is more important to obey</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laws of Hometown</td>
<td>8% (8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laws of the Federal Government</td>
<td>18% (19)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>74% (78)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

compliance sector, 18% obey all laws because of rule conformity, 18% to maintain social order, 4% to avoid punishment, 1% on moral principles, and 18% for other reasons.

The sample overwhelmingly felt that both local and federal laws were important to obey (74%). Federal laws seemed slightly more important over local laws as 18% responded that federal laws are more important than local laws; local followers tallied an 8% count.

Black and White Attitudes Toward Compliance with the Law

By group, the percentages are reciprocated to each other concerning the dichotomy of law obedience or disobedience. In the black group 54% replied "No" and 46% answered "Yes," while the white group totaled 47% "No" and 53% "Yes." Reasons for compliance and non-compliance were again very diverse as noted in table four.

Both groups saw local and federal laws being of equal importance to obey, as 76% of the blacks and 73% of the whites answered "both." The black group seemed slightly more inclined to pick federal law over local law, as 15% said federal law and 10% local law. The white group tended to pick federal laws over local laws by an even greater margin.

C. Political Trust Attitudes

Concerning trust in the political system, 90% of the respondents trusted the government to do right "some" or
# Table 4

**Attitudes Toward Law Compliance, by Race**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Racial Group</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you think people should always obey laws?</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>46% (19)</td>
<td>54% (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons*</th>
<th>Non-compliance</th>
<th>Compliance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>20% (8)</td>
<td>15% (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>15% (9)</td>
<td>10% (6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which is more important to obey</th>
<th>Laws of Hometown</th>
<th>Laws of the Federal Government</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>10% (4)</td>
<td>15% (6)</td>
<td>76% (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>6% (4)</td>
<td>20% (13)</td>
<td>73% (47)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"most of the time," with the remaining 10% distributed on the periphery of extreme negativism or positivism. A large majority (70%) feel, though, that our government in Washington is run pretty much for the "big interests."

Trust on the local level was fairly evenly dispersed with the majority of respondents concurring that their hometown government listens to people and can be trusted for the most part. Trust in hometown elected officials elicited 49% to respond that they trust them "some of the time," and 34% have confidence "most of the time." On the national level, a 50% majority felt that elected officials could be trusted "some of the time" with a 34% minority saying "most of the time;" but, trust in the President was better with a 45% count espousing trust "most of the time" and a slightly-less minority concurring on "some of the time." Political trust responses are noted in table five.

I believe that for the most part this support is diffuse in nature, not linking the President or any elected official directly with the question. It is a general support of the role and office of the particular group or individual. This general support best shows political trust over a period of time. It also seems that this support manifests itself more visibly on the individual (President or mayor) rather than on a group of elected officials. When public officials are considered as a whole, trust drops.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Just About Always</th>
<th>Most of the Time</th>
<th>Some of the Time</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Trust in our governmental system to do what is right</td>
<td>4% (4)</td>
<td>38% (39)</td>
<td>52% (54)</td>
<td>7% (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Trust in hometown govt. to do what is right</td>
<td>6% (6)</td>
<td>42% (44)</td>
<td>43% (45)</td>
<td>10% (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Trust in national elected officials to do right</td>
<td>3% (3)</td>
<td>34% (36)</td>
<td>59% (62)</td>
<td>4% (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Trust in President to do right</td>
<td>9% (9)</td>
<td>45% (47)</td>
<td>43% (45)</td>
<td>4% (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Trust in hometown elected officials to do right</td>
<td>7% (7)</td>
<td>36% (38)</td>
<td>49% (51)</td>
<td>9% (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Trust in mayor of hometown to do right</td>
<td>10% (11)</td>
<td>36% (38)</td>
<td>43% (45)</td>
<td>10% (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefit of Big Interests All the People</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Washington, D.C. govt. is run for</td>
<td>70% (74)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30% (31)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 5 (CONTINUED)

POLITICAL TRUST ATTITUDES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A Good Deal</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Not Very Much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3. Elections make govt. in Washington pay attention to what people think</td>
<td>23% (24)</td>
<td>54% (57)</td>
<td>23% (24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Elections make govt. in hometown pay attention to what people think</td>
<td>33% (35)</td>
<td>53% (56)</td>
<td>13% (14)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
black and White Political Trust Attitudes

Breaking the total sample down by subfile showed a slightly higher level of political trust for the white group as opposed to the black section. (see Table 6) Trust in our governmental system to do what is right brought 60% of the blacks to say "some of the time" and 11% to agree on "most of the time." Of the whites, 47% held trust in our government to do right "some of the time," 44% "most of the time," and a mere 6% could say "just about always."

A majority of both groups felt that the government is pretty much run for the benefit of "big interests," those being 78% of the blacks and 66% of the whites. Concerning the value of elections making our Washington government listen to the people, a majority of both blacks and whites feel they help "some."

Trust in hometown elected officials and local government registered similar results. Trust in hometown government and the belief that the hometown system listens to people seem to be closely linked, with approximately 50% of the blacks responding "some of the time." Conversely, 44% of the whites trust local government "most of the time" and 39% feel trust "some of the time." Furthermore, the white group felt that elections do make the hometown government listen to what people think, with 55% responding "some" and 31% "a good deal." The black group evinced an even more positive position as 51% responded "some" and 37% "a good
TABLE 6
POLITICAL TRUST ATTITUDES, BY RACE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Just About Always</th>
<th>Most of the Time</th>
<th>Some of the Time</th>
<th>Almost Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Racial</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>2% (1)</td>
<td>27% (11)</td>
<td>60% (24)</td>
<td>12% (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>6% (4)</td>
<td>44% (28)</td>
<td>47% (30)</td>
<td>3% (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Trust in hometown govt. to do what is right</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>2% (1)</td>
<td>39% (16)</td>
<td>49% (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>8% (5)</td>
<td>44% (28)</td>
<td>39% (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Trust in national elected officials to do right</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26% (12)</td>
<td>63% (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>5% (3)</td>
<td>38% (24)</td>
<td>56% (36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Trust in President to do right</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>2% (1)</td>
<td>32% (13)</td>
<td>56% (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>13% (8)</td>
<td>53% (34)</td>
<td>34% (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Trust in hometown elected officials to do right</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>41% (17)</td>
<td>51% (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>11% (7)</td>
<td>33% (21)</td>
<td>47% (30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Trust in mayor or hometown to do right</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>4% (4)</td>
<td>44% (18)</td>
<td>37% (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>White</td>
<td>11% (7)</td>
<td>42% (27)</td>
<td>36% (23)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 6 (Continued)

**POLITICAL TRUST ATTITUDES, BY RACE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial Group</th>
<th>Benefit of Big Interests</th>
<th>All the People</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>78% (32)</td>
<td>22% (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>66% (42)</td>
<td>34% (22)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial Group</th>
<th>A Good Deal</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Not Very Much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>17% (7)</td>
<td>59% (24)</td>
<td>24% (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>27% (10)</td>
<td>52% (33)</td>
<td>22% (14)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial Group</th>
<th>A Good Deal</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Not Very Much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>37% (15)</td>
<td>51% (21)</td>
<td>12% (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>31% (20)</td>
<td>55% (35)</td>
<td>14% (9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
deal," to this question. Dealing with the political agents of hometown government, 51% and 41% of the blacks, respectively, feel that locally elected officials warrant trust "some" and "most of the time." For the white congregation, 47% said "some of the time," 33% "most of the time," and 11% agreed on "just about always." Mayoral trust is almost symmetrical between both sets with both majorities concurring on the ability to trust "most of the time."

Switching to the national level, trust in elected officials in Washington for the black subsample had 63% saying "some of the time," and 29% "most of the time." Again, slightly more positive, the white subsample had 56% trusting "some of the time," 38% "most of the time," and 5% "just about always." Trust in the President seemed significantly higher for the whites as 34% trust him "some of the time," 53% "most of the time," and 13% "just about always." Conversely, 10% of the black group could trust him "almost never," 56% "some of the time," and 32% bestowed trust "most of the time."

D. Effect of Police Attitudes on Law Compliance

In this analysis, obedience to the law (question no. 10) will serve as the dependent variable and attitudes toward the police (questions 16-20) will be the independent variables. For the entire sample, three significant and meaningful relationships appeared concerning attitudes toward the police and law compliance. It seems that people who believe that
most policemen like to give someone like themselves a "hard time" will tend to be more likely to accept disobedience of the law. The correlation here is .19 indicating a significant (p < .03) relationship. Furthermore, those people who have confidence in the police when personally in trouble tend to believe one should always obey the laws. Here, there is a correlation of .28 and p < .01. Finally, the more one can rely on the police for help the more likely he is to obey the law (correlation .17 and p < .05).

**Effect of Police Attitudes on Law Compliance by Race**

By subfile, the black group evinced one strong relationship, that being those in trouble who trust the police will also tend to believe one should always obey the laws. This relationship is significant to the less than .02 level and constitutes a .47 correlation. The only relationship for the white group was the more a subject believes a policeman is out to give him a "hard time," the more likely will he accept disobedience of the laws. The correlation here being .23 (p < .04). The data indicates for both groups that the honesty of the policeman or blare in carrying out orders does not significantly affect one's acceptance or disdain of law compliance.

E. **Effect of Police Attitudes on Political Trust**

In this facet of the analysis, the independent variables will be attitudes toward the police (questions 16-20), and the
variables serving a dependent role will be the political trust questions (nos. 1-9).

Analyzing the entire sample, general trust in our governmental system was significantly linked to all the attitude toward the police items. Trust in the police when in trouble and reliance on the police for help were both significant to the less than .01 level and correlated with trust in our governmental system by .22 and .23 respectively. Trust in elected officials in Washington was significantly linked to the propensity of one's overall attitude toward the police. Especially, does one's trust in the police when in trouble affect his/her trust in national elected officials, including the President. Specific trust in the President was strongly linked to one's attitudes toward the police. Each relationship here had an average correlation of .20 (p < .01).

On the local level of political trust, a positive attitude toward the police generally meant a positive attitude toward trust in one's hometown government and mayor. A belief in the government being run for "big interests" or "all the people" was not significantly related to police attitudes.

**Effect of Police Attitudes on Political Trust by Race**

The black subfile brought out four major relationships between police attitudes and political trust. General trust in the governmental system is significantly linked to trust in the police when in trouble (correlation .24, p < .03) and
reliance on the police for help. The black group also sensed that the honesty of policemen, as they perceive it, can be positively associated with the importance of elections making Washington officials listen to the people and specific trust in the national elected officials themselves.

On the hometown scope, the more trust in the police when the black person is in trouble, the greater likelihood will be his trust in hometown government (correlation .26, p < .02). Although the black population felt strongly that the government was run especially for a "few big interests" this had no significant link toward its police attitudes.

The white subsample confirmed several more relationships between attitudes toward the police and political trust. General trust in our governmental system to do what is right correlated with confidence in police when in trouble to the .16 degree (p < .03). A white person generally links greater perceived honesty of the police, absolution of any blame in carrying out duties, and greater reliance on police for help, with a positive attitude toward elections making the government in Washington pay attention to the people. The more one trusts the police to not try and give them a "hard time," the more likely will be a stronger trust in elected national officials (correlation .23, p < .01) and the President (correlation .28, p < .01). Trust in the President is significantly tied in with three other factors, more honesty, confidence when in trouble, and the attitude that there should be no
blame put on a policeman in carrying out his duties. Each of these relationships was significant to the less than .02 level and measured a correlation of approximately .18. Attitudes toward the police seemed closer aligned with the President than other national elected officials.

Concerning hometown government and its elected officials, similar findings are indicated from the positive relationship between honesty of the police and confidence in police when in trouble with trust in the hometown government to do what is right (correlations of .21 and .24 respectively, \( p < .04 \)). Overall trust in locally elected officials is also partially linked to a trust in police not to give one a "hard time," and the ability to rely confidently on the police when in trouble. Here there is a covariance of .22 and .21 respectively (\( p < .02 \)).
VI. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The importance of regime stability for continuity in government cannot be underrated. There is one estimate that sixty-four out of eighty-four countries of the world were more stable between 1948 and 1954 than the years 1955 and 1962. Since World War II there have been 17 successful coups d'etat in South America and in many of the African and Asian countries. A world in such a constant flux of turmoil has little chance to preserve a form of government. It is the major argument of the present work that generalized support, in the form of authority-acceptance, from the ordinary members of the political system is one important way of explaining how some political orders are able to maintain themselves in the face of severe stress. The United States seems to be one of the few countries which have been characterized by relative regime stability rather than by frequent regime change. If so, American support attitudes can be used as an empirical focus for looking at the relationship between regime maintenance and the values held by political system members. This study has attempted to see how specific attitudes

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23 Samuel P. Huntington, Political Order in Changing Societies, pp. 3-4.
toward the police (support) affect the acceptance of political authority in the form of political trust and compliance with the law.

Studies in this area have tapped the attitudes of various age groups. To young children the policeman is a heroic figure. As they move into their teens, however, many of these starry-eyed youngsters become covert cynics or overt enemies of the police. A transition in attitudes takes place. It has also been shown that Negro children equally like the police and political authorities as do white children, but drop in trust much more rapidly upon entering the teen-age years. On the adult community, Negro attitudes toward the police seem to be significantly lower than those of the whites. A CBS News Poll showed that 59% of the Negroes and 6% of the whites in the sample felt that police treatment was "too brutal." In handling riots, 45% of the blacks as opposed to 5% of the whites thought that the police "should go easier." Finally, 60% of the blacks felt that the government couldn't be trusted as it favors the whites over the blacks. Of the whites, 56% thought the government was worth trusting and was fair. 25

Comparing the data from the present study with that of other studies shows that some parallels exist. A study

24Arthur Niederhoffer, New Directions In Police-Community Relations, p. 115.

done in 1968 to 1971 by Daniel Yankelovich, Inc., for the John D. Rockefeller Fund found that 52% of the students (N = 1,244) in 1971 were more skeptical of the truthfulness of government officials than they were the year before. In 1968, this survey found that six out of ten students (59%) agreed they would easily accept the "power and authority" of police. In 1971, this number had been reduced to 45%. It should also be noted that the Negroes in this extensive study held less positive attitudes toward authorities and the government in general. Another survey presented the college generation as "... politically disinterested, apathetic, and conservative." Furthermore, this 1960 study on national attitudes had 81% concurring that "most people can be trusted." On the whole, these college students of over fifteen years ago are significantly more trusting than those of today.

The data from this study is generally in alignment with other research in the area. Some discrepancies do exist, though. Attitudes toward the police and authority-acceptance are generally fairly similar between races. A few blacks

26The Changing Values on Campus, p. 21.
27Ibid., p. 77.
28Ibid., pp. 151-155.
29Korton Levitt and Ben Rubenstein, eds., Youth and Social Change, p. 199.
30Ibid., p. 134.
tended to dominate the more negative categories and a few whites dominated the positive categories. The brunt of the distributions for both races were in the middle, granted the white distribution was slightly more positive. Several possibilities exist to explain the results. A time-lag exists between the previously cited studies and this one. The time period of 5-10 years ago was filled with more fervid civil rights problems and possibly could account for the significantly lower black attitudes. Today, this area is much more sanguine and less open of an issue. Also, the factor of social class could be an important reason that black and white attitudes are so similar for the college population. Generally, the college-geared Negro comes from a middle or upper-class family and is a very special select person compared to the many blacks who are not in college. Finally, it could be that the black student is more open to negative socialization by family and peers than is the white college student. Again, this small attitude discrepancy posited by socialization may be compensated for by the Negro student generally coming from a middle or higher socio-economic class.

Attitude toward the police seems to be significantly related to both political trust and law compliance. However, the relationships might be spurious, for example, it could be that a college student's political trust determines both his attitude toward the police and his compliance with the law. Spuriousness is usually determined by using a partialling
technique which controls for all other independent variables. The data does lend itself to such further analysis. Relationships do exist between police attitudes and authority-acceptance, further research can augment this knowledge and determine the extent to which one affects the other.

In any case, only a small amount of variation is accounted for by any one variable. This is a strong indication that authority-acceptance is, like so many other social science concepts, a product of multivariate causation. This does not mean that our original hypothesis is incorrect. Attitude toward the police is only one of a number of variables that determine political trust and law compliance.


VIII. APPENDIX
Dear respondent:

At the present time I am conducting a study of attitudes toward political authorities among selected Ball State students. You have been randomly selected to participate in a survey to help me in developing this study. All questionnaires are coded by number so your name will not be used for identification purposes. All questionnaires will be kept in the strictest of confidence.

Some people do not hold very much faith in surveys and some people don't like them! But if you will take the time to honestly answer these questions based on your true feelings I will be most appreciative. This survey is being done as a part of a course requirement and I do need your help!

If you do not wish to participate in this survey please send it back so you will not be further bothered.

After completing it, please place it in the enclosed self-addressed stamped envelope and mail it to me as soon as possible.

Thank-you for your assistance in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

Chris Seigel
Ball State University
Please answer the following questions by placing a check in the appropriate blank.

1) How much do you think you can trust our governmental system to do what is right?
   ______ Just about always
   ______ Most of the time
   ______ Some of the time
   ______ Almost never

2) Would you say that the government in Washington D.C. is pretty much run for the benefit of a few big interests or that it is run for the benefit of all the people?
   ______ Run for the benefit of a few big interests
   ______ Run for the benefit of all the people

3) How much do you feel that having elections makes the government in Washington pay attention to what the people think?
   ______ A good deal
   ______ Some
   ______ Not very much

4) How much do you think you can trust the government in your home town to do what is right?
   ______ Just about always
   ______ Most of the time
   ______ Some of the time
   ______ Almost never

5) How much do you feel having elections makes the government in your home town pay attention to what people think?
   ______ A good deal
   ______ Some
   ______ Not very much

6) How much do you feel you can trust the elected officials in Washington to do what is right?
   ______ Just about always
   ______ Most of the time
   ______ Some of the time
   ______ Almost never

7) How much do you feel you can trust the President of the U.S. to do what is right?
   ______ Just about always
   ______ Most of the time
   ______ Some of the time
   ______ Almost never
8) How much do you feel you can trust the elected officials in your home town to do what is right?

______ Almost never
______ Some of the time
______ Most of the time
______ Just about always

9) How much do you feel you can trust the mayor (or city-manager) of your home town to do what is right?

______ Almost never
______ Some of the time
______ Most of the time
______ Just about always

10) Do you think people should always obey laws?

______ No
______ Yes

11) If you answered "No", why not?__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

If you answered "Yes", why would you obey a law you disagree with?__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

12) Which do you view is more important to obey, local laws of your own home town or the laws of the Federal government?

______ Laws of the home town
______ Laws of the Federal government
______ Equally important to obey both

13) When I think about politics, I feel like an outsider.

_____ Strongly agree
_____ Agree
_____ Disagree
_____ Strongly Disagree
_____ Don't know

14) It is only wishful thinking to believe that a person such as me can influence what happens in politics.

_____ Strongly Disagree
_____ Disagree
_____ Agree
_____ Strongly Agree

15) Government officials care a lot about what people like me think.

_____ Strongly Agree
_____ Agree
_____ Disagree
_____ Strongly Disagree
_____ Don't know
16) Generally speaking, most policemen like to give someone like me a "hard time."

   ____ Strongly Disagree
   ____ Disagree
   ____ Agree
   ____ Strongly Agree
   ____ Don't Know

17) How honest do you think the police are compared to most men?

   ____ More Honest
   ____ As Honest
   ____ Less honest
   ____ Don't Know

18) If I were in trouble with the police, I would feel most confident in being treated fairly.

   ____ Strongly Agree
   ____ Agree
   ____ Disagree
   ____ Strongly Disagree
   ____ Don't Know

19) A police officer is only following orders when he is carrying out his duties, and cannot be blamed for what he does.

   ____ Strongly Disagree
   ____ Disagree
   ____ Agree
   ____ Strongly Agree
   ____ Don't Know

20) If I ever need help, I can rely on the police to come to my aid.

   ____ Strongly Agree
   ____ Agree
   ____ Strongly Disagree
   ____ Don't Know

21) Please classify the population of your home town according to one of the following categories.

   ____ Large City (100,000 people or more)
   ____ Suburb (town or city located near a large city)
   ____ Medium-size City (20,000 to 100,000 people)
   ____ Small Town (less than 20,000
   ____ Rural (farm or agricultural area)

***************

THANK-YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION