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PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING AND THE SELECTION OF POLICE OFFICERS

A National Survey

ROBERT E. COCHRANE

ROBERT P. TETT

LEON VANDECREEK

Personnel selection practices have become more widely used over the years, particularly with law enforcement candidates. This increased use has included more sophisticated methods of evaluating potential police officers. One reason for greater emphasis on selection procedures is the negative impact of having unqualified employees. Financial costs are one way police agencies are affected. For example, the Los Angeles Police Department spends approximately \$100,000 to train each

new police officer. Furthermore, it was estimated that the average new police recruit was required to undergo nearly 1,000 hours of training (U.S. Department of Justice, 1996). Obviously, if hires later prove unable to perform their duties, substantial resources have been wasted. Although several factors influence the potential success or failure of police recruits, agencies are largely concerned about the emotional or psychological adequacy of recruits. Hibler and Kurke (1995) defined this as “psychological suitability,” or the

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presence of personal factors that contribute to human reliability and the absence of those that create unreliability.

Shusman, Inwald, and Landa (1984) reported several purposes for preemployment screening of police officers. First, employers want to weed out lateness and absenteeism, which result in understaffing, excessive overtime pay, and a breakdown in trust among officers. Second, disciplinary interviews increase department expenses and use up valuable administrative time. Third, screening helps to avoid potential harm to citizens or fellow officers. Last, poor publicity and court litigation may result from reckless or irresponsible officer behavior. In at least one case, a plaintiff won a large settlement due to a department's negligence in conducting psychological evaluations of its officers (*Bonsignore v. City of New York*, 1981). Considering the duties of a police officer, there is little room for error. Besides the military, there is perhaps no other profession that has the authority to use force on others if necessary and invade the privacy of citizens. The consequences of officers' behavior can result in negative effects for the department, individuals, and the community.

The purpose of properly selecting a candidate is rather obvious. However, employee selection is more difficult to conduct than other personnel decisions (e.g., promotion) because little is known about the individual and there is no in-house record of previous performance for the candidate. Because recruiters cannot evaluate applicants based exclusively on their observed performance, other measures must be utilized. Determining persons' abilities from their past performance and behavior would probably be ideal. Unfortunately, this information is often unavailable for a new recruit. Lester (1983) argued that the most valuable information comes from observing officers in training and during a probationary period. This may be true, but many resources (e.g., money, time) will be depleted if all applicants go through the training process. Furthermore, not all determinants of job performance, such as cognitive ability and personality variables, can be acquired or altered via training

(Reiss, Ones, & Viswesvaran, 1996). Also, if well-designed selection is used during the recruitment phase, less socialization will be needed in terms of social control, disciplinary procedures, and ongoing supervision (Hancock & McClung, 1984).

THE SELECTION AND ASSESSMENT PROCESS

In 1973, the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals recommended that every police agency follow a formal selection process that includes (a) a written test of mental ability or aptitude, (b) an oral interview, (c) a psychological examination, and (d) a background investigation. Even earlier, the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice (1967) recommended the screening of all potential officers. It was believed that introducing greater screening and standardization to the selection process would result in a more qualified police force. More recently, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (1998) developed several guidelines for preemployment psychological evaluations. These recommendations address such issues as validation of testing instruments, compliance with legislation (e.g., Americans with Disabilities Act [ADA]), using qualified psychologists who are familiar with the relevant research, and content of the written reports.

Over the years, countless measures for screening candidates have been used to predict officer performance; these have shown varying levels of success. One of the best predictors of future work performance has been ability to perform duties similar to those required on a job (Guion & Gibson, 1988). For example, Schmidt, Hunter, McKenzie, and Muldrow (1979) compared job performance for employees selected with an ability test (e.g., situational exercise) and those without the test and found on average that those selected with the test were 0.487 standard deviation units better in job performance. Hunter and Hunter's (1984) meta-analysis showed that when

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artifacts such as statistical error and small sample size were removed from research studies for entry-level jobs, the best predictor of job performance was ability, which had a mean validity of .53. Assessment centers have a long history of evaluating candidates based on how well they perform job-related activities in simulated settings. These centers are typically private agencies that design evaluation instruments and assess candidates on numerous variables before providing feedback to the employers. However, as of 1990, less than one fourth of police departments reported using assessment centers (Ash, Slora, & Britton, 1990). Although still controversial, the polygraph is frequently cited as a tool used in selection (e.g., Ben-Shakhar & Furedy, 1990; Lykken, 1981; Saxe, 1994). Of the municipal agencies responding to the Ash et al. survey, 73% indicated using the polygraph in preemployment screening. The Civil Service Examination (CSE) is a multiple-choice exam designed for the selection of civil servant employees, including police officers (Cortina, Doherty, Schmitt, Kaufman, & Smith, 1992). However, there is no indication as to how extensively the CSE is used. The National Police Officer Selection Test (POST), a less well-known skills-based instrument, has also shown decent reliability and criterion-related validity in several studies (Henry & Rafilson, 1997; Rafilson & Sison, 1996). The POST assesses mathematics, reading, grammar, and incident report writing. Certain information derived from the interview, application blank, and background investigation has also been used to select police officers, even though much of this data is not subject to predictive validity studies like other variables. For example, many departments will deny an applicant further consideration if he or she has a history of a reckless driving conviction. In this case it would be impossible to validate the predictive or concurrent validity of this measure without danger to the public. Cognitive measures have also been used to predict job performance across various occupations. However, intelligence and cognitive ability are not highly predictive of on-the-job performance, despite showing some promise in predicting police academy performance

(Aylward, 1985; Henderson, 1979; Spielberger, Ward, & Spaulding, 1979).

Two large meta-analytic studies have demonstrated the usefulness of personality measures in predicting job performance using the “big five” personality dimensions (conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, neuroticism, and openness to experience) (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Tett, Jackson, & Rothstein, 1991). Other studies have also established the ability of personality tests and inventories to predict job performance (e.g., Inwald, 1988; . . . McDaniel & Frei, 1994; . . .). Traits from the Neuroticism, Extraversion, and Openness (NEO) Personality Inventory–Revised, which was based on the five-factor model of personality, have also shown to be predictive of police performance. In fact, conscientiousness added incremental validity to cognitive testing in one study with 284 police recruits (H. C. Black, 2000).

The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory–2 (MMPI-2) and the Inwald Personality Inventory (IPI) have been shown to be effective in predicting several job criteria for police officers, as well (e.g., Bartol, 1991; Inwald & Knatz, 1988; Scogin, Schumacher, Howland, & McGee, 1989; . . .). Various inventories and psychological measures have also been used to assess the degree to which applicants present excessive socially desirable responses, because applicants may have a tendency to minimize their flaws or weaknesses (e.g., Borum & Stock, 1993; Grossman, Haywood, Ostrov, Wasyliv, & Cavanaugh, 1990).

Between 1979 and 1988, there was enormous growth in the use of psychological services in police departments, assessment being the primary service used (Delprino & Bahn, 1988). In their 1988 nationwide survey, Delprino and Bahn found that 52% of responding police agencies were conducting psychological screening on police recruits and 90% perceived a need for its use in their department. Similarly, Behrens (1985) found that 50% of police agencies responding to a nationwide survey were doing psychological screening. Bartol (1996) surveyed 152 police psychologists and found that preemployment screening consumed the largest percentage of their time

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(34.3%), again suggesting this activity's importance to police departments.

The psychological tests most frequently used in departments throughout the United States are personality measures (Hancock & McClung, 1984). Hartman (1987) reported that most agencies use the MMPI and the clinical interview along with one or more of the following: the California Psychological Inventory (CPI), the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF), Edwards Personal Preference Schedule, and the Inwald Personality Inventory. An earlier survey found the most commonly used personality instruments were the Rorschach, MMPI, CPI, and Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) (Spielberger, 1979). However, a more recent finding (Ash et al., 1990) suggested that Rorschach use has declined among police departments (only 4.4% using it).

Clearly, numerous different psychological tests are used to screen officers, yet little is known about the degree of variability among departments in the United States. Understanding the psychological tests and procedures used today to select officers may help us understand whether departments are using those instruments shown to be most effective in selecting police officers. This information will also allow us to take a look at possible reasons why different departments use different measuring devices. Examining selection practices will also inform us about how police agencies use collected data to make decisions and how much attention they give to various measures and outcomes.

Other important questions that have not been adequately addressed to date are the extent to which police departments are following public policy guidelines regarding selection procedures and the extent to which selection practices have been affected by policy changes. Various agencies have put in place several policies and guidelines including *Standards for Educational and Psychological Tests* (American Psychological Association [APA], 1985), *Principles for the Validation and Use of Personnel Selection Procedures* (Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 1987), *Enforcement*

Guidance: Preemployment Disability-Related Inquiries and Medical Examinations Under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1995), and the *Civil Rights Act of 1991*. These guidelines address such issues as inappropriate inquiries during selection, cutoff scores on standardized tests, and the use of norms. Also, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission focuses much attention on selection procedures that may discriminate or have an adverse impact on certain racial and gender groups.

In addition to examining current selection practices and adherence to guidelines, this study examines how police departments differ based on their size and degree of selectivity of applicants. Knowledge gained from this study will help determine if changes are needed in how police officers are selected as well as provide important feedback to police agencies regarding how well they are performing their selections relative to accepted standards and normative practices. We gathered information to help answer these questions via a survey developed specifically for this study.

Although this study was intended to primarily be exploratory in nature, the following hypotheses are offered: (a) Police departments would use psychological evaluations to a higher degree than has been found in prior studies (Behrens, 1985; Delprino & Bahn, 1988); (b) larger police departments (those that served larger areas and had more employees) and more selective departments (those with higher applicant-to-selection ratios) would use a greater number of selection devices as well as more sophisticated procedures because these agencies tend to have more options and greater resources (sophistication was defined as the use of psychological assessment, development of norms, conducting a job analysis, using a greater number of selection procedures, and making conditional offers of employment); and (c) larger departments would use a pass-fail approach to psychological assessment and a minimum cutoff score approach to the selection process, based on the belief these approaches require less judgment and lend themselves to

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quicker decision making, which is especially important for larger and busier departments.

METHOD

Participants

We mailed the survey to personnel departments of municipal police agencies located throughout the United States. We chose municipal police departments because they are the most widely recognized law enforcement agencies and they represent the largest number of police or safety personnel in the United States. Currently, more than 12,000 municipal agencies exist in this country. Of the 355 departments randomly selected based on geography and population size served (stratified random sample), 155 agencies returned completed surveys (43%). To facilitate the analyses and illustration of the data, we categorized each department into one of three groups based on the size of the population served. Departments were considered *large* if population size served was greater than 100,000, *medium* if between 25,000 and 100,000, and *small* if less than 25,000. The source used to select departments and determine population size was *The National Directory of Law Enforcement Administrators and Correctional Agencies* (National Police Chiefs and Sheriffs Information Bureau, 1996).

SURVEY

We developed 20 survey questions that were intended to cover the content relevant for this study. . . . These questions encompassed several topics such as background about the department, selection procedures utilized, the selection process, public policy issues, and use of norms and job analyses.

Procedure

We asked four reviewers (psychologists) with experience in the criminal justice system,

police selection, or test construction to review the survey questions for clarity, content, and ease of response. We revised item content based on feedback from these sources. Then we showed the revised survey to two personnel managers at local police departments. They reported no difficulties in reading or understanding the questions on the survey and invested approximately 10 to 15 minutes in completing the survey.

We analyzed survey results to identify selection practices and procedures among police departments. In the first sets of analyses, descriptive statistics were computed (i.e., percentages) comparing the procedures and psychological tests used among small, medium, and large departments. We then utilized chi-square analyses to discern statistically significant differences among these departments.

We implemented further analysis to compare departments based on their number of employees, population size, and degree of selectivity in hiring. We completed Pearson correlation coefficients to show relationships between these continuous variables and several procedures related to sophisticated methods utilized by departments (e.g., use of job analysis, use of norms).

RESULTS

Selection Procedures

Table 3.1 lists the diverse procedures used by departments serving different population sizes as well as the percentage of departments that use each procedure. Results show that the median number of procedures reported by departments to select officer candidates was nine, indicating that respondents use a package of tools to select employees.

More than 90% of departments use the background investigation along with a medical exam, interview, application, and psychological assessment. More than half of the agencies also reported utilizing drug testing, measures of physical fitness, and the polygraph.

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Table 3.1 Percentage of Departments That Use Selection Procedures

<i>Procedure</i>	<i>Department Size</i>			
	<i>Small (n = 35)</i>	<i>Medium (n = 53)</i>	<i>Large (n = 67)</i>	<i>Combined (N= 155)</i>
Background investigation	100.0	98.1	100.0	99.4
Medical exam	97.0	98.1	100.0	98.7
Interview	100.0	98.1	97.0	98.1
Application blank	97.0	90.5	98.5	95.5
Psychological assessment	73.5 ^a	94.3 ^b	98.5 ^b	91.6
Drug testing	70.5 ^a	90.5	95.5 ^b	88.4
Physical fitness	64.7	81.1	86.5	80.0
Polygraph	26.4 ^a	69.8 ^b	82.0 ^b	65.8
Civil Service Exam	32.3	50.9	56.7	49.7
Recommendation letters	50.0	35.8	53.7	46.5
Knowledge, skills, abilities	47.0	49.0	44.7	46.5
Other	20.5	26.4	31.3	27.7

NOTE: Figures within a row that do not share subscripts differ at $p < .001$ by the chi-square test.

One interesting finding is that more than 27% of police departments use procedures other than those listed. Also, 36 different procedures were reported by responding agencies. Of these 36 procedures, not one was utilized by more than six departments. Clearly, a wide variety of selection tools is used by police agencies. Although there is conformity among agencies in using the major selection procedures, departments also utilize many unique methods.

Additionally, there were a few differences in selection procedures used by departments of different sizes. Small departments reported using psychological assessment less frequently than medium . . . and large departments. . . . Small agencies also reported less use of drug testing than large departments . . . and they used the polygraph less than medium . . . and large departments. . . .

Psychological Assessment

Survey results indicate that approximately 91% of respondents reported they required psychological assessment for all new police recruits. This figure compares with 52% in 1988

(Delprino & Bahn, 1988) from a study that used a fairly similar sample (287 municipal agencies and 49 state police agencies). Although a large percentage of departments require a psychological evaluation, the amount of weight or consideration reportedly given to the evaluation in the overall selection process is modest. Almost one third (31.9%, $n = 44$) of the 155 agencies in our final sample reported they weighted the evaluation in comparison to other selection procedures used, whereas the remaining 68.1% of agencies ($n = 94$) viewed data from the psychological evaluation in terms of passing or failing for the candidate. In other words, the majority of respondents see candidates as either passing or failing the psychological evaluation with those who fail no longer being considered for a position. However, of these departments, psychological assessment is given a median weight of 30.0% (range = 15 to 100), a fair degree of emphasis. The percentage of applicants ultimately rejected solely on the basis of psychological assessment is small (median = 5.0%, $n = 111$, range = 0 to 75).

Table 3.2 lists the psychological tests most frequently used by police departments. Consistent

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Table 3.2 Percentage of Departments That Use Psychological Tests

<i>Psychological Test</i>	<i>Department Size</i>			
	<i>Small (n = 35)</i>	<i>Medium (n = 53)</i>	<i>Large (n = 67)</i>	<i>Combined (N = 155)</i>
Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2	52.9 ^a	67.9	83.5 ^b	71.6
Clinical interview	50.0	52.8	64.1	57.4
Personal History Questionnaire	50.0	49.0	56.7	52.9
California Psychological Inventory	17.6	20.7	29.8	24.5
Other	5.8	20.7	31.3	21.9
16 Personality Factor Questionnaire	14.7	13.2	23.8	18.7
Inwald Personality Inventory	2.9	13.2	14.9	11.6
Mental status exam	11.7	16.9	4.4	10.3
Rorschach/inkblot	2.9	7.5	5.9	5.8
Hilson Safety/Security	2.9	9.4	1.4	4.5
Eysenck Personality Questionnaire	5.8	0.0	1.4	1.9

SOURCE: Cochrane et al.

NOTE: Figures within a row that do not share subscripts differ at $p < .001$ by the chi-square test.

with results from the late 1980s (Hartman, 1987), the most widely used testing instrument is the MMPI-2. The clinical interview and the CPI also continue to be used by a large number of agencies (57.4% and 24.5%, respectively), whereas the EPQ and the Rorschach have decreased in use. The Personal History Questionnaire was used by a large number of departments (52.9%). This tool is useful for collecting information that can be used to rule out job candidates and to verify information obtained through other means (e.g., background check).

The only significant difference in psychological tests used by departments of different sizes was with the MMPI-2. Small departments reported less use of the MMPI-2 . . . than large agencies.

PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES

Conditionally offering employment to potential employees is one way for departments to avoid soliciting medical information prior to hiring, which would violate public policy guidelines

(i.e., ADA, 1990). In this study, 87% of municipal police departments reported using conditional offers in their selection process. The median year these departments began this procedure was 1992. This may be a response to the 1990 ADA, which prohibited medical inquiries prior to job offers. Medical information can include information from such sources as medical examinations, psychological tests that measure psychopathology, drug testing, and physical fitness tests. . . .

Overall, most departments resist medical inquiries until after offers of employment have been made. However, medical exams are conducted prior to offers in 12.3% of departments, whereas pathology-based psychological testing (testing to assess mental illnesses or disorders) is done prior to offers in 17.4% of departments.

Municipal police departments also appear to comply fairly well with other mandates regarding selection of potential employees. However, a small portion of police departments utilize different norms for racial groups or genders (13.3%, $n = 113$). This practice violates guidelines in *Standards for Educational and*

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Psychological Testing (APA, 1985). However, virtually all departments that use cutoff scores on various procedures do not use different cutoff scores when selecting members of different races or genders (95.0%, $n = 61$), suggesting a very high level of compliance in this area.

LEVEL OF SOPHISTICATION OF SELECTION PROCEDURES

Several authors have made suggestions regarding the procedures and processes of selecting police officers (e.g., Beutler, Storm, Kirksih, Scogini, & Gaines, 1985; Hiatt & Hargrave, 1988; Meier et al., 1987). However, police agencies are under no obligation to follow these recommendations and there may be times or circumstances when a department should follow other procedures not suggested. Nonetheless, one point this study was designed to address is the level of sophistication of police departments' selection procedures and the extent to which agencies follow recommendations offered by available research.

Conducting job analyses to determine the essential job functions, duties, and work skills needed for police officers involves a great endeavor and investment by police departments. Performance of job analyses suggests a high level of sophistication in the selection process. Prior to this study, it was not expected that many agencies would utilize job analyses, given this high degree of investment. Surprisingly, 74.5% of departments surveyed reported having completed a job analysis or systematic evaluation of essential job functions at their agencies. Furthermore, an additional 7.4% of departments reported using job analysis information from other sources. Results show that the median year agencies last conducted a job analysis was 1995 ($N = 98$), and on average a job analysis is updated every 2.8 years ($SD = 2.4$).

For the evaluator to properly determine whether an applicant will be capable of performing the required duties of an officer, the evaluator needs to know what those duties are and the kind of environment in which the officer will be working. Agencies that request psychological assessment

to cover more than just "rule outs" for mental disorders should provide or make sure the evaluator has access to job analysis results. When asked whether job analysis or job description information was provided to the evaluator(s), 78.8% ($n = 108$) of police departments reported providing this material. This suggests the majority of evaluators are aware of job requirements and duties of officers when conducting the evaluations.

Another question examined was whether police departments review applicant results on a procedure-by-procedure basis or with a more global outlook where performance on all selection procedures is considered together. The majority of agencies used a minimum cutoff score approach (62.9%, $n = 83$) where applicants who do not achieve a certain predetermined score on a particular measure are no longer considered for a position. A more global approach where performance is evaluated together for all measures was reported by 15.9% of departments, whereas 21.2% used both a minimum cutoff score and a global approach.

In terms of procedures used to select officers, it was of interest to determine how frequently formal assessment centers were used by police departments. Assessment centers can be a costly means of assessing police candidates, and the benefits they reap may or may not outweigh the costs. In response to the survey, only 8.1% of the police departments reported using a formal assessment center. The low use of this selection procedure may reflect the belief by police personnel that the costs do indeed outweigh the gains, or they may simply not know how to use them. Whatever the reasons, many authors (e.g., Ash et al., 1990; Coulton & Field, 1995; Dunnette & Motowidlo, 1976) would argue that assessment centers are currently being underutilized.

DISCUSSION

Municipal police departments throughout the country have given increasing attention to procedures for selection of police officers. One reason

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for greater emphasis on selection of new recruits is the high costs associated with poor officer performance. These costs are incurred through such means as greater supervision, dismissals, lawsuits, and low morale. The primary purpose of this study was to identify the selection procedures used by municipal police departments, paying particular attention to the psychological assessment process. It appears that greater emphasis on selection can be seen in the increased use of selection procedures, particularly psychological assessment procedures. In fact, comparing this study's results with that of prior research (Delprino & Bahn, 1988), psychological assessment of police candidates has increased dramatically over the past 10 years, with 52% of agencies using psychological screening in 1988 compared to more than 90% in this study.

THE SELECTION PROCESS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

Large attention given to selection is also reflected in the high number of procedures used by departments to evaluate candidates. On average, police agencies use nine different procedures when selecting new recruits. And although most departments reported using similar procedures (i.e., background investigation, medical exam, interview, application, and psychological assessment), great variability existed. This diversity among departments may reflect an appropriate application of selection techniques because departments differ to some degree in terms of specific duties and the amount of time invested in performing different tasks. These wide differences could also be the result of a lack of awareness by municipal agencies or their consulting psychologists regarding the most effective selection procedures. The high degree of variability found in this study may also be due to each department utilizing different selection criteria. The measures used and the conclusions drawn depend to a large degree on the police department's criteria. For example, some departments

may consider abuse of an officer's power and early termination as highly important, whereas other agencies may place greater emphasis on tardiness and poor supervisory evaluations.

Despite the fact that no unified criteria or selection procedures exist at this time and there is great variability in procedures used, many agencies use a core set of similar selection measures. In fact, the typical department reported using the following measures when selecting officers: an application, background investigation, medical exam, oral interview, psychological assessment, drug test, physical fitness measures, and polygraph test. It also makes conditional offers of employment to those candidates [it is] interested in and then conducts the medically related tests following this offer. The typical department also uses approximately three or four different psychological tests or procedures, with the MMPI-2, clinical interview, Personal History Questionnaire, and the CPI being the most common.

Although psychological assessment appears to be valued in the selection process (median weight = 30.0%), very few individuals are rejected based solely on the results (median = 5%). This contrasts with a previous finding reported by Meier et al. (1987) that approximately 15% of candidates were screened out through personality assessment. The reason for this difference is not clear. One possible explanation could be that, more recently, qualified candidates are pre-selected through other procedures prior to the psychological evaluation. Therefore, once the psychological evaluation is completed, few individuals are found to be outright unqualified. At a first glance, this would seem to make psychological assessment essentially irrelevant. However, although a 5% rejection rate based on psychological assessment results does not appear high, if only half of these candidates (2.5%) would eventually prove to be problematic, this could cost a police department a tremendous amount of difficulty including loss of money, potential harm to others, and negative publicity.

Whereas the typical agency did not report using norms for most of their procedures (many

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of which are not conducive to developing normative data), a large percentage did use norms for psychological testing. Also, the average agency conducted its own job analysis and provided this information to the person(s) conducting the psychological evaluation. Overall, the average municipal police department appears to have a relatively thorough and professional selection process. Almost 25 years ago, the National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals (1973) recommended that police agencies use written tests of mental abilities (i.e., tests of Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities [KSAs]), an interview, psychological assessment, and a background check on all police officer candidates. With the exception of KSAs, this study found that police departments are following these suggestions at a relatively high rate.

PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES AND TESTING RECOMMENDATIONS

A significant minority of agencies failed to follow public policy guidelines and other recommendations. For example, respondents reported making medical inquiries prior to conditional offers of employment at a fairly high rate (medical exams = 12.3%, pathology-based psychological tests = 17.4%). These are somewhat alarming numbers considering that a plaintiff may have grounds to file a lawsuit if he or she discovered that not being hired was due to a medical condition or disability. It is not clear why these agencies neglect to adhere to these regulations and suggestions. Many agencies may not be aware of the guidelines and just simply continue old practices that have worked in the past. Others may be aware of guidelines but are willing to take the risk of using certain procedures (e.g., medical inquiries prior to conditional offers), believing they are exempt from such policies due to the nature of the job of police officer. In many ways, departments may be justified in this position, given that certain criteria are unique to that of a police officer and are job-related. For example, individuals with severe

emotional or psychological problems should be excluded from consideration for a police officer position, given the nature of the job. One would think this could be justified in a court of law if necessary, but it is still a risk departments may not wish to take.

Departments appear to consider the psychological assessment component of the selection process as a procedure that has an all-or-none value. In other words, the majority of agencies use a pass-fail approach to psychological assessment results, keeping candidates who pass and rejecting those who fail. This is consistent with Ho's (1999) study on the effects of test results and demographic factors on 420 police candidates in a North Carolina police department. Ho found the decision-making process in selection of officers was primarily testing oriented, whereby candidates who failed to achieve a satisfactory rating on any of the tests were less likely to be recruited.

These results indicate police agencies may be underutilizing the usefulness of a psychological evaluation. Many authors have argued that psychological assessment has incremental validity beyond simply screening out candidates with psychopathology. For example, certain personality instruments (e.g., IPI) have shown strong predictive power in determining those candidates who will likely have problems with absenteeism or poor supervisor ratings. The departments that use a pass-fail approach may be the same departments that only request assessments to rule out psychopathology. Conversely, agencies that weight the assessment results may be those that request a greater degree of input from the psychological assessment referral. Each approach could be justified based on the information they were seeking to obtain. However, it seems many departments may not consider the psychological results very useful beyond informing them of obvious problem candidates.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results from this survey need to be considered in light of the fact that only 155 municipal police

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departments participated in the study. Although this size is not small, generalizability may be of concern because more than 12,000 municipal agencies exist in this country. Also, as previously mentioned, the survey was completed by police department personnel managers, not psychologists or other persons directly assessing the candidates.

One area that deserves greater attention is the validation of various selection methods and procedures within particular departments. Although every procedure utilized by departments cannot be validated, many tests and procedures can be appropriately validated, particularly psychological tests. Given the predictive validity demonstrated with the MMPI-2, IPI, and CPI, departments may want to specifically request that these tests be used in the assessment process. And until norms are developed for a department with these tests, results can be interpreted with the aid of broader normative data that are available through various testing companies (e.g., Caldwell Reports).

Examining whether a multiple-hurdle selection strategy is superior to a global evaluation process (where all candidates receive all measures) may be of great interest to police departments, as well. Economically speaking, departments would likely save considerable money if they employed

a multiple-hurdle strategy. Each candidate could be rated at each stage or hurdle, and those not meeting a minimum standard could be disqualified. Those candidates who completed all the hurdles could then be given a total rating, allowing comparisons and selections to be made based on the number of available positions. And in terms of psychological evaluation, departments may wish to request that the psychological evaluators rate or rank candidates. Ratings could include broad categories (e.g., highly acceptable, acceptable, marginally acceptable, unacceptable) that could then be incorporated into the overall selection rating process. This would broaden the usefulness of the psychological evaluation beyond simply ruling out obviously poor or problematic candidates.

Lastly, although various psychological tests have shown predictive validity, studies are lacking in the value of other selection procedures (e.g., Civil Service Examination). It would be prudent for police departments to solicit and promote greater research into other procedures and tests that are both cost effective and predictive of important outcome criteria. This will likely occur with the assistance and expertise of diligent psychologists in the field.

