

HANDBOOK OF POLICE PSYCHOLOGY

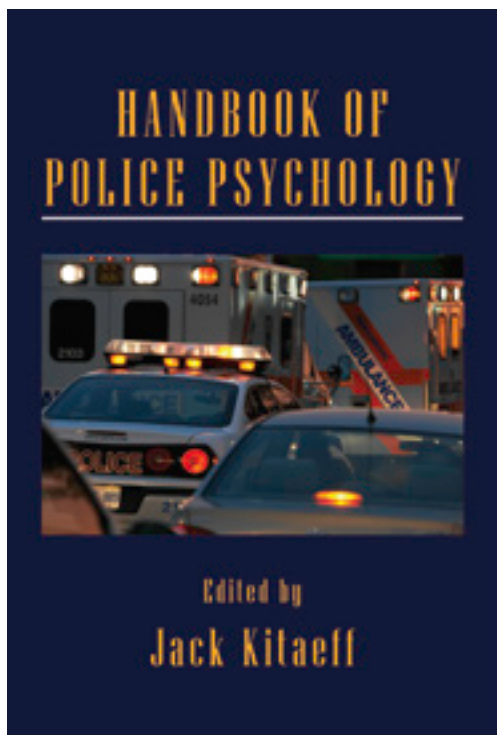


Edited by
Jack Kitaeff

Handbook of Police Psychology

Jack Kitaeff (Ed.)

Series in Applied Psychology (Edwin A. Fleishman & Jeanette N. Cleveland, Eds.)



The *Handbook of Police Psychology* represents the contributions of over thirty police psychologists, all experts in their field, on the core subject matters of police psychology. Police psychology is broadly defined as the application of psychological principles and methods to law enforcement. This growing area includes topics such as screening and hiring of police officers; conducting screening for special squads (e.g., SWAT); fitness-for-duty evaluations; investigations, hostage negotiations; training and consultation, and stress counseling, among others. The book examines the beginnings of police psychology and early influences on the profession, such as experimental investigations of psychological testing on police attitude and performance. Influential figures in the field of police psychology are discussed, including

the nation's first full-time police psychologist who served on the Los Angeles Police Department, and the first full-time police officer to earn a doctorate in psychology while still in uniform with the New York Police Department.

February 2011 • 7x10 • 592pp

HB: 978-0-415-87766-4: £64.95 • \$95.00

Jack Kitaeff, Ph.D., J.D. is a licensed clinical psychologist in the Commonwealth of Virginia specializing in police and forensic psychology. He received his undergraduate education at Brooklyn College, and his graduate psychology education at the State University of New York at Cortland and the University of Mississippi. He received his law degree from the George Mason University School of law, and completed a legal clerkship with the U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of Virginia. He is the author of *Forensic Psychology*, a leading 2010 textbook.

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6 Criterion-Related Validity in Police Psychological Evaluations

Peter A. Weiss

William U. Weiss

INTRODUCTION

Use of psychological assessment instruments such as the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2 (MMPI-2), Personality Assessment Inventory (PAI), and California Psychological Inventory (CPI) has become a routine practice in police psychological evaluations in recent years. Such instruments are often used in conditional pre-employment psychological evaluations as well as for other purposes such as fitness-for-duty (FFDE) evaluations (Weiss, 2000; Weiss, Weiss, & Giacomin, 2005). A major issue with such assessment instruments is that many of these tests were originally designed for purposes of clinical diagnosis and treatment planning and are not in fact instruments originally designed for use in employment settings. While certain newer instruments, such as the MPAUSE (Davis & Rotow, 2006), were designed especially for purposes of police psychological evaluations and were originally validated with law enforcement populations, most of these instruments and many validity studies tend to be performed on non-law enforcement (generally personality inventories such as the MMPI-2 and PAI) acceptable for use in law enforcement evaluations. As a result of the current emphasis by the American Psychological Association (APA) on promoting evidence-based practice, it is important for psychologists using such instruments in their practice of police psychology to have an understanding of the validity of these tests for applications in police work. The purpose of this chapter is to better assist the practicing police psychologist with the validity issues applicable to the use of such assessment instruments, and then to review the evidence supporting the validity of the most popular instruments.

TEST VALIDITY ISSUES IN POLICE PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATIONS

In teaching about the validity of psychological tests, the present authors have divided it into three components. The first may be termed *internal validity*, which may be further broken down into *face validity* and *content validity*. Essentially, *internal validity* is the degree to which an assessment instrument makes sense during an inspection process, in other words, whether the test items appear to measure what the test developers say they should measure. *Face validity* is whether or not test items obviously measure the characteristic the test developer is attempting to measure. According to Kardes (2000), this is not typically part of the psychometric development of a measure but rather an informal evaluation of its usefulness. *Content validity* is evidence that the items on a test or measure relate to the concept underlying the instrument. It asks the question: Does the test appropriately sample the universe of items associated with the concept? Problems with *face* or *content validity* are rarely a problem in contemporary psychological testing, tests that are ultimately validated through predictive, construct, and criterion points of view also have good *face* and *content validity*. However, this is an

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mental health practitioners, however, in the third kind, which is commonly referred to as *criterion-related validity*. This is the degree to which a particular measure can be used to predict some external criterion. For example, if scores on the MMPI-2 could be used to accurately predict termination for cause in police departments, then the MMPI-2 would be said to have *criterion-related validity* for that purpose. According to Kardes (1998) psychologists use both *construct validity* (correlation with a measure at one point in time) and *predictive validity* (correlation with a measure at some point in the future) as ways of establishing the *criterion-related validity* of an instrument. Most police psychologists are concerned with the degree to which assessment instruments used as part of a psychological evaluation can be used to predict performance—either good or bad—at some point in the future, so *predictive validity* is the aspect of *criterion-related validity* most often explored by police psychologists. However, there are special issues with validating tests used for law enforcement purposes that make establishing their *criterion-related* (especially *predictive validity*) difficult.

PROBLEMS AND LIMITATIONS IN LAW ENFORCEMENT TEST RESEARCH

While tests used in psychological evaluations in law enforcement need to be validated for their *predictive validity*, particularly in the area of police selection, there are a number of limitations to research that must be overcome. A major limitation to such research is that pure *predictive validity* studies are not practical. A pure *predictive validity* study in the area of law enforcement would be one in which a wide variety of individuals obtained through random sampling are given a test and then hired as police officers; next, the data would be analyzed to determine if the test predicted either poor or good performance. However, such a procedure would undoubtedly expose police departments to lawsuits because hiring applicants using a random sampling procedure would result in individuals becoming police officers who exhibited performance problems. Given that law enforcement is a sensitive, high-risk profession in which officers have the right, under certain circumstances, to take life and liberty, such an approach to research would be highly impractical.

Another related limitation is that psychological evaluations are the last thing considered in making law enforcement hiring decisions. According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), such evaluations—even if mandated by law—can only be performed after all other factors have been considered and a conditional offer of employment has been extended to the candidate (Weiss, Weiss, & Giacomin, 2005). While certain kinds of psychological tests can be given on a pre-offer basis (see, for example, Jones, Cunningham, & Singer, 2005), most psychological tests fall into the category of “medical tests” and therefore can only be used postoffer. While this restriction is obviously necessary to prevent discrimination, it also presents a challenge to law enforcement researchers because subjects who find their way into police validity studies tend to be most psychologically healthy than the rest of the general population (Weiss, Whitehead, Weiss, Rotow, & Davis, 2006).

These problems, while understandable, create a situation in which *criterion-related validity* studies in police psychology are scarce. Most data samples for research in police psychological evaluations consist of assessment data collected during the course of routine evaluations. As stated earlier, this means the sample has been highly preselected, and most individuals with unusual behavioral or

"The editor has found THE TOP experts to write the most appropriate chapters. Every practicing police psychologist would buy a book like this. Kitaeff did a fine job of looking at comparable books but none will be able to compete with this book" - **David R. Englert, Behavioral Science, Air Force Office of Special Investigations**

"I would enthusiastically recommend this book to anyone searching for a state of the art reference volume on police psychology." - **Laurence Miller, PhD Boca Raton, Florida**

"Jack Kitaeff has compiled an exceptional book on a critical topic in policing. This handbook is the perfect desk reference for police legal advisors, policy writers and police psychologists who need to create defensible policies or who work with active police officers." - **Jon M. Shane, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, Law and Police Science, New York**

"Jack Kitaeff has brought together a cast of stellar contributors to produce an extremely comprehensive and well organized book. It will surely be of value to students who want to become police psychologists and to individuals who are currently working in the field. An excellent resource, full of valuable information." - **Craig Bennell, Carleton University, USA**

"This is a fascinating book and should be read by all psychologists involved in working with the police. It illustrates beautifully the important interface between police practice and applied psychology." - **Gisli Gudjonson, Psychology Department, King's College London, UK**