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POLICE SCIENCE

THE SELECTION OF PERSONNEL FOR A POLICE JUVENILE SERVICE

JACOB CHWAST

Jacob Chwast, Ph.D. has recently retired from the New York City Police Department where he served as a Lieutenant and as Director of Planning and Training Unit, Juvenile Aid Bureau. Dr. Chwast devoted most of his police career to work within the Juvenile Aid Bureau which bureau is particularly concerned with the handling of youthful offenders and other problems which could lead to juvenile delinquency.—EDITOR.

All youth services in the New York City Police Department have been incorporated in the Youth Division. This division, under the direction and supervision of the Deputy Commissioner in charge of the Youth Program,¹ contains the Juvenile Aid Bureau and the Youth Squads. The selection procedure outlined below refers to the Juvenile Aid Bureau which is particularly responsible for case investigations of reported delinquency or neglect in children.

As with other departmental adjuncts, the Bureau has constantly striven to improve its methods of staff selection to assure its obtaining the type of person best suited for its specialized work. This work requires a skillful blending of fundamental police investigation and social study techniques. Persons capable of exercising this special combination of characteristics are sought from among all members of the uniformed force of the Police Department.

The approach of the Bureau to the delinquent child has evolved from a bedrock of police experience which has objectively appraised the utility of the findings of many related professions and scientific disciplines. It has accepted from the latter those concepts, principles and practices which have proven themselves of value in the handling of the delinquent child. In consequence, we have sought in our potential personnel those to whom the integration of the knowledge, skills, and capabilities from these diverse sources could come easily.

The Bureau's effort to select such personnel has been one which has gradually developed through the years since it was first formed in 1930. At the

¹ This paper had been prepared with the cooperation of Deputy Commissioner Robert J. Mangum, the then present incumbent.

present time, we find that the net result of these efforts has been that the staff now with us includes many with fine professional backgrounds.

Each person requesting assignment to the Bureau is given the opportunity to "have his day in court," so to speak. When he applies he is channeled through the selection procedure described in this paper and is judged strictly upon his merit. The specific standards which we have devised are rigorously applied so that the applicant can be as objectively evaluated as possible.

STANDARDS FOR J.A.B. CANDIDATES

It might be appropriate at this point to describe these standards. As we see it, three relevant areas of investigation must be pursued for a total assessment of the candidate's capabilities. These consist of:

1. Educational background.
2. Work experience.
3. Personality characteristics and motivations for this type of work.

We fully realize that the standards we have constructed cannot be entirely met by many people applying for assignment. However, we do attempt to weigh the individual's equipment for our work in so far as he measures up to these standards.

Educational Background.

1. B.A., B.S., and B.S.S. are most desirable. We have found that other baccalaureate degrees are ordinarily inadequate as background for our work as they tend to lead to a type of specialization which can interfere with the orientation and thinking most suited to work with children.
2. At least twelve (12) undergraduate credits in the field of psychology, sociology, or social work.
3. Additional courses at the graduate level in

psychology, sociology, or social work. Courses in education, anthropology, and vocational guidance have value but to a lesser degree.

Since the second and third of the desired types of educational background described above are rather difficult to attain by police officers who work full time, we give preference to such candidates who have attempted to undertake further study on their own initiative even though they may not have been able to do as much as we would have liked.

Work Experience.

1. At least one year of work on patrol within the Police Department. This we feel is necessary for perspective and intercommunication.
2. Social Work. Any person who has had concrete experience in this field receives due consideration.
3. Club leader, personnel, nursing, and camp counsellor. Persons with any such experience are given extra credit.
4. Teaching. We have found that this type of experience can be of great value if the candidate has not succumbed to fixed habits which would make for difficulties in cementing effective working relationships with delinquent youngsters.

Here again, since many of our candidates have not had the opportunity to do work as above described, we do give preference to those who have tried to get into work wherein they deal with people and their problems.

Personality and Motivations. The appraisal of personality has always been fraught with the likelihood of considerable error. That this is the case should in no way minimize our efforts to continue along this route. Even the slightest acquaintance with casework, counseling, and psychotherapy, on one hand, or police work, on the other, makes one aware of the critical impact of personality factors as they affect relationships with the delinquent youngster.

We believe that the candidate for work of this kind should possess the following characteristics:

1. He should be stable yet flexible.
2. He should be intelligent and perceptive.
3. He should show some degree of self-awareness.
4. He should possess social poise and bearing.
5. He should be scientifically curious.
6. He should be receptive to new ideas. This is especially necessary since it is desirable that he be amenable and responsive to an in-service-training program.

7. He should genuinely be interested in people and have some understanding of their motivations.

8. He should have the ability to express himself well, freely, and appropriately.

9. His relationship to authority and supervision should be wholesome and rational.

Since the candidate is seeking assignment for specialized work, we expect him to know something about the Juvenile Aid Bureau and also about the field of social work. We also attempt to assay his appreciation of the balance between the human relations aspect of our work and the enforcement role.

The manner in which the collected data elucidates the candidate's status with respect to the criteria in these three major areas will be described below.

THE PROCEDURE OF SELECTION

Of course, all members of the Juvenile Aid Bureau, as policemen and policewomen, are civil service employees. Hence, each must first meet rather severe mental, physical, and moral requirements for appointment to the Police Department. In the Police Academy, the newly appointed members of the force are first acquainted with the philosophy and work of the Juvenile Aid Bureau. At that time, and any other thereafter, members of the force may apply for assignment to the Juvenile Aid Bureau. In any case, official solicitation is made twice each year of all members of the force desiring change of assignment to any branch of the department including, of course, the Juvenile Aid Bureau. Usually, enough persons apply on their own initiative in this way to fill the openings which occur. If, however, there is an insufficiency of such applicants, a canvass is made of all department members for interested applicants. This canvass has been greatly facilitated by utilization of the Department's recently established Personnel Records Unit which maintains complete personnel data sheets for each member of the Department.

Whatever the port of entry may be, once he has applied, the applicant is then subjected to our own intensive screening procedure. He is first asked to fill out the following application blank, figure 1, which comprehensively covers pertinent material with regard to his educational and work experience. At this time, he is usually seen by the Commanding Officer of the Juvenile Aid Bureau who starts the appraisal process by obtaining a personal

APPLICATION FOR ASSIGNMENT TO JUVENILE AID BUREAU

DATE _____

NAME _____ RANK _____ SHIELD NUMBER _____

COMMANDER _____ APPOINTED PATROLMAN _____ APPOINTED PRESENT RANK _____

HOME ADDRESS _____ HOME PHONE NO. _____

RESIDENCE PCT. _____ SOCIAL STATUS _____ DATE OF BIRTH _____

| BASIC EDUCATION | | | | | | |
|-----------------|--------|-------------|-------------|------|----|----------------------------------|
| SCHOOL | COURSE | MAJOR FIELD | MINOR FIELD | FROM | TO | NO. OF CREDITS DEGREE OR DIPLOMA |
| ELEMENTARY | | | | | | |
| HIGH SCHOOL | | | | | | |
| COLLEGE | | | | | | |

| POST-GRADUATE WORK | | | | | | |
|--------------------|--------|-------------|-------------|------|----|----------------------------------|
| SCHOOL | COURSE | MAJOR FIELD | MINOR FIELD | FROM | TO | NO. OF CREDITS DEGREE OR DIPLOMA |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |

| ADDITIONAL EDUCATION | | | | | |
|----------------------|--------|---------------|--------------|-----------------|--|
| SCHOOL | COURSE | HRS. PER WEEK | NO. OF WEEKS | COLLEGE CREDIT? | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: LIST ANY EXPERIENCE IN YOUTH WORK WITH SOCIAL AGENCIES, OR RECREATIONAL PROGRAM, ETC. THAT MIGHT BE CONSIDERED IN ADDITION TO OR IN LIEU OF THE EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND:

| AGENCY OR PROGRAM | PERIOD OF EMPLOYMENT | NATURE OF EMPLOYMENT |
|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| | | |
| | | |

OCCUPATIONS PRIOR TO ENTRANCE INTO THE POLICE DEPARTMENT

FOREIGN LANGUAGES:

SPEAK _____

READ _____

WRITE _____

DO NOT WRITE BELOW THIS LINE

COMMENT BY INTERVIEWER

INTERVIEWED BY _____ DATE OF INTERVIEW _____

Figure 1

acquaintance with the candidate. This also enables him to utilize his impression of the candidate as a check against later findings. The applicant is also requested to forward a certified copy of his college transcript and of all other educational courses pursued beyond the baccalaureate level. When this material has been gathered, the candidate is again interviewed; this time by another superior officer especially versed in the techniques of personnel appraisal.

Interview. This interview is especially designed to explore the qualifications of the candidate for our type of work. The attempt is made to assess the candidate's assets and liabilities as fully as possible so that he might be justly compared to the other candidates available at the time at which openings for J.A.B. work occur. The interviewer seeks clarification and amplification about various points which may be obscure in the completed application form and in other materials about him in our possession. In any event, the interviewer's primary concern is to determine whether the candidate possesses a suitable personality, good drive, strong interest, and high potential for education and growth in the field. The interview is somewhat focused upon the topics which are described below. Since these latter tend to be rather special areas of inquiry, personality appraisal relies considerably upon the interviewer's professional experience and knowledge. The topics themselves serve as a take-off for further probing into the personality make-up of the candidate. In no sense is the interviewer expected to rigidly adhere to the sequence of subjects as listed below, but rather in a natural way to obtain pertinent information during his contact with the applicant. He elicits this as skillfully and tactfully as he can. The questions are not put to the applicant in the direct manner in which they are here stated because quite obviously this could lead to camouflage. The intention is not to find out what the applicant thinks is desired, but rather what he really feels and believes about the subject under discussion. Inasmuch as these items are covered for all candidates, there is some assurance that the interview situation is standardized and uniform as much as is feasible.

The subjects which are explored are:

1. Reasons for the applicant's requesting assignment to the Juvenile Aid Bureau.
2. How does the applicant regard the Juvenile Aid Bureau and its work?

3. How does the applicant regard the Police Department?

4. What does the applicant know about social work?

5. What does the applicant know about delinquency?

6. How does the applicant account for human behavior?

7. How would the applicant handle typical problems in the Juvenile Aid Bureau?

8. How does the applicant get along with other people: superiors, fellow officers, the public?

Lest any possible misunderstanding arise with respect to the manner in which the results of the interview are treated, it should be explicitly made clear that the only purpose is to ascertain the candidate's fitness for the job he seeks. He is made fully cognizant of this fact and, in consequence, we have found that the response has been very positive.

Interview Evaluation Sheet. Immediately after the interview has been terminated, the interviewer fills out the rating form, figure 2, which is designated as the "Interview Evaluation Sheet." This form enables him to briefly and rapidly synthesize his findings and impressions of the applicant. In this evaluation, he takes into consideration all available data regarding the applicant.

The form also serves as a check in assuring that each of the relevant items regarding the applicant's qualifications are covered. Under the section, "Personality and Interests," the interviewer makes a judgment regarding the strength of each of the eleven characteristics listed, on the basis of a five point scale. This gives a rough quantitative statement about the candidate's personality which helps in rating his capabilities. Also included in this section are a group of behavioral manifestations observable by the interviewer which carry considerable weight in screening candidates who are grossly unsuited for our work. After these finer points have been covered, the interviewer records his total impression of the candidate in which section he has much more latitude in describing him.

Rating Classification of Candidates. The interviewer is also required to describe the candidate's qualifications in accordance with the following categories:

1. *Unacceptable*

a) Candidate does not meet minimum academic qualifications.

b) Personality is not suitable for our work.

INTERVIEW EVALUATION SHEET

EDUCATION

- 1. College graduate _____ Degree or credits _____ Major field _____
Minor field _____
- 2. Undergraduate social science courses (Indicate approx. number of courses.)
Psychology _____ Sociology _____ Social Work _____
Guidance _____ Anthropology _____ Education _____
- 3. Graduate Study _____ Degree or credits _____ Major field _____
Psychology _____ Sociology _____ Social Work _____
Guidance _____ Anthropology _____ Education _____

WORK EXPERIENCE (Check appropriate item. How long?)

- Social Work _____ Personnel _____ Guidance _____ Teaching _____
- Club Leader _____ Camp Counselor _____ Other: _____

PERSONALITY AND INTERESTS

- 1. Social poise and physical bearing.
- 2. Ability to express ideas.
- 3. Stable and mature.
- 4. Flexible- receptive to new ideas.
- 5. Intelligence and perceptiveness
- 6. Healthy curiosity.
- 7. Sense of humor.
- 8. Self-insight
- 9. Interest in people and their motivations
- 10. Understanding of JAB and social work.
- 11. Understanding of balance between social
work and police roles

Any of the following manifestations, if present, should be noted by interviewer: peculiar ideas or notions, repeated nervous mannerisms, euphoric (too happy); depressed (too sad), withdrawn (lost in rever), talks excessively, talks very little, over-compliant - no initiative, over-bold.

IMPRESSION:

Date _____

Interviewed by _____

Figure 2

- 2. *Average*
 - a) Candidate meets minimum academic qualifications: that is, baccalaureate degree.
 - b) Personality appears good; interest is adequate.
 - c) Personality is fair; interest is strong.
- 3. *Above Average*
 - a) Candidate meets academic qualifications with emphasis in social sciences.
 - b) Had done some graduate work in the field.
 - c) Personality appears suitable; interest is strong.
 - d) Some experience in social field.
- 4. *Excellent*
 - a) Candidate meets academic qualifications.
 - b) Graduate work beyond a couple of courses in the field.
 - c) Personality is very suitable.

- d) Interest is very strong.
- e) Good experience in social field.

After this step has been completed, the further safeguard is taken of checking the record of the candidate in the Police Department and the references which he may give.

All of the data regarding the candidate are centrally maintained. Each candidate is rated strictly on the basis of his qualifications, and when an opening occurs for work in the Bureau, the highest ranking candidate or candidates who are available are selected. Once he does arrive in the Bureau, the applicant receives a two week intensive training course to orient him to the scope of the Bureau's operations and the particular job which he will perform. During this period he is carefully observed so that he will receive a field assignment which conforms best to his capabilities.

In some instances, psychological tests may be administered to candidates to obtain additional information about them. These include such tests as the Wechsler-Bellevue Intelligence Scale, the Otis Quick Scoring Mental Ability Test, the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, Kuder Preference Record, and appropriate projective techniques.

Once assigned to a field unit, the worker is carefully observed and supervised in his work. In accordance with general police thinking, we try to avoid shifting personnel unnecessarily other than to meet the exigencies which typically arise. We feel that this procedure is best in that the worker feels secure in his surroundings and gains especial competence in working in a particular neighborhood. Should the worker acquire additional skills, every opportunity is given him to promote his professional development and, of course, to benefit the Bureau. This, it might be parenthetically added, has happened especially in the cases of those members of our staff who have obtained social work and other types of professional training.

When supervisory vacancies occur, we try to fill them with former members of the Bureau when possible. In this way we feel that our investment in their training can continue to pay dividends. Of course, we are as interested in securing other superior officers of the department who desire to seek assignment to the Bureau, if they meet our qualifications.

SUMMARY

The selection of the candidate then, as we see it, is based upon the following discrete sources of information about him.

1. His record—which consists of the completed application form detailing both his work and educational experiences and all additional information available from the files of the Personnel Records Unit and other departmental sources. The academic transcript serving as an independent check upon the validity and relevancy of the statements made in the application form. A verification where indicated is made of references which the candidate may have given.

2. The professional interview—which is designed to clear up ambiguities in his record and to permit an independent appraisal of the candidate's capacities and personality. The fact that the candidate is interviewed by two superior officers considerably controls any possible misjudgment which might arise.

3. Psychological testing—where necessary, serving as a means of obtaining further elaboration about the candidate's qualifications.

We do not make any pretensions that this method of selection of candidates for Juvenile Aid Bureau assignment is in any sense flawless. The full scientific validation of our method, of course, must await a carefully controlled analysis of the many factors involved. We do believe, however, that from a practical standpoint our processing has become more discriminating and accurate.

This type of screening, we find, enables us to locate and accept those candidates who do meet our rather exacting standards, and to eliminate those who would undoubtedly be ill-suited for our work. Such latter, of course, could on the other hand be excellent in performing different jobs within the Department such as becoming detectives, laboratory technicians, plainclothesmen, etc. For our part, we try to screen out those who are not educationally qualified, those who cannot by temperament work on a one to one basis with people in trouble, and those who have little potential for professional growth in a dynamic enterprise.

Since this procedure has been followed, we have been studying it carefully to make any changes which may be indicated. We are gratified to note that our new staff additions appear to be of superior quality.