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A Call to Serve: Fundamental Challenges to Integrating Social Service Responsibilities into Policing Work

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Abstract

The professional roles of law enforcement and social services have slowly intertwined in recent decades. While there are possible advantages to greater collaboration between different categories of public servant, the ongoing shift of social work and mental health responses to police often produces questionable results. While training programs are improving law enforcement abilities to utilize soft skills in non-crime emergency situations, there remain challenges. The current study examines the question of personality differences between individuals in both fields of work, as a consideration of differentiated skill sets, using a subset of respondents from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth – 1997. Respondents working in law enforcement and social service roles were selected, and latent personality constructs identified, in adulthood. Measures addressing similarities in career, such as faith, and substantial differences, such as gender, were incorporated into logistic regression models. Results indicate substantial differences in personality between those serving in law enforcement and those in other social service roles. The findings suggest fundamental difficulties in having law enforcement continually assume non-crime emergency responsibilities.

Introduction

It has long been acknowledged that there is a significant overlap of activities and responsibilities between policing and social services, such as social work or mental health counseling (see Vollmer, 1919). Within the United States, in particular, police officers began shouldering the responsibility of mental health service calls and coordinating social service actions during the deinstitutionalization period of the 1960s. State run centers for mentally ill individuals were closed en masse in favor of smaller, community-led care centers, but with insufficient funds and resources, and political barriers, care for at-risk populations fell passively to law enforcement (Watson, Pope, & Compton, 2021). This trend raised the salient concern that police were not adequately trained or structured to take on such responsibilities. While modern policing involves more training, such as Crisis Intervention Teams (CIT), research indicates ongoing insufficiency in handling such emergencies (e.g., mental health calls) (Yang, Kanewske, & Thompson, 2018).

Recent trends including decreases in crime rates and increases in calls for social service support (e.g., individuals in mental health crises) places greater emphasis on police response to, and management of, non-crime emergency situations or scenarios requiring differentiated response (Punch & James, 2017). The necessity of law enforcement in emergency response remains clear, but the gradual assumption of responsibilities beyond responding to crime and threats to public safety poses an escalating concern. Social workers, community center staffers, and mental health professionals are needed, but the systems, apparatus, and personnel do not yet exist to provide 24-hour emergency coverage for broader social service needs across the country, whereas police departments and sheriff's offices, by default, are available and thus, by inertia, are expected to pick up the slack (Lum et al., 2022). Recent efforts, such as the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, have acknowledged some of the problems that stem from these trends, going beyond training and equipment deficiencies to identify philosophical

inconsistencies. One example is the goal of shifting a mentality of policing away from a “warrior” mindset to one of guardianship (President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015). While research exists documenting problems with training (Yang et al., 2018), and with forcing police to take on responsibilities beyond their domain (Lamanna et al., 2018), there is not enough empirical examination of the personality characteristics that may distinguish those drawn to law enforcement from those drawn to other forms of public service (e.g., social work).

Despite Vollmer’s (1919) call, questions remain as to whether those in law enforcement are psychologically the most adaptable to other forms of service. Before one can explore situational responses, and dynamic factors of risk and judgment, it is necessary to explore whether there are substantial differences in personality or outlook between individuals who serve in law enforcement and those who serve in social service roles. The current study considers this question via exploration of longitudinal data collected within the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth-1997 (NLSY97), examining career status in adulthood in concert with personality characteristics, social experiences and preferences, and control measures.

Literature Review

Adjacent Careers

Careers in public service reflect a strong desire to serve one’s community, but may include many different paths and activities in pursuit of that goal. Individuals employed in law enforcement and social work provide two illustrations of the variety of paths and perspectives, but both roles often collaborate. Incidents of intimate partner violence, domestic violence, mental health emergencies, adolescent delinquency and status offenses, homelessness and substance abuse often involve police and social workers interacting to resolve situations (Patterson & Swan, 2019). Individuals who choose careers in social work often speak of a strong internal desire to help others as a primary motive (Bradley, Maschi, O’Brien, Morgen, & Ward, 2012; Petersén, 2024; Stevens et al., 2010), while those who enter policing express similar sentiments of a desire to truly serve one’s community (Courtright & Mackey, 2004; White, Cooper, Saunders, & Raganella, 2010). From a casual glance, it might appear logical that, if social service budgets and resources were trimmed at the municipal or county level, law enforcement agencies could step in to fill the void. However, there are logistical and practical obstacles that are not easily overcome.

Problems in Practice

One aspect of the recent Black Lives Matter protests involved calls to “defund” the police. One interpretation of this phrase is to call attention to the reallocation of municipal and county budgets to reduce mental health resources, trim social service funding, and overall reduce spending on social safety net issues, at times when such budget reductions typically exclude law enforcement from cuts. Emergency response systems providing 24-hour coverage in the United States were originally designed

for crime response and public safety (i.e., police, fire, emergency medical services). While psychological, psychiatric, and even social work agencies are being incorporated into these systems in piecemeal fashion across the country, there remain inconsistencies in practice and gaps in service that local mental health providers and social workers cannot fill, and it is unclear if designing and executing a similar emergency response system for such services would provide better or faster responses in an economically feasible manner (Lum et al., 2022).

However, current research clearly indicates that mobile non-crime crisis response systems are not adequately vested into 9-1-1 operations. This, combined with the fact that approximately one third of individuals who transition into mental healthcare settings do so through police involvement (Watson et al., 2021), which may also disproportionally impact people of color with mental health needs, clearly illustrates the need to revisit how social service and law enforcement operations co-exist at the local level. Leadership in law enforcement has long recognized the importance of improved training in mental health services among officers (International Association of Chiefs of Police). One way this has been addressed is through CIT training, which involves officers undergoing 40 hours of specialized training to recognize mental health concerns among individuals they encounter, expanding de-escalation techniques, and working with community mental health providers in strategic partnership (Marcus & Stergiopoulos, 2022). While helpful, there is much more needed work in this area. Yang and colleagues (2018) found that CIT training does not sufficiently reduce the likelihood of use of force when interacting with those in mental health crises, and other research elaborates that the training does not significantly alter use of force practices within the general population (Compton et al., 2014).

A related problem to infusing emergency response systems with mental health and social service organizations is the variety of emergency calls that occur. One analysis of 9-1-1 call volumes across nine metropolitan areas revealed that police most often respond to traffic issues, personal disputes, calls on suspicious behavior, residential disturbances, disorder, and general calls for help. It is possible that many of these incidents could benefit from the presence of social service personnel, but it is equally important to note that mental health calls reflect a small portion of overall 9-1-1 calls (Lum, Koper, & Wu, 2022). Furthermore, co-responder models, in which police and social service workers arrive together in an emergency response, may not de-escalate a tense situation if an individual is in mental health crisis or has particularly strong beliefs about the police (Watson et al., 2021). Research has begun to address the efficacy of co-responder models, and initial results are promising (Davis, Norris, Schmitt, Shem-Tov, & Strickland, 2025) but they are preliminary only.

Improving police training may benefit emergency response outcomes, but research supports the argument that police are often tasked with social service responsibilities beyond their training and skill (Vitale, 2017). Indeed, one argument raised is that decades spent fighting a war on drugs and the increased use of military equipment and resources has hardened police attitudes on social service (Watson et al., 2021). Individuals who utilize public service resources, such as community drug counseling or those who call 9-1-1 in non-crime emergencies, often report that police are undertrained and treat the individual as a criminal during response (Lamanna et al., 2018). However, in regions without

other alternatives, people call police for mental health concerns, minor nuisances, or other issues that may be better handled from a social service agency (Braga & Bond, 2008).

Differentiated Callings

One noteworthy consideration of social services and policing involves gender. The social work field is estimated to be 80% female (Petersén, 2024), while policing and law enforcement remain largely male dominated professions (Franklin, 2015). This is not to suggest that similarities do not exist between those drawn in either direction. Indeed, religion and sense of spirituality are often cited as considerations by those who study and pursue careers in social work (Hirsbrunner, Loeffler, & Rompf, 2012; Petersén, 2024), and those who perceive law enforcement as their calling (Friedman, 2017; Gilmartin, 2002).

In terms of personality, many characteristics housed within the big five domains (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) resonate with social workers and law enforcement agents, but not necessarily in concert. Petersén (2024) examined social work students and identified self-characterizations of empathy, caring, and being a good listener, among her sample. While it remains unclear if there is a singular personality "type" that is called to policing (TenEyck, 2023), successful cadets and officers often show strong conscientiousness in personality assessments (Detrick & Chibnall, 2006; Raganella & White, 2004), and research indicates that officers may be more open to new experiences than previously assumed (Garbarino, Chiorri, Magnavita, Piattino, & Cuomo, 2012). One early assumption of police personality argued that officers were likely to be more cynical than the general public (Skolnick, 1966), but this argument has been challenged through more recent assessments of various personality measurements (TenEyck, 2023). While cynicism may be debatable, research has not sufficiently examined critical interpersonal skills (e.g., empathy or sympathy) that would aid law enforcement in providing emergency responses in non-crime situations, or scenarios extending beyond the criminal justice system.

To lend further insight into the challenges of passing off social service responsibilities to police departments, it is necessary to directly compare personality differences between those in law enforcement and social work roles. Efficacy in interpersonal situations, particularly emotionally volatile or otherwise tense scenarios, requires considerable soft skill capability (Kuok, 2022). While the evidence accumulated thus far suggests there are many similarities in personality characteristics and motives (e.g., desire to help, practicing one's faith) it is worth noting that the inconsistencies identified leave open a key question: What differences exist in personality characteristics between individuals in law enforcement careers and individuals in social work roles?

I hypothesize that personality differences will emerge between individuals in these career categories. However, it is unclear how these differences will manifest.

Methods

Sample

The data used in the current study was collected from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth – 1997 (NLSY97), a longitudinal study of nationally representative youth begun in 1997. At the beginning, 8,984 respondents were included, between 12–16 years of age. While the sampling technique included overrepresentation of minority populations, the sample remains nationally representative due to the multistage cluster strategy applied (Bureau of Labor Statistics, BLS – clinical trial number: not applicable). Respondents were followed annually for the first several years of the study, and are now interviewed every two years, documenting social, and periodic psychological, changes from adolescence to adulthood.

Given the central focus on career interest, a sub-sample was generated based on identified careers and temporally available data. The NLSY97 allows for identification of occupation through the 2002 Census occupational coding data. The current study focuses on career status in 2008, allowing for a more focused look at career in adulthood (NLSY97 mean age = 25.85; mean age of sub-sample = 25.92), and to connect with data collected on personality characteristics in the same year. Per the Census codes, respondents were categorized into social work roles if they identified as a social worker (n = 40), counselor (n = 48), or miscellaneous community social service worker (n = 28). Respondents were categorized as law enforcement workers if they identified as a police or sheriff patrol officer (n = 34), detective or criminal investigator (n = 2), first line manager of police (n = 1), or bailiff/jailer (n = 27). The current study identified 180 respondents working in either career context in 2008. Respondents in either career field were not significantly different from other NLSY respondents in terms of prior military service, attitudes towards government responsibilities or race. However, these respondents were more likely to have pursued or completed education beyond high school ($X^2(1) = 129.81$, $p < .001$), were more likely to report asking God for help ($X^2(1) = 12.09$, $p < .001$), were more likely to report volunteering in the past ($X^2(1) = 12.92$, $p < .001$), and were more likely to be black ($X^2(1) = 4.40$, $p < .05$).

Insert Table 1

Table 1
Subgroup Description

	Subgroup Respondents	Remaining NLSY97 Participants
	***n* = 180**	***n* = 8,804**
Military Service by 2008	5.00%	5.40%
Ask God for Help (2008)	69.40%	56.50%
Education Beyond High School by 2008	59.40%	23.00%
Volunteer (2007)	91.10%	80.40%
Government Responsibility Attitude (2006)	15.00%	11.90%
Male	45.60%	51.30%
Black	32.80%	25.90%

Variable Design

The dependent variable was a binary measure of career, with social work roles coded as 0 for a baseline, and law enforcement workers coded as 1. Independent variables were taken from interviews in and prior to 2008. The 2008 interviews included a personality inventory, used previously on a small subset of the original sample in 2002. In this interview, the majority of all respondents provided answers on a 7-point Likert scale to statements rating their resonance to the following attributes: extraverted/enthusiastic; critical/quarrelsome; dependable/self-disciplined; anxious/easily upset; open/complex; reserved/quiet; sympathetic/warm; disorganized/careless; calm/emotionally stable; conventional/uncreative; hard worker. Respondents also applied the same scoring system to the following statements:

- I do not work as hard as the majority of people around me.
- I have high standards and work toward them.
- I do what is required, but rarely anything more.
- I make every effort to do more than what is expected of me.
- I do not intend to follow every little rule that others make up.
- When I was in school, I used to break rules quite regularly.
- I support long-established rules and traditions.
- Even if I knew how to get around the rules without breaking them, I would not do it.

Higher scores reflected stronger agreement with each statement or characteristic.

If a respondent reported any military service in the interviews up to 2008, that information was included as a dummy code. Another dummy code identified educational attainment up to the 2007–2008

academic year, specifying any respondent who reported earning an Associate's, Bachelor's, or higher degree. Also in 2008, respondents reported yes or no to the statement "I often ask God to help me make decisions." In the 2007 interview, respondents answered ordinal questions on the amount of time they spent volunteering, which was recoded into a binary measure of any volunteering. In 2006, respondents were asked to share their perspectives on government responsibilities, including one question assessing whether the government should provide a job for everyone who wants one. Response options included: definitely should be, probably should be, probably should not be, and definitely should not be. Positive responses to the first two statements were recoded into a binary measure reflecting attitudes in favor of government support for providing employment. Lastly, additional baseline control measures included a dummy code for male respondents, and another for race (black). Table 2 provides an initial comparison of respondents in each career category on relevant control measures. Respondents who work in law enforcement roles were more likely to have prior military experience ($X^2(1) = 11.76$, $p < .01$), and be male ($X^2(1) = 55.58$, $p < .001$), but were less likely to pursue additional education ($X^2(1) = 40.41$, $p < .001$) than those who work in social work roles. No differences emerged on faith, history of volunteerism, attitudes towards government responsibilities, or race.

Table 2
Differences by Career Field

	Law Enforcement Career	**Social Work Career**
	***n* = 64**	***n* = 116**
Military Service by 2008	12.50%	0.90%
Ask God for Help (2008)	64.10%	72.40%
Education Beyond High School by 2008	28.10%	76.70%
Volunteer (2007)	89.10%	92.20%
Government Responsibility Attitude (2006)	18.80%	12.90%
Male	82.80%	25.00%
Black	29.70%	34.50%

Insert Table 2

Analysis

Analyses were conducted in two phases. First, to establish latent personality measures, and given the need for parsimony with such a small sample, the 2008 personality statements were assessed via orthogonal rotated, varimax exploratory factor analysis. Second, to assess influence on career field, I ran a logistic regression model predicting public service protection work, treating social service assistance work as the baseline, via the latent constructs and all specified control measures.

The limited sample size raised significant concerns over missing data. Sub-sample respondents who did not provide information on personality measures were more likely to be male ($X^2(1) = 10,21$, $p < .01$). This concern was addressed using the Blimp Studio 3.2.2 software application. This software package utilizes Bayesian estimation for multiple imputation techniques. The current study involved fully conditional specification (FCS), specifying 2,000 burn-in iterations computed prior to establishing the first imputed data set, running 10,000 iterations per model, and estimating 50 imputed data sets that are pooled into a single logistic regression model estimating parameters and standard errors (Enders, Keller, & Levy, 2018).

Results

Factor Analysis

Insert Table 3

Table 3
Personality Factor Analysis

	n = 7,044					
	Eigenvalue	**Proportion**	**Cumulative**			
1	3.52	0.2	0.2			
2	1.7	0.09	0.29			
3	1.39	0.08	0.37			
4	1.31	0.07	0.44			
5	1.14	0.06	0.5			
6	1.01	0.06	0.56			
Rotated Factor Loading						
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Extraverted/enthusiastic	-.01	.08	-.01	.35	-.64	.33
Critical/quarrelsome	.14	-.14	.69	.15	-.07	-.05
Dependable/self-disciplined	-.14	.09	.02	.70	.01	.07
Anxious/easily upset	.04	-.01	.77	-.22	.16	.03
Open/complex	-.06	-.14	-.03	.32	-.12	.59
Reserved/quiet	.10	.07	.04	.12	.86	.08
Sympathetic/warm	-.10	.29	-.06	.00	-.01	.73
Disorganized/careless	.15	-.23	.22	-.49	.12	.34
Calm/emotionally stable	.10	.05	-.46	.59	.09	.25
Conventional/uncreative	.36	.07	.23	.07	.26	-.24
I do not work as hard as the majority of people around me.	.74	-.09	.10	-.16	-.02	.05
I have high standards and work toward them.	.77	-.01	.09	-.07	.08	-.06
I do what is required, but rarely anything more.	-.44	.10	.06	.57	-.07	.16
I make every effort to do more than what is expected of me.	-.53	.23	.13	.47	-.02	.10
I do not intend to follow every little rule that others make up.	.10	-.64	.11	-.02	.09	.19

	n = 7,044					
	Eigenvalue	**Proportion**	**Cumulative**			
When I was in school, I used to break rules quite regularly.	.09	-.62	.20	.02	-.11	-.05
I support long-established rules and traditions.	.03	.61	.14	.28	-.03	.12
Even if I knew how to get around the rules without breaking them, I would not do it.	-.02	.72	.01	.11	.05	.13

Table 3 provides the results of the exploratory factor analysis, and identifies six factors of value. The rotated loading results reflect distinct personality characteristics, with loading scores suggesting the following labels:

1. Average Worker
2. Rule Oriented
3. Critical of Others
4. Dependable/Motivated
5. Introvert
6. Sympathetic Individual

Logistic Regression

Table 4 provides the results of the logistic regression model predicting public service protective work over social service assistance work. Of the six identified latent personality constructs, two showed significant predictive difference. A one standard deviation increase in the “Critical of Others” factor increased the log-odds of working in law enforcement by 0.27 ($p < .05$). A one standard deviation increase in the “Sympathetic Individual” factor decreased the log-odds of law enforcement work by 0.48 ($p < .001$). Respondents who pursued education beyond secondary school were significantly more likely to be engaged in social work roles, and male respondents more likely to enter law enforcement. No other personality or control measure significantly differed in predicting career categories in this context.

Table 4
Regressing Law Enforcement Status

	Coef.	S.E.	Sig.
n = 180			
Intercept	-0.23	0.50	
Dependable/Motivated	0.03	0.15	
Rule Oriented	0.20	0.15	
Average Worker	0.004	0.16	
Critical of Others	0.27	0.13	*
Sympathetic Individual	-0.48	0.14	***
Introvert	-0.01	0.13	
Military Service by 2008	0.99	0.61	
Ask God for Help	0.03	0.28	
Education Beyond High School	-1.13	0.28	***
Volunteer	-0.72	0.46	
Government Responsibility Attitude	0.52	0.36	
Male	1.74	0.30	***
Black	-0.30	0.32	
*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001			

Insert Table 4

Discussion

Personality and Career: Divergent Callings

Law enforcement and social service personnel often report being called to serve, by religious influence, or other characteristics (Bigham, 2008; Friedman, 2017; Gilmartin, 2002; Hirsbrunner et al., 2012; Petersén, 2024; Raganella & White, 2004; Stevens et al., 2010). Spirituality, in particular, often resonates with individuals in both arenas, and while its impact on career choice, between these focal areas, may not be substantial, it is relevant to the individual's ethical view and self-efficacy in the workplace (Duffy & Blustein, 2005).

Educational, career (i.e., military experience), and demographic (i.e., gender) differences emerged between respondents in each career field, which resonates with and expands established research (Franklin, 2015; Petersén, 2024). The substantial findings on personality strongly support the stated hypothesis and raise theoretical challenges to the efficacy of law enforcement assuming social service roles. Personality aspects reflecting a critical nature, and being a sympathetic presence, differentiate career status and suggest a career selection effect (at least in the narrow context defined by the sample).

These findings do not unilaterally state that police are ill-suited to social service responsibilities, but they do raise concerns about engagement, efficacy, and lasting trust issues that may arise. Prior research indicates that no measured aspects of the big five personality domains accurately predict the job performance of law enforcement officers (Sanders, 2008), but this point focuses on law enforcement specific roles (e.g., patrol, community-policing engagement). If law enforcement personnel are less sympathetic, by nature, than those tasked with social justice concerns (e.g., working with unhoused or mentally ill populations), they may possess fewer soft skills that often prove necessary to effective engagement (Kuok, 2022; Morrison, 2007). A compounding effect, beyond whether individuals with certain personality characteristics are drawn to specific career fields, is the training and expectations built into curricular development prior to the start of the career. Social work curricula recognize and embrace the need for soft socialization skills as critical to the work (Bajjaly & Saunders, 2023). While police training does not ignore communication and interaction skills, the majority of law enforcement training prepares officers for potentially dangerous confrontations (Reaves, 2016) and primes officers for active physical engagement.

Selection vs Socialization

This observation raises an important complication in that the debate over policing personalities remains unresolved, as aspects of one's outlook may change as a result of the years of experience accumulated on the job or through training. Research has previously indicated a selection effect into policing (Check & Klein, 1977), but the overall issue of selection versus socialization has not been resolved (Garbarino et al., 2012; Salters-Pedneault, Ruef, & Orr, 2010; TenEyck, 2023). Recent incidents of police misconduct that have drawn national attention (e.g., Ferguson, MO) have pushed officers towards more cynical attitudes, and overall negative emotionality (Galovski, Peterson, Beagley, Strasshofer, Held, & Fletcher, 2016). Police officers that are more oriented towards order maintenance perspectives, as opposed to those more inclined towards community interaction and development, were found to be more cynical, and less motivated towards the role of the police generally, after public protests occurred (Torres, Reling, & Hawdon, 2018).

Given the relevance of training for contingency situations, it is worth considering how supplemental police training addresses potential non-crime emergencies. CIT training has been shown to improve communication skills between police and public service agents (Skubby, Bonfine, Novisky, Munetz, & Ritter, 2013), but thus far has proven insufficient to adequately address different situational response needs (Yang et al., 2018).

Multi-Agency Cooperation

One possible approach involves further incorporating social service and psychiatric personnel and agencies into emergency response protocols (Lum et al., 2022). Oftentimes, co-responder models produce a wider array of outcomes than arrest or escort to a treatment center (Helfgott, Hickman, & Labossiere, 2016), and one quasi-experiment of Canadian emergency response identified a reduction in officer use of force in such models, relative to police only patrol techniques (Blais, Landry, Elazhary, Carrier, & Savard, 2020). These strategies can be beneficial and harmful, however, as reliance on police during mental health crisis responses may create heightened fears or reactions from civilians, and race specific impacts have not been adequately studied (Saleh, Appelbaum, Liu, Scott Stroup, & Wall, 2018). Furthermore, shifting non-emergency responses to outside agencies may also hinder police-community relations in the long-term (Mazerolle, Rogan, Frank, Famega, & Eck, 2002), and the dynamics of emergency response situations requires acknowledgement that non-violent calls can escalate to violence (e.g., intimate partner violence) quickly (Lum et al., 2022). The logistical challenge of disaggregating policing from social service needs, and separating emergency from non-emergency scenarios under time constraint, cannot be easily addressed or uniformly resolved (Neusteter, Mapolski, Khogali, & O'Toole, 2019). A related observation is that roughly half of 9-1-1 calls are disposed of by the dispatch officer (Lum & Koper, 2017).

Considerations

This research provides theoretical insight into a practical problem, but admittedly does not identify clear policy opportunities. The results suggest that revisiting police training standards may have minimal impact on changing future emergency response outcomes, but as an initial exploration of a limited sample, they warrant caution, expansion, and consideration. The strongest implication is that further reductions to social service and mental health resources, at the local level, cannot be reasonably offset by additionally burdening law enforcement. One avenue for future study warrants the possibility of change in outlook for officers who spend time serving in co-responder units. Further work needs to shed light on earlier personality metrics (e.g., collected in adolescence), and additional social factors (e.g., parental career) influencing different educational and career pathways. While challenges exist for co-responder models (Saleh et al., 2018), one recent evaluation of a long running effort, the Crisis Assistance Helping Out on the Streets program in Eugene, OR, shows substantial promise in situational de-escalation, reduction in arrest, and improvements in response protocols (Davis et al., 2025).

Conclusion

The current study examined latent personality differences between two important professional callings: law enforcement and social services. Over time, the former has been gradually forced to assume responsibilities and tasks managed by the latter in municipal and county services (Watson et al., 2021), and while revised policing training is helpful in improving recognition of mental health crises, such efforts have met with limited success at de-escalating emergency scenarios (Yang et al., 2018). The

current study provided an initial exploratory effort to shed light on these limitations, and suggests fundamental differences in outlook between those who choose either career path. Law enforcement and social services remain vital components of public safety and functionality, and although the porous boundary between the two has been well established (Vollmer, 1919), much work remains to properly serve all members of the public.

Declarations

Ethical Approval

The NLSY97 is publicly available data, produced in compliance with federal law and evaluated by appropriate IRB procedures. Information can be found at: https://www.nlsinfo.org/content/cohorts/nlsy97/intro-to-the-sample/confidentiality-informed-consent

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Author Contribution

DAJ wrote the entire manuscript for this study, including all analyses.

Data Availability

The data may be accessed by any individual through the NLS Investigator:https://www.nlsinfo.org/investigator/pages/home

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