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OF APPLICANTS

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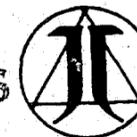
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POLICE INTEGRITY: THE ROLE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SCREENING OF APPLICANTS

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In the literature of police moral conduct, causation is usually discussed in terms of the "rotten apple" versus the "rotten barrel" explanation (Swan, 1976; Bahn, 1976). Bracey (1976) discussed these theories in terms of "bad men" versus "bad laws" explanations. In recent years, writers have been leaning heavily toward the "rotten barrel" explanations. Niederhoffer (1967), Fortier (1972), Mann (1973), and Bahn (1976) have been the strongest advocates for the acculturation process model for explaining the essential causes of police behavior of questionable integrity. However, there have been few data gathered, and consequently theories of causation are largely speculative and hypothetical.

Theoretical explanations of the lack of integrity of some policemen correspond closely to a controversy in the area of general personality theory, i.e., the importance of situational variables versus trait variables in determining behavior. Advocates for the situational position have typically been followers of Skinner and the behaviorist school. Mischel (1968) has been the most vocal critic of

trait theories of personality and has championed the situational view of determinants of behavior. Eysenck, Cattell, and the personality trait and type theorists have been the advocates of the position of trait determinants of behavior or cross-situational consistencies in behavior. A more moderate "interactionist" position has been taken by some, e.g., Bem (1974) and Spielberger (1966). The interactionists essentially hold that behavior is determined by a combination of personality traits or cross-situational consistencies and situational variables. In Bem's words, interactionism allows us to "predict some behavior, some of the time."

The situational, behavioral, or social position has had its influence on the methodology of psychological screening of police applicants. For example, Chenoweth (1961) and Mills (1972) used situational, behavioral methods of assessment rather than standardized psychological test batteries. However, the majority of psychologists involved in psychological screening of law enforcement applicants use standardized psychological tests or a combination of tests and interview procedures. In order to justify the use of preemployment testing, one must assume that at least some (and a significant amount of) police behavior is cross-situational. It would be foolish to make preemployment predictions of police behavior if that behavior is determined solely by variables occurring after the person is hired into the police department.

This paper will relate the empirical data from studies of psychological characteristics of police applicants and policemen to theoretical explanations of police moral behavior. In order for the "rotten apple" or "bad men" position to be supported, it would be helpful to show that 1. some police applicants show characteristics of "rotten apples" before becoming employed as policemen, and 2. police officers who show a lack of integrity in their professional behavior generally have more "rotten

apple" characteristics at the time of preemployment screening than officers who have high integrity. Conversely, if the "rotten barrel" or socialization theories are to be supported, data should show that 1. policemen who do engage in low integrity behavior were not predisposed to do so when they entered the police department, i.e., their personality make-up did not differ from the general population on traits that are related to integrity, and 2. identification of high-risk applicants and preemployment prediction of unethical behavior should not be possible. In other words, officers who are identified as having low integrity should have been no different in personality-behavioral characteristics at time of employment from those who are later identified as having high integrity.

An Interactionist Position

Based on the empirical data which are presented in this paper, an interactionist position is taken regarding causation of moral conduct of policemen. More specifically, it is asserted that:

1. Some individuals who are attracted to police work have personality characteristics indicating that they are more likely to be predisposed to low integrity behavior than persons drawn from the general population.
2. Applicants to police departments are relatively homogeneous in terms of personality characteristics; however, some applicants share these characteristics more than others.
3. This behavioral predisposition interacts with situational variables and socialization processes to determine moral conduct.
4. The organization values in police departments are in part a product of the personality characteristics of

the individuals making up the organization.

This does not mean that all people who engage in behavior of questionable moral justification were predisposed to do so nor that all people so predisposed will encounter the social variables necessary to produce this behavior. The personality type "predisposition" is regarded as a necessary but not sufficient condition to determine later, on-the-job moral conduct. Neither are the socialization variables regarded as sufficient in themselves to determine moral conduct, but it is necessary to take them into account in predicting or explaining moral conduct. When a person predisposed to behavior of questionable moral conduct encounters the socialization pressures described by Bahn and others, police behavior reflecting low integrity occurs.

Data supporting this position will be presented both from the published literature and from the author's own research, some of which is published and some of which is still in preparation. The author's sample consists of a broad battery of personality and interest tests administered to more than 850 applicants to 15 law enforcement agencies in the Southeast and follow-up data on approximately 350 of these applicants who were hired. The psychological test battery consists of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), the Strong Vocational Interest Blank (SVIB), and a biographical inventory. Recently, five moral values measures were added to the battery; these will be discussed more fully later in this paper. The number of subjects varies as analyses were performed at various stages of research.

Personality Characteristics of Applicants

MMPI

In our research, we have found that the mean and

modal MMPI profile on a sample of 632 applicants is the "4-9" configuration. Scale 4 is the Psychopathic Deviate scale, and scale 9 is the Hypomania scale. The "4-9" profile is usually interpreted as predictive of "acting out of antisocial impulses." The elevation of each of these two scales is approximately one standard deviation above the mean of the general population. *This elevation is not in the range suggesting psychopathology.* However, it should be noted that for the mean profile to be elevated by one standard deviation on these scales, it was not infrequent to encounter psychopathological "4-9" profiles in applicants. In fact, when psychopathology was found, it was, in the majority of cases of the "antisocial" type. In an earlier study of 171 applicants who were hired, the hired group also had a mean "4-9" MMPI profile that is in the normal range (Shealy, 1972). One MMPI interpretation manual (Van de Riet and Wolking) says of the "4-9" profile that "people with this code typically show some acting out behavior. They exhibit an enduring tendency to get into trouble with their environment, usually in ways that are more damaging to themselves and their families' reputation than to others." This mean "4-9" profile, although of mild elevation, indicates that some police applicants and policemen are predisposed toward behavior reflecting questionable integrity. We find two other clinical scales on the MMPI which deviate from the norm, but to a lesser degree than the 4 and the 9 scales. Both scale 3 (Hysteria) and scale 0 (Social Extraversion) deviate slightly from the mean in the normative sample. This deviation suggests that the applicants and policemen are characterized by a mild tendency to engage in attention-seeking, extroverted behavior.

These findings in our studies in the Southeast are quite similar to findings of other investigators in different parts of the country at different times (Badalamente et al. 1975; Matarazzo et al. 1964; Rubin & Cruse, 1973;

Saccazzo et al. 1974). Matarazzo's research group reported a "4-3" mean profile code on a 1959-1962 sample of 243 police applicants and described this group of successful applicants as "blustery, sociable, exhibitionistic, active, manipulating others to gain their own ends, opportunistic, unable to delay gratification, impulsive, and showing some tendencies toward overindulgence in sex and drinking, in a word, fitting the lower socioeconomic group's stereotype of the 'man's man' " (p. 131).

Not only is this 1959-1962 Northwest sample very similar to our 1970-1976 Southeast sample, but Matarazzo's group described the sample as a "remarkable facsimile" of the 1946-1947 officer studied by Zaice (1962) in the same city of the Northwest. Thus, the similarities in personality characteristics of police applicants seem to be relatively consistent across geographical location as well as across a thirty-year period of time.

Both the Southeast and Northwest samples discussed were composed of "successful" applicants, i.e., applicants who had successfully undergone civil service and police department screening procedures. In both settings, psychological screening is performed as the last step in the selection process to reduce expense and professional time required. This postponement of screening means that the samples have been preselected and the grossly unfit have likely been already eliminated by civil service examinations, background investigations, and other procedures.

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

The MBTI, unlike the MMPI, is not a measure of psychopathology but a measure of normal differences in people, i.e., differences in types of activities preferred, the way in which one perceives the environment, and the way one goes about valuing what is perceived. It is often used in matching persons to activities, other persons, and situations, and it is particularly useful for matching

personality types with occupation.

We administered the MBTI to 292 police applicants (Shealy and Roberts, 1976) and found that there is a modal personality type for police applicants as measured by this inventory. The modal personality type was the ESTJ code, meaning that the majority of applicants are more extroverted than introverted (85%), used sensation rather than intuition as the preferred mode of understanding their environment (87%), preferred thinking over feeling in making judgments (66%), and generally preferred judging over perceiving (76%). This ESTJ constellation was found in 47% of the applicants as compared to 15.6% of the male high school normative sample. Most other groups included in the normative sample showed a much lower frequency of occurrence of ESTJ types, e.g., a study of 671 National Merit finalists found less than 4% ESTJ types. Our 47% frequency of this type is thus at least three times greater in the sample of police applicants than would be expected from the general male population of similar educational background.

The ESTJ type description is an analytic, impersonal, factually-oriented person. An excerpt from Myers (1973) description of the ESTJ type follows:

Being a judging type, he may neglect perception. He needs to stop, look and listen to other people's points of view, especially with people under his authority who can't talk back. This is seldom easy for him. But unless he can do it, he will judge too hastily, without sufficient facts and without enough regard for what his associates think and feel. When he does not make an effort to understand, he will misjudge and antagonize. It pays him to understand. Feeling is his least developed and least manageable process. If too much is suppressed, it will gradually build up pressure and explode unexpectedly on quite insufficient provocation.

Our conclusions from this study are that police applicants are somewhat homogeneous in personality type, i.e., there is a modal personality type among applicants. The characteristics of this type are in accord with findings of other researchers and support the notion that some police applicants are predisposed to certain behavior which is consistent with the stereotype of policemen being impulsive and antagonistic.

Edwards Personal Preference Schedule

The EPPS, like the MBTI, is not a test designed to measure psychopathology, but one which measures non-pathological personality "needs." The Matarazzo group (1964) reported that their sample of 243 applicants were below average in Autonomy, Succorance, Nurturance, and Aggression and above average in the needs of Achievement, Exhibition, Intraception, Dominance, Endurance, and Heterosexuality. These researchers described their sample of police applicants on the EPPS as "having strong needs to excel or achieve, be the center of attention, understand and dominate others, stick to a job until it is done, and to 'be one of the boys' among men." They "like to work with others rather than autonomously, need little kindness or succorance from others, in return give little sympathy to others."

Sterling (1972) administered the EPPS to police recruits at the beginning of their training and again after eighteen months of police work. He also administered the test to a control group of experienced policemen. He found that recruits are much more similar in personality characteristics to experienced policemen than to the general adult male population. Eighteen months later, the same officers were even more similar to veteran officers. Sterling's finding of the recruit being more similar to veteran policemen than to the general population is confirmed in Mill et al. (1964) Mills and his colleagues

found "an astonishing similarity between the recruit and veteran patrolmen groups which suggests that the recruit shares the distinctive personality traits of the experienced officer before he ever dons a uniform." Their findings suggest that personality characteristics as well as socialization processes are important in accounting for policemen's behavior.

Measures of Moral Development

Hogan (1973) developed a model of moral conduct and moral character which, according to Hogan, "explain(s) a considerable range of moral behavior" and "should help to explain moral conduct in any sociocultural context." These five concepts are 1. moral knowledge, 2. socialization, 3. empathy, 4. ethics of conscience vs. ethics of responsibility, and 5. autonomy. From the personality studies reviewed earlier, we see that police applicants and/or policemen are low in autonomy and empathy. Police applicants are also described as being rather rigid and rule-oriented, i. e., subscribing to ethics of social responsibility rather than ethics of personal conscience. Shortly, evidence will be presented indicating that police officers who are suspected of improper moral conduct are more likely to subscribe to ethics of responsibility while those believed to be of unquestionably high integrity are more likely to subscribe to ethics of personal conscience. In a related finding, Rokeach (1971) concluded that the value systems of policemen differed from those of a sample of the general community in that policemen have higher values for obedience to authority and a punitive, unsympathetic approach toward people.

The first dimension in Hogan's model, moral knowledge, is believed to not vary in terms of individual differences, assuming that one is intelligent enough to understand the rules of society and has had normal acculturation experiences. By inference, it appears that

police applicants are remarkably lower than the general population in three of Hogan's other four dimensions; empathy, autonomy, and degree of subscription to ethics of conscience.

Again, the empirical data support the view that police applicants are predisposed toward behavior reflecting questionable moral judgment, and the high incidence of police corruption acknowledged by some law enforcement administrators can be traced to the proverbial "rotten apples" who were perhaps blemished before they fell into the "rotten barrel."

An Empirical Study

In 1975 the author and his research group were able to obtain the cooperation and assistance of the administration of a police department in conducting a study of policemen who were believed to be involved in behavior of dubious moral justification. The administration provided the researchers with a list of names of policemen who were thought to be engaging in professional improprieties involving acceptance of "gratuities." These officers were still active only because there was not sufficient evidence to successfully bring charges against them. The researchers had known and worked with the police administration for four years, and an open working relationship had developed; there was a high degree of mutual trust during the project. The administration also provided a list of names of officers who were believed to be of unquestionable high integrity. With the assistance of the administration, the researchers identified two supervisory level police officers who were believed to be of high integrity. These two officers were asked to participate in a psychological study. They agreed to do so but were not informed as to the specific nature of the study.

A random-ordered list of names of the total group of policemen being studied was independently presented to these two officers. Each was asked to rate each person on the list on a five-point rating scale on two dimensions: 1. how long he had known the person, and 2. how well he liked the person. Then the researchers matched the high and low integrity groups on: a. the length of time the rater had known each officer, b. the rater's liking of each officer, and c. the rank of the officer. Matching the two groups on these variables resulted in a shorter list from which was generated all possible *pairs* of names. These pairs were then arranged in random order.

Over a period of several months, the pairs were presented one at a time to each rater. The rater was asked to choose the member of the pair who was most likely to be the officer involved in the following verbally described scene:

A police officer drives up to an illegal "whiskey house" on Saturday morning. He parks his patrol car and enters. After exchanging greetings with the proprietor, the police officer accepts a ten-dollar bill as a bribe and puts it into his pocket. No words are exchanged about the money, and the officer leaves.

This particular scene was used because it is the most frequently reported type of questionable police activity in this particular city, according to the police administration.

The number of times a person was chosen as the main character in the vignette was totalled to produce an "integrity score" for each person on the list. Each person received two independent scores based on the two ratings. Agreement between the two raters was high as indicated by a correlation coefficient of +.85. The agreement between each rater and the initial dichotomous sorting by the police administration was also high as indicated by correlation coefficients of +.83 and .85. A linear correlation combining these three measures of integrity was

used to produce one "integrity score" for each person.

Scales measuring empathy (Hogan, 1969), socialization (Gough, 1969), moral values (Hogan & Dickstein, 1972), moral judgment (Hogan, 1970), and autonomy (Barron, 1953) were administered to these 102 volunteers. These scales were chosen because they are considered by Hogan's model to measure the essential dimensions of moral conduct. Also a number of biographical and demographic variables (20) were collected at the time of testing.

Results

As mentioned earlier, the officers in the "low integrity" group scored significantly lower on the moral values scale measuring the belief in ethics of conscience ($p < .005$). The results depict the group of policemen rated as having lower integrity, as having immature moral judgment characterized by insensitivity to justice, being more conforming, and using moral judgment based on rational rather than intuitive processes. The "high integrity" policemen were more likely to have concern for the sanctity of an individual, to use judgments based on the spirit rather than the letter of the law, to be concerned for the welfare of society as a whole, and to have the capacity to see both sides of an issue.

Policemen rated in the "low integrity" group were also more likely to have formally participated in athletics on a varsity team in high school ($p < .01$), were less likely to be affiliated with religion ($p < .05$), were less likely to have had relatives in police work in the past ($p < .05$), and were more likely to have relatives in police work currently ($p < .05$). There was a suggestion that this group was less likely to have children and more likely to have more years of formal education, but these findings are tentative and need to be confirmed in further studies ($p < .10$).

The tentative and surprising finding that higher

education is positively related to ratings of low integrity, if confirmed, might be explained in terms of Bracey's notion of the "functional importance of police corruption." One of the cultural beliefs of our society is that persons with higher education should receive more financial remuneration than persons with less education. Perhaps accepting gratuities for favors functions to produce the higher income and resulting higher standard of living that is "supposed" to come with higher education. Or, in terms of Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957), such behavior would function to reduce the dissonance resulting from two incongruent pieces of information—higher education and no higher income than less-educated co-workers. Although the department studied provides educational incentive pay, that extra money might not be sufficient to raise the standard of living without additional unethical salary supplements.

In summary, this study supports the position that preemployment variables exist that can be measured during preemployment screening and are predictive of judged moral conduct of policemen. Several of the demographic variables, e.g., participation in organized athletics in high school, seemingly could be used to predict post-employment integrity (this example of athletic participation may be related to low autonomy and high conformity needs). Further research will determine whether the measures of moral values developed by Hogan will be predictive of later moral conduct of policemen. The author is currently administering these scales to applicants and will at some future time be able to determine if they are predictive. It should also be possible to determine if moral values of police applicants are similar to those of the general population when the recruit enters police work and to determine whether they change as a result of police socialization. Based on the data presented earlier in this paper, it would be reasonable to hypothesize that some

applicants are low on these scales at time of employment and score even lower after the socialization process occurs.

Conclusions

The evidence seems to support the conclusion that police integrity is at least partly determined by personality characteristics that are present when the recruit is hired. There is also convincing evidence that the problem of police impropriety is in part a function of the personality type that is attracted to police work. To say this is not to deny the importance of organizational factors and the socialization process as causal factors; however, to assert that job-related improper moral conduct of some policemen is the sole result of post-hiring organizational dynamics is to oversimplify the problem. Police moral conduct is likely to have complex causes including an interaction between personal traits and situational variables. Also, if peer pressure to engage in unethical activities is as universal in police organizations as some writers have proposed, some predispositional variables are necessary to account for the fact that some policemen succumb to these pressures while the majority of others do not.

The fact that groups of applicants and policemen studied have personality characteristics which seem to predispose them toward questionable behavior does not mean that all applicants or all policemen within these groups have these qualities. There is individual variation within these groups; otherwise, attempts to predict future behavior among applicants would be useless. However, the relative homogeneity of personality type among police applicants makes the screener's task more difficult.

One implication for reducing the incidence of improper behavior is that we should attempt to screen out the most "predisposed" applicants while attempting to remedy the organizational dynamics which encourage such behavior.

Another implication involves management of assignment of new recruits. If certain recruits are identified as more vulnerable to these organizational pressures than others, careful selection of assignments might reduce the incidence of behavior reflecting questionable integrity and would shield high-risk persons from the work-setting more likely to foster improper behavior during the early formative months of employment.

Much of the literature concerned with police integrity and personality characteristics of policemen seems to be emotionally-loaded or value-oriented. There are a number of testimonials and opinions regarding "rotten apples" or "rotten barrels." Too often, these do not include empirical data. Without an empirical data base, it is unproductive to debate whether or not there is a "police personality" or whether policemen are often forced into behavior reflecting questionable moral judgment by organizational pressures. Only if we are willing to look at the facts that exist and continue to expand our objective base of data will we be able to understand and apply our knowledge to insure that we *select* and *nurture* policemen in the direction of superior moral judgment and integrity.

It appears imperative to the author and, one can guess, to the majority of professional police officers themselves, that we continue to search for better methods to predict moral behavior of police officers and add these methods to our psychological screening phase of the hiring process.

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