**Comparing the M-PULSE Inventory and MMPI-2: Degree of Overlap and Predicting Misconduct in 7,161 Law Enforcement Officers**

Kevin M. Williams, Ph.D.1, Robert D. Davis, Ph.D.2, & Cary D. Rostow, Ph.D.2

1Multi-Health Systems, Inc., Toronto, Canada

2RD Associates, LLC and Matrix, Inc., Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Paper presented at the 2011 Convention of the American Psychological Association, Washington, DC

Correspondence: kevin.williams@mhs.com

Please do not cite without author permission

The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI-2) has been frequently used over the past several decades to assist in the selection and evaluation of law enforcement personnel by various North American agencies. However, because the MMPI-2 was originally developed as a general measure of personality and psychological illness nearly 70 years ago, it is unclear if this measure is actually appropriate for law enforcement evaluations and hiring decisions today. On the other hand, the Matrix-Predictive Uniform Law Enforcement Selection and Evaluation Inventory (M-PULSE) was published in 2008 as a self-report measure specifically relevant to law enforcement job performance and culture. Previous research has shown the M-PULSE to be extremely accurate in predicting future misconduct among law enforcement officers. This article summarizes new research that directly compares the MMPI-2 and M-PULSE in law enforcement settings for the first time.

We examined MMPI-2 and M-PULSE Inventory data for 7,161 participants (85.3% male, 72.8% white, average age = 30 years old, average level of education = high school graduate). All participants were law enforcement candidates sitting for post-conditional offer evaluations. Data were collected from law enforcement agencies in nine U.S. states: California, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, and Vermont.

Along with MMPI-2 and M-PULSE Inventory scores, official records of misconduct were collected for 4,973 of the officers. On average, each officer’s behavior was tracked for a period of about two years. For each officer, a superior completed a standard form describing any instances in which the officer committed any of the following 16 liability outcomes:

* procedural or conduct mistakes
* family or interpersonal difficulties
* at-fault motor vehicle accidents
* weapons discharges
* inappropriate weapons use
* undesirable off-duty conduct
* damage or destruction of official property
* misuse of official vehicles
* unprofessional conduct
* suspensions or written reprimands from superiors
* lawsuits for sustained misconduct
* inappropriate sexual behavior
* racially offensive conduct
* substance abuse
* excessive force
* criminal conduct

Three main statistical analyses were performed on the data. First, MMPI-2 scores (e.g., Good Cop/Bad Cop, Aggression, etc., see Table 1) were compared to M-PULSE Liability Scale scores for all of the law enforcement officers. Results showed that there was no relationship between scores on the two measures. In other words, the two scales appear to be measuring very different things. The psychological and personality traits measured by the MMPI-2 are not related to the law enforcement-specific traits measured by the M-PULSE.

Second, we compared MMPI-2 and M-PULSE scores for officers who committed or did not commit the 16 liability outcomes. Results showed that officers who committed liabilities scored higher on the M-PULSE scales, as expected. On the other hand, officers who committed liabilities generally did not score any differently on the MMPI-2 than officers who did commit liabilities. In other words, the MMPI-2 could not distinguish officers who committed liabilities from those who did not. In some instances, officers who did not commit the liabilities actually scored higher on the MMPI-2 than individuals who committed the liabilities; the opposite result from what one would expect.

Finally, we examined the ability of the M-PULSE to predict the 16 future liability outcomes, compared to how well the MMPI-2 was able to predict these outcomes (Table 1). Initially, for 14 of the 16 outcomes, results showed the M-PULSE was more accurate than the MMPI-2. For the two outcomes in which the MMPI-2 was the more accurate predictor, further analyses demonstrated that this was a ‘chance’ statistical anomaly and that the M-PULSE is in fact a more consistently accurate predictor for these two outcomes as well.

Overall, these results suggest that the MMPI-2 and M-PULSE measure different aspects of individuals: the MMPI-2 measures factors related to psychological illness and general personality traits, while the M-PULSE measures attitudes and behaviors more specific and relevant to law enforcement. Also, officers who committed liabilities scored consistently higher on the M-PULSE scales, a trend that was not found for the MMPI-2. Finally, the M-PULSE was a more accurate and consistent predictor of misconduct than the MMPI-2. These results provide convincing evidence that traditional measures of personality and psychological illness may not be appropriate for law enforcement job evaluation and hiring decisions. Despite its superior performance, it is still recommended that the M-PULSE Inventory be used not as a stand-alone measure in personnel selection and evaluation, but in combination with traditionally effective procedures such as interviews and background checks. Overall, the M-PULSE Inventory may be used to assist agencies in hiring officers who are least likely to demonstrate misconduct, therefore reducing associated monetary and reputational liabilities while maximizing performance and efficiency in their public safety mission.

Table 1. Discriminant function analysis results predicting liability outcomes from M-PULSE Liability Scales and MMPI-2 indices.



*Note.* Highlighted cells represent most accurate predictor per liability.