To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Carla Gayle Strassle entitled "Assessing Police Applicants: A Further Look at MMPI and Rorschach Data." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Psychology.

Leonard Handler, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and
recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:

Associate Vice Chancellor and
Dean of The Graduate School

ASSESSING POLICE APPLICANTS: A FURTHER LOOK AT MMPI AND RORSCHACH DATA

A Thesis
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ABSTRACT

Currently, there are many problems associated with the process of police officer selection. Focusing specifically on psychological testing instruments, the MMPI is the most widely used instrument in police officer selection. The general MMPI profile for the police population, however, is relatively flat. Researchers have tried to pinpoint scales which will differentiate officers, but consistent results have been elusive. The present research was undertaken to determine if the Rorschach could be effectively utilized in conjunction with the information provided by the MMPI in the police selection process. Protocols (N = 53) from police applicants were obtained and found to be within normal limits on the MMPI validity scales and contained valid Rorschach protocols. The Rorschach protocols were then scored and analyzed. Results indicate that this sample differed from the normative data found in Exner's Comprehensive System (1993) on variables of human movement (M), active movement, Populars, extended Form quality (X+%), unusual Form quality (Xu%), texture (T), Lambda (L), and on the Erlebnistypus (EB) measure and the Depression Index. Based on these findings, it appears that the Rorschach could be a viable psychological test to be used in conjunction with the MMPI to screen police applicants. Further research into the use of these two tests, in a sample where follow-up information is available, is warranted.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Introduction

Psychological screening of potential police officers is utilized by most law enforcement agencies as part of the selection requirement (Hiatt & Hargrave, 1988). Inwald and Shusman (1984) list several reasons for psychological testing of police applicants, including saving time and money on applicants who eventually fail to perform up to standard, identifying people who may misuse their position, thereby posing a risk to the public, and preventing negative publicity which might arise from incidents involving such officers. In addition to these reasons, psychological screening allows a candidate's specific pathology, which could interfere with job performance, to be detected. From this short list of reasons alone, it appears that psychological screening is not only a prudent but a crucial addition to the selection process.

While the reasons for using psychological screening in police officer selection seem clear, the literature on police officer selection is confusing, at best. Burbeck and Furnham (1985) and Meier, Farmer, and Maxwell (1987), in their respective reviews of the literature on police officer selection, highlight several areas of confusion surrounding the selection process. To begin, there is no distinct definition of a police personality. Many researchers (e. g., Beutler, Nussbaum, & Meredith, 1988; Kunce & Anderson, 1988; Lester, Babcock, Cassissi, Genz, & Butler, 1980; Lorr & Strack, 1994; Mills & Bohannon, 1980) have explored what personality characteristics make up a "police personality." While many characteristics have been found, they vary from study to study, prompting Burbeck and Furnham (1985) to state, "attempting to select recruits who display a 'police personality' may simply not be feasible" (p. 61). A second area of

confusion in the selection process is that there is no definitive way of measuring success in police officers. Many researchers have contributed to the selection literature by focusing on what behaviors are acceptable or constitute "success" in an officer (e. g., Azen, Snibbe, Montgomery, Fabricatore, & Earle, 1974; Bartol, 1991; Beutler, Storm, Kirkish, Scogin, & Gaines, 1985; Cortina, Doherty, Schmitt, Kaufman, & Smith, 1992; Costello, Schoenfeld, & Kobos, 1982; Dralle & Baybrook, 1985; Hargrave & Hiatt, 1987; Inwald & Shusman, 1984; Merian, Stefan, Schoenfeld, & Kobos, 1980; Saxe & Reiser, 1976; Schoenfeld, Kobos, & Phinney, 1980; Shusman, Inwald, & Knatz, 1987). This approach, too, has met with difficulties, in that "success" has been hard to define (Bartol, 1991, Meier et al., 1987). To add to the confusion, Beutler et al. (1985) raise the point that behaviors which would almost certainly be construed as unacceptable, or "unsuccessful", such as abuse of deadly force, happen so infrequently that they can not fully define success. Various definitions of success which have been investigated include supervisor ratings (Costello et al., 1982), grade point average at the academy (Cortina et al., 1992), peer ratings (Hargrave & Hiatt, 1987), performance criteria such as absences and injuries on the job (Inwald & Shusman, 1984), and rate of attrition (Saxe & Reiser, 1976). Burbeck and Furnham (1985), and Meier et al., (1987) also note a third area of confusion in the selection process in that all law enforcement officers do not perform the same job because of the relative environment in which they work. Depending, for example, on whether they work in a large metropolitan area or in a small town, their respective responsibilities and duties are different. Others (e. g., Bartol, 1982, 1991; Carpenter & Raza, 1987) have raised this issue, pointing out that a job description or

successful screening of an urban officer may not necessarily be appropriate for a small town officer, underscoring Beutler et al.'s (1985) recognition of "a need to clearly and objectively define the task requirements of officers in different roles and departments" (p. 333). Burbeck and Furnham (1985) highlight one final area of confusion in the selection process when they contend that "No (psychological) test has been found that discriminates consistently and clearly between people who will make good police officers and those who will not" (p. 64). It is this fourth point which spurred the current research.

The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) is the single most widely used instrument for police officer selection (Coutts, 1990). Its popularity can be partly attributed to its ability to detect psychopathology in the applicants (Kornfeld, 1995; Costello & Schoenfeld, 1981); but it has been used for other purposes in the selection process as well. The literature is full of studies that use the MMPI to answer various questions, ranging from outright predictive ability to distinguish suitable and unsuitable officers (e. g., Saxe & Reiser, 1976; Schoenfeld et al., 1980), to the utility of certain scales to predict specific behaviors such as resignation (Cortina et al., 1992), attitude problems (Inwald & Shusman, 1984), or automobile accidents (Azen, Snibbe, & Montgomery, 1973). The problem with using the MMPI in this fashion is that, overall, most applicants and existing officers score within the normal range of functioning on the MMPI (Beutler et al., 1985), which limits its utility. Some researchers (e. g., Azen et al., 1974; Bartol, 1982, 1991; Carpenter & Raza, 1987; Cortina et al., 1992; Costello et al., 1982; Kornfeld, 1995; Saccuzzo, Higgins, & Lewandowski, 1974; Saxe & Reiser, 1976) have examined different scales within this normal range to see if predictive aspects within

the police applicant pool or to the population at large can be found. These efforts have met with some success. For example, Azen et al. (1974) and Cortina et al. (1992) found scales which helped predict resignation, Costello et al. (1982) identified differences between acceptable and unacceptable officers, and several researchers have found elevations which differ within the applicant population (e.g., Bartol, 1982, 1991; Kornfeld, 1995), or from the population at large (e. g., Carpenter & Raza, 1987; Saxe & Reiser, 1976; Saccuzzo et al., 1974). These findings, however, are limited because they are not consistently found across studies, and the elevations, given that they are within the normal range, are not large enough to meaningfully differentiate among applicants (Saxe & Reiser, 1976). One final limitation of using the MMPI for police officer selection is that over half of the MMPI literature reviewed (e. g., Bartol, 1982, 1991; Beutler et al., 1988; Carpenter & Raza, 1987; Costello & Schoenfeld, 1981; Hargrave & Hiatt, 1987; Hiatt & Hargrave, 1988; Inwald & Shusman, 1984; Kornfeld, 1995; Saccuzzo et al., 1974; Saxe & Reiser, 1976) indicated a tendency by the applicants to put forth a good impression, resulting particularly in elevations on the L and K validity scales. Thus, because of these limitations, the MMPI has only been able to differentiate among applicants at the grossest functioning level.

Given the somewhat limited utility of assessment provided by the MMPI, it would be advantageous to find an alternative personality measure that could more clearly differentiate among applicants, to be used in conjunction with the MMPI in the selection process. For the purposes of the current research, the Rorschach was chosen as the alternative measure. Reasons for this choice include the fact that MMPI and Rorschach

data are often unrelated, and therefore not redundant, and the Rorschach, by virtue of its projective orientation, may be less amenable to the impression management which has been noted as a problem in the MMPI (Acklin, 1993). Toward this end, a search of the literature was conducted to gauge any existing studies that used the Rorschach for police selection. Such studies, however, were virtually nonexistent. Mention of the Rorschach was found in studies by Gavin and Hamilton (1975) and Johnson (1983), where the Rorschach was listed as the second most frequently used personality test in screening of police applicants. A discussion of the Rorschach's utility in these samples, however, was not the focus of the studies, and was therefore not reported. The seemingly total lack of research in this area strengthened the belief that such a study would be informative.

To begin the research, a pilot study (Strassle et al., 1997) was conducted on randomly selected files (N = 30) from a sample of police applicants who had normal MMPI validity scales. The purpose of the pilot study was to determine if the Rorschach was able to distinguish applicants given their relatively flat MMPI profiles[1]. Eleven hypotheses, which were further broken down into three categories of 1) basic orientation to the world, 2) emotions, and 3) aggression were tested. Using Exner's Comprehensive System (Exner, 1993), three raters achieved Kappa indexes for reliability on rating Rorschach protocols > .80, except for cognitive special scores for which the Kappa was .74 (see Table 1)[2]. These raters then scored the selected Rorschach protocols. As this pilot study was extremely exploratory in nature, frequency descriptions of the data, with a

[1] Of the 30 protocols, 27 had MMPI clinical scales within the normal range, and the other 3 protocols had 1 clinical scale elevation apiece.
[2] All tables are located in the appendix.

minimum criterion of at least one standard deviation from Exner's norms was established as a point of comparison.

The findings from the pilot study gave some definite grounding points from which to continue research. Of 11 hypotheses, 2 were supported and 2 gained partial support. As a group, the sample was not "people oriented", as indicated by a low number of human movement (M) responses. They also lacked awareness of their affective needs, as indicated by a low number of texture (T) responses. Partial support was found for the hypothesis that the applicants would be more action oriented rather than thinking oriented, as they produced more active than passive movement responses within the sample. Partial support was also found for the hypothesis that the sample would exhibit constricted emotions, indicated by Lambda (L) > 1.

Interestingly enough, some of the hypotheses which were not confirmed in the pilot study were just as important as hypotheses which were confirmed. For example, the hypothesis that the applicants would be rule bound and conventional in their view of the world, as indicated by elevations on Popular, conventional pure form percentage (F+%), and conventional form percentage (X+%) responses, and a lower proportion of unusual form percentage (Xu%) responses, was not confirmed. Popular, X+%, and Xu% responses differed by more than 1 standard deviation from the norms, but the differences were in the opposite direction from what was predicted. The low Popular and X+% scores, coupled with the elevated Xu% score suggested that rather than being rule bound and conventional, the applicants had a commitment to the individuality of the self and in seeing the blots in unusual and subjective ways (Exner, 1993).

Another interesting finding came from the hypothesis that the applicants would have an action oriented over thinking oriented style, as indicated by more active then passive movement responses and an extratensive style on the EB measure. As stated, partial support was obtained for this hypothesis, since the applicants did produce more active than passive movement responses within the sample, although, compared to the norms, the sample generated fewer active responses. The second part of the hypothesis, being extratensive on EB, however, was not supported. Rather than being extratensive, a full 50% of the applicants were ambitent, which may lead to less efficiency and more vacillation in problem solving (Exner, 1993). In addition, 14 out of the 15, or 93% of the introversive and extratensive protocols were positive for the pervasiveness of their style. This is much different from the 22% found to be pervasive in the normative population, and signals a coping style which could be a detriment for police work where a broad variety of coping situations will occur. Furthermore, compared to the normative data in which 36% of the population was introversive and 44% was extratensive, the sample looked more similar to some patient populations, most notably that of depressives, who average approximately 56% ambitents (Exner, 1993). To explore this similarity further, a post hoc examination of the data indicated that 30% of the sample was positive on the Depression Index. Although all but one of those protocols had a depression score of 5, which merely indicates that a person's psychological organization is vulnerable to fluctuations in mood (Exner, 1993), compared to the 3% who are positive on the Depression Index in the normative sample, this was an interesting finding.

Finally, the findings related to the hypothesis that the applicants would exhibit constricted emotions, as indicated by L > 1 and higher color responses dominated by form (FC) than color responses dominated by color (CF) plus pure color responses (C) were interesting. As stated, partial support was obtained since L was > 1. However, the second part of the hypothesis, that there would be more FC than CF + C, was not supported. Rather than having more FC then CF + C, 50% of the sample had more CF + C than FC. In fact, 30% of the sample had a CF + C score ≥ FC when C was 1 or 0. A ratio such as this suggests that the person will be less stringent about modulating emotional discharge (Exner, 1993). While this is not seen as a particularly worrisome characteristic for most adults, it could be a potentially disastrous characteristic for a police officer. In addition, when either the D or adjusted D score falls into the negative range, the capacity for control is much more limited (Exner, 1993). Post hoc frequency tabulation indicated that of the 30% who had a CF + C score equal to or up to 2 points greater than FC when C was 1 or 0, 20% had a D score in the negative range. For this hypothesis, the sample did have constricted emotions, but they were moderated by a tendency to have impulsive emotional discharges.

The findings from the pilot study provided a first look to determine whether the Rorschach could be effectively utilized in the police selection process. As several hypotheses were either confirmed or showed interesting tendencies for further exploration, the hypotheses were reformulated and tested for the present study using a larger sample of police applicants. The hypotheses can again be broken down into categories of basic orientation to the world and emotions (see Table 2). In the category of

orientation to the world, it was hypothesized that applicants self-selecting to be police officers would not be "people oriented", indicated by low M. They were also hypothesized to possess an action oriented over thinking oriented style, which would be moderated by a tendency to vacillate in problem situations, as indicated by more active than passive movement responses within the sample, and an ambitent style on the EB measure, respectively. Finally, applicants were expected to show a commitment to the individuality of the self and to seeing the blots in unusual and subjective ways as indicated by lower scores on Popular and X+% responses, and a higher proportion Xu% responses.

Under the general category of emotions it was hypothesized that applicants would lack awareness of affective needs, indicated by less T. It was also hypothesized the applicants would exhibit constricted or over-control of emotions, which would be moderated by a tendency toward occasional impulsivity in emotional discharge, as indicated by L > 1 and more CF + C than FC, respectively. Finally, applicants were expected to be positive on the Depression Index, signaling a possible tendency toward mood fluctuations.

II. Method

Participants

The 30 protocols from the pilot study and 30 additional protocols from the same sample pool were obtained for applicants to the City of Knoxville, Tennessee's police department. Before the protocols were obtained, all identifying information was removed by the assessment center that was providing the protocols to ensure the confidentiality of the applicants. All applicants had been assessed by a licensed psychological examiner as part of their application process. Of the 60 protocols, 2 were dropped from further analysis because their MMPI or MMPI-2 validity scale scores were not within the normal range, and 5 additional protocols were dropped because they contained an invalid Rorschach protocol, as fewer than 14 responses were recorded. Of the remaining 53 protocols, 41 were male. In the case of age, education, and racial demographics, 2, 5, and 12 protocols, respectively were missing this information. Demographics for protocols in which the information was present indicated that the mean age was 25, the mean education level was 14 years, and 31 were of Euro American background, 8 were African American, 1 was Asian, and 1 was Hispanic.

Materials

Assessment included an interview, and administrations of the MMPI or MMPI-2, the Rorschach, and an abbreviated version of the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Revised (WAIS-R). In addition, some applicants were administered the California Psychological Inventory (CPI) and the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT).

Procedure

All protocols were checked to confirm that all MMPI or MMPI-2 validity scale scores were within the normal range, and that all WAIS-R scores indicated average or better intelligence. The clinical scales of the MMPI were then examined. Among the 53 applicants, 46 had scores on the clinical scales of the MMPI which were within the normal range, 6 protocols had 1 scale elevation apiece, and 1 protocol had 2 scale elevations. Using the same procedure as the pilot study, the three raters who had achieved interrater reliability then scored the selected protocols.

III. Results

The results were analyzed using one sample t-tests so that the current sample could be tested using the larger normative sample as the constant. Chi-square tests were performed on the nonparametric variables. An alpha level of .01 was established as the point of significance for all tests. The applicants produced a mean number of 21.06 responses, which was comparable to Exner's norms (t (52) = -1.95, $p > .05$).

Looking first at the hypotheses relating to basic orientation to the world, it was hypothesized that the applicants would have low M. The hypothesis was supported, since the sample produced M responses less often than the normative sample (t (52) = -8.93, $p < .001$). Next it was hypothesized that within the sample the applicants would have more active than passive movement, and would have an ambitent style on EB. Looking at total active versus passive movement within the sample, 60.4% had more active movement, 26.4% had more passive movement, and 13.2% had equal active and passive movement. Chi-square analysis indicated that this was a significant difference ($\chi 2$ (2, N = 53) = 18.83, $p < .001$). This part of the hypothesis, then, was supported even though, when comparing the sample to Exner's norms, the sample still generated far fewer active responses than the normative population (t (52) = -6.90, $p < .001$). When looking at the EB measure, 32.1% of the applicants were found to be introversive, 20.8% were extratensive, and 47.2% were ambitent. Comparing these percentages to what would be expected based on Exner's norms indicated significance ($\chi 2$ (2, N = 53) = 26.30, $p < .001$). This part of the hypothesis then, was also supported. Finally, it was hypothesized that the applicants have lower scores on Popular and X+% responses, and a higher score

on Xu% responses. This hypothesis was also confirmed, as the scores for both Popular (t (52) = -10.40, $p < .001$), X+% (t (52) = -14.61, $p < .001$) and Xu% (t (52) = 6.70, $p < .001$) were significantly different from the norms.

In the category dealing with emotions, it was hypothesized that the applicants would have less T. This hypothesis was supported (t (52) = -7.07, $p < .001$). It was also hypothesized that the applicants would have Lambda > 1 and higher CF + C versus FC. Lambda for the sample was 1.00, which was significantly different from Exner's norms (t (52) = 4.78, $p < .001$). The second part of the hypothesis, however, was not confirmed, as only 37.7% of the sample had more CF + C, whereas 50.9% had more FC, and 11.3% had equal FC and CF + C. The last hypothesis in this category was that the applicants would be positive on the Depression Index measure. This hypothesis was confirmed ($\chi 2$ (1, N = 753) = 59.91, $p < .001$).

IV. Discussion

Of the 6 hypotheses, 5 were supported and 1 gained partial support. As a group the sample produced scores which indicated, based on the Comprehensive System (Exner, 1993), that they were not "people oriented", had a more action oriented coping style which was moderated by a vacillation in problem solving, were committed to the individuality of the self, lacked awareness of their affective needs, and had a tendency toward mood fluctuations. These findings produce some seeming contradictions between what was found in the applicant sample and what one might expect given stereotypes of police officers. For example, given that police officers are inextricably tied to the public, it is interesting that the sample would appear not to be "people oriented". Also of note is the finding that, with a job that may require quick decisions and problem solving, the applicants' protocols indicated that they would be likely to vacillate in decision making.

On the other hand, the findings that the applicants were committed to the individuality of the self and lacked awareness of their affective needs are perhaps more consistent with what one might expect given stereotypes of police officers. For example, police officers perhaps relate to conformity pressures differently than an average citizen would, since they are responsible for enforcing the law as a primary concern, whereas upholding the law would represent a citizen's primary concern. That police officers might be more distant, or less aware in their connection to affect is also not surprising, given the fact that their job requires them to react impartially. This hypothesis also seems to lend support to the hypothesis that the applicants would be constricted in their emotions.

It is also interesting that the applicants were significantly more likely to be positive on the Depression Index compared to Exner's norms. This hypothesis was a result of similar, albeit surprising findings in the pilot study. The fact that these findings were supported for a second time definitely warrants further investigation. It should be stressed that, as in the pilot study, 80% of the protocols which were positive for the Depression Index had a score of 5, which does not signal a serious affective disorder, but merely a disposition toward mood fluctuations (Exner, 1993). In police work, however, where the job is trying in and of itself, a disposition toward mood fluctuations could be detrimental.

The hypothesis that the applicants would have constricted emotions, moderated by impulsive emotional discharge was partially supported in that L = 1. The second part of the hypothesis, however, was not supported, as the sample had more FC than CF + C. The second part of this hypothesis was formulated as a result of findings from the pilot study, and given that the findings were not significant with the larger sample size, the findings from the pilot study seem to be an artifact of that particular sample.

From the results of the present study, it appears that the Rorschach could be a viable psychological test to be used in conjunction with the MMPI to screen police applicants. Of course, the strongest deterrent in this study is the lack of follow-up information with which to gauge the predictive validity of the hypotheses. All hypotheses were put forth with an a priori assumption that the Comprehensive System's (Exner, 1993) interpretations represented viable ways of behaving. Based on the differences from the normative sample which were found in both the present and pilot studies, further

research utilizing a sample for which follow-up information is available seems warranted. Desirable follow-up information would include information concerning which applicants were hired into the department and their current state of performance. With such a sample, the hypotheses based on the Comprehensive System can be tested, and a more definitive statement about the advantages of using the Rorschach to distinguish among applicants can be made.

Using both the MMPI and the Rorschach in the screening of police applicants seems to be a wise use of psychological testing. The MMPI can provide information concerning gross functioning of the individual and can alert the tester to any pathology which might be present. Supplementing this general information with more detailed distinctions obtained from the Rorschach would then strengthen the grounds on which a recommendation to the department could be given. Further research utilizing these tests working in conjunction in the police selection process seems desirable.

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Appendix

Table 1

Kappa Indexes for Reliability

Location	.96
DQ	.89
Determinants	.87
FQ	.80
Pairs	.93
Content	.85
Popular	.90
Cognitive Special Scores	.74
Other Special Scores	.86

Note. The kappa indexes used were computed by G. J. Meyer for a concurrent research project using the same raters as the current study. A full description of this procedure can be found in Meyer, G. J., Riethmiller, R., Handler, L., Benoit, W., & Brooks, G. D. (1997, March). Further explorations into Rorschach and MMPI-2 integration. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Personality Assessment, San Diego, CA.

Table 2[3]

Hypotheses Broken Down by Categories

Orientation to the World

Not people-oriented

Low M

Action oriented over thinking oriented, moderated by vacillation in problem solving

More active than passive movement

Ambitent on EB*

Committed to individuality of the self

Low P and X+%, high Xu%*

Emotion

Lack of awareness of affective needs

Less T

Constricted emotions, moderated by impulsive emotional discharge

L > 1

Higher CF + C than FC*

Tendency toward mood fluctuations

Positive on Depression Index*

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[3] Those hypotheses resulting from unexpected findings from the pilot study are marked with an asterisk.

VITA

Carla Gayle Strassle was born in June 11, 1974. She attended schools in the public school system in Sumner County, Tennessee, where she graduated as valedictorian of the White House High School's class of 1992. She graduated magna cum laude with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee in May 1996. She entered the Doctoral Program in Clinical Psychology at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville in August of 1996. This thesis represents a requirement of that program.