NEW YORK CITY'S POLICE: THE BACKGROUND AND PERFORMANCE OF THE CLASS OF '57

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NEW YORK CITY'S POLICE: THE BACKGROUND AND
PERFORMANCE OF THE CLASS OF '57

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INTRODUCTION

The procedures used for selecting and promoting police officers in New York are likely to undergo fairly substantial change in the next few years. Even if the direction of change cannot be clearly predicted now, the strength and diversity of objections to the current system indicate that it cannot survive intact. Police Commissioner Patrick Murphy wants to recruit a new type of policeman—better educated, more resistant to the temptations of corruption, more capable of handling increasingly complex investigations, and better attuned to the sensitive frictions between the police and the community they serve. He apparently feels that the existing selection standards are not providing him with the men he needs. Others have proposed that police officers once again be required to live in the City, so that their salary, provided by the City’s taxpayers, will be spent here, and so that they will have a more direct concern for local crime problems.

At the same time, the Police Department is being sued by the Guardians Association and the Hispanic Society, organizations of black and

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Hispanic police officers, who claim that the present selection and promotion procedures unfairly discriminate against minority group members. They want to see the civil service examination modified or eliminated to give all racial and ethnic groups an equal chance for representation on the police force. The federal court which has jurisdiction in this case might possibly order sweeping changes in the present system. Similar suits are pending in other cities or have led to at least temporary suspension of the procedures in effect there.*

But neither police commissioners nor courts are inclined to discard a procedure which has been worked out with the experience of many years' operation, in favor of an alternative with unknown implications. There are many hard questions to be asked. What kind of man is selected to be a police officer by the current procedures? How is the performance of these policemen related to the selection standards which they had to pass? Do the current procedures actually discriminate against minority group members, and, if so, is the discrimination unfair or does it reflect the fact that many blacks and Hispanics who apply to become policemen will actually perform less satisfactorily once appointed than the average white applicant? How can you tell which policemen are performing well, anyway?

We cannot pretend to have the complete answers to any of these questions, nor are we the first to attempt to find the answers. What we have done is to examine the records of all the men who were appointed to the New York City Police Department in 1957. These records include

*For citations and details on this point and others which follow, we refer the reader to our book, Police Background Characteristics and Performance, D. C. Heath, 1973.
a variety of background characteristics and test scores, a history of their assignments and promotions, and performance measures such as awards and disciplinary actions. Our performance measures cover an eleven-year period, for those who remained on the force, and are derived from data typically kept in personnel files by police departments.

From these data we have been able to construct a portrait of the class of '57, to identify the background characteristics and test scores which appear to be related, positively or negatively, to later performance, and to identify attributes which are commonly accepted as indicators of future good or bad performance but do not appear from data to have the anticipated relationship.

Although the applicants for jobs as policeman, the selection procedure, and the job itself have changed in many ways since 1957, there is no way to perform a similar study on a group of men appointed, say, in the late 1960's, since not enough time has passed to make firm judgments about their performance. Therefore, with some caution in interpretation, the kind of results we present here must serve as the most current information available to draw conclusions about the answers to the questions posed above.

THE SELECTION PROCESS

Although the civil service system for selection of policemen is often viewed as a simple process in which applicants take a written examination and, if they pass, are ranked on a list for appointment, the actual process is much more complex. In fact, it often happens that more men are rejected or drop out at other steps in the appointment process than are eliminated because they failed the written test.
In 1957 and earlier, the passing grade on the written exam was 70 (it is now 75), and we obtained the scores for the men appointed in 1957. Collectively, they had taken several different exams, mostly in 1956.

After passing the written examination, the candidate is informed to appear for a medical/physical exam at which certain requirements of law in regard to height (5'7'') and vision (20/30 in each eye, without glasses) are checked, and a test of physical agility is given. As many as 30 percent of those who pass the civil service exam do not show up for the medical/physical, and about one-fourth of those who do appear fail the test. The candidates who pass the test are asked to fill out a long application form, which served as the source of our data about the background of the men appointed in 1957. Some men fail to submit this form, but of course all who were subsequently appointed did so. We were able to construct the following background variables from the information on this form.

- The officer's race. Among the men appointed in 1957, 92.4 percent were white, 6.2 percent were black, and 1.4 percent were Hispanic.

- The officer's age at time of appointment, which averaged 25.7 years. Due to appointment requirements, all of the men were at least 21 years old, and those over 29 were veterans.

Family Descriptors

- The number of members of the officer's family who had a mental disorder prior to his application.

- The officer's region of birth.

- His number of siblings.
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- His father's occupation, scaled according to a standard index of prestige.

Occupational History

- The officer's last occupation, scaled by the same index.
- The number of jobs held by the officer prior to application. The average was 5.7 prior jobs.
- The officer's history, in previous employment, of dismissal or other disciplinary actions.

Military History

- Whether the officer was a veteran of the armed forces. About 82 percent of those appointed in 1957 were veterans.
- The number of times an officer was the subject of a court-martial or other military disciplinary actions.
- Whether the officer had received any military commendations.

Personal History

- Number of residences at which the officer lived after leaving elementary school, excluding military addresses.
- The officer's marital status at time of application.
- The number of the officer's children at time of application.
- The number of debts outstanding against the officer at time of application.
- Whether the officer had had any nervous or psychological disorder prior to application, as recorded by him on his application form.
Highest level of education attained by the officer prior to application.

**Incidents Involving Police and Courts**

- The number of times the officer had been arrested, including for juvenile offenses, prior to application. About 9 percent of the men appointed in 1957 had a prior arrest.
- Type of offenses for which he had been arrested.
- Whether any arrests were for a violent crime.
- Number of summonses (other than in a civil action) received by the officer prior to application.
- Number of civil court appearances, as a party or a witness.

Beginning with the information provided on this form, a specially trained police officer conducts a background investigation of the candidate to determine proof of good character. Some candidates are rejected by the background investigator or withdraw their application during the course of the investigation. Although most of these men are not included in our study group, since they were not appointed, it is possible to appeal the decision of the background investigator, and therefore we have data on a few men termed "disapproved." For the other men appointed in 1957, we reviewed the report of the background investigator and classified his summary of the applicant as poor, questionable, fair, good, or excellent.

The next step in the appointment process is to wait until higher-ranking men who have been approved by the background investigator are appointed. In 1956 and 1957, the wait was not long, but there are
currently (1973) some men who passed the written exam in 1968 but are still awaiting appointment. The number of men who survived all these steps and were appointed in 1957 was 2002. Of these, 1608 were still on the force in 1968, when we collected most of our data. We refer to these men as the "active cohort."

After appointment, there are still two more obstacles to pass before being retained by the Police Department. First, the men are sent to the Police Academy, where they undergo a period of intensive study and training to prepare for police work. During their training, the recruits in 1957 took a series of four exams which tested their knowledge of what they learned in the Academy. The individual test scores for each candidate on the four examinations were combined to produce the variable we call Recruit Score. Candidates had to obtain a minimum of 68 on Recruit Score to graduate from the Police Academy in 1957. The recruits were also given an I.Q. test at this time, and we recorded each man's I.Q.

Those candidates who completed the three-month Academy training course in 1957 spent an additional six months on probation. At the end of this period, each probationary patrolman was evaluated by his immediate supervisor. Although few of the men were in fact dismissed from the force at this phase of the recruitment process (only 7 out of nearly 2000 men), we found that 30 percent of the subjects had one or more negative ratings, which we recorded in the variable Unsatisfactory Probation.

*In 1957, the training period was three months; currently it is six months.
PERFORMANCE MEASURES

For the men who passed all the steps of the appointment process, we recorded the following information about their performance as policemen over an eleven-year period.

Career Advancement

- The officer's career type, including special assignments, promotion to or within the Detective Division, and civil service promotion to sergeant, lieutenant, or captain.
- The number of departmental awards conferred on the officer in the period from 1957 to 1968.

Disciplinary Actions

- The number of complaints against the officer over 11 years from civilians who protested a summons they received or objected to harassment associated with an arrest (e.g., illegal search and seizure, unjustifiable detention, or confiscation of property).
- The number of allegations (usually by a commanding officer, but sometimes by a civilian) that the officer violated the Department's rules and procedures. These departmental charges refer to minor violations such as absence from post without permission or failure to safeguard revolver, but not to serious charges such as corruption.
- The number of allegations of criminal misconduct against the officer received during 11 years, including corruption.
• The number of complaints against the officer processed by the Department's Civilian Complaint Review Board. These include allegations of the use of unnecessary force, abuse of authority, discourteous behavior, or ethnic slurs.

• The total number of complaints, of any type, against the officer in 11 years.

• The number of complaints against the officer brought to departmental trial.

• The number of complaints substantiated in a departmental trial.

Absenteism

• The number of illnesses reported for the officer in 11 years, with each illness counting as one time sick, independent of how long it lasted. The average number of times sick was 10.3.

• The total number of days sick for each officer. This averaged 107.1 days in 11 years.

Other

• The number of times an officer claimed he had been injured in the line of duty and his claim was determined to be invalid. Under 4 percent of the officers had an injury disapproval.

• The number of occasions on which an officer was requested to turn in his firearms. This is done only in cases of extreme misconduct or physical disability, and only 27 officers (1.7 percent of those still on the force in 1968) had their firearms removed.
For detectives only, there were additional performance measures: the number of arrests made by the officer in the first six months of 1968, broken down into misdemeanor and felony arrests, and a supervisor's evaluation of performance. None of these performance measures was found to be significantly related to any of the predictor variables. Although this finding can be interpreted to mean that it is not possible to predict the performance of detectives from background characteristics and early performance measures, we tend to believe that it merely indicates the need for better measures of detective performance.

PERFORMANCE PATTERNS

From the data available in the Department's personnel files, only a few patterns of performance could be identified and related to background characteristics of officers. These were:

- **termination**, which describes the officer who left the Department prior to 1968, either voluntarily or involuntarily;
- **career advancement**, which refers to the officer who obtained special assignments or promotions, frequently coupled with above-average numbers of awards;
- **departmental discipline problem**, which describes the officer who had an above-average number of departmental charges, and frequently also had an above-average number of times sick;
- above-average number of civilian complaints; and
- above-average number of allegations of harassment.

The last four performance patterns were found to be independent, so that any given officer could display none of these patterns, any
one of them, two, three, or all four. A fairly substantial group of officers, numbering in the hundreds, displays none of the patterns. These are officers who remained on patrol for eleven years, obtained average or below-average numbers of awards, and were not a discipline problem for the Department. The fact that it was not possible to tell from records maintained by the Department in 1968 whether these officers were good or bad performers reflected the absence of departmental evaluations of performance based on field activities of the officers, a situation which has now been remedied by the Police Department. Such measures, if carefully developed and administered, can enhance a department's ability to distinguish effective from ineffective performance.

The termination pattern is of interest because 376 out of 2002 men appointed in 1957 (or 19 percent) had left the Department by 1968. Although we located the personnel files of nearly all the men who entered in 1957, the bulk of those we did miss belonged to officers who had terminated, so our findings in regard to this pattern are less firm than those to be reported below about the other patterns.

We did not distinguish the men who were asked to terminate from the men who left voluntarily, since it was not always possible to make an unambiguous determination of the cause of termination from the Department's records. Based on data from 307 officers who terminated, we found that the dates of termination tended to cluster around two points. The largest number left in 1959, which is approximately two years after appointment; about 18 percent of those who terminated left in 1959. There was then a decrease in the number leaving in the third and fourth years, with another peak in the fifth year when 12 percent
of the terminators resigned. Beginning with the sixth year, the number leaving decreased from year to year.

The officers who left the Police Department did not possess disproportionate amounts of any characteristics which might be considered negative. Indeed, with regard to criminal history, employment and military disciplinary incidents, and prior mental disorder, these men were indistinguishable from the officers who remained on the force. However, those men who left the force had a higher average number of prior jobs than those who remained.

The men who left the force were also younger than the ones who stayed, and therefore fewer of them were married. Among the married men, those with greater family responsibilities (as measured by the number of debts and children) were more likely to remain on the force. The men who terminated their employment with the Department were considerably better educated than those who remained, and they attained higher ratings by the Department's background investigators. It is particularly noteworthy that one-third of the college-educated recruits in 1957 (8 out of 24) were found to have left the force by 1968, compared to 19 percent of the men who had not graduated from college. Over one-third of officers who left the police force joined the City's Fire Department, and an additional 19 percent resigned for other jobs they considered better employment.

The data suggest that many men who represent the Department's view of a desirable candidate, especially college-educated men, will have shorter tenure than the average officer unless the Department consciously attempts to determine the source of dissatisfaction among such officers and modifies its personnel policies accordingly.
COMPARISON OF BACKGROUND AND PERFORMANCE OF WHITE AND BLACK OFFICERS

We were able to compare the characteristics of black officers with those of white officers, but the number of Hispanic officers was too small to permit statistical analysis of their differences from the others.

Some of the important differences in the background characteristics of white and black officers appointed in 1957 were as follows:

- The black officers were slightly older than the whites at time of appointment, and more of them were married.
- More black officers than white officers were born outside New York City: 29 percent of the blacks compared to 6 percent of the whites.
- The fathers of white applicants ranked higher than the fathers of black applicants on the scale of prestige used in this study, but the prestige rankings of the occupations of the candidates themselves did not differ by race.
- The black officers were considerably better educated than the whites. In fact, nearly 40 percent of the black appointees had attended college for at least one year, compared to somewhat over 20 percent of the whites.

There were some interesting characteristics on which black and white officers did not differ. No differences by race were found on I.Q. or civil service scores, which means that for each range of scores the fractions of black appointees in that range was about the same as their fraction of the total group. Thus, we did not obtain any indication that the civil service exams in the mid-1950's discriminated by race.
It should be noted, however, that every officer in our sample had passed the civil service examination for patrolman, and therefore we have no information about the proportions by race among the men who took the examination but failed.

Black officers and white officers did not differ on any aspect of military or employment history, including:

- whether or not they were a veteran;
- the number and type of previous jobs; or
- the number of military or employment disciplinary actions they had in their history.

They also did not differ in the proportions of men who had been arrested prior to appointment, in the number of summonses they had, or in the number of times they had appeared in civil court.

Despite these important factors on which the blacks did not differ from the whites, the black appointees ranked somewhat lower on the rating by the Department's background investigator. In fact, over 25 percent of the blacks were rated disapproval, poor, or questionable by the background investigators, compared to 15 percent of the others. This finding led us to feel that it is important for the Department to assign enough black and Hispanic officers to the Background Investigation Unit so that they can help interpret the characteristics of candidates of like ethnicity and background when there is a question of acceptance.

There were also some important differences by race in performance after appointment. The black officers accumulated 65 percent more departmental disciplinary charges than white officers, but they did not differ from whites on the numbers of civilian complaints, allegations of harassment, or criminal charges.
The black officers also did not progress through civil service ranks as well as white officers. In fact, at the end of 14 years there were 5 black sergeants and 1 black lieutenant in our group—which is 6 percent of the total—compared to 15 percent of the whites. However, the black officers did progress into and through the Detective Division better than whites. Almost 30 percent of the black officers were detectives after 14 years, compared to 15 percent of the white officers. These two facts about the career advancement of black officers tend to compensate for each other, so that if we compare the two groups according to their current salary, we find that the black officers have just about the same salaries as white officers, or perhaps slightly higher. The fraction of black officers who left the Department prior to 1968 was the same as the fraction of whites who terminated.

The black officers had fewer days sick than the whites, but counting each illness as a single time sick, disregarding how many days they were sick, we found that black and white officers had the same number of times sick.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS AND PERFORMANCE

The key question for development of improved selection procedures is: Which aspects of background proved to be related to the patterns of performance we were able to identify? The data revealed the following relationships.

Age

The men who were oldest at time of appointment were least likely to advance beyond patrol assignments, had low absenteeism for sickness,
and were substantially less likely than average to have civilian complaints. This observation does not arise from a departmental policy of placing the older officers in the least hazardous precincts; in fact, a subject's age at appointment was not found to be correlated with the hazard status of the first precinct to which he was assigned. Therefore, the data suggest that older recruits would be best suited for assignment to sensitive communities.

I.Q.

In general, men with a high I.Q. advanced through the civil service route to a greater extent than men with a lower I.Q., and they had more departmental awards. But they did not differ from average on the patterns of misconduct. Men with below-average I.Q. were much more likely than average to be assigned to traffic duties, at which they appeared to perform well. Black officers with high I.Q. had a greater incidence of the departmental misconduct pattern than average, including high absenteeism, but they did not have above-average career advancement. This finding is merely indicative of possible problems with relations among the races in the Department, which should be explored further by an interview study which includes some black officers with high I.Q.

Civil Service Score

The white officers who scored high on the civil service examination for appointment as a patrolman were found to be more likely than those who scored low to attain later civil service promotions to sergeant, lieutenant, or captain, but the same was not true for black officers. The civil service score was not related to any other pattern of performance, including departmental disciplinary actions, civilian complaints,
or absenteeism. For white officers, a high civil service score was slightly predictive of good grades in the police academy—which we did not consider to be a performance measure—but not for blacks.

In short, the civil service examination for patrolmen does not appear to predict any aspect of job performance measured in this study, other than the ability to pass later civil service examinations for promotion.

Region of Birth

Black officers born outside New York City had better career advancement, especially to detective assignments, than City-born blacks. Few of the white officers were born outside the City, and therefore no significant patterns emerged for them.

Occupational History

Occupational mobility was not found to be associated with any aspect of performance among those officers who remained on the force. However, a prior history of employment disciplinary incidents or dismissals was found to be a strong predictor of a future pattern as a disciplinary problem for the Department.

Military History

Veterans were not found to be better or worse performers than non-veterans, and the same was true for men with military commendations. However, a military disciplinary record, like an employment disciplinary record, was a predictor of future misconduct; in this case the misconduct included not only violation of the Department's rules and procedures, but also civilian complaints of the use of unnecessary force and complaints of harassment.
Arrest History

Men who had been arrested for nonviolent crimes prior to joining the force were less likely than other officers to be later charged with harassment of citizens such as false arrest, illegal search and seizure, etc. Seemingly, their own personal experiences tempered their relations with crime suspects. In other respects, men who had a previous history of arrest for nonviolent crimes performed no differently from other officers. Although the number of subjects with a prior arrest for a violent crime was too small to obtain statistically significant findings, the data suggested that such men had excessive misconduct later.

Civil Court Appearances

Men who had appeared several times in civil court as a party or witness in litigation proved more likely than average to engage in harassment later, although the differences were not large. We therefore have some indication that a history of court appearances may reflect difficulty in getting along with other people.

Other Early Background Characteristics

Aspects of background which might be thought to be negative but which were not found to be related to later performance, among those who were appointed to the force in spite of these characteristics, included:

- a large number of debts;
- a prior history of a psychological disorder; and
- any history of mental disorder in the applicant's family.

Other aspects of background found unrelated to performance were:

- father's occupation;
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- number of residences or place of residence;
- marital status and number of children; and
- number of summonses.

Background Investigator's Rating

The Police Department's background investigators, who had access to the pre-1957 data used in this study and in addition interviewed the applicant and his neighbors and employers, were fairly successful judges of how a man would later perform as a policeman. Low-rated candidates were less likely to be promoted than high-rated candidates, and they were more frequently departmental discipline problems. In fact, 25 percent of those rated excellent by the background investigators were later promoted to sergeant, lieutenant, or captain, compared to 9 percent of those rated poor; and 42 percent of those rated poor later had at least one substantiated disciplinary action, compared to 16 percent of those rated excellent. The background investigator's rating did not distinguish men who would later have excessive civilian complaints or allegations of harassment.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN OTHER CHARACTERISTICS AND PERFORMANCE

None of the early background characteristics described above were as strong predictors of later performance as the variables which we shall now discuss.

Recruit Training Score

An officer's recruit training score was the strongest predictor of his later performance. Men who scored high on written examinations on the material presented in police academy training courses were
subsequently much better performers than average. They advanced more rapidly through special assignments and civil service promotions, they had less departmental misconduct and absenteeism, and they had more awards than lower-scoring officers.

Among black officers, recruit score was related statistically only to later career advancement. For example, we found that 45 percent of the blacks with recruit scores of 75 and higher advanced to the Detective Division, compared to 10 percent of the officers with scores below 75. Not a single black officer with recruit training score of less than 75 advanced through civil service promotion.

The overall incidence of misconduct for black officers, although not significantly related to recruit score, appeared to be consistent with the patterns observed for the white officers.

Probationary Evaluation

The officer's rating while on probation was found to be the second strongest predictor of later performance. Men who were marked "unsatisfactory" on some aspect of performance after nine months on the force tended to have more allegations of misconduct subsequently, of which more were brought to trial and substantiated, than subjects without derogatory ratings. We found, for example, that 67 percent of the subjects with poor rating had been alleged to have engaged in misconduct, compared to 55 percent of the subjects without negative ratings. Moreover, 35 percent of the subjects with poor probationary rating had at least one substantiated complaint on their records, while the corresponding proportion for officers without poor evaluations was 24 percent. These patterns reflected higher rates of violating the Department's internal
rules and procedures among men with unsatisfactory probation; these men did not have higher rates of civilian complaints, complaints characterizable as corruption, or complaints of harassment.

Subjects with poor probationary evaluations also tended to be absent more frequently than average. We found, for example, that 43 percent of the subjects with poor probationary ratings reported sick 11 or more times in 11 years compared to 36 percent of the subjects without negative ratings.

For the black officers, the relationship between probationary evaluation and police performance was almost identical to that of the white officers. An unsatisfactory probationary rating was found to be a good predictor of above-average incidence of later departmental misconduct and absenteeism, but it was not related to other performance measures.

An important finding concerned the 22 subjects with more than one unsatisfactory notation on their probationary evaluation. This group consistently performed less effectively on the majority of performance measures than other officers.

Education

As a group, the men with at least one year of college education who remained on the force were found to be very good performers. They advanced through civil service promotion, but not disproportionately through the detective route of advancement, and they had fewer civilian complaints than average. The men who obtained college degrees, either before or after appointment to the force, exhibited even better on-the-job performance. They advanced through preferential assignments and civil service promotions, they had low incidence of all types of
misconduct except harassment, on which they were average, they had low sick time, and none of them had their firearms removed for cause.

A typical example of the difference in patterns between the college graduate and non-college graduate was in the number of civilian complaints incurred over an 11-year period. Our data revealed that 369 men, or 24 percent of the non-college graduates, had a civilian complaint, compared to only four college graduates, or 8 percent. Generally speaking, the older, more educated officer received fewer civilian complaints than the younger, less educated officer.

CONCLUSIONS

A major conclusion of this study is that data commonly maintained in personnel files by police departments can be summarized in terms of a small number of distinct aspects of job performance which are related to another small collection of important predictor variables. Although the nature of the relationships between these predictors and dimensions of performance are not identical for black and white officers, the same variables proved to be important for both races. This finding suggests that it is not necessary to adopt separate selection procedures for white and black officers. Regrettably, there were not enough Hispanic officers in our cohort to analyze their performance patterns separately from those of the other officers.

We found for the white subjects that many of the traditional "negative" indicators of past performance were indeed predictors of at least one of the dimensions of ineffective performance. For example, military discipline and employment discipline record were found to be consistent predictors of the pattern of the departmental discipline problem.
Moreover, multiple appearances in civil court were the strongest predictor of the harassment pattern, although differences between officers with and without multiple court appearances were not large. We therefore have some indication that a history of court appearances may in fact reflect difficulty in getting along with people. Other factors which are usually viewed as negative and which may also be related to a pattern of ineffective performance, although the data were not conclusive on these, were arrests for violent crimes, multiple summonses, and debts.

Among the black officers, the only negative factor which attained significance as a predictor of performance was civil court appearances, which was found to be related to above-average civilian complaints. In addition, an employment disciplinary record and military discipline were generally associated with ineffective performance for blacks, although they did not attain statistical significance as for the whites.

In one instance, a so-called "negative" indicator was actually associated with effective performance. White officers with a prior arrest (not for a violent crime) were found to have lower incidence of the harassment pattern. On the other hand, high I.Q., traditionally viewed as a positive attribute, was found to be related to a higher incidence of departmental discipline problems among black officers. The same was not true of white officers with high I.Q., who appeared to be generally effective performers and in particular had above-average awards and attained promoted ranks.

Clearly, the implication of this is not that police departments should refuse to accept black applicants with high I.Q. Rather, it
suggests that the New York Police Department may not be currently meeting the needs of its most intelligent black recruits. Among the intelligent white applicants, we found that a disproportionate number left the Department (this was identified from the termination rates of officers with higher education). For the blacks who found themselves similarly unsuited for police work, the options in other occupations may not have been as attractive for them as for whites in the late 1950s, and therefore they remained as somewhat unsatisfied and unsatisfactory officers.

If police departments wish to attract and retain more intelligent and more educated officers, they will have to recognize that these men may not be suitable for certain assignments, and they may not be satisfied with the long periods required to attain promotions or with other aspects of the department's operations. These officers should be given special attention by police administrators. The similarity of our finding in regard to early termination by college-educated officers to findings in other cities suggests the need for a questionnaire-interview study of a sample of intelligent, educated officers who either left police work or failed to attain satisfactory performance, in order to determine the source of their discontent. Police departments might then be able to plan new procedures and incentive systems which will improve the retention and performance of such officers, especially in their early years. One possibility is that the starting salary of recruits could be determined in accordance with their level of education. Such a procedure would be entirely consistent with the principle that compensation should be related to performance, since we found that college-educated officers in New York performed at a level well above average.*

* We are indebted to Marvin E. Wolfgang for suggesting this possibility after reading an early draft of this study.
We might also note that, although men who obtain college degrees while on the force appear to be excellent performers, this does not necessarily suggest that all men would improve their performance if they attended college. We are no doubt observing a combination of motivation, stamina, and intelligence in the men who completed college. The Department should evidently encourage and assist in every way possible officers who wish to advance their education. However, it appears to us that the New York Police Department will continue to need officers of average I.Q. and no college education. For example, our finding that the members of our cohort who remained in the Traffic Division predominantly had these characteristics suggests that these men are good performers in traffic duty. Probably, if more educated recruits were given traffic assignments, they would be dissatisfied with the lack of challenge of their job and their inability to apply what they have learned in college. On the other hand, we found that the older and more educated subjects were less likely to incur civilian complaints than their younger, less educated counterparts. This suggests that older officers with advanced education should be assigned on a permanent basis to sensitive areas in greater numbers, and also they should make up the units which are routinely mobilized and assigned to trouble spots.

We find that in New York the Police Department's background investigators are fairly skillful at weighing together all of an applicant's characteristics and deriving an overall appraisal. In general, the men they rated "excellent" turned out to be well above average, and many of those termed "poor" or "disapproved" were later found to be departmental discipline problems. This suggests that the recommendations of the
background investigator be given considerable weight in accepting candidates. There may, however, be some danger of decreasing the number of minority group members among appointees with a procedure which allows the investigators to reject a larger fraction of applicants than they have in the past. Our data showed that the ratings of blacks tended to be lower in general than those of whites and that more background characteristics were found to correlate negatively with background ratings for blacks than for whites. This occurred in spite of the fact that the blacks were better educated than the whites and did not differ from the whites on any aspect of military or employment history, arrest or summons history, or the number of times they had appeared in civil court.

We believe this difficulty can be overcome by assigning an adequate number of black and Hispanic officers to investigate the backgrounds of candidates, and by instructing the investigators as to the findings of this study in regard to the characteristics which were and were not related to later performance. Marginal candidates should be reviewed by investigators of like background and ethnicity. On balance, we would trust the background investigators to produce an overall appraisal of each candidate from the data contained in the application form, using the findings of the present study as a guide.

A very important finding of this study is that the strongest predictors of later performance are obtained after the candidate has been accepted as a recruit. These include his recruit training score and his probationary evaluation. This suggests that the New York Police Department should consider developing an extensive program of evaluating the performance of recruits and terminating the services of much larger
numbers than has ever been done in the past. In 1957, less than 1 percent of the recruits were dropped from the Academy or during probation. The fraction has not been substantially higher in recent years in New York, and is probably typical of many cities. We feel that the benefits to the community in terms of improved police service and avoiding the expense of salaries and retirement benefits for unsatisfactory policemen clearly outweigh the disadvantages of possible false rejection of men who perform poorly in their first year on the force but might improve later.

Our data showed that low scores in recruit training and probationary evaluation, taken together, were good predictors of future unsatisfactory career advancement, departmental misconduct brought to trial and substantiated, and a low history of awards. Rather than taking the attitude that men who do poorly in the Police Academy or on probation should be given a second chance, we feel that the Police Commissioner should utilize the option available to him under the civil service laws to terminate the services of such recruits. For this purpose, a special review board could be established to consider carefully the record of each officer at the end of his probationary period and to recommend action to the Police Commissioner in each instance. If a recruit's background investigation rating was marginal, but he was accepted for the probationary period anyway, this should be taken into account at the same time, in light of his training and probationary performance.

In 1957, there was a small number of men (20) who had two unsatisfactory marks on probation and also scored below average in the Police Academy. The records of these men were found to be uniformly worse
than average on all aspects of performance. Therefore, our findings suggest that such men could be separated from the force at the end of the probationary period with little risk of losing officers who would perform well later in their careers.

In regard to the question of whether police officers should be required to live in the City, analysis of data from the class of '57 cannot provide much guidance. These men were initially required to reside in New York, but subsequently the law was changed, and some 46 percent of them moved out to nearby counties. We could not detect any difference in performance between those who left the City and those who remained here, except that white non-City residents had more absenteeism than the others.

Our data do not give much hope that a truly accurate prediction of a candidate's potential performance as a police officer can be derived from information collected before he is accepted into the Police Academy. On the other hand, we have been able to identify a number of characteristics which appear to be unrelated to performance and therefore should play little, if any, role in the selection process. Many of these characteristics have been recorded on the application form only for informational purposes or to assist the background investigation, and they never actually entered into selection. However, some qualified candidates may have been discouraged from submitting an application, thinking that their answers would disqualify them, and therefore it is important to eliminate or separate out the irrelevant items.

For the total group of men who were appointed in 1957 and remained on the force, the following entries on the application were found not
to be related to subsequent poor performance: arrest for a nonviolent crime, presence of a family mental disorder, history of psychological disorder, record of summonses, or any answer whatsoever to questions about region of birth, number of siblings, father's occupation, applicant's number of jobs and last occupation, military service and commendations, number of residences, and aspects of early family responsibility such as marital status, number of children, and debts. In addition, the civil service entry exam score above passing was not found to be related to any of our performance measures other than the ability to pass subsequent civil service exams.

We therefore see as desirable a selection process which reduces the influence of these characteristics on a candidate's chances for appointment and places greater emphasis on his early performance in training and on probation.

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Because findings and conclusions of the type described here have been found to vary when conducted in other police departments or at other times, we would not wish to see our results applied as if they had universal validity. However, the methods we used could be readily adapted to the personnel files of nearly any police department in the country, and further research along these lines, including validation studies, would indicate the extent to which the New York City Police Department class of '57 shows typical patterns of relationships between background characteristics and performance.