The configural nature of the five-factor model

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Handbook of Personality at Work

Edited by Neil D. Christiansen and Robert P. Tett

This is a comprehensive and timely reference on the important topic of personality at work. The two editors, chapter authors, and contributors provide in-depth, up-to-date, and useful insights into the theory and applications of personality in the workplace. The handbook is organized around five broad sections: (1) personality and motivation, (2) personality and social influences, (3) personality and leadership, (4) personality and performance, and (5) personality and health. Each section contains a series of chapters that discuss the latest research and applications in these areas. This handbook is a valuable resource for students, researchers, and practitioners who want to deepen their understanding of personality at work.
Contents

List of Tables xi
List of Figures xiv
Series Foreword—Jeanette N. Cleveland and Kevin R. Murphy xvi
Foreword—Paul R. Saucier xvii
Preface xx
Acknowledgments xxi
About the Editors xxii
About the Contributors xxiii

SECTION I Foundations and Theoretical Perspectives

1 The Long and Winding Road: An Introduction to the Handbook of Personality at Work Neil D. Christiansen and Robert P. Teti 1

2 Theoretical and Empirical Structures of Personality: Implications for Measurement, Modeling, and Prediction Fred L. Oswald, Leanna Hoogh, and Jison Ock 11

3 Advancing Our Understanding of Processes in Personality–Performance Relationships Jeff W. Johnson and Robert J. Schneider 30

4 Socioanalytic Theory Robert Hogan and Gerhard Bickel 53

5 Trait Activation Theory: Applications, Developments, and Implications for Person–Workplace Fit Robert P. Teti, Daniel V. Simonton, Benjamin Widok, and Cameron Brown 71

6 Individual Differences in Work Motivation: Current Directions and Future Needs John J. Dorencan, Tanner Beman, and Eric D. Hoggard 101

7 Implicit Personality and Workplace Behaviors Nicholas L. Paslepopoulos, Brian P. Sires, and Megan N. Shaw 129

xi xiv xvi xvii xx xxi xxii
17

Trait Interactions and Other Configural Approaches to Personality

MindK. Shoss and L. A. Witt

Ned-Art Expert company needed an expert and hired Am for her advanced technical skills. Shortly after
Am was hired, her supervisor began to complain that she treated them as if they were her subordinates. She
made many, often unreasonable, demands and was easily angered if they can't meet them. She is highly critical
and frequently antagonistic. To make matters worse, she refuses to share resources or information with others
but expects others to share with her. Am is low in (a) extraversion, (b) conscientiousness, (c) openness to
experience, (d) emotional stability, (e) agreeableness.

Managers, who, by the nature of their position, observe and try to shape others' behavior, note the
considerable variability in how individuals respond to events in the workplace (Dunn, Mount, Barrick, & Obles, 1998). Despite the intuitive relationship between personality and behavior, meta-
analytic research suggests these relationships may be quite weak (e.g., Hersey & Donavan, 2000). Why is it that personality appears to explain much less variance in behavior than we would expect?

One line of thought suggests that our expectations are misaligned: that is, we attribute variance in behavior to personality when they are really driven by situations (i.e., fundamental attribution error; Ross, 1977). Another suggests that situations evoke or trigger the expression of specific personality traits such that traits may only be relevant to behavior in a given context (Teo & Burett, 2003). Another alternative is that validities found in research studies are lower than true validities because of measurement limitations, such as faking (Meehl-Hanson, Heggestad & Thornton, 2003).

In addition to these possibilities, we suggest that personality appears to have limited utility for explaining important behaviors, attitudes, and cognitions because of the way we have typically examined personality variables in research. By this, we are referring to the common practice in the organizational sciences to consider traits as competing predictors in a regression model. By focusing on the unique relationship of traits with outcomes, this approach fails to consider that it may be the specific combination of traits that is most relevant for understanding and predicting workplace variables. At least intuitively, we know that one word or one trait provides a limited representation of a person—one that likely omits important and relevant information. Even the simplest of scholars generally

The chapter asking about Am. From the description, you may have selected that she is low on agreeableness. However, her behavior is better understood by also considering her standing on other traits such as emotional stability. Indeed, such characteristics as demanding, selfish, ill-tempered, and antagonistic are indicative of a blend of low agreeableness and low emotional stability (Hosmer, De Jong, & Goldberg, 1992). In contrast, those low in agreeableness but high in emotional stability might be better described as insensitive. Therefore, a more accurate answer is that Am is low in both agreeableness and emotional stability. As another example, consider two individuals, Bill and Joe, who are both high in extraversion. According to personality theory, they are both likely to be attracted to working with others (Costa & McCrae, 1992). However, whereas Bill tends to be approachable, Joe tends to be dominating. These differences are certainly important for those with whom they work. We can understand these differences by considering Bill and Joe's respective standing on agreeableness in conjunction with their levels of extraversion; Bill is friendly and compassionate, whereas Joe is not (Hosmer et al., 1992).

This chapter is devoted to the theoretical rationale behind and practical approaches to considering multiple traits simultaneously in the explanation and prediction of behavior in the workplace. Our ultimate goal is to improve our understanding of personality's influence on workplace behavior, and, as a result, to develop ways of more completely capturing personality that may be useful for both research and practice. To this end, we first describe the circumplex model of personality and theory behind trait-by-trait interactions. Then, we expand the trait-by-trait interaction concept to consider the interactions of more than two traits. We then discuss alternative approaches for conceptualizing profiles of traits. Finally, we discuss issues related to the use of these approaches as personnel selection.

Circumplex Model

Although the Five-Factor Model (FFM) of personality has dominated personality research in organizations, we emphasize five criticisms that have been leveled against it. First, different personality assessments do not always classify the same traits falling under the same factors, and there is some disagreement as to what each factor actually represents. Perhaps the greatest disagreement has been over the meaning of the fifth factor, which has been labeled openness to experience by some (McCrae & Costa, 1985) and intellect by others (Goldberg, 1993; Hogan, 1996). These labels reflect differences in the adjective assigned to each factor; those who view this factor as openness to experience tend to assign such terms as intellect and analytical to the conscientiousness factor instead (J. A. Johnson & Ostendorf, 1992). Another alternative is that the FFM's theoretically orthogonal factors are often related in research (J. A. Johnson & Ostendorf, 1992). This is problematic, as it suggests that the five factors might not be "pure"; that is, there is likely some overlap. Hence, the FFM may not accurately describe personality. These overlaps are also problematic as they make the factor locations unstable and contribute to the continuum over the meaning of each factor (Hosmer et al., 1992). Across these lines and issues, although there is some consensus about the five-factor structure (e.g., Pajak, 1969; Goldberg, 1992; John & Srivastava, 1999; McCrae & Costa, 1999; Norman, 1963), some scholars have advocated fewer as well as more factors (e.g., Denen & Weller, 1999; Block, 1998). Fourth, some have criticized the FFM for being overly broad and, for that reason, failing to capture nuances in personality that might strategically predict outcomes (Teo & Burett, 1999). Fifth, some have noted that many characteristics tend to "fill in the fuzzy regions between the factors" (John & Srivastava, 1999; Block, 1998). Also in this vein, Worsh, Graziama (2001), Goldberg (1993) suggested that most personality variables "must be viewed as blends of two or more factors" (p. 166). These last two issues are largely
interrelated. By covering a broad conceptual space, the factors in the FFM inherently include characteristics that may be more accurately described as a combination of two factors. The circumplex model (i.e., Abalb Big Five Dimensional Circumplex, ABSC; Horsey et al., 1992; J.A. Johnson & Onesford, 1993) addresses a number of these issues by integrating the FFM and illustrating the adjacencies that fall within blocks of traits. The circumplex model, like the FFM, is based on the fact that five factors can be extracted from an analysis of personality attributes (i.e., the lexical approach). Unlike the FFM, the circumplex model takes into account the secondary loadings of trait attributes (by using an ellipse instead of orthogonal modeling), suggesting that the particular blend of personality characteristics is more relevant. The ABSC model considers blends of two traits at a time. The blends take a circular form. One bipolar trait represents the vertical dimension of the circle, and the other trait represents the horizontal dimension. Attributes are mapped on to this two-dimensional space and are distributed at 30° angles around the circle according to their loadings on the two factors (Horsey et al., 1992; J.A. Johnson & Onesford, 1993). As a result, the circumplex model yields 45 configurational measures.

The circumplex model uses Roman numerals to designate factors, instead of descriptive labels. Factor I corresponds to extraversion in the FFM. Factor II to agreeableness, Factor III to conscientiousness, Factor IV to emotional stability, and Factor V to openness to experience or intellect. The model uses a plus sign (+) to indicate one of the bipolar trait (e.g., carefulness) and a minus sign (-) to indicate the other (e.g., hasty). The circumplex model suggests that each factor has pure traits as well as traits representing blends with other factors. Pure traits are those that do not have a secondary loading on another factor or have secondary loadings that are substantially smaller than the primary loadings; thus, they constitute the core definitions of their respective factors. At its core, Factor I (+) or extraversion) is captured by such traits as sociable (+I) and energetic (+I), Factor II (- seize opportunities) or agreeableness), Factor III (- the willingness or care (III)), Factor IV (- emotional stability) or peremptory (IV)), and Factor V (- the openness to experience and uninhibited (V)), respectively.

The majority of personality characteristics fall into these factors. For example, traits that represent tendencies to express positive emotions reflect blends between Factor I (primary) and II (secondary, extraversion and agreeableness). A. Johnson & Onesford, 1993). Conformity, in particular, is characterized by combinations of Factors II (primary) and V (secondary, e.g., rule abiding, conscientiousness, and openness) as well as combinations of Features I (primary) and V (secondary, e.g., submissiveness, extraversion, and openness). We note additional examples throughout the chapter.

The sources provided by combining blends of traits from the five largest advantages of using a circumplex approach over the traditional method of considering each trait individually, for example, facets of the circumplex model are characterized by the fact that openness to experience generally overlaps with neuroticism is characterized by high levels of openness to experience and low neurotism. J.A. Johnson & Onesford, 1993). Whereas a person's need might be a desire among employees, perfectionism might be (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). Considering both the primary and secondary loadings of traits, the circumplex model elucidates the space between the traits. As a result, it covers more "complex territory than the Big Five factors in isolation" while providing a more nuanced view of personality (Judge & Locke, 2004, p. 575, see also Horsey, 2003). Particularly notable, the circumplex model includes personality characteristics that the FFM has been criticized for overlooking. This is, whereas the FFM is criticized for misrepresenting such characteristics as aggressive, hostile, impulsive, sexual, and humorous (Hough & Onesford, 2011), the circumplex model captures them (8/1, +II, +II, +III, +IV, +V, and hum) (Horsey et al., 1992).

The circumplex model has also helped resolve prior inconsistencies among different measures of the Big Five. For example, A. Johnson and Onesford (1993) observed this summary.

McGhee and Costas (1985) view that positive emotions and warmth belong to Factor I caused their Factor I and II scales to take on +H and +H character, respectively. This differs from the other researchers whose Factor I scales were +H and Factor II scales were +H +V. McCrae and Costa's Factor III scale received a HI-V designation, reflecting their view that intellect belongs to this factor rather than the sixth factor. This view is consistent with the interpretation of Factor III as an organized purposefulness or intellectual achievement. In contrast, Hogan and Johnson's (1981) scale was HI +V, reflecting a view of Factor III as an interpersonal maturity and amicable control. Finally, McCrae and Costa's (1985) Factor V scale, which they use to measure openness to experience, received a V +V designation. The other researchers, who favor an intellect interpretation of Factor V, used HI+V scales.
that agreeableness moderated the relationship between neuroticism and depressive symptomatology, such that agreeableness helped those high in neuroticism better regulate their emotions. In a more comprehensive approach to trait interactions, recent work by Penny, Hood, and Witt (2011) set forth a number of hypotheses regarding the predictive value of the binary trait interactions of conscientiousness and emotional stability with each other as well as with agreeableness and extraversion for various dimensions of workplace performance.

The trait-by-trait interactions and the circumplex model yield identical information. From a circumplex standpoint, trait-by-trait interactions are assessed by multiplying scale scores on paired FFM factors. The circumplex model can be assessed using Goldberg's (1999) International Personality Pool (IPP) ABSC (http://ipp.org/), Holstein et al.'s (1992) scales; others have created scales from adjectives identified as particular trait blends in prior research (J. A. Johnson, 1994). However, Bickman, Newson, and Maddox (1999) noted that some of the IPP's ABSC scales differ somewhat from the blends presented in Holstein et al.'s (1992) original model. In particular, they note that the pure factor for Factor V (Openness) provides the weakest correspondence. Whereas creativity constitutes the pure trait in Holstein et al.'s (1992) and J. A. Johnson and Ostendorf's (1995) ABSC analyses, the IPP measure treats intellect as the pure version of this factor. An alternative approach to using the ABSC-IPP scale might be to take advantage of the fact that different measures of the FFM factors appear to capture different blends and administer the scale that best captures the blend being investigated. For example, J. A. Johnson and Ostendorf (1993) found that Goldberg's (1992) agreeableness scale reflects a H+H+ blend, whereas McCrae and Costa's (1985) agreeableness scale reflects a H+H+ blend. Researchers could therefore base their selection of scales on whether such traits are cooperative and flexible (H+H+) or generous and warm (H+H+) are most relevant to the research under investigation. However, given that there are not as many personality measures as there are blends in the ABSC model, this approach may have limited utility.

Conceptually, the circumplex model and trait-by-trait interactions have different foci. The circumplex model aims to portray a specific interaction or blend of traits, with the goal of more comprehensively representing the structure of personality. In contrast, trait-by-trait interactions model the conditional effect of one trait on another when predicting a given outcome in order to examine how one trait (e.g., extraversion) shapes the expression of another (e.g., openness) across the full theoretical range of both variables. Thus, differences exist with regard to the specificity of these two approaches. As Judge and Erez (2007) summarized, an interaction between two traits located along a circumplex is a more specific concept in that it implies a "unique geometric configuration" (Amabile & Pincus, 2004, p. 169). A circumplex measure has precise reference points that are fixed and, in the Big Five circumplex, each point represents a particular configuration of two traits, with "conceptual-empirical anchor" (Carson, 1996, p. 242).

Each configuration is specific, different from other configurations, and can describe individuals as Amabile and Pincus (2004, p. 170) noted, in a circumplex measure, a "fixed radius is never when traits are necessarily projected to locations at equal distances from the center of the circumplex, and continuous form implies directionality of traits," which differs from a statistical interaction.

Consider our example regarding openness to experience in the previous section. Using the circumplex model, we could focus on those characteristics that have primary loadings on openness but secondary loadings on one of the other four factors (or vice versa). Specifically, if we were interested in the blend of openness to experience (as the primary factor) and extraversion (as the secondary factor in the circumplex model, we would focus on characteristics related to experiencing (V+I) and conscientiousness (C+V). If we were considering traits closer to extraversion (i.e., extraversion as a primary factor), we would focus on such characteristics as daring...
(I-V+) and follower (I-V-). In contrast, trait-by-trait interactions consider the two traits together without giving one primary importance. That is, theoretically, trait-by-trait interactions capture all characteristics that are blends of the two traits without considering on which factor they primarily load, in essence including all traits that fall within the 45° angle between two bipolar traits in the circumplex model (see Figure 17.1). Personality combinations using trait interactions, therefore, are described in much broader terms than are trait blends in the circumplex model. For example, these two traits may be high in extraversion or low in emotional stability, and these traits may be described as being very distinct or very similar. In contrast, trait interactions involve multiple blends within each circumplex, and the circumplex model is likely to be useful for developing theory regarding how trait combinations manifest in workplace outcomes.

Judge and Erez (2007) compared the predictive validities of the interaction and interaction of extraversion and emotional stability. They used the IV+/I- versus IV-/I+ ABSC-IIPI measure to assess the interaction and calculated the interaction between the two traits using the circumplex model (BFI; John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991). Judge and Erez found that both the circumplex measure and the interaction significantly predicted performance among employees of a health and fitness center, even when the other was included in the model. They suggested that although the results indicate that these two approaches provide unique information, they have similar interpretations—those who score as high on both traits are high on "happy" personalities and are happy performers. What unique information does each approach capture? Comparing the items for the ABSC-IIPI and the BFI yields some insight. The ABSC-IIPI measure includes items along the lines of self-esteem and confidence (e.g., "I feel comfortable with myself"). The BFI, on the other hand, is a measure of extraversion (e.g., "I am out of my element"). The items for the ABSC-IIPI measure are reflected in the emotional stability scale of the BFI. Specifically, the BFI scale includes items regarding energy (e.g., "I feel full of energy"); low emotional stability (e.g., "I have a lot of fun"); and expressions (e.g., "I have an assertive personality"); that do not map on well to the ABSC-IIPI measure. However, these items correspond somewhat to those in the ABSC-IIPI I+I- versus I-/I- measure (e.g., "I have a lot of fun"). Therefore, Judge and Erez's findings may have differed if they had assessed traits with primary loadings on extraversion (e.g., I+I-) in addition to or instead of assessing traits with primary loadings on emotional stability (e.g., I+/I-).

An important question is whether these differences reflect real substantive differences between the two approaches or are artifacts of measurement. More research is needed to answer this question, but we suspect that it is a little of both. From a theoretical standpoint, trait interactions, and the models that are described in the circumplex model, can be interpreted differently from one another. However, as previously noted, the two approaches differ with regard to their specificity (see Figure 17.2). As Saucier and Goldberg (2003) noted, narrow constructs may be more predictive of specific instances of behavior than broad constructs of which they are a part. For example, a methodological standpoint suggests that traits with high secondary loadings tend to get tipped from inventories assessing the FFM (Blickenstaff et al., 2009). Therefore, measures corresponding to the circumplex model might be assessing traits that are not covered in FFM measures. This could explain the lack of overlap between the circumplex and BFI measures discussed in the paragraph above. However, the utility of this explanation is somewhat difficult to assess at present given that Judge and Erez (2007) represented the circumplex approach with only a narrow range of trait characteristics—those with primary loadings on emotional stability and secondary loadings on openness that fall on one location of the circumplex (IV+/I- vs. IV-/I-). Thus, future research is needed to compare the predictive validities of trait-by-trait interactions with multiple dimensions of trait blends in the circumplex model.
Trait Interactions and Other Configural Approaches to Personality

Trait-by-Trait Interactions: 3-, 4-, and 5-Way Interactions

The triadic model is limited in its focus on only two factors at a time, meaning that it does not consider if characteristics have loadings on more than two factors (Witt, 2002). Similarly, trait-by-trait interactions have primarily only focused on the interactions of two traits. However, given the multitude of trait interactions and trait traits, might it not be more useful to consider 3-, 4-, or 5-way personality factors in combination?

This idea is intriguing, as it would allow for a more holistic view of personality. Certainly, it may be achieved using 3-, 4-, and 5-way interactions, which can be easily computed in many of the statistical software packages commonly used today. However, there are a number of challenges inherent in this approach that we have been discussed in previous sections. The first set of challenges is practical. It is difficult to detect two-way interactions, let alone interactions of many variables. Power considerations are compounded by the need to sample individuals falling into each of 2-, 3-, 4-, or 5-dimensional quadrants.

The second set of challenges is theoretical. Personality theories often begin to identify the trait combinations that may be most useful for predicting certain outcomes. However, an explanation as to whether traits have additive or interactive effects on outcomes has not yet been developed. It may be that additive models of traits are relevant to some outcomes, whereas multiplicative models are more relevant to others. Alternatively, some traits may primarily operate in a multiplicative sense (i.e., by shaping the expression of others), whereas others have only main effects.

Campbell, Guzzo, and O'leary-Kelly (1996) called for examination of specific facets of performance rather than overall job performance. Indeed, consideration of specific facets permit us to look at how various combinations of the Big Five traits are likely to influence work behavior in different ways. To illustrate the considerations needed to develop theory on trait configurations, we examine the combinations of the FFM traits predicting five different performance-related work behaviors—task performance, adaptive performance, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), person-focused counterproductive work behavior (CWBP), and organization-focused CWBP. We emphasize that, because our interest is linking personality traits with performance-related work behaviors, we are focusing on performance constructs that reflect employee behaviors (i.e., "goal-relevant actions that are under the control of the individual") (Campbell, McPherson, & Sager, 1993, p. 405) as opposed to the outcomes of those actions (i.e., effectiveness). Measures of effectiveness (e.g., sales volume) are important but are reflective not only of personality and other individual differences but also of factors beyond the control of employees, such as store location (Binning & Barron, 1989; Campbell et al., 1996; O'leary-Kelly & Sackett, 2002). In contrast, employer behaviors (e.g., creating positive relationships with customers and making sales calls on time) are more directly reflective of personality (as well as other individual differences).

Borman and Motowidlo (1993, 1997a, 1997b) distinguished between task performance and contextual performance at distinct facets of job performance. Task performance reflects behaviors involving a job's primary substantive tasks/duties. Contextual performance behaviors are unique to a job. In contrast, contextual performance behaviors are unique to a specific job. In general, OCB refers to cooperative behavior targeted at helping others and for the organization, such as cooperating, following rules, helping, and volunteering (Organ, 1997, 1997). Characteristic of all jobs, they affect both social capital and operational effectiveness for more coverage of the underlying processes between personality and performance, see Chapter 3, this volume; for more coverage of personality and predicting citizenship performance, see Chapter 26, this volume).

Adaptive performance refers to two related sets of behaviors: (a) enhancing one's skill set in response to or in anticipation of a changing environment and (b) cooperating with workplace change, such as the adoption of new procedures (e.g., Quinn & Heppner, 2003; M.A. Griffin, 2003).

Figure 17.2 (Continued)  
* Interactions between three or more traits are omitted for simplicity.
Mcrl & Parker, 2007; J. W. Johnson, 2001; Shoss, Witt, and Vera (2012) emphasized that adaptive performance reflects behavior rather than ability or intent. In addition, they noted that firms need employees who can successfully handle the ambiguity and uncertainty that accompany change and who are also willing and capable of developing and applying new skills. Thus, personality may be particularly relevant for understanding and predicting adaptive performance. Furthermore, given the changing nature of work, adaptive performance is a performance outcome that organizations may as well consider when designing selection systems.

CWB is a performance-related outcome that refers to behavior that is inconsistent with the interests of an organization or its members (Sackett & DeVore, 2001). Organization-focused CWB is targeted toward organizations, examples include theft, wasting time, and performing work sloppily or incorrectly. In contrast, person-focused CWB is targeted toward individuals; examples include ignoring, mistreating, and making fun of others. We make predictions for two types of person-focused CWB—(a) person-focused CWB motivated by desires for retaliation and (b) person-focused CWB motivated by achievement of a task-relevant tactical end (cf. Penney, Hauser, & Perry, 2011)—based on our expectation that personality traits differentially relate to these two types for more coverage of personality and CWB, see Chapter 27, this volume.

We offer in Table 17.1 the 32 possible combinations of the Big Five traits at low and high levels and how the levels of the traits might be associated in most jobs with low, moderate, and high levels of task performance, adaptive performance, OCQ, retaliation-driven person-focused CWB, instrumentally driven person-focused CWB, and organization-focused CWB. We present the combinations of the Big Five traits labeled as groups (i.e., Groups 1–32). For simplicity, the table summarizes our general expectations regarding multivariate interactions in relation to distinct criteria, irrespective of possible situational moderators. In particular, these general expectations primarily assume jobs that require very little creativity or interpersonal interaction. However, in the text that follows, we supplement our description of these expectations by indicating how they may differ in the case of jobs that do require creativity or high levels of interpersonal interaction. We emphasize that these predictions are speculative.

As shown in Table 37.1, we suggest that conscientiousness and emotional stability are the primary drivers of task performance. Individuals low in conscientiousness are not motivated to exert effort to succeed on tasks. Because they tend to experience angst easily, individuals low in emotional stability often direct their efforts toward managing their angst and away from their task performance. Hence, we anticipate that workers with low levels of both conscientiousness and emotional stability are unlikely to manifest effective levels of task performance behavior (Groups 1–9). In contrast, task performance is likely to be high in Groups 10–32 because both conscientiousness and emotional stability are at high levels. We anticipate that Groups 17–21 (high emotional stability, low conscientiousness) likely manifest moderate levels of effective task performance behavior; although they may experience a low need for achievement (i.e., low conscientiousness), they are calm and able to focus on completing tasks (i.e., high emotional stability). In other words, high levels of emotional stability compensate somewhat for low levels of conscientiousness. However, we doubt that it works the other way around, thus suggesting that the effects of conscientiousness and emotional stability on task performance are interactive rather than additive. Even though they are motivated to achieve, the highly conscientious workers low in emotional stability are unlikely to be able to focus effectively on job tasks and therefore perform at low levels (Groups 10–16).

We emphasize that we anticipate this to be the case in most but not all jobs. For example, in jobs requiring creativity and out-of-the-box thinking, task performance might be moderate or high (instead of low) in Groups 10, 12, 14, and 16; that is, we expect openness to experience to play a role in the extent to which low emotional stability detracts from task performance in these job families. The combination of creativity (i.e., high in openness to experience), diligence, and drive...
### Trait Interactions and Other Configural Approaches to Personality

Achievement (i.e., high conscientiousness) allows individuals to cope with their angst (i.e., low emotional stability) by focusing on their work, thus, they are likely to be high performers in tasks requiring attention to detail. In contrast, task performance in jobs requiring creativity might be hampered in Groups 9, 11, 13, and 15 (i.e., low openness to experience, high conscientiousness, and low emotional stability). People are likely to be inflexible and obsessed with the minute details of each task and to be reluctant to develop and try alternative strategies for achieving tasks. Similarly, openness is likely to be beneficial for task performance in creative jobs only when conscientiousness is high and emotional stability is low.

Furthermore, agreeableness might influence the expression of conscientiousness and emotional stability relevant for task performance in jobs that require interacting with others. Those who are highly conscientious but low in both agreeableness and emotional stability (Groups 9-12) are unlikely to be high performers in team settings, as this combination of characteristics makes them appear demanding and cold to others. They are also likely to be easily angered if others do not share their same level of detail-orientation and achievement striving (perhaps especially so if they are concerned; Groups 11 and 12). Those with high levels of both conscientiousness and emotional stability paired with a low level of agreeableness (Groups 23-26) might, in contrast, achieve moderate levels of performance as high levels of emotional stability might reduce the opportunities for low agreeableness to be manifested but may not completely compensate for low agreeableness. High levels of agreeableness might compensate somewhat for low levels of emotional stability among those who are highly conscientious working in team settings, allowing these individuals (Groups 13-16) to reach moderate levels of performance (as opposed to the low levels of performance in jobs that require little interpersonal interaction that is depicted in the table). Among workers low in conscientiousness, we expect that high levels of both agreeableness and emotional stability allow them to achieve a moderate level of performance; they may not want to let others down, and therefore may assign higher levels of conscientiousness than they really have. As suggested by Judge and Fox (2007), extraversion may also influence an individual's success in jobs that require interacting with others, as high levels of extraversion in conjunction with emotional stability relate to the emotions and arousal (i.e., excitement) individuals experience. We suggest that conscientiousness and openness to experience are the primary drivers of adaptive performance, such that high levels of both traits are needed. Motivated to exert effort in general (i.e., conscientiousness) and consider change (i.e., openness to experience), such individuals are generally likely to adapt well. We expect that high levels of both are needed for adaptive performance. Conscientiousness may be detrimental for adaptive performance if openness is low, as these individuals are more conventional and may rigidly adhere to the traditional ways of doing things (Holbein et al., 2002; A. Johnson & O'Connor, 1993). High openness is unlikely to translate into adaptive performance if conscientiousness is low. Accordingly, we expect those high in conscientiousness and low in openness (Groups 9, 11, 13, 15, 27, 29, and 31), those low in conscientiousness and high in openness (Groups 2, 4, 6, 8, 18, 21, 22, and 24), and those low in both traits (Groups 1, 3, 5, 7, 17, 19, 23, and 25) to engage in low levels of adaptive performance. Emotional stability is likely a secondary driver; individuals high in both conscientiousness and openness to experience but low in emotional stability are predisposed to adapt but are likely handicapped somewhat by a tendency to focus on others' feelings, hence, they may be likely to have suboptimal levels of energy with which to engage in adaptive performance behavior. Accordingly, we anticipate that Groups 10, 12, 14, and 16 are likely to manifest moderate levels of adaptive performance behaviors. In contrast, because workers high in conscientiousness, openness to experience, and emotional stability are motivated to adapt and have sufficient emotional energy to do so, we anticipate that Groups 26, 28, 30, and 32 are likely to manifest high levels of adaptive performance behaviors. Agreeableness may also play a tertiary role in adaptive performance, especially with regard to being cooperative with workplace changes or adapting to new situations.

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<th>Group</th>
<th>Agreeableness</th>
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<th>Openness</th>
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members in one's workgroup. Thus, high levels of agreeableness may compensate at least to some extent for lower levels of openness or emotional stability in these situations.

We suggest that conscientiousness, agreeableness, and emotional stability are the primary drivers of OCBI, and that high levels of all three are associated with high levels of OCBI. Persons who experience little angst, and therefore spend little energy on coping with it (i.e., high emotional stability), are likely to exert more effort (i.e., high conscientiousness), are cooperative (i.e., high agreeableness), and are likely to seek out opportunities to contribute beyond core task performance behaviors. Hence, we anticipate that Groups 29–32 are likely to manifest high levels of OCBI. We anticipate that, regardless of the levels of agreeableness and emotional stability, individuals low in conscientiousness will not put forth much effort to do more than is required and to do it well. That being said, individuals low in conscientiousness and emotional stability but high in agreeableness may attempt some OCBI behaviors, such as volunteering for extra tasks, due to their agreeableness, but they are unlikely to engage in these behaviors effectively. Thus, we expect Groups 1–8 and 17–24 to engage in low levels of OCBI. However, among workers high in conscientiousness, high levels of either agreeableness or emotional stability are likely to compensate for low levels in the other and yield moderate levels of OCBI. For example, highly conscientious workers high in agreeableness but low in emotional stability may engage in OCBI as an emotion-focused coping mechanism; whereas their low emotional stability may prevent them from manifesting high levels of OCBI, their general motivation to do so (i.e., high conscientiousness) and cooperative nature (i.e., high agreeableness) may predispose them to do more things to feel better. Highly conscientious workers high in emotional stability but low in agreeableness are unlikely to seek opportunities to be nice, per se, but they are predisposed to exert effort and observe opportunities to be successful. Hence, we anticipate that Groups 13, 14, 15, 16, 25, 26, 27, and 28 engage in moderate levels of OCBI. Finally, we expect that those high in conscientiousness but low in both emotional stability and agreeableness (Groups 9–12) will engage in low levels of OCBI. Workers who are easily upset and are not interested or consider that others are likely to pursue other ways to achieve their goals.

As noted above, we suggest that personality trait predictors of engagement in person-focused OCBI vary based on the motivation to manifest the OCBI—retaliation or a tactic to achieve a task-related end. For the sake of simplicity, we ignore for the moment the tactical motivations underlying person-focused OCBI and limit our example to linking the FFM traits with retaliatory person-focused OCBI. We argue that agreeableness, extraversion, and emotional stability are the primary drivers of retaliatory person-focused OCBI. Because they are motivated to be liked, individuals high in agreeableness are likely to view person-focused OCBI as an appropriate way to in which to treat others and therefore refrain from doing so. Those high in emotional stability have fewer opportunities to engage in person-focused OCBI, as they less frequently experience angst and hurt. Those low in extraversion may find themselves in fewer situations that might motivate person-focused OCBI, because introverts prefer to avoid interaction with others. Thus, we anticipate that all but Groups 3, 4, 11, and 12 manifest low levels of retaliatory person-focused OCBI.

We suggest that high conscientiousness serves as a governor limiting OCBI among those predisposed to manifest it. Hence, we view conscientiousness as a secondary rather than a primary driver of retaliatory person-focused OCBI. We expect this to primarily be a function of the impulsive aspect of conscientiousness. Thus, we anticipate that extraversion low in emotional stability are likely to manifest high levels of retaliatory person-focused OCBI if they are also low in conscientiousness. We expect high levels of conscientiousness to constrain person-focused OCBI among those high in extraversion and low in agreeableness and emotional stability, but not completely. Accordingly, we expect that: (a) Groups 3 and 4 engage in high levels and (b) Groups 11–12 engage in moderate levels of retaliatory person-focused OCBI.

Our expectations differed markedly for jobs that require teamwork or high levels of interpersonal interaction. In this case, we expect agreeableness and emotional stability to be the primary drivers of person-focused OCBI. Those low in agreeableness who are easily upset by others (i.e., low emotional stability) are likely to manifest high levels of person-focused OCBI (Groups 1–8 and 9–12) in interpersonal situations. Conversely, conscientiousness is likely to do little to restrain this behavior because it is driven by impulsive control resources available at any given moment. In fact, conscientiousness may contribute to retaliatory person-focused OCBI, especially in situations where team members perceive emotional responses by failing to meet performance goals or do work incorrectly. Likewise, agreeableness is unlikely to restrict this behavior because individuals are unable to avoid others in team settings. As a result, retaliation might even be associated with increased retaliatory person-focused OCBI because having to interact with others is emotionally draining for these individuals.

We discuss organizational OCBI before discussing tactically driven person-focused OCBI. We suggest that the motivation to manifest organization-focused OCBI is largely retaliatory and not a tactic to achieve a task-related end. Extraversion and openness to experience are probably not salient to organization-focused OCBI. Instead, we view agreeableness and emotional stability as the primary drivers. High agreeableness workers are cooperative. Emotionally stable workers are unlikely to get angry and feel the need to retaliate against the organization. We argue that the presence of one compensates for the lack of the other, and that persons high in either agreeableness or emotional stability are likely to engage in high levels of organization-focused OCBI. We view conscientiousness as a secondary driver of organization-focused OCBI. If they are low in both high in conscientiousness. Accordingly, we expect Groups 1–4 to engage in high levels of organization-focused OCBI.

We also expect that groups 5–8 and 13–20 to engage in low levels of organization-focused OCBI. To achieve the maximum of the FFM traits with organization-focused OCBI. To provide an illustration of how the five traits might interact to form a performance-related behavior, we return to our example of resources. For the purposes of this example, we assume that intrasocial (i.e., tactically oriented) person-focused OCBI is considered inconsistent with cultural norms.

We suggest that conscientiousness serves as the primary driver of instrumental person-focused OCBI. Highly motivated to achieve, high-conscientiousness workers are likely to exert effort to manifest the person-focused OCBI for the purpose of acquiring work-related resources in order to get the job done; in contrast, low-conscientiousness workers have no need to achieve. Without the motivation to get things done (i.e., high conscientiousness), the question of whether to engage in instrumental person-focused OCBI for tactical purposes is unlikely to arise. Accordingly, we anticipate that persons low in conscientiousness (i.e., Groups 18 and 17–20) manifest low levels of instrumental person-focused OCBI regardless of their standing on the other four traits. However, we also expect that to which highly conscientious workers engage in instrumental person-focused OCBI depends on their standing on the other four traits. We consider emotional stability to be the primary second driver. However, because we suggest that emotional stability shapes the expression of the other personality traits, we discuss it last. We suggest that persons high in agreeableness avoid instrumental person-focused OCBI because they are cooperative and want to be liked; in contrast, low-agreeableness workers have no such need to avoid unpleasantness. Highly conscientious workers who are low in agreeableness probably
Compound Traits

Schneider, Hough, and Dumette (1996) developed a compound trait as "linear combinations of narrow personality facets that do not all converge." Two of the most commonly discussed systems are agreeableness and emotional stability. Agreeableness is characterized by high positive correlations among traits such as friendliness, cooperativeness, and empathy. Emotional stability, on the other hand, refers to the tendency to remain calm and composed in stressful situations.

These traits are often measured using personality inventories such as the Big Five personality traits model. The Big Five model includes traits such as extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience. These traits are often assessed using self-report questionnaires.

Despite the fact that these traits are highly correlated, they are not identical. For example, agreeableness and emotional stability are positively correlated, but they are not identical. Agreeableness is more related to social behavior, while emotional stability is more related to stress resilience.

These models are widely used in psychology and are often used in research to understand personality traits and their implications in various contexts.

Metatraits

Metatraits refer to the higher-order traits that influence the expression of lower-order traits. For example, a decision maker can be described as having a high metatrait of decision-making ability, which can influence their performance in decision-making tasks.

In summary, compound traits and metatraits are important concepts in personality psychology that help us understand the complex nature of personality traits and their implications in various contexts.
As a result, Furr recommended considering each profile’s normativeness separately from its distinctiveness. He also suggested comparing profiles’ scatter and elevation (he provides SAS code for calculating these on his website) and, perhaps, looking at the interaction between these elements.

Within organizational science, the most common use of profiles is in the person-organization fit literature (Edwards, 2007). Here, a profile of an employee’s personality, interests, or values is compared to a profile designed to reflect that of the organization. Many different approaches have been used to compare profiles, including D, Euclidean distance, absolute value of D, and Q. However, these approaches have been criticized for combining conceptually different elements into a single score and for treating positive and negative mildness as equivalent (Edwards, 1993). Furthermore, these approaches are inherently compensatory in the sense that poorer fit on one point can be compensated by better fit on another. Recent approaches using polynomial regression and response surface mapping (Edwards, 2007) have helped to resolve these issues. Unfortunately, these latter approaches consider differences in only one variable (e.g., personality trait) at a time. Future research is needed to integrate Edwards’ and Furr’s approaches to profile comparison, as both have unique advantages. Whereas Edwards provides a more comprehensive consideration of similarity (e.g., distinguishing positive and negative differences), Furr’s approach is straightforward.

An issue that remains crucial for the use of profiles is the difficulty in determining a comparison profile. An employee’s personality profile could be compared to scores on the same set of variables: (a) obtained at another point in time, (b) reported by an informant (e.g., coworker, spouse), or (c) reflective of another person. These comparisons are relevant when similarity (e.g., over time, between people) is theoretically related to outcomes of interest. However, what about the use of profiles to explain outcomes where the theoretical process is unrelated to similarity? Cluster analysis and related approaches (e.g., latent profile analysis) might be useful in this regard. For example, Cortina and Magley (2009) used cluster analysis to identify profiles of coping with incivility and then used discriminant function analysis to determine those factors that maximally discriminated between the clusters. Meyer, Stanley, and Parfousova (2012) used latent profile analysis to determine commitment profiles (e.g., conscientious, dominant, fully committed) and compared how these profiles predicted a variety of well-being and performance outcomes. Although these studies did examine personality, personality could certainly be used in these contexts. Latent profile and cluster analyses may also be useful in examining whether different personality profiles (e.g., combinations reflected in our groups in Table 17.1) and whether these profiles meaningfully explain predict behavior.

Summary and Recommendations for Research and Practice

Figure 17.2 illustrates the five main configurational approaches discussed throughout the chapter as well as how each could be used for predicting outcomes. Our aim in Figure 17.2 is not to provide a complete theoretical model for each (e.g., outcomes would be regressed on traits as well as their interaction in co-twin-correlation interactions) but rather to illustrate the key similarities and differences between the approaches.

Note that the depictions of compound and metatraits are virtually identical, except for the fissions of the arrows connecting the compound and metatrait with agenticness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability. This distinction reflects that between configurative and metaphoric constructs. The former, which are also called aggregate constructs, reflect those constructs that are formed by the combination of their indicators (i.e., indicators “cause” the construct; Bolles & Lettieri, 1991; Dimitrovopoulos & Sigauw, 2006; Edwards & Bagozzi, 2000). A common example of a configurative construct is GWB, where the individual behaviors are not necessarily

410
interchangeable, but together comprise the construct (Spector et al., 2006). In contrast, the latter, which are also called superordinate constructs, consider the indicators as reflecting an underlying construct (i.e., the construct "causes" the indicators). The implication is that formative constructs do not consider indicators to be interchangeable, and therefore, indicators may have different sets of antecedents and unique effects on outcomes (R. L. Johnson, Ison, & Levy, 2008). In contrast, latent constructs suggest a certain degree of interchangeability because indicators are driven by a single construct; therefore, indicators would be expected to result from similar antecedents and to have similar effects on outcomes. Research is needed to examine compound and superordinate constructs with regard to these assumptions. This is particularly important given that the same indicators appear in some compound and metatraits (e.g., integrity and alpha both have agreeableness, emotional stability, and conscientiousness as indicators). Thus, an integrative view of these approaches may be necessary to avoid return to the "good old days" (Hough, 1997, p. 233) of disjointed personality constructs.

Research is needed to examine the relative validity of all of the configurational approaches presented here. That being said, we have noted the growing amount of evidence that suggests that configurational approaches, whether trait interactions, trait blends, compound traits, or higher-order traits, appear to provide incremental validity over nonconfigural approaches in predicting a wide range of outcomes. Assuming that the compatibility principle of attitude-behavior relationships (Azjen, 1980; Harrison, Newman, & Koch, 2006) might also be applied to personality-behavior relationships, we expect the trait blends in the circuit model (and other narrow approaches) to best predict precise and narrow dependent variables, whereas trait interactions (and other broader approaches) likely best predict broader dependent variables such as measures of performance discussed in this chapter (Saucier & Goldberg, 2003).

At previously noted, our primary aim in this chapter was to describe how configurational approaches, in particular trait interactions, may yield a more comprehensive understanding of personality in the workplace. A related, secondary aim is to suggest that these ways of more comprehensively capturing personality have practical utility for improving the validity of personnel selection systems. All of the aforementioned approaches—trait complexes, trait interactions, compound traits, metatraits, and profiles—can be implemented in personnel selection. However, these considerations are relevant to choosing among them: (a) ease of measurement/implementations, (b) ease of interpretation, and (c) validity. Trait-by-trait interactions are likely one of the easiest approaches to implement. As previously noted, organizations that already use selection in personnel selection could potentially see additional validity in their systems without any additional cost for data collection. Trait interactions are also relatively easy to interpret, as they allow one to understand the implications of changing one trait while keeping the other(s) constant. Following Witt and colleagues (e.g., Witt, 2002; Witt, Burke, et al., 2002), the circuit model could be used to develop theory regarding how trait interactions relate to behavior. Thus, an advantage of the interactions is that they capture the nuances provided by the circuit model while maintaining the simplicity of the FFJM traits as an organizing framework. However, the interpretation of trait interactions becomes more difficult as the number of traits in the interaction increases. Turning to the other approaches, compound and higher-order traits are easy to use and relatively easy to interpret. In contrast, we see profiles as more difficult to implement and interpret. As noted above, research is needed to examine the comparative advantages of these approaches for predicting important workplace outcomes.

In addition to theoretical issues, there are a number of practical issues that need to be considered when using configurational approaches in applied settings. Many of these issues (e.g., faking and situational specificity) apply generally to the use of personality in selection. Others (e.g., setting common present unique challenges associated with configurational approaches. We highlight situational specificity and setting cutoffs as two key considerations and briefly discuss each in turn.

As alluded to throughout the chapter and supported by a considerable body of research, context plays an important role in shaping the personality-performance relationship (Hackman, Wilt, & Kacmar, 2000; Tett & Christensen, 2007; Witt, Kacmar, Carbon, & Zivnuska, 2002). Thus, situational factors are an important consideration when using personality in a selection setting (as well as many other settings). For example, Kacmar and colleagues (2002) proposed that situational factors are an important consideration when using personality in performance assessments. As pointed to throughout the chapter, including situational factors is important because situational factors are important to performance. In doing so, we recognize the complexity of personality in the workplace. Likewise, we encourage researchers to consider the context in which various aspects of personality may emerge. For example, judges and performance in customer service employees. To do this, some have suggested developing a personality scale to which one is more relevant for the work context (i.e., specifying in the instructions the extent to which each item reflects how one is "at work"), consistent with the idea of contextual measurement (Horgen & Gordon, 2000). Although doing so may increase personality-performance relationships, we caution that benefits from contextualizing personality may be at the cost of being able to draw firm and contribute to personality theory more generally. Furthermore, we suggest that research is needed to understand what assessment of personality at work is actually measuring for example, responses may simply be indicating organizational or workgroup norms regarding behaviors. Therefore, we again suggest that studies of the effects of personality in the workplace may not be as straightforward as in the laboratory.

On the other hand, the effects of personality on job satisfaction and employee behavior are well established (Judge & Cable, 2005). Although doing so may increase personality-performance relationships, we caution that benefits from contextualizing personality may be at the cost of being able to draw firm and contribute to personality theory more generally. Furthermore, we suggest that research is needed to understand what assessment of personality at work is actually measuring for example, responses may simply be indicating organizational or workgroup norms regarding behaviors. Therefore, we again suggest that studies of the effects of personality in the workplace may not be as straightforward as in the laboratory.

Conclusion

As noted by Hough and Oswald (2005), organizational researchers study real-world phenomena, where human behavior and performance are complex, and therefore when a correlation between a single variable for personality and a single variable for performance is relatively low, we should not be too surprised or too quick to dismiss its usefulness. Organizational researchers study real-world phenomena, where human behavior and performance are complex, and therefore when a correlation between a single variable for personality and a single variable for performance is relatively low, we should not be too surprised or too quick to dismiss its usefulness. 

As noted by Hough and Oswald (2005), organizational researchers study real-world phenomena, where human behavior and performance are complex, and therefore when a correlation between a single variable for personality and a single variable for performance is relatively low, we should not be too surprised or too quick to dismiss its usefulness.
Practitioner's Window

Two of the most powerful uses of personality data are selection and employee development. For years, many, if not most, practitioners have primarily considered conscientiousness and emotional stability in developing selection systems. Moreover, many have primarily, if not only, considered the main effects of conscientiousness and emotional stability. Additionally, it is likely that the development of many selection systems reflects inadequate consideration of multiple performance-related work outcomes as criterion variables. At the same time, employee and leader development practices have typically discussed with their clients the effects of traits only in terms of main effects. Whereas much work remains to be done, we argue that simultaneous consideration of the effects of all five traits on specific performance-related work outcomes is likely to provide not only more accurate and rigorous selection outcomes but also higher utility employee and leader development practices. In particular, key points noted in the chapter include the following:

- One personality trait may shape the expression of another. Therefore, there is a need to consider specific configurations of traits when using personality to explain or predict behavior in the workplace.
- The extent evidence suggests that configural approaches (e.g., trait interactions, trait blends, and compound traits) appear to provide incremental validity over nonconfigural approaches in predicting a wide range of outcomes.
- Trait interactions are likely to be the easiest approach to implement in practice because they allow for the use of familiar methods and measures. Therefore, trait interactions may allow organizations to achieve additional validity in selection systems without additional data collection cost.
- Careful attention needs to be paid to both performance criteria and context when developing personality-based systems for selection or employee development.

Notes
1 The circumplex model uses both ends of the Five-Factor Model (FFM) dimensions (e.g., IV+ is high IV-, IV+ is neutral, IV- is low, and IV- is low). Johnson & Oosterhof, 1999. There are 90 unique pairs, which are discussed in terms of 45 bipolar items (e.g., sociable vs. unsociable, II, etc.). Ritual, The Ritual, & Goldberg, 1992. From these are blends of two factors. (e.g., pair pere trait, where the loading on the primary factor is low at .735 is the loading on a secondary factor (heuristic, etc.)).

2 Of course, there may be further evidence in the lack of consistency of trait blends for the law of the additive correlation between openness to experience and performance. In particular, low loadings may result in evidence of substantial specificity such that openness to experience may contribute positively to performance in some situations and negatively in others. Although Barrett and Mouton (1991) found a reliable week interval, Herren and Domanii (2004) reported a consistently week interval for the open-to-task performance relationship.

3 These are just two of the many possible job demands that may influence how individuals interact with different performance criteria.

4 It is likely that those in openness to experience may be more likely to engage in more complex and creative work.

References


Assessing Personality in Selection Interviews

Patrick H. Raymark and Chad H. Van Iddekinge

Over the past few decades, there has been a substantial amount of research on the use of personality assessments for personnel selection. The results of this research suggest that certain personality variables (e.g., conscientiousness, emotional stability) can predict job performance across a variety of jobs (e.g., Barrick & Mount, 1991; Frurip & Dunham, 2000), and that the criterion-related validity of personality variables may be enhanced when confirmatory rather than exploratory research strategies are used (Telc, Jackson, & Rothenberg, 2001; Telc, Jackson, Rothenberg, & Redden, 1999). In addition, when considered within a multivariate framework, evidence suggests that small changes in the relationship between personality variables and job performance may be produced by cognitive ability (Telc & Christianson, 2007). Despite this favorable evidence for the use of alternative methods in assessing job applicant personality (Moore et al., 2007; Ployhart, 2004), another line of research suggests that the selection interview remains one of the most popular, if not the most popular, approaches to evaluating job applicants (Wilk & Cappelli, 2003). Two positive reactions to the selection interview are not only found for organizational decision makers (e.g., Lievens, Highton, & De Corte, 2003) but also for job applicants (e.g., Hausknecht, Day, & Thomas, 1984). In addition, several meta-analyses have concluded that structured interviews can obtain acceptable levels of criterion-related validity (e.g., Huffcutt & Arthur, 1994; McDaniel, 1999), while providing a relatively low level of adverse impact (e.g., Huffcutt & Roeth, 1998).

Although there is evidence that many selection interviews are designed to assess personality (e.g., Huffcutt, Conroy, Roth, & Stone, 2001), surprisingly few studies have attempted to examine the extent to which selection interviews are effective for this purpose. In this chapter, we will further explore the potential for the selection interview to enhance personality assessment in a way that incorporates this approach.

The Selection Interview

Evidence suggests that the interview remains one of the most prevalent selection techniques used by organizations (Koenig, Kiefe, Berghold, & Kleinmann, 2010). Furthermore, meta-analytic results indicate that selection interviews can produce useful levels of both reliability and criterion-related