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# Personality Measurement and Employment Decisions

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## Questions and Answers

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*The invisible college of psychologists who do research with measures of normal personality now largely agrees about the structure of personality; this group also agrees that competently developed personality measures are valid predictors of real world performance. Outside that college, however, there is still considerable skepticism regarding the meaning and validity of these measures. This article attempts to summarize the data needed to answer the most frequent questions about the use of personality measures in applied contexts. Our major conclusions are that (a) well-constructed measures of normal personality are valid predictors of performance in virtually all occupations, (b) they do not result in adverse impact for job applicants from minority groups, and (c) using well-developed personality measures for preemployment screening is a way to promote social justice and increase organizational productivity.*

**M**any people agree that intelligence tests predict important practical outcomes (e.g., "Mainstream Science," 1994). In contrast, the conventional wisdom of modern psychology is that personality measures lack validity, are easily faked, and are generally unsuitable for preemployment screening purposes. The preferred answer in response to a question from a study guide for a licensing exam characterizes personality tests as poor predictors of job success and suggests their use in employment settings could be unethical. Similarly, Reilly and Warech (1993), in a review of alternatives to cognitive tests for employment decisions, concluded that, "The generally low validities reported and the problem of faking in operational settings make it difficult to recommend personality measures [sic] as an alternative" (p. 187; see also Blinkhorn & Johnson, 1990). On a personal note, hardly a day goes by without our being asked—by a lawyer or human resource specialist—to defend the use of personality measurement in organizational contexts. Although a small group of researchers in personality and industrial-organizational psychology believes personality measures can predict important aspects of occupational performance, the larger psychological community seems unpersuaded. This is unfortunate because the data are reasonably clear that well-constructed personality measures are valid predictors of job performance, and they can enhance fairness in the employment process. This is an important public policy issue and an area in which

psychology can contribute to both organizational productivity and social justice. This article presents frequently raised questions about personality measurement in employment and offers some responses.

### What Is Personality?

MacKinnon (1944) noted that personality is defined in two ways. On the one hand, personality refers to "factors" inside people that explain their behavior. These factors include *temperaments*—genetically controlled dispositions that determine the fundamental pace and mood of a person's actions (cf. Buss & Plomin, 1975)—and the interpersonal strategies that people have developed to deal with others and find their way in the world. These factors inside people are what drive their social behavior, including their performance in assessment center exercises and their responses to personality questionnaires.

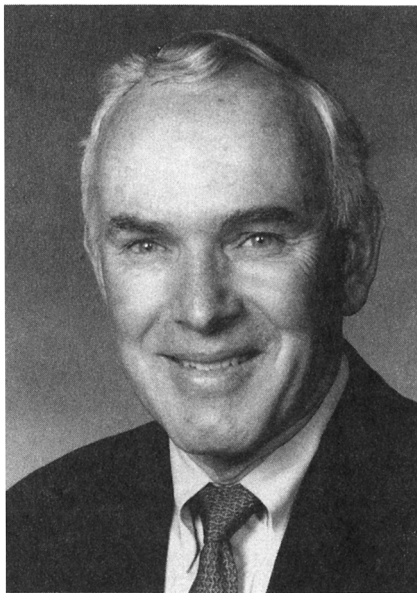
On the other hand, according to MacKinnon (1944), personality refers to a person's distinctive interpersonal characteristics, especially as described by those who have seen that person in a variety of situations. This aspect of personality is functionally equivalent to a person's reputation. It is also the source of the big-five personality factors (cf. Digman, 1990; Goldberg, 1993; McCrae & Costa, 1987) which, at least in the beginning, were discovered in factor analyses of observers' ratings (Norman, 1963; Thurstone, 1934; Tupes & Christal, 1961). Some personality psychologists regard this as the most important aspect of personality; Hofstee (1994), for example, argued that, "The averaged judgment of knowledgeable others provides the best available point of reference for both the definition of personality structure in general and for assessing someone's personality in particular" (p. 149). Moreover, because reputation is built on a person's past behavior, and because past behavior is the best predictor of future behavior, this aspect of personality has important practical use. In addition, the reputational aspect of per-

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sonality is the most accessible to measurement. And finally, most people care deeply about their reputations and will go to great lengths to preserve them.

Although personality is defined in two very different ways, both definitions are important, and both refer to individual differences in interpersonal style. From a pragmatic perspective, personality is most evident in and consequential for social interaction because people are social animals and it is during interaction that human nature is primarily expressed.

### **What Is Personality Measurement?**

Personality measurement is any procedure that systematically assigns numbers to the characteristic features of a person's interpersonal style according to some explicit rules. These numbers can then be used to make predictions about that person's responses in future settings. This definition includes many different procedures: interviews, in-basket exercises, integrity tests, and the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI; Hathaway & McKinley, 1943). And therein lies the rub. The real issue, in our judgment, is not "What is personality measurement?" but rather "What is a good personality measure?"

A good personality measure will, minimally, have two features. First, scores on the measure should be temporally stable (i.e., scores will be reliable over time). And second, there should be credible evidence that scores on the measure relate to indexes of meaningful nontest behavior (i.e., scores should predict real world performance). Although a very large number of instruments purport to measure personality, only a small subset meets the modest but crucial criteria listed above.

### **The Scales on the Various Personality Inventories Have Different Names—How Is One to Choose?**

Terminological confusion abounds in the practice of personality measurement, and this is a professional embar-

assment. But there is at least one answer to the confusion: the Big-Five model mentioned earlier. Many personality researchers now agree that the existing personality inventories all measure essentially the same five broad dimensions with varying degrees of efficiency. Various test authors have favorite dimensions in addition to the standard Big-Five, and legitimately so. Our point is that the Big-Five model is one taxonomic answer to the problem of terminological confusion.

A potential user should examine the test he or she is considering to ensure that it contains reliable and valid scales for at least the standard five dimensions—it is like making sure that the car you want to buy has an engine, brakes, steering system, transmission, and headlights. Any additional scales that the test may have are the optional features. When using an inventory to predict performance in a particular job, some dimensions will be irrelevant on the basis of a prior validity study. But when conducting validity studies, it is useful to begin with an inventory that adequately covers the major dimensions of personality so that one can determine empirically which dimensions are irrelevant.

### **Why Should an Employer Use a Multidimensional Inventory if Only One Aspect of Personality Is of Interest?**

Scores on a single scale are useful when that scale maps a unidimensional domain (i.e., cognitive ability). However, the domains of personality and occupational performance are multifaceted. Many employers want to make personnel decisions that are based on, for example, conscientiousness scores alone. This practice is risky because most performance criteria are best predicted by a combination of scales. For example, persons with high scores on a measure of integrity will follow rules and be easy to supervise, but they may be poor service providers because they tend to be inflexible in following rules. Similarly, persons with high scores on measures of service orientation will be tolerant, patient, and friendly, but they may not work very hard. It is an article of faith in traditional personality assessment that interpreting a single scale in the absence of other information is usually ill advised.

### **What Do Personality Scales Measure?**

Personality scales are typically described as self-report measures. We believe this is misleading. The processes that govern responses to items on personality scales are formally identical to those underlying social interaction in general (cf. R. Hogan, 1991, in press). During interaction, people usually try to control how others perceive them—they try to manage their reputations—so as to maximize positive attention and minimize criticism. Responding to questionnaire items is like talking with an anonymous interviewer. People use their item responses to tell an anonymous interviewer who they are and how they would like to be seen. Thus, item endorsements are



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self-presentations, not self-reports. This means that personality scales sample a person's typical interpersonal style, and that style is what creates a person's *reputation*—how he or she is perceived by others.

Gough (1965) argued that what personality scales measure is defined by what they predict, and what they predict best is observers' ratings. This means that both personality scale scores and observers' ratings are rough indexes of reputation. And it is the link between scale scores and reputation that explains why well-constructed personality scales predict nontest behavior.

### **Why Use Personality for Employment Decisions?**

During job analysis interviews, if you ask incumbents what is required for effective performance, they typically describe characteristics such as "being a team player," "remaining calm under pressure," "being responsive to the client's needs," "being persistent," and "taking initiative" as crucial for their jobs, and these characteristics are precisely what well-constructed measures of normal personality assess. When incumbents complete structured job analysis questionnaires, they again describe characteristics such as self-control, stress tolerance, leadership, and willingness to listen as essential for job performance (J. Hogan & Stark, 1992). Job analysis instruments are now being developed that focus exclusively on the personality and interpersonal requirements of jobs (Schmit, Guion, & Raymark, 1995); their development will greatly facilitate the use of personality measures in personnel selection.

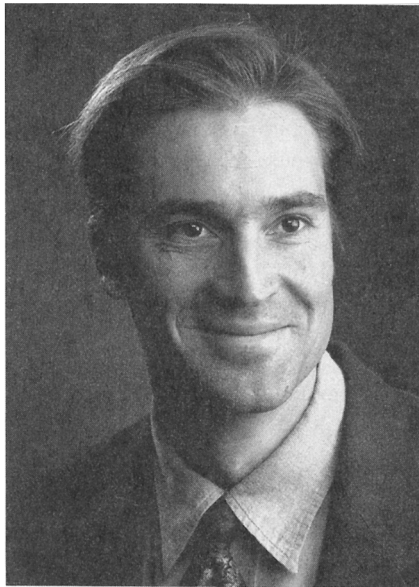
### **Do Personality Inventories Predict Job Performance?**

As recently as 1990, many academic psychologists would have answered no. Since then, however, estimates of the

validity of such measures have steadily inched up. In an important "early" article, Barrick and Mount (1991) studied the relationship between the Big-Five personality dimensions and job criteria across five occupational groups and concluded that, minimally, measures of conscientiousness reliably predict supervisors' ratings of job proficiency and training proficiency (each estimated true validity = .23). Next, Tett, Jackson, and Rothstein (1991) concluded that, when researchers choose tests on the basis of job analysis, conduct confirmatory analyses, and study incumbents with reasonable job tenure, they find validity coefficients even larger than those reported by Barrick and Mount (1991). In fact, validities for the Big-Five dimensions of intellect and agreeableness approach those for cognitive measures in predicting job performance (e.g., corrected mean  $r$ 's of .27 and .33, respectively).

In addition, McHenry, Hough, Toquam, Hanson, and Ashworth (1990) found that the personality inventory that they developed for the U.S. Army significantly predicted relevant nontechnical performance criteria for enlisted personnel (corrected mean  $r$ 's ranged from .33 to .37). In the largest meta-analysis of personality measures ever conducted, Ones, Viswesvaran, and Schmidt (1993) found that integrity tests, which are composed of facets of the Big-Five dimensions of conscientiousness and emotional stability, significantly predict supervisors' ratings of job performance in a variety of settings (estimated operational validity = .41). McDaniel and Frei (1994) reported that customer service measures, which contain facets of the Big-Five dimensions of agreeableness and emotional stability, have a mean validity of .50 for predicting rated performance in service jobs.

We are skeptical about the merits of some of the procedures used in some meta-analyses. In particular, we believe that in some cases, corrections for attenuation are used inappropriately and lead to an overestimate of predictor-criterion relationships. Nonetheless, we believe that the meta-analyses described above provide lower bound estimates of the validity of personality measures in predicting job performance. This is so because the researchers had to deal with four difficult, nonstatistical problems that necessarily obscured their results. First, the meta-analyses combined the results of research on the basis of personality scales that were not equivalent in their construction, their measurement goals, or their underlying theory. Second, the researchers sometimes misclassified scales, for example, Barrick and Mount's (1991) raters classified the California Psychological Inventory (CPI; Gough, 1987) Achievement via Independence Scale as a measure of conscientiousness when it should be aligned with openness-intellect. They also classified the CPI Self-Control Scale as emotional stability rather than conscientiousness (Megargee, 1972). Third, the jobs included in the validation studies were not classified in any rational way; for example, results that were based on military enlisted mechanics were combined with results that were based on teachers and social workers. Because effective performance in these jobs is a function of different Big-Five characteristics, aggregating results from jobs with



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different psychological requirements reduces the resulting validity coefficients.

Finally, when those meta-analyses were conducted, there was no agreed-on rationale or method for classifying the criterion space: Measures were aligned with criteria in an atheoretical manner with predictable results. In our view, the best way to evaluate the validity of personality measures is to study the evidence associated with a single scale on an inventory such as the CPI using a variety of construct-relevant performance criteria, as opposed to combining data across scales and measures. For example, Collins (1995) reviewed the validity data from 24 studies in which the Socialization Scale of the CPI was correlated with a range of social behavior criteria; she estimated that the true score validity for this scale is .56. We believe this is the correct way to estimate the validity of a personality measure. Similar results are available for occupational scales of the Hogan Personality Inventory (HPI; R. Hogan & J. Hogan, 1995, pp. 66–67).

### **Are Personality Measures Valid Predictors of Performance in All Jobs?**

When compared with studies evaluating cognitive abilities (cf. Hunter, 1983), the absolute number of job titles that have been studied using personality measures is small. In our research, however, we find that good truck drivers are pretty much the same, regardless of where they work and what they are transporting. Recent meta-analytic research suggests that performance in many jobs should, in principle, be predictable using good measures of normal personality. Negative cases include highly scripted jobs in which there is little room for personality to take effect (Barrick & Mount, 1993).

Employers, however, typically do not find meta-analytic studies very helpful. When employers ask if a test works, they want to know: (a) Has this test been used in our industry?; (b) has it been used for Job X?; (c) can

it identify persons who will perform well in Job X?; and (d) will it work in our (unique) company? Psychologists need to present their research results differently to communicate with employers.

We use the Big-Five model combined with the insights of Ghiselli and Barthol (1953) and Holland (1985) to organize this information. We first classify a job into its major Holland code, then we examine the validity coefficients of personality measures, classified in terms of the Big-Five model, for that job. We call our approach the *5 × 6 Model* (J. Hogan & R. Hogan, 1993) because it considers the Big-Five personality requirements of the six Holland occupational-type categories.

Consider, for example, the job of truck driver. In Holland terms, this is a realistic-conventional occupational type, in which the average incumbent should be conforming and introverted. Campbell's (1990) "universal dimensions of job performance" (pp. 708–710) suggest that high-performing people in realistic-conventional jobs are hard working and good organizational citizens; on the other hand, they are not good communicators, leaders, or administrators, nor do they need the ability to work well in a team. The Big-Five dimensions associated with hard work and organizational citizenship are conscientiousness and emotional stability; the other dimensions are much less important. And this is exactly what we find using the HPI (R. Hogan & J. Hogan, 1995); truck driver performance is predicted by high scores for prudence and adjustment and low scores for sociability, because high sociability is associated with impulsivity, and impulsive truck drivers get in trouble on the job (J. Hogan & R. Hogan, 1989).

Our point is that if researchers classify jobs by occupational type and then consider the Big-Five dimensional requirements and performance criteria relevant to that occupational type, the predicted relationships between personality and job performance will increase.

### **Is Much of the Research Relating Personality Measures to Job Performance Methodologically Flawed?**

The answer to this question is yes. It is also true that most of the people who play the piano do not play it very well, but that does not mean we should ban piano playing. It means, rather, that we should judge an activity in terms of the performance of the best players in it. And in these terms, there is some impressive research available (cf. Gough, 1975; Hall & MacKinnon, 1969; Ones et al., 1993).

### **Were Not Most Personality Inventories Developed for Clinical Settings and, Therefore, Are They Appropriate for Preemployment Screening?**

Historically this statement was true. But since World War II, a small number of tests have been developed explicitly to assess normal personality. To avoid using a measure

of psychopathology, the test user need only examine the item content of the test being considered and consult the test manual to understand the purpose of the test.

## **Is Behavior Not More Important Than Personality?**

Describing jobs in terms of behaviors (e.g., the President of the United States shakes hands, signs documents, reads prepared statements, etc.) focuses attention on simple manifestations of more complex underlying processes. The more significant tasks of a President include providing leadership, inspiring followers, motivating subordinates, and persuading Congress—activities that are hard to reduce to a list of behaviors. As noted above, it is not *what* a person does but *how* he or she does it (e.g., calmly, creatively, attentively, etc.) that determines effective performance.

In our view, what people do—their behavior—is a function of the kind of people they are—their personalities. We use behavior to interpret and evaluate other peoples' personalities. Although we need contextual information to interpret their behavior and we need many contexts to make reliable judgments, any single behavior is a high fidelity, narrow bandwidth expression of a personality disposition (J. Hogan & R. Hogan, 1994). We rarely want to predict how late an employee will be next Tuesday; rather, we are interested in a person's punctuality. To predict punctuality—a broad bandwidth behavioral characteristic—we need constructs of the same bandwidth (i.e., personality dispositions).

## **People's Behavior Constantly Changes: Does This Not Invalidate Personality Measures?**

It is difficult, if not impossible, to predict the weather in any city more than a few days in advance. However, we can predict seasonal and regional climates. For example, although we cannot predict well the weather in Miami on a particular day in January, we know that Florida will be warmer on that day than New Jersey.

Behavior is like the weather, it changes from moment to moment and from context to context. The personality differences that characterize people are like seasonal and regional climate differences. Personality attributions reflect judgments about others' behavior averaged over many contexts and times; they are patterns, not specifics. Nonetheless, when properly assessed, these patterns are consistent and, over time, people differ from one another in ways that are important to employers. Are there any empirical data to support this weather analogy?

Beginning about 1980, a series of studies showed that personality is consistent across adulthood. For example, Costa and McCrae (1988) presented correlations between personality traits over a six-year period that averaged .83. Similarly, Helson and Wink (1992) reported correlations between scores on the CPI and the Adjective Checklist (Gough & Heilbrun, 1983) across 10 years averaging close to .70.

The most impressive evidence for personality consistency comes from truly longitudinal studies. In a 45-year follow-up of the sample originally studied by Kelly (1955), Conley (1984, 1985) found that personality was not only quite consistent ( $r$ 's averaged about .34), but it was consistent across both self-reports and observers' ratings. Finn (1986) found, across 30 years, that the scores on the first two factors of the MMPI, Negative Affectivity and Constraint, had retest correlations averaging about .53. Using CPI scales, Helson and Moane (1987) reported 20-year correlations averaging .50 in the Mills Longitudinal Study. Stevens and Truss (1985) presented stability coefficients on the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule over 20 years ranging from .20 to .40, with some as high as .70. Finally, Haan, Milsap, and Hartka (1986) found personality correlations across a 50-year period from early childhood to late adulthood averaging around .25 (for reviews & other examples, see Conley, 1984; Heatherton & Weinberger, 1994; Kogan, 1990; McGue, Bacon, & Lykken, 1993).

Recent research also demonstrates the longitudinal predictive power of personality: Who you were 20 years ago predicts your performance now. For example, Caspi, Bem, and Elder (1989) found that middle-class boys who were ill-tempered as children tended to leave school early, achieve less occupational status than their better-natured peers, and experience downward mobility. In a 25-year follow-up of the architects studied at the Institute of Personality Assessment and Research (see MacKinnon, 1962), Dudek and Hall (1991) found that those who were more creative when they were young were more productive, less likely to retire, and still winning awards for their work in late adulthood. In a study of creativity in women, Helson, Roberts, and Agronick (in press) reported that measures of creativity gathered in college correlated .48 with occupational creativity assessed 30 years later. In the same sample, Roberts (1994) found that traits similar to the Big-Five dimensions of extraversion and conscientiousness measured in college predicted successful participation in the paid labor force 20 years later.

We are not suggesting that personality is destiny. Nor are we saying that personality never changes. But from the data, it appears that when personality changes, it changes gradually; meanwhile, the stable components affect our lives in important ways. This means, in particular, that it is highly useful for individual careers to know where our potential problems are, so that we can take steps to mitigate them.

## **Do Personality Measures Discriminate Against Protected Classes of Job Seekers and Violate the Terms of the Americans With Disabilities Act?**

There are three parts to the answer to this question. First, there is no evidence whatsoever that well-constructed personality inventories systematically discriminate against any ethnic or national group (cf. R. Hogan & J. Hogan, 1995). Moreover, the evidence suggests persons with dis-

abilities receive, on average, the same scores as nondisabled persons (Hayes, 1996); thus, measures of normal personality could be useful in allowing persons with disabilities to demonstrate their qualifications. In addition, normative data from the HPI indicate that persons over 40 years, as a group, receive slightly higher or more positive scale scores than the under 40 group (R. Hogan & J. Hogan, 1995), probably because they are, in fact, more mature. Finally, there are gender differences in mean scale scores. As a group, men have somewhat higher scores on measures of emotional stability; as a group, women have somewhat higher scores on measures of conscientiousness (R. Hogan & J. Hogan, 1995). However, these differences seem not to translate into differential selection rates for men and women applying for jobs.

Second, measures of normal personality are not medical examinations and, therefore, do not fall under the purview of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). For example, Howell and Newman (personal communication, May 11, 1994) from APA's Science and Practice Directorates, in a letter to the chairman of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), noted that personality tests are not medical examinations and are appropriate for preemployment inquiries when they assess job-relevant abilities, skills, or traits. Moreover, the October 10th, 1995, EEOC final enforcement guidance on Preemployment Disability-Related Questions and Medical Examinations under ADA (EEOC, 1995a), which replaced the May 1994 EEOC guidance (EEOC, 1994), defined a medical examination as one that is designed to "provide evidence that would lead to identifying a mental disorder or impairment (for example, those listed in the American Psychiatric Association's most recent *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*) . . . [I]f a test is designed and used to measure only things such as honesty, tastes, and habits, it is not *medical*" (p. 16).

Third, the intent of the policy set forth in Volume 2 of the *EEOC Compliance Manual* (see EEOC, 1994) is to proscribe questions that are likely to lead to an inference that a person has a disability; the intent is not to proscribe questions that might lead to such an inference. A positive answer to an item such as "I have trouble sleeping" might lead a clinician to infer depression, but it is equally reasonable to infer that the person is very energetic; in principle, therefore, this item can be used to screen job applicants.

Moreover, Section 902 of the 1992 EEOC (EEOC, 1995b) issuance 915.002, dated March 14, 1995, which defined the term *disability*, noted that (a) "Like physical characteristics, common personality traits also are not impairments"; (b) "a psychological profile of an applicant for a police officer position determined that the applicant 'showed poor judgment, irresponsible behavior and poor impulse control. . . . The court ruled that the applicant's personality traits do not constitute an impairment' "; (c) "Example 1—CP [complaining party] is a lawyer who is impatient with her boss. She often loses her temper, frequently shouts at her subordinates, and publicly questions

her boss's directions. Her colleagues think she is rude and arrogant, and they find it difficult to get along with her. CP does not have an impairment. Personality traits, such as impatience, a quick temper, and arrogance, in and of themselves are not impairments"; and (d) "Note, however, that CP's employer does not have to excuse CP's misconduct, even if the misconduct results from an impairment that rises to the level of a disability, if it does not excuse similar misconduct from its other employees. See 56 Fed. Reg. 35, 733 (1990) (referring to revisions that 'clarify that employers may hold all employees, disabled . . . and nondisabled, to the same performance and conduct standards')." (EEOC, 1995b, pp. 902–910)

## **Do Personality Measures Invade Privacy?**

Measures of psychiatric disorders and many commercially available integrity tests contain items that may be offensive or invasive; items concerning religious preferences or sexual orientations are invasive. Nonetheless, it is possible, even easy, to measure normal personality well and avoid using these kinds of items. But some people want to define invasion of privacy so broadly that it can preclude any attempt to understand the causes of behavior. We agree that people should be evaluated exclusively on their actual job performance, but by definition we have no performance data for job applicants. Employers are increasingly reluctant to comment on the performance of former employees. Moreover, a person's right to privacy is balanced against an employer's (a) right not to hire incompetent, insubordinate, or lazy people and (b) obligation not to hire someone who is a threat to the safety and security of other employees.

## **Are Not Many Items on Personality Inventories Unrelated to Job Requirements—Do They Not Lack Face Validity?**

The topic of face validity has always been a problem for personality assessment, especially for tests developed in the MMPI tradition of empirical keying, with which tradition we identify. Cronbach (1960) defined *face validity* as "a test which looks good for a particular purpose" (p. 143), and he noted that many good-looking tests fail as predictors of job performance. He concluded that if one must choose between a test with face validity, but no empirical validity, or one with empirical validity and no appeal to the layman, "he had better choose the latter" (p. 144). We agree. Nonetheless, there are circumstances in which face validity is important: A simulation used in a selection battery should resemble the relevant components of the job as closely as possible (this is an issue of fidelity and adequate sampling of the construct domain). Moreover, face validity normally enhances applicants' acceptance of a testing procedure, and that is always desirable. On the other hand, a face-valid measure that fails to predict nontest behavior is useless for decision making.

Personality measures are in a somewhat awkward position because they are often strong on empirical validity and often weak on face validity. Moreover, personality test authors have paid little attention to developing items with occupationally oriented item content. More effort has been directed toward eliminating items with unusual content rather than developing new ones that "look good" in an employment context. The degree to which future test developers will attend to the face validity of their items is an open question. In the meantime, the problem for personality assessment becomes one of educating the public about the difference between empirical and face validity while continuing to demonstrate the job relatedness of personality measures.

### **Are Not Personality Measures Easily Faked?**

The items on many commercially available integrity tests are transparent and therefore easily faked. Many items on empirically keyed measures such as the CPI are not transparent and are therefore hard to fake, but this leads to complaints about lack of face validity. This is an issue on which the critics are allowed to have it both ways—in other words, items that are face valid are transparent and easy to fake; items that are not transparent and are, therefore, hard to fake also lack face validity. But there are some additional responses to this criticism. First, when asked, some people can intentionally raise some of their scores on measures of normal personality. Second, the base rate of deliberate faking in applicant populations is low (cf. Hough, Eaton, Dunnette, Kamp, & McCloy, 1990). Third, the consensus among researchers who have studied the problem is that correcting for faking seems to reduce the validity of the scales that are corrected (cf. Barrick & Mount, 1995; McCrae & Costa, 1983). Fourth, efforts to enhance one's scores artificially are usually detected by special scales measuring social desirability or "unlikely virtues." And finally, in a careful review of the empirical data on this issue, Hough and Schneider (in press) concluded that "intentional distortion does not appear to affect criterion-related validity negatively, as is often assumed." Although the data needed to resolve this issue are clear, the issue seems somehow unlikely to go away.

### **What Is the Best Way to Use Personality Measures for Preemployment Selection?**

The answer to this question depends on the hiring strategy being used; these strategies fall into two major categories, although there will always be mixed cases. In the first case, an organization has many applicants for a large number of openings, and positions are filled on a continuous basis. Because the applicant pool is large, processing costs are an issue, and the goal will normally be to screen out potentially unsuitable employees. To avoid hiring mistakes, one should use broad measures of integrity and the capacity to handle the pressure of a heavy work load

because these measures predict accidents, absenteeism, turnover, and other undesirable behavior patterns. To ensure adequate applicant flow, it is necessary to use moderate test cutoff scores. Typically, the personality measures (integrity and stress tolerance) are supported by criterion-related validity.

In the second case, an organization has few applicants and few openings. The goal normally will be to identify excellent applicants as opposed to screening out marginal ones. Here, one should use an inventory of normal personality to match the applicant with the psychological requirements of the job. For example, potential sales personnel should have high scores on measures of extraversion and ambition. Again, the scales used should be identified on the basis of a criterion-related validity study.

In our view, an inventory of normal personality, supported by the proper validity evidence, is an essential part of any preemployment screening process. Although such measures provide information about the personal characteristics of the applicant, they cannot assess technical skills, experience, and ability to learn.

### **Conclusions**

This article can be summarized in terms of four points. First, a surprising number of people still believe that personality measures are unsuitable for use in preemployment screening, and a variety of reasons are given to support this judgment; we have tried to show that these criticisms are less serious than is generally believed. Second, we present data showing that scores on well-developed measures of normal personality are (a) stable over reasonably long periods of time and (b) predict important occupational outcomes. Third, we want to suggest in the strongest possible terms that the use of well-constructed measures of normal personality in preemployment screening will be a force for equal employment opportunity, social justice, and increased productivity. Finally, although we believe that personality measurement is appropriate for most preemployment decisions, it should always be used in conjunction with other information, particularly in regards to the applicant's technical skills, job experience, and ability to learn.

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