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PREDICTING POLICE FAILURES*

RUTH J. LEVY

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EDITOR.

With the increase in crime and the concomitant slipping image of the police officer, comes an intensified interest in refining techniques used in selection of officers whose jobs include keeping the peace, maintaining law and order, and keeping their own houses above reproach. City Health Departments participate in the screening of police officers, and those of us involved in such programs feel less than adequate when we are asked to state whether police applicant John Smith is emotionally suited for the job for which he is applying. Accordingly, as one such Health Department, we undertook to gather and study the personnel files of ca. 4,500 law enforcement officers in 14 police jurisdictions to see whether we could find any known and recorded pre-appointment factors which would significantly discriminate between those who left their positions because of occupational inadequacies, including personal behaviors intolerable to their employers, and those who were considered adequate or successful.

Studies on selection in law enforcement have been sporadic, and conclusions often have had to be qualified because of small numbers of cases used. There are 1,762 cities in the United States with populations of over 100,000 each, and each of these cities maintains its own Police Department (18). Altogether, there are approximately 250,000 policemen in the United States (22). Their training during the first year of employment is estimated by some (2) to cost \$10,000. "The appointment of an unfit person to the police force is always costly to the taxpayers" (7). O. W. Wilson's book (23) is found in the libraries of Police Departments throughout the country and is considered a

* This paper is based upon a retrospective study of Peace Officer Personnel Files which was made possible through a three year financial grant from the National Institute of Mental Health.

classic for police administrators. Of the book's 492 pages, only seven are devoted to selection, including recommendations concerning age, height, and education.

It has been the practice, in the past, to exclude from groups of police applicants those whose life histories, test results, interviews, or references have revealed anxiety, rigidity, low intelligence, poor credit ratings, criminal records, sadistic tendencies, alcoholism, dishonesty, homosexuality, or behavioral manifestations of impulsivity. The reasoning underlying these exclusions is that the behavior of individuals with these traits is not consistent with the needs of good law enforcement. Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that applicants with these characteristics are usually eliminated before appointment, common reasons for departmental termination of police officers' careers are drunkenness, extramarital sexual activity, and indebtedness. Absence of these traits at the time of appointment, and their not infrequent presence at time of termination, suggest the possibility that donning a police uniform and buckling on a holster may bring about a change in self-image and subsequent overt behavior. If this be so, then we cannot predict from absence of unwanted qualities before employment, a necessary continuation of such absence after employment. What then should we be seeking?

HYPOTHESIS

In an attempt to answer the above question, we launched an empirical study, one in which we let the records speak. Our hypothesis was that the personality characteristics of unsuccessful law enforcement officers, as revealed in their personnel files, would show significant and identifiable differences from the personality characteristics of non-failures, and that certain combinations of life

historical events would have significantly discriminating values for the two groups.

Some definitions are in order. We used personality characteristics in its broadest sense, including emotional, social, physical traits either overt or implied. Unsuccessful law enforcement officers, or as hereafter categorized, *Failures*, constituted the group of officers who had been dismissed for cause, or whose resignations had been requested due to failure to meet department expectations, either on the job or off. Personnel files included those kept by Police Departments, Sheriff's Offices, Highway Patrol, City and County Civil Service Personnel Departments, and Health Departments. Significant differences were measured using chi-square test of goodness of fit. As an extra precaution to avoid spuriousness of results, we programmed a stepwise multiple regression analysis which permitted us the option of randomly dividing the total sample into two approximately equal sub-samples for cross-validation purposes, and it was assumed that the minimal set of criterion predictors should be in essential agreement for these two sub-samples. Unless otherwise indicated, only such differences are reported which showed significance at better than the 1% level of confidence in both sub-samples.

SUBJECTS

Complete personnel files were collected for 2,139 former law enforcement officers, who had been separated (either as *Failures* or *Non-failures*) from their employment during the decade 1952-1962. These represented all terminations during that period of time in the 14 agencies included in the study. The 14 agencies were comprised of ten Police Departments in cities whose populations ranged from 13,000 to 700,000; three Sheriffs' Offices in Counties whose population ranged from 90,000 to one million, and the California Highway Patrol. Participants included inland and coastal communities, some heavily industrialized and others primarily agricultural. The 14 agencies showed the same range in peace officer population ratios as holds for the United States as a whole (19). From these same 14 agencies, we then collected 2,148 personnel files of officers still employed in 1962, whose dates of employment followed the same curve as that created by the appointment dates of the separated officers. With the exception of the three largest agencies, this group of *Current* employees represented all the peace officers employed by our study participants in 1962. In the three largest agencies we "matched" the *Current*

with former officers for year of appointment, randomly eliminating excess *Currents*.

The study was confined to male officers, who represent 98% of law enforcement officers in the United States (22).

METHODOLOGY

As the study proceeded, we found it necessary to modify certain original plans. Because of the nature of the contents of the files; because of the tremendous variability among agencies in record-keeping, in extent of background investigations, in requirements for appointment, and in methods used for commendation and punitive action; because of our desire to eliminate unnecessary additional heterogeneity from a group which tends, by nature, to be heterogeneous; and because paucity of information in some files made them practically worthless for any serious scientific consideration, for these reasons we eliminated from the quantitative data computation phase all cases categorized as follows.

1. *Service Retirement*. We had originally thought to include this group among the *Non-Failures*, but those who retired for service during the years 1952 to 1962 had been appointed before 1942. By eliminating this group we eliminated the problem of introducing unwanted heterogeneity of entrance requirements, community ethos, and administrative philosophy. Inclusion of service retirements would have introduced a group of men born earlier and appointed earlier than the rest of the group.

2. *Disability Retirement*. All law enforcement administrators would like to have available a method of identifying the potential disability retirement. This group includes, in addition to on-the-job injuries, anticipated in a hazardous occupation, the accident-prone, the malingerer, and the hypochondriac. In one Department included in this study the Chief of Police reported an annual per capita cost of \$330 (derived by dividing number of sworn peace officers into total annual cost to his city of disability pensions). However, the etiology of pathology in these men we assume to be different from that which is operative in the men who are terminated for reasons other than disability retirement.

3. *Death While in Service*. These were eliminated because death was not descriptive of the separation in terms of the criteria used in categorizing separation as *Failure* or *Non-Failure*. Deaths included an officer who, during a psychotic episode, sequestered a plane and flew to his death; several coronary heart failures, and a number of deaths following highway accidents.

After eliminating cases falling into the above three categories, there remained 1,333 separations, of which 690 were considered by their Departments to have been *Failures*, and 643 *Non-Failures*.

Our next concern was with the excess (815) of *Currents* over the 1,333 usable separation cases. The reader may be wondering why we bothered altogether to collect the *Currents*. Before data collection started it was, very naively, believed that we would be able to combine into one group of satisfactory policemen the *Non-Failure* separations and the *Currents*. Our statistical consultants pointed out the advantages which could accrue if our *Non-Failure* group were twice the size of our *Failure* group, and adding *Currents* to *Non-Failures* seemed, before the research began, a solution to the problem of swelling the size of our *Non-Failure* group without contaminating the data by introducing unnecessary heterogeneity and other problems. The *Non-Failures* had demonstrated that they were such by the number of promotions they had received, citizen commendations, awards for bravery, expressions of Departmental disappointment upon their terminations, and the like. It was reasoned, before collecting the files, that a *Current* employee was obviously, according to our definition, not a *Failure*; he still received a paycheck; he still wore a uniform; and even if he were not the Chief's ideal, he either had not behaved in a manner unacceptable to his department or at least, if he had, he had not been publicly discovered. From this naive and so grossly incorrect assumption grew one of the most interesting findings of this study. In any event, we had an excess, for statistical computation purposes, of 815 *Currents*. To avoid the myriad problems which they would create (weighting, table collapsing, reliability) we randomly eliminated 815 cases from the group of *Currents*.

Once the above-described eliminations had been completed, our staff abstracted from each file all information recorded up to the day of appointment. We used no check-lists or other such devices, which might have shortened our task, because we insisted that the records tell the story. Consequently, from some departments we obtained voluminous case histories with information including subject's ordinal position in his parental family, school grades, I.Q., number of club memberships, tendency to enuresis during childhood, father's income, hobbies, use of authoritarian manner with own children, degree of observable cleanliness in home, illnesses of siblings, color of eyes, reasons for termination from former employment, number

of television sets in the home, military experiences, relationships with neighbors, amount of indebtedness, stated life goals, and reasons for applying for employment as a law enforcement officer. From some departments we obtained handwritten pre-appointment autobiographies. From some we obtained only skeletal outlines, the personnel files being devoid of almost all pre-appointment information except for birthdate, education, and the place of residence, blood pressure, height, weight and marital status at time of application. It was agreed that, for quantitative analysis, we would use only such factors, or variables, on which information was found in at least 50% of the records. When these had been ascertained we coded the information for each variable in each record. The numbers of cases having information varied from factor to factor, depending upon what was contained in the files. It is not suggested that the 140 variables which met our criterion of appearing in at least 50% of the records, are necessarily the most important ones to know about in selecting police officers.

The 140 coded variables were punched across IBM cards. Onto each row we punched a subject's code number, the code for his department, his birthdate, his date of appointment, and his length of service. For each subject we punched the information under as many of the 140 variables as were contained in his personnel file. Finally, we identified each subject according to the criterion *Failure*, *Non-Failure*, or *Current*. It had been discovered, on the basis of inspection and experimental computational trials, that we could not reasonably group the *Currents* with the *Non-Failures*, because contrary to earlier unwarranted assumptions, the 1,333 *Currents* constituted a group very different from the group of 643 *Non-Failures*. And so, against expectations, we report findings not about two groups of police officers (*Failures* and *Non-Failures*) but about three groups (*Failures*, *Non-Failures* and *Currents*).

RESULTS

The distribution of cases into three criterion groups is as follows:

Failures	21%
Non-Failures	24%
Currents	55%

It may be remembered that in the three largest agencies the author determined the sizes of the *Current* groups by numerically equating them with the sizes of the groups of separated officers. In the remaining departments there was no such deter-

TABLE I
AGE DISTRIBUTION OF CRITERION GROUPS

Age When Hired		Failure		Non-Failure		Current	
		S-1	S-2	S-1	S-2	S-1	S-2
Less than 24 years	N	39	47	78	55	126	88
	%	(17.2)	(20.7)	(29.2)	(22.0)	(20.6)	(14.4)
24-26 years	N	82	72	97	103	187	204
	%	(36.1)	(31.7)	(36.3)	(39.0)	(30.6)	(33.4)
27-29 years	N	65	68	53	61	151	186
	%	(28.6)	(30.0)	(19.9)	(23.1)	(24.7)	(30.5)
30 plus years	N	41	40	39	42	147	132
	%	(18.1)	(17.6)	(14.6)	(15.9)	(24.1)	(21.6)
Column Sums		227	227	267	264	611	610
Category Means		2.48	2.44	2.20	2.33	2.52	2.59

Criterion Comparison	Sample 1			Sample 2		
	Chi-Square	df	P Level	Chi-Square	df	P Level
Fail/Non-Fail/Current.....	24.760	6	.001	17.188	6	.01
Fail/Current.....	6.206	3	N/S	5.508	3	N/S
Non-Fail/Current.....	17.513	3	.001	14.501	3	.005
Fail/Non-Fail.....	12.370	3	.01	4.309	3	N/S

mination. In those remaining eleven departments, the files of all *Current* employees were included. The retention rate (55%) resembles findings of other studies (14).

Age at appointment is significantly related to later employment status. (Table I) *Non-Failures* are youngest at time of appointment, *Current* employees are oldest, and *Failures* fall between. Approximately 25% of the *Non-Failures* were under 24 at the time of appointment, compared with 19% of the *Failures* and 17% of the *Currents*. About half of the *Failures* and *Currents* were 27 or older when appointed while only 37% of the *Non-Failures* fell into that age bracket.

Education prior to appointment consistently shows a greater number of years of formal education for the separated personnel (whether *Failure* or *Non-Failure*) than for the *Current* employees (Table II). Approximately 65% of the *Currents* reported 12 years or less formal education, compared with 39% of the *Non-Failures* and 56% of the *Failures*. Mean number of years of education for each criterion group indicates the *Currents* have 12 1/2 years, the *Failures* 12 3/4 years, and the *Non-Failures* 13 3/4 years. Each criterion group comparison for both samples is statistically significant at levels well beyond chance expectations.

Additional comparisons for schooling beyond high school in academic colleges (as distinguished from

business schools, vocational schools, trade schools, et al) reveal significant relationships between years attending college and the criterion: *Currents* who attended college averaged two years, *Failures* averaged a small fraction over two years, and *Non-Failures* two and three-quarters years (Table III). When the tables are collapsed so that comparisons are made for two years or less vs. three years or more of college, we find a significant chi-square relation between amount of college education and each criterion comparison except for *Failures* and *Currents*. That is, amount of higher education does not seem to separate the *Failures* from the *Currents* when these two criterion groups are looked at alone, although it does divide the *Failures* from both the *Currents* and from the *Non-Failures* when all 3 criterion groups are examined simultaneously. (It is interesting, in this connection, to note that Captain Rush of the Kansas Highway Patrol, in their already-cited 1960 pilot selection study, stated he had "not found that college graduates work out particularly better for us...") (2). *Non-Failures* consistently have more education than the other criterion groups regardless of the period of their birth. Except for the birth period 1900-1924, the *Currents* consistently have less formal education than *Failures* or *Non-Failures*.

The relationship was computed between the number of years of education and five different

TABLE II
YEARS OF EDUCATION

Number of Years		Failure		Non-Failure		Current	
		S-1	S-2	S-1	S-3	S-1	S-2
Less than 11 years	N	18	10	6	5	35	38
	%	(9.4)	(5.3)	(2.5)	(2.2)	(5.9)	(6.6)
11 years	N	10	12	12	5	35	28
	%	(5.2)	(6.3)	(5.0)	(2.2)	(5.9)	(4.9)
12 years	N	81	84	76	77	310	319
	%	(42.2)	(44.2)	(31.7)	(34.1)	(52.5)	(55.4)
13 years	N	23	23	26	27	76	60
	%	(12.0)	(12.1)	(10.8)	(11.9)	(12.9)	(10.4)
14 years	N	27	32	35	32	65	64
	%	(14.1)	(16.8)	(14.6)	(14.2)	(11.0)	(11.1)
15 years	N	15	17	28	28	32	38
	%	(7.8)	(8.9)	(11.7)	(12.4)	(5.4)	(6.6)
16 years	N	11	6	36	33	33	28
	%	(5.7)	(3.2)	(15.0)	(14.6)	(5.6)	(4.9)
17 years or more	N	7	6	21	19	4	1
	%	(3.6)	(3.2)	(8.7)	(8.4)	(0.7)	(0.2)
Column Sums		192	190	240	226	590	576
Category Means		3.81	3.84	4.69	4.71	3.59	3.55

Criterion Comparison	Sample 1			Sample 2		
	Chi-Square	df	P Level	Chi-Square	df	P Level
Fail/Non-Fail/Current.....	94.328	14	.001	106.778	14	.001
Non-Fail/Current.....	86.963	7	.001	96.116	7	.001
Fail/Current.....	17.458	7	.02	24.451	7	.01
Fail/Non-Fail.....	26.782	7	.001	30.427	7	.001

hiring periods for each criterion group. Chi-square probability levels for education vs. the three-way criterion (*Failure*; *Non-Failure*; *Current*) were calculated for each hiring period. There is a statistically significant relationship between education and the criterion for the hiring periods 1948-52, 1953-57, and for 1958 or later. The *Non-Failures* have the most education for each hiring period; *Currents* have the least education for the periods 1953-57 and 1958 and later, but slightly more education than *Failures* prior to 1953. In general, with each successive hiring period, the level of education increases for all applicants, as one might expect. But the *Non-Failures* tend to have nearly a full year of school more than either *Currents* or *Failures*.

Cross-tabulation tables were computed showing relationships between the length of service in months and the three criterion groups for each of eight levels of education. Although the number of subjects in some instances is rather small (especially of those having obtained 17 or more years of academic training), we find a consistent and defi-

nite trend that with increasing education, there is a reduction in length of service for all three criterion groups. Applicants having less than 11 years of education tend to serve a little more than four years if they are *Failures* or *Non-Failures*, whereas if they remain in service (*Currents*) they do so for about 11 ½ years on the average. If they have 11 or 12 years of education the *Failures* and *Non-Failures* serve between 4 and 4 ½ years, but the *Currents* serve fewer than 11 ½ years. This downward progression of the *Currents* in length of service continues until, with 17 or more years of school, the service length is little more than 7 years. For the *Failures* and *Non-Failures*, 17 or more years of school is associated with a Mean service of about 1 ½ years.

Police School or accredited *Police Science* courses attendance is positively reported in 418 cases. In the remaining cases either the applicant recorded that he had not had such preparation or else the information is lacking in the personnel file. Of the 418 who did have police school training before

TABLE III
YEARS OF COLLEGE

Number of Years		Failure		Non-Failure		Current	
		S-1	S-2	S-1	S-2	S-1	S-2
Less than 1 year	N	11	10	18	9	19	18
	%	(11.6)	(10.4)	(11.0)	(6.2)	(8.4)	(8.7)
1 year	N	23	23	26	25	73	60
	%	(24.2)	(24.0)	(15.9)	(17.4)	(32.3)	(28.1)
2 years	N	27	33	34	34	64	61
	%	(28.4)	(34.4)	(20.7)	(23.6)	(28.3)	(29.6)
3 years	N	16	17	28	27	32	38
	%	(16.8)	(17.7)	(17.1)	(18.7)	(14.2)	(18.4)
4 years	N	11	7	37	31	34	28
	%	(11.6)	(7.3)	(22.6)	(21.5)	(15.0)	(13.6)
5 years	N	4	5	14	11	3	1
	%	(4.2)	(5.2)	(8.5)	(7.6)	(1.3)	(0.5)
6 years	N	2	1	6	5	—	—
	%	(2.1)	(1.0)	(3.7)	(3.5)	—	—
7 years	N	1	—	1	1	1	—
	%	(1.1)	—	(0.6)	(0.7)	(0.4)	—
8 years	N	—	—	—	1	—	—
	%	—	—	—	(0.7)	—	—
Column Sums		95	96	164	144	226	206
Category Means		3.19	3.07	3.68	3.76	3.01	3.00

Criterion Comparison	Sample 1			Sample 2		
	Chi-Square	df	P Level	Chi-Square	df	P Level
Fail/Non-Fail/Current.....	39.130	16	.005	40.758	16	.005
Fail/Non-Fail/Current.....	18.946	2*	.001	17.571	2*	.001
Non-Fail/Current.....	18.246	1*	.001	14.388	1*	.001
Fail/Current.....	.708	1*	N/S	.049	1*	N/S
Fail/Non-Fail.....	6.706	1*	.01	10.825	1*	.005

* Based on Collapsed Tables, viz., 2 years or less/3 years or more.

appointment, 67 (or 16%) were terminated as *Failures*; 132 (32%) terminated as *Non-Failures*; and 219 (52%) fell into the category of *Current* employees. This distribution differs from the distribution among the criterion groups. While the proportion of currently employed who attended police school is not widely divergent from the proportion of currently employed in the group as a whole, police school background is associated with a decrease in the proportion of terminations who are *FAILURES* and with an increased proportion of law enforcement officers who terminate as *NON-FAILURES*.

Previous law enforcement employment is divided into that representing sworn peace officer employment on the one hand, and jobs with industry, municipalities, educational institutions, banks,

prisons, and others who employ guards and keepers-of-the peace on the other hand. Looking at type of previous law enforcement experience (i.e. sworn peace officers vs. guards etc.) for those applicants who reported any, the *Non-Failures* are more likely to have been guards than are either the *Currents* or *Failures*. However, none of the four possible criterion comparisons held up as statistically significant in both sample 1 and sample 2 of our data. A highly significant relationship does exist between criterion and variable when *Non-Failures* are compared with *Currents*. *Non-Failures* are apt to have had prior guard jobs rather than sworn peace officer employment to a significantly greater degree than *Currents*. Of the *Non-Failures* who report prior law enforcement experience of any kind, 42% report guard or other non-sworn

peace officer employment, compared to 25% of the *Failures* and 28% of the *Currents*. Conversely, if an applicant applies with a history of prior sworn peace officer employment, rather than guard employment, he is more apt to remain on the newly employing department or to fail, than to terminate as a *Non-Failure*.

There are 129 cases among the files we collected where it is definite that, at the time of application, the applicant had been previously appointed to more than one other law enforcement agency. Of these 129, 56% are *Currents*, 23% became *Failures*, and 21% terminated as *Non-Failures* in the department we studied. Other statistics computed for this variable are not reported because of the small size of the group. It can readily be seen that the distribution into criterion groups is much the same as the distribution of all cases.

Reason given for applying for position shows no significant relationship with criterion.

Religious affiliation was often investigated through questionnaires before F. E. P. C. proscribed pre-employment inquiry in this area. The number of cases in which we were able to collect data for this variable is too small to produce meaningful results.

Previous jobs, up to the fifth most recent job before application, were classified in accordance with the categories in the Industrial Classification Manual. These categories are Agriculture, Mining, Construction, Manufacturing, Transportation-Communication, Wholesale-Retail Sales, Finance, Service, and Government. No significant relationship with criterion emerged at any point of the calculations, indicating that in our group of cases the industrial classification of previously held jobs, back through the fifth job before appointment, is predictive neither of "stayability" nor of type of separation if the latter occurs.

The same five jobs were classified also according to the U. S. Employment Service's occupational categories. These categories are: Professional, Clerical and Sales, Service, Agriculture, Skilled trade, Semi-skilled, Unskilled, and "other" (including non-classifiable). Of the very large number of possible relationships computed, one emerged which is significantly related to criterion at better than the 1% level of confidence. This concerns the occupational classification of the second job before appointment (second most recent), which is significantly related to criterion when *Currents* and *Non-Failures* are compared. There are more *Currents* and *Non-Failures* who report skilled and semi-skilled employment in that second most re-

cent job. There are more *Non-Failures* than *Currents* who report Clerical and Sales jobs during employment tenancy on that second job before appointment. Of interest also is the fact that proportionately more *Non-Failures* than *Currents* had to be eliminated from this segment of analysis due to information provided by applicant being too inadequate to permit occupational category coding.

There appears to be a greater likelihood of correlation between *length of employment* on previous jobs and criterion than between occupational or industrial classifications of these jobs and the criterion. Length of employment was examined for each of the five most recent jobs held prior to application. The differences between the criterion groups are consistent for the most recently held position immediately prior to making application as well as for the second job more remote in time. *Currents* have the longest average tenure, *Failures* the next longest, and *Non-Failures* the shortest tenure on both jobs. Although for all three criterion groups the greatest percentages are in the category of under six months employment on the most recent job, 47% are *Non-Failures*, 37% are *Failures*, and 31% are *Currents*. For the second most recent job these percentages are consistently greater—as one might expect—but are consistent in direction with those of the first job: *Non-Failures* - 50%, *Failures* - 44%, *Currents* - 36%. On the other end of the scale—three years or more of job tenure—the data are again consistent: *Currents* are more likely to remain on the job for this length of time than either the *Failures* or *Non-Failures*.

Currents have the longest average job tenure for the third and fourth jobs also.

Longer employment history for *Currents* applies to total time of work experience as well as to time on individual jobs. *Currents* have longest total work history when we combine all five jobs held prior to application. *Failures* have second longest history. *Non-Failures* have the shortest history. Since length of total employment history is age-related, the fact that *Currents* have the longest total work history and *Non-Failures* the shortest may be nothing more than a reflection of the age differential at time of application. However, this age differential cannot explain the length of employment on the individual jobs preceding appointment as police.

After reading several thousand personnel files, the author found what looked like a definitive difference between the image or persona presented by the applicant who had worked relatively long

on a few jobs and the one who had "flitted" from one job to another with greater flexibility. The men who showed the greatest job-mobility before appointment were the ones most likely to end their law enforcement careers as *Failures*.

Have you ever been dismissed from a job? is a question, answered in 606 records, significantly related to criterion with *Failures* most likely to answer in affirmative, and *Currents* most likely to answer in negative.

Number of citations for Vehicle Code violations admitted by applicant also differentiates between *Failures* and *Currents* to a degree beyond chance expectations. Of the three criterion groups, the *Currents* report fewest number of citations for Vehicle Code violations; the average number reported 1.7. Average number of citations reported by *Failures* is 2.5. About 20% of the *Currents*, 12% of the *Failures*, and 7% of the *Non-Failures* report never having received any citation for Vehicle Code violation. Convictions for "other" violations (of both Civil Code and Penal Code); with misdemeanors and felonies grouped together because there is a total of only 831 cases on which any information is available, and of these only 332 contain positive information; i.e. reporting of convictions for other than Vehicle Code Violations discriminate among our three criterion groups with the *Currents* reporting the fewest number of such convictions. Seventy-five percent of the *Currents*, 53% of the *Non-Failures*, and 49% of the *Failures* reported no such convictions.

When Birthplace is the City of Application this datum has predictive value in discriminating *Currents* from *Non-Failures* to a statistically significant degree. Twenty-two percent of the *Currents*, 13% of the *Failures*, and 12% of the *Non-Failures* reported birthplace identical with city of application.

Length of residence in city of application is significantly related to criterion. As groups, the *Currents* had lived longest in the city of application, and the *Non-Failures* had lived the shortest amount of time in city of application. Interestingly, the greatest proportion of applicants who report never having lived in the city of application is found among the *Currents* (9%), compared to 4% of the *Failures* and 5% of the *Non-Failures*. But the *Currents* are also most likely to have lived in the city of application more than five years (44%) compared to 36% of the *Failures* and 32% of the *Non-Failures*. As with the birthplace variable, information regarding length of residence in city of application, may not discriminate between *Failures* and *Non-Failures*, but definitely does discriminate

between *Currents* and *Non-Failures* as well as having predictive value regarding "stayability". Both variables together, birthplace plus length of residence in city of application, seem to add up to a picture of lesser mobility, a picture which appears to be, possibly, the most important characteristic predictive of an officer's remaining on the job. His past history of lesser mobility seems to be likewise predictive of lesser mobility (occupationally) after appointment.

Total Number of Residences listed in application likewise is found to have discriminative function when all three criterion groups are compared simultaneously. *Currents* report the lowest total number of residences. Ten percent of the *Currents* list a total of seven or more home addresses, compared with 21% of the *Non-Failures* and 17% of the *Failures* so reporting. The difference between *Failures* and *Non-Failures* on this variable, when these criterion groups are isolated for comparison, is not statistically significant.

Marital Status at the time of application is known in the majority of cases. The distribution of applicants according to marital status (married, single, divorced, separated, widowed) is the same for all fourteen departments, with the greatest percentage falling into the "married" category. There is no significant relationship between this variable of marital status and the criterion. In other words, in our group marital status not only fails to discriminate between occupational *Failures* and *Non-Failures*, but also fails to discriminate between applicants who stay on the job and those who leave (regardless of type of separation).

Number of Marriages for those married two or more times at the time of application definitively shows a relation with the criterion. In the 325 cases on which information regarding number of marriages is available, 32% of the *Failures* report two or more marriages, compared with 11% of the *Currents* and 12% of the *Non-Failures*. This should not be confused with percentages of total group. These percentages apply only to the 325 cases who answered on application blanks the question, "How many times have you been married?" In view of the relative frequency with which marital infidelity eventually leads to occupational *Failure* in law enforcement, it appears as though multiple marriages before appointment, everything else being equal, may constitute a high risk factor.

Psychiatric reports and psychiatrists' recommendations are made before appointment in four of the fourteen departments. Their contents relate to presence or absence of problems in relation to

authority figures; degree of intelligence; presence or absence of overt signs of dependency needs; degree of emotional maturity; degree of observable anxiety; degree of spontaneity; and degree of personality rigidity. Although the gross number of psychiatric reports is adequate for analysis by inspection, since these reports emanate from only four of the fourteen departments, they are not included in the quantitative computations.

The remaining variables fail to show significant relationship with criterion. Military branch, military rank, number of years of military service, number of military enlistments, and whether or not applicant was hospitalized while serving military duty are all facts investigated by most hiring departments. Many law enforcement administrators feel that success or failure in military, as judged by promotions and demotions, correlate positively with later success or failure in law enforcement. In this study such is not conclusively proven. It may be that the range in military ranks reported by applicants is too narrow to permit establishing a significant correlation. Approximately half the applicants in this study who gave highest military rank, reported it as Sergeant or equivalent.

Reported financial status before appointment, including number and amount of debts and assets, failed to significantly discriminate among our criterion groups.

DISCUSSION

Most police administrators want more officers. Most police administrators are realistic enough to know that they may never be able to employ the number of officers they consider adequate. Dr. Leo R. Eilbert of the New York Institute of Technology, after conducting a four year study in cooperation with the New York Police Department, in which the behaviors of officers were examined and appraised, came to the conclusion that numbers alone solved nothing, and that a Police Department would be better served by, "17,000 highly qualified men than with a force of 25,000 or 30,000 men" (16). Can we identify the men who are "highly qualified"? Or, asking the question at the other end of the scale, because qualifications for success in law enforcement will continue to vary from community to community, Chief to Chief, and year to year, whereas the earmarks of *Failure* bear greater resemblance to each other regardless of time and place, can we identify the potential misfit? We believe the results of our study point in the direction of an affirmative answer. The officer

who failed to meet his department's expectations after appointment really was different from those who did not so fail (whether they remained on the department or left as *Non-Failures*), and the areas in which he was different, and the kinds and degrees of differences were known and recorded before his appointment. If only we had known what to examine!

The traditional methods used in evolving occupational selection tests may be inappropriate for law enforcement. Such approach would involve classification of qualifications and standardization of test items to probe for these qualifications. In law enforcement one of the obstacles is the contrariness of the job.

Whereas most professional roles stress either support (physician, nurse, clergyman) or control (military officer, warden), there is reason to believe that it is difficult if not impossible to carry out both roles simultaneously (5). And yet, this duality of performance is what we are expecting more and more of a policeman. Dean Joseph Lohman of the School of Criminology, University of California has been quoted as saying that, "The Police are really being called on to handle social problems that they can't handle." Primers picture him as the kindly man on the corner, in the pretty blue suit, who helps Johnny and Mary across the street. Mental Health Associations underline the importance of the supportive role of the policeman when he becomes involved in problems resulting from mental illness and numerous Police Departments now give courses in this area of interpersonal relations as part of their in-service training. In the current civil rights demonstrations the policeman is likely to become the unwilling scapegoat of opposing forces. Police administrators may give poor performance ratings to an officer whose activity is low, who gives fewer citations than his colleagues. "The Police Officer is charged with responsibility of controlling crowds, potential criminals, and the flow of traffic. The person who serves as the visible symbol of the disciplinary capacity of Government is the Police Officer. His badge and uniform tend to transform him from another human being into an authority" (18). In an article, "Who Cares?" (11) by Leonard Gross, Police Chief Edward J. Allen of Santa Ana, California is quoted as referring to a decisive feeling of estrangement between the public and law enforcement agencies. Chief Allen said that police feel "that they have been set aside by society." Not only do we want our policemen to have at their disposal care-giving, crime-detecting, and disciplinarian techniques, but we

also overtly demand that they enforce all criminal laws while we covertly expect a certain amount of selective enforcement (4). Are we expecting the impossible of our law enforcement officers? Possibly so, and more scrutiny of this aspect is urged. However, unless and until our role expectations in law enforcement change, we should examine those who have survived these ambiguous expectations and discover how they differ from those who have, occupationally, failed to survive (3).

That psychiatric examinations do not constitute a panacea is known not only to the examining psychiatrists but also to any one who peruses their reports and compares their predictions with later status. As yet we have no scientific proof that psychological tests and psychiatric interviews have better predictive value than do other police selection techniques (1, 2, 8, 17). This is not surprising when we consider that we have not yet determined which characteristics constitute emotional suitability for law enforcement. We have no hesitation in recognizing the sophistication of psychologists and psychiatrists in identifying psychopathology. Professor Marc C. Hollender, Chairman of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of New York in Syracuse has written that, "The assumption often is made that psychological problems lower the tolerance to stress. This is based on the concept that a human being can be likened to a machine capable of handling a specific load. Unfortunately, this concept has only a very limited usefulness. Moreover, there are situations in which emotional problems are assets and not liabilities" (8). Police applicants are subjected to a variety of biases because of lack of knowledge as to what constitutes emotional suitability or unsuitability for law enforcement work.

CONCLUSIONS

The usual procedure for developing a screening test is to first ascertain the special characteristics called for in the occupation in question and then to develop and validate a measuring instrument which evaluates the characteristics. We have bypassed this procedure because of the belief, substantiated by the records studied, that the characteristics comprising successful law enforcement vary in accordance with geographic location, size and ethnic composition of community, individual philosophy of administration, salary, size of law enforcement agency, ratio of peace officers to population, age of department, type of enforcement agency (Police Department, Sheriff's Office, Highway Patrol) and other factors. The characteristics

of a successful Highway Patrolman, enforcing the Vehicle Code, may be very different from the characteristics of the successful Sheriff's Deputy enforcing the Criminal Code. Attempts to devise police selection techniques addressed to identifying the successful or ideal peace officer may have failed largely because of the heterogeneity of characteristics required from agency to agency. Stenography and appendectomy each requires certain skills and characteristics whether performed in Chicago or Palm Springs. But law enforcement in Chicago requires skills, motivations, aptitudes, and interests different from those required in Palm Springs. On the other hand, characteristics leading to *Failure* in law enforcement, such as inability to suppress retaliatory aggressive behavior toward an arrestee, lack of respect for the authority to be upheld, excessive emotional lability and behavioral mobility, will doom the job history of the peace officer, regardless of locale. One is not the reverse of the other. We can identify characteristics needed in some jobs such as finger dexterity in the work of an electronics technician. It is common sense and good economy to administer dexterity tests to applicants for jobs known to require the characteristic tested and to steer into other employment those who cannot qualify. It is equally sensible, economical and humane to steer into other employment police applicants whose characteristics are predictive of probable failure in the law enforcement profession.

Based on a study of the personnel files of ca 4,500 law enforcement officers in 14 law enforcement agencies, it was found that certain life historical background characteristics are significantly related to subsequent non-retention. Officers who are terminated for cause by their departments tend to be younger at the time of appointment, to have a greater number of years of education, a greater number of marriages, shorter work histories, more citations for vehicle code and other violations, and, in general, to present a pattern of greater mobility and uncontrolled impulsivity than do the officers who are retained. Except for the finding that terminated officers have better education, as measured in number of years of school attendance, than do those who are retained, the findings substantiate the hunches of many police administrators. Since the finding on educational attainment cannot be disregarded, and since it should not be interpreted to mean that poor education insures retention, it is suggested that this finding may be generated by the fact that Police Departments, in general, do not sufficiently meet

the needs of their better educated officers. The better educated officer who meets the needs of his department may leave for more challenging employment. The better educated officer whose frustrations are expressed in overt behavior unacceptable to his Department is likely to terminate at the department's request.

If we are to speculate on the meaning of our quantitative and qualitative findings we find that the appointees most likely to remain in law enforcement are probably those who are more unresponsive to the environmental stresses introduced when they become officers of the law than are their fellow-appointees. These stresses include becoming a member of a "minority" (occupationally speaking) group, need to adhere to semi-military regimen, community expectation of incongruous roles and the assumption of a position of authority complete with the trappings of uniform, badge, holster and gun and all that these imply. The officers who remain in law enforcement may well be the sons of fathers who imposed a rigid code of behavior, to which their children learned to adhere and who do not feel a strong need to defy or rebel against authority.

Those who leave police employment with a clean record may well be individuals with affective lability whose developmental experiences have taught them to control their impulsivity. They are affected by the stresses inherent in their new occupation, they are predisposed to suppress overt reactions to those stresses and the ensuing internal battle creates anxieties and/or dissatisfactions which lead to their voluntary resignations despite good employment records.

Those who leave police employment by departmental request seem to have similarities to the self-terminating officers in that they, too, are mobile and flexible and experience reactions to the new milieu. However, unlike their occupationally more successful peers, their personality development has not equipped them to control their affect, and they are apt to channelize their feelings into overt behavior which is unacceptable to their departments. These occupational failures may possibly be differentiated from other applicants before appointment by the recognition that they have more citations for vehicle code and other violations, greater number of marriages, greater tendency to have been fired or asked to resign from previous positions, and greater tendency to have grown up in a family from which the father was absent due to death, divorce, or emotional distancing. Present attempts to identify the candidate emotion-

ally unsuited for law enforcement work leave something to be desired. Pre-appointment psychiatric examinations and personality testing have concentrated on identification of emotional pathology without knowledge as to specific factors which constitute high risk in police work. This study has attempted to identify some of the "diseases of adaptation" (21) which lead to occupational failure in the field of law enforcement. Despite the complexity of the problem, our approach to it has been both simple and straightforward and hopefully the reader has found this report to be likewise. The eighteenth century French moralist and friend of Voltaire, Luc de Clapiers de Vauvenargues once said: "Lorsqu' une pensee est trop faible pour porter une expression simple, c'est la marque pour la rejeter." (When a thought is too weak to be expressed simply, that is a sign it should be rejected.)

Despite differences among the fourteen departments in administrative philosophy of hiring and retention, there was consistency in the over-all generalizations elicited by electronically computing relatedness of the differentiating characteristics to occupational status; i.e. whether the appointee was retained or left with a good employment record or left as an occupational failure in law enforcement.

This has been a retrospective study from which it was hoped there would evolve a set of traits and life historical events which could be incorporated into a screening device. Some areas of importance have been determined, and it is now mandatory that these be fully explored in a prospective study for the purpose of establishing their reliability and validity. As law enforcement changes, its representatives will also change. Factors constituting unsuitability for law enforcement are dynamic and not static, but the areas encompassing these characteristics will remain constant as long as the task of police officers is to enforce the laws imposed on us.

The results emphasize that rejecting the applicant who is "emotionally unstable" is not as effective in eliminating the high risk as would be rejection of the "emotionally unsuited." The two terms are not synonymous. Until now, diagnosed personality pathology has often served to eliminate applicants. On the basis of our findings it appears possible that the theoretically conceived individual with no pathology may be a higher risk than his brother whose emotional makeup includes certain problem areas. Any pre-appointment screening device must be specifically tailored to the unique needs of the law enforcement profession.

We cannot create a fool-proof instrument. The Honorable Willard Wirtz, Secretary of Labor, when interviewed regarding problems of automation and employment, remarked that, "...We could find out a lot more about our future needs than we know now. But we will probably go on guessing, which is part of democracy's magic formula" (13). Where loss of human dignity and even life is at stake, it is most notably in a democracy that we try to reduce the guess work! Through its Department of Mental Health, the State of Indiana supported a survey of methods of police selection in 61 cities with populations over 150,000 and concluded that the usual "police selection test" is nothing more nor less than a test of general intelligence, that very little is done, as a rule, to evaluate applicants' personalities, and that very little research has been conducted on police selection techniques (15). These conditions must change and are changing.

Police administrators are concerned with standards of "professionalization" in law enforcement. Oregon's Multnomah County Sheriff, Donald Clark, recently told a news reporter, "This nation can't afford bargain-basement cops anymore." (20). While all of us would welcome an increase in standards, it must be remembered that "professional" is a term denoting exclusiveness and is not necessarily synonymous with excellence. As long as we maintain our civil service system, with protection of the rights of the policeman or other civil servant, it behooves us to continue to seek ways of achieving excellence in the performance of those whose task it is to enforce our laws. "The civil service, wrongly administered, may be the greatest obstacle to discipline in the police department. Combine this effect of the civil service status with the common failure of examining boards to select well-qualified men for appointment, and you have a combination of conditions that is serious indeed." (9). It is not just the behavioral scientist who is pleading for quality rather than quantity on the police force. This sentiment is reflected also by the veteran police officer himself. Thus, Captain Francis McCann, who commands New York City's 16th precinct, and who in 34 years on the police force has never been shot at and has never shot anyone, is quoted as saying in regard to tackling potential riots that "he would rather go into the situation with a few competent men than with a big armed group" (12). Nor is it a foregone conclusion that the safest road to selection is via the well-worn path of "aptitude tests".

The most noteworthy and encouraging experience during the collection of data for this study has been our discovery that administrators and other representatives of law enforcement are sincerely and energetically dedicated to the difficult task of self-examination and self-improvement. With assistance from the rest of the citizenry they will certainly achieve their goal.

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