

ACTION METHODS FOR POLICE IN A PROGRAM OF OPEN ADMISSIONS TO COLLEGE

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The brilliant pioneering work of Dr. J. L. Moreno has made yet another major contribution to the higher education of police officers.

John Jay College of Criminal Justice, The City University of New York, was originally designed with the notion of providing higher education opportunities for persons involved in law enforcement activities. Towards this end a faculty of highly experienced and equipped people teach within a format which offers the same course twice a day to allow for the changing shifts of the police officers in the City of New York. Moreover, courses are particularly designed toward the end of affording a Baccalaureate, Associate and Master degrees in Criminal Justice, and at present, plans are well under way at this time toward offering a Ph.D. In recent years other majors have been made possible in the areas of Arts and Languages; Behavioral Science; Government, History and Economics; Science and Mathematics, in addition to the basic offerings of Law and Police Science.

Two events last fall highlight the increasing range of responsibility to society evidenced by our institutions of higher learning. One was the admission to our college of approximately 1,000 open enrollment students last September. This figure is being raised to an anticipated 1,800 for next September. In addition to this, every police officer as part of his training has been required to come to John Jay College for one day of instruction in Psychology, Sociology and English every week for a full semester. This figure is being increased both in numbers of police in training and in time spent at the John Jay College. In September new recruits to the Police Department will probably spend 2½ days per week in college for one semester. This type of student population coupled to the demands of our rapidly changing society necessitates the utilization of teaching methods that have several objectives that appear important at this time, they are:

1. To facilitate the educational process with many people who previously thought they may have seen the last of a classroom situation.
2. To facilitate communication among groups whose verbal skills may not be commensurate with earlier student populations.
3. To shift their self-concept toward the end that continuation in a college framework after their initial exposure is facilitated.

PSYCHODRAMA

Effort was made to meet these objectives in the following manner:

1. The shock of finding themselves back in a classroom was partially mitigated by allowing the students to ventilate their initial consternation. A polarized type of adaptation with most of them seeing themselves as light years apart from the inhabitants of Academe was shifted by doing some early role reversal work and by the instructors' orientation toward an affirmative and highly accessible approach.

2. Again role training whenever possible was utilized as an adjunct to the conventional academic model. In at least one instance there appears some evidence that in time the conventional academic model might be superseded. Action methods were adapted to courses in speech; these proved to be very effective. It was noted that the gains in speech facilitated by a very few sessions of role training transcended the gains in a prolonged course of academic instruction. At this time then the focus will be on the relevance of action methods to the overcoming of resistance to education in people who are attending college and to an analysis of some factors that appear associated with continuation in college. In this latter connection it must be pointed out that correlation does not imply causation.

3. Once the compulsory one semester stint at John Jay was over, it was hoped that the police would continue to attend on their own volition. There were several reasons why we felt this way—for one, we noted a diminution of authoritarianism. This is particularly desirable in these days of confrontation where an irresistible force meeting an immovable object could well be the prescription for chaos. In addition in a society becoming ever more technologically oriented and boasting of an evergrowing population exposed to higher education, having a non-college trained police force can contribute to a depressed self-esteem on the part of the individual police officer as well as fostering enormous lacunae in the rapprochement between the police and the public whom they are sworn to protect. In this context, we see action methods as serving a tremendous need and filling a large education gap which has long begged for practical solution.

