

# The Validity of B-PAD as a Measure of Interpersonal Skills

Purpose of the Study. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the validity of Scale 2 (Interpersonal Skills) of B-PAD in selecting police officer applicants. The study utilized a construct validation strategy, contrasting the B-PAD scale scores with independent measures of interpersonal/communication skills and overall suitability for police work. Complete details of this study are available in Young (1992).

Methodology and Subjects. This study involved the administration of *B-PAD for Police* to 203 applicants for deputy sheriff positions with Contra Costa County, located in the eastern San Francisco Bay Area. The sheriff's office serves nearly 760,000 residents and employs 630 sworn personnel. Deputy sheriffs initially serve an average of two years as correctional officers in the detention facility prior to beginning training as patrol officers. The study followed a "double-blind" methodology: none of the three external raters had knowledge of the applicants' standing in the assessment process on any measure until scoring had been completed. Similarly, the agency's internal evaluators remained ignorant of the applicants' B-PAD performance. Interpersonal/communication skills were assessed by the agency using a two-rater panel observing a structured group exercise involving several applicants combined with a structured interview with a background investigator. This assessment resulted in a Composite Communications Skills score that utilized a 4-point scale. A score of 4 reflects the highest level of competence.

Results. A total of 60 applicants with low scores on the Composite Communications Skills rating were dropped from further consideration. This group of applicants obtained statistically lower B-PAD Scale 2 (Interpersonal Skills) scores, significant at the .01 level of confidence (applicants with low Composite Communications Skills scores averaged 20.38 on B-PAD's Scale 2, S.D. = 3.78; all others averaged 23.09, S.D. = 3.58). Even larger significant mean differences were obtained in a comparison of the hired applicants (N = 32, mean = 24.45, S.D. = 2.53) vs. applicants not hired due to poor communication skills.

Conclusion. B-PAD was shown in this important study to be a valid and cost-effective tool for identifying applicants with adequate interpersonal/communication skills, as well as those capable of being hired and trained vs. those not capable of completing the assessment process. Conservative estimates indicate that in this study alone, B-PAD would have resulted in a savings of more than \$60,000 had B-PAD been used to select applicants for further processing.