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PERSONOLOGICAL CORRELATES OF POLICE EFFECTIVENESS*

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SUMMARY

This study with the Police Department of Oakland, California, supports results obtained earlier with the Maryland State Police concerning the personological correlates of competent police work. With use of the California Psychological Inventory and 229 men, the paper provides evidence on three points: (a) the modal personality of police; (b) the personality characteristics associated with persistence in police work; and (c) the personality correlates of effective performance. These samples of American police were found to be masculine, self-confident, and socially effective. Good police are characterized by functional intelligence, achievement motivation, and social poise.

A. INTRODUCTION

In policy-oriented social science research, the problem of identifying and selecting competent policemen would seem to have a high priority. The bulk of the research on this problem, however, has been either descriptive (*cf.* 9, 10, 11, 15) or directed toward detecting potentially unfit candidates (*cf.* 1, 13). Moreover, as a consequence of an almost exclusive reliance on measures of intelligence and psychopathology as selection devices in earlier research (*e. g.*, 3), little is known about the positive dimensions of personality associated with competent work as a law enforcement official. In an earlier paper (8), the first author found that effective police performance in Maryland, defined in terms of supervisors' ratings in recruit training and in the field, was associated with practical or functional intelligence, sociability, and self-assurance. The research reported here extends these earlier findings, based on state troopers in the East, to a sample of urban police on the West coast; in so doing the paper attempts to clarify further the personal characteristics that promote effective performance as a policeman.

B. METHOD

The analyses were conducted in two parts, each based on a separate subject sample and directed toward a separate question. The data consisted of Cali-

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fornia Psychological Inventory protocols [CPI (5, 7)] originally gathered by the Personnel Department of the City of Oakland, California.² The first sample included the following: 12 "field training officers," police with three or more years' experience on the Oakland force, who were tested in April, 1971; 31 police cadets in the final stages of training at the Oakland Police Academy, tested in June, 1971; 28 men, selected from a pool of 70 applicants, who began recruit training in the fall of 1971; and 42 men who had applied for positions with the Oakland Police but were rejected on the basis of an oral interview ($N = 21$), and IQ test ($N = 18$), or lack of physical agility ($N = 3$).³ Thus 113 subjects provided CPI protocols for the first set of analyses, which were designed to examine personality characteristics associated with "survival" in the selection process. The second sample contained 116 officers on active duty in Oakland, all of whom had at least three years of experience with the Oakland department. These men were tested with the CPI in the summer of 1971. Their protocols were used to study personality characteristics associated with effective performance. Since reliable measures of field performance were unobtainable, the following served as indices of effective performance for this second group: grades at the police academy, class standing at the time of graduation, and cumulative number of disciplinary actions taken against each man by the summer of 1971.

C. RESULTS⁴

1. *CPI Differences Between Police Officers and Unsuccessful Applicants*

The first analyses investigated personality variables associated with survival in police work and asked the question: How do police and police recruits differ from unsuccessful applicants? As will be noted below, these analyses afforded the opportunity to answer some other interesting but incidental questions as well.

To examine differences between police or police recruits and unsuccessful applicants, the first sample was divided into two groups—All Police ($N = 71$) and Unsuccessful Applicants ($N = 42$). The groups were then compared across each of the standard 18 CPI scales and an additional scale developed by the first author (8), using a simple scale by scale one-way analysis of variance. Results of these comparisons indicated three items of note. First, in terms of personal effectiveness, the unsuccessful applicants were in fact a

² The authors thank James Newman, Personnel Director, City of Oakland, for making these data available to us.

³ CPI scores were not used in the selection process.

⁴ Tables of mean CPI scale scores and correlations between CPI scales are available from the first author at the address shown at the end of this article.

reasonably sound group, scoring above the mean for men in general on dominance, sociability, social presence, self-acceptance, self-control, achievement via conformance, achievement via independence, and psychological-mindedness, and scoring below the male adult mean only on tolerance. The second noteworthy point is that the Oakland Police sample and the Unsuccessful Applicants were significantly different on nine of 19 CPI scales. Relative to the Unsuccessful Applicants, the police sample was more assertive (dominance); had more potential for social mobility (capacity for status), more social poise and self-confidence (social presence), a more pronounced sense of self-worth (self-acceptance), more need for autonomous achievement (achievement via independence), more functional intelligence (intellectual efficiency), and more psychological-mindedness (psychological-mindedness); was more masculine (femininity); and possessed greater social acuity (empathy). Third, relative to men in general, the police sample presented a picture of unusual personal soundness and effective social functioning. They scored above (and often considerably above) the adult mean on 16 of 19 scales. Moreover, the scales on which the Oakland group did not exceed men in general are measures of socialization and responsibility. This suggests that the Oakland police were no more (and no less) conventional, conforming, and overcontrolled than men in general. Relatively speaking, however, they were more poised and self-assured and had a higher level of achievement potential, intellectual efficiency, and social insight.

2. Variables Associated with Effective Police Performance

The second set of analyses used 116 experienced officers and was designed to explore the personological variables associated with effective performance. The 19 CPI scales served as predictor variables; criterion variables included, as noted above, grades at the police academy, class standing at graduation, and total number of disciplinary actions taken against a man at the time of testing. Although the results are less dramatic than the earlier analyses, two points are of interest. First, the CPI is more strongly associated with classroom performance than any other criteria. Second, the best predictors of these performance criteria seem again to be self-confidence and social poise (capacity for status), motivation for independent accomplishment (achievement via independence), and practical, functional intelligence (intellectual efficiency).

A canonical correlation analysis was then used to determine the pattern of CPI variables most closely associated with the criteria, and the pattern of criterion variables most predictable from the CPI. The first canonical corre-

lation was .55; the CPI variables with the largest weights in this analysis were capacity for status, achievement via independence, and intellectual efficiency with positive weights, and tolerance and responsibility with negative weights. The criterion variable with the largest positive weight was grades at the police academy, followed by class standing, and then disciplinary action with a negative weight. The second canonical correlation ($r = .44$) emphasized among the predictor variables capacity for status and achievement via conformance with positive weights, and communality and psychological-mindedness with negative weights; disciplinary action and class standing were the most important criterion variables for the second canonical correlation. These canonical correlations suggest that the criterion variables are moderately interrelated and about equally predictable from linear combinations of CPI scales. Once again the pattern of CPI scales that best predicted police performance stressed ambition and self-assurance (capacity for status) and achievement motivation (achievement via independence), in combination with toughness and respect for authority (e. g., low scores for tolerance and psychological-mindedness).

The results of the analyses just described are similar to those presented by Hogan (8); in addition, they suggest that certain general characteristics associated with police performance are independent of geographical location and departmental structure. To verify this impression, a four variable CPI regression equation was developed to predict performance in 183 officers from the Maryland State Police. The Maryland sample was used because their criterion scores (e. g., supervisors' ratings) had a known reliability. The equation, which had a multiple r of .42 in the Maryland sample, was as follows: Police Effectiveness = $20.21 - .47$ (social presence) + $.68$ (self-acceptance) + $.33$ (achievement via independence) + $.68$ (intellectual efficiency). The constant and computing weights were adjusted to yield a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10 in the Maryland sample. This equation was applied to the full sample of experienced Oakland Police. The resulting correlation ($r = .27$; $N = 116$; $p < .01$, one-tail test) with their performance criterion, while not large in absolute value terms, suggests a gratifying element of consistency in the determinants of police performance in a cross-national comparison.

3. *Social Maturity and Leadership Scores of Police Officers*

To define more clearly the determinants of police effectiveness, we conducted two further analyses. The Oakland, California, and Maryland Police samples were scored for two CPI-based regression equations: the first is de-

signed to estimate social maturity (4), and the second is intended to provide a general index of leadership (6).

Conceptually, the social maturity regression equation defines a dimension anchored at the low end by the "untutored, egocentric" infant, and at the high end by the socially mature individual. This six variable regression equation was developed by comparing the CPI responses of 2146 nondelinquents with those of 881 delinquents. The equation was cross-validated on a sample of 2482 nondelinquents and 409 delinquents. In cross-validation the point-biserial correlation between social maturity and the delinquency-nondelinquency dichotomy was .63. From peer ratings high scorers on the equation were described as rational, idealistic, wholesome, clear-thinking, and organized. Low scorers were seen as shallow, intolerant, nervous, temperamental, and frivolous. The constant and weights for the equation were adjusted so that the mean score in a normal population is 50.0. In the original sample, the nondelinquent mean was 50.5, and the mean delinquent score was 42.7. In the present analyses, the mean scores on the social maturity equation were 49.4 for the Oakland Police and 49.3 for the Maryland Police.

The regression equation for leadership was developed by comparing the CPI responses of 90 men and 89 women (high school students) who were nominated as outstanding leaders with responses from 2411 students tested in eight schools. A five variable equation was derived, and the biserial correlations between regression scores and the leader-nonleader dichotomy were .45 for men and .44 for women. Individuals with high scores on this equation were described by their peers as dominant, aggressive, self-confident, rational, and demanding. Low scorers were seen as cautious, shy, unassuming, meek, timid, and withdrawn. Once again the constant and the weights for the equation were adjusted so that the mean score in a normal population is 50.0. In cross-validation the mean scores for the male leaders and nonleaders were 54.4 and 49.2. The mean leadership scores for the Maryland and Oakland Police were 54.3 and 58.2, respectively.

Three points in the preceding discussion should be stressed. First, the police scored slightly but not significantly below the mean for men in general on social maturity; thus, the typical policeman was neither more nor less socially mature than the average man. Second, both groups of policemen scored well above men in general on the leadership equation. The mean score for the Maryland Police equaled that of Gough's (6) original leadership criterion group, while the Oakland Police scored notably higher than Gough's nominated leaders. Generally speaking, then, the experienced policemen seem to have had considerable force of character and leadership potential. Finally,

correlations were computed between individual regression scores and all the available criterion scores from both samples. Social maturity failed to predict any of the criteria for the Oakland Police. Leadership scores, however, were significantly correlated with academy grades ($R = .17$, $p < .05$) and positively but nonsignificantly associated with class standing ($r = .13$). For most of the Maryland sample only one criterion of performance was available. The performance index used was a composite rating for "overall suitability for police work," a criterion with quite satisfactory reliability [$r = .93$; *cf.* (8)]. For the Maryland Police the correlation between rated performance and social maturity regression scores was .21 ($p < .05$). The correlation between performance and leadership scores was also significant ($r = .32$, $p < .01$).

D. DISCUSSION

The conceptual burden of the foregoing analyses can be summarized in terms of two points. First, there was a stable personological core to the notion of police effectiveness; i. e., good police shared many common characteristics, regardless of whether they dealt with Black Panthers in Oakland, California, or middle class Jews in Pikesville, Maryland. For those persons (like the authors) who believe that certain important aspects of personality transcend situational constraints, findings such as these are encouraging.

Second, and in contrast with the view that policemen are cynical, suspicious, violence-prone authoritarians (*cf.* 2, 12, 14), those in our sample can be generally described as masculine, self-confident, and socially competent. The best of these officers were, in addition, characterized by practical intelligence, achievement motivation, and interpersonal effectiveness.

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