

*The Predisposition Test**

Next we will explore psychological predispositions. We feel this is important, because our psychological tendencies shape our behavior, especially in the workplace. Again, remember that there is no right or wrong answer. The best answer is the one that most accurately describes the way you are, not the way you want to be or the way you think you should be.

Follow the instructions carefully. When you have completed the test, as before, we will outline the

dimensions measured in this exercise and explain how to record and interpret your scores.

For each of the statements below, please draw an "X" through:

DA if you *definitely agree* with the statement,

IA if you are *inclined to agree* with the statement,

ID if you are *inclined to disagree* with the statement,

DD if you *definitely disagree* with the statement.

*J. W. Lorsch and J. J. Morse, *Organizations and Their Members: A Contingency Approach* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974). Material reprinted by permission.

1. If a person is satisfied with the kind of job he has done, he shouldn't get upset if colleagues criticize it.	DA	IA	ID	DD
2. The most interesting life is to live under rapidly changing conditions.	DA	IA	ID	DD
3. One often has to be told what to do in order to do a good job.	DA	IA	ID	DD
4. It's satisfying to know pretty much what is going to happen on the job from day to day.	DA	IA	ID	DD
5. Off with the old, on with the new, even though a person rarely knows what the "new" will be.	DA	IA	ID	DD
6. One should never go with a group if the crowd means little to one.	DA	IA	ID	DD
7. Doing the same things in the same places for long periods of time makes for a happy life.	DA	IA	ID	DD
8. A person gets more satisfaction out of reading an enjoyable book than from talking to friends about their vacations.	DA	IA	ID	DD
9. Adventurous and exploratory people go farther in this world than do systematic and orderly people.	DA	IA	ID	DD
10. When planning a vacation, a person should have a schedule to follow if he's really going to enjoy himself.	DA	IA	ID	DD
11. The best work is done with some close supervision.	DA	IA	ID	DD
12. Others' thoughts of one's actions are of great importance.	DA	IA	ID	DD
13. It's better to walk along a beach alone than to sit on a beach blanket with friends.	DA	IA	ID	DD
14. Even if a man loves a girl, he ought not to marry her if his friends don't approve of her.	DA	IA	ID	DD
15. One should welcome suggestions, but resent even reasonable orders.	DA	IA	ID	DD
16. Even children know they must decide their actions; their fathers and mothers do not know best.	DA	IA	ID	DD
17. The least possible governmental and social controls are best for all.	DA	IA	ID	DD
18. A really satisfying life is a life of problems. When one is solved, one moves on to the next problem.	DA	IA	ID	DD
19. Schools which force conformity stifle creativity.	DA	IA	ID	DD
20. Teachers who force students to use prescribed methods of study make it difficult for them to learn.	DA	IA	ID	DD
21. A person usually can get a job done faster and better by working alone than with a group.	DA	IA	ID	DD

Scoring and Interpreting the Predisposition Test¹

Introduction

Jobs have a variety of dimensions, many of which will have an effect on how much at home you feel in your work and perhaps on how well you perform. Three such dimensions are the amount of uncertainty or change, the degree of supervision, and the amount of required interaction with others. These were the underlying beliefs of a study conducted in the early 1970s by Professors Jay Lorsch and John Morse of the Harvard Business School. They wanted to understand the impact of the fit be-

tween individual characteristics and job characteristics on the effectiveness of companies.

This study represented an extension of contingency theory from its former focus on the organization-environment interface (see *Organization and Environment* by Paul Lawrence and Jay Lorsch, [Homewood, Illinois: Irving, 1969]) to include the organization-individual interface. Contingency theory, of course, is the set of ideas surrounding the notion that there is no one best way to organize, rather that the most effective organizational form depends on a variety of factors and constraints. The Lorsch-Morse study suggested that there is no one best individual employee profile, but that individual effectiveness in a job depends on the fit between an individual's characteristics and the demands made of him or her by the job.

¹Much of this material is based on J. W. Lorsch and J. J. Morse, *Organizations and Their Members: A Contingency Approach* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974). It was prepared by Mark P. Kriger, research assistant, and revised by Ellen Porter Honnet, research assistant, under the direction of Assistant Professor James G. Clawson, as the basis for class discussion. Copyright © 1979 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College. Harvard Business School case 1-480-017.

The Development and Scoring of the Predisposition Test

As part of this study, the researchers designed a questionnaire that measures personality predispositions along three dimensions:

1. Tolerance for ambiguity
2. Preference for autonomy
3. Predisposition toward solitude in a work situation

All three dimensions are what psychologists call *personality predispositions*—that is, they are tendencies for you to think and act in certain ways that arise from your own particular personality development. For example, if your parents encouraged you as a child to make your own decisions rather than to look to them for the final say in all matters, then you may be predisposed to solving problems on your own and might prefer to work in jobs with less, rather than more, supervision. Likewise, if you were raised an only child or in such a way that you spent a good deal of your time alone, you may be predisposed to working alone more than with others. Or the opposite effect could occur, and you may prefer to be surrounded by people constantly.

There are a variety of personality predispositions which Lorsch and Morse could have explored. These three (along with one or two others), however, seemed to offer the best way to demonstrate their thesis that organization (job)-individual fit did affect effectiveness. The next problem, the most common one in social science research, was how to measure these dimensions in individuals and in jobs.

Lorsch and Morse collected a number of statements they believed described values or behaviors relating to these personality predispositions from a variety of generally accepted personality inventories. To these they added a number of statements of their own invention. They then distilled the number of statements down to twenty-one by means of factor analysis. Each of these twenty-one statements represented one of the three dispositions (a “positive” statement) or its opposite (a “negative” statement). Respondents would mark the degree of their agreement or disagreement with each statement, and then the researchers, knowing which statements were “positive” and which were “negative”, could add up the respondents’ scores on each dimension. The positive statements were scored as follows:

DA	IA	ID	DD
Definitely Agree	Inclined to Agree	Inclined to Disagree	Definitely Disagree
4	3	2	1

They reflect one’s agreement with the statement. Negative statements were scored this way:

DA	IA	ID	DD
1	2	3	4

These reflect one’s disagreement with the statement. For example, one item in the questionnaire is, “The most interesting life is lived under rapidly changing conditions.” This is a positively scored statement for tolerance for ambiguity. If you indicated that you definitely agreed with that statement by putting an X through DA, your tolerance for ambiguity score would increase by 4. There are seven statements for each dimension. After each statement has been scored, you can add the seven scores and calculate an average for each dimension. We have developed a scoring sheet that matches the dimensions and scores with the questions and your answers. Once you have identified your numerical score, you can then transcribe it onto the tally sheet under the appropriate dimension.

Interpretation of Scores

The first personality predisposition, tolerance for ambiguity, measures your preference for a more changing set of conditions as opposed to well-defined, stable, and relatively unchanging conditions. The higher your score on this dimension, the greater your tolerance for ambiguity. As you might expect, if you work in an uncertain environment, you will need a greater tolerance for ambiguity on the whole than if you work in a more certain environment. Less defined work and greater uncertainty of information will produce a higher level of ambiguity with which you must cope. Your tolerance for ambiguity will also be related to the speed and quantity of feedback you receive. When feedback is frequent, you will not require as high a tolerance for ambiguity as when feedback takes longer.

The second personality predisposition, preference for autonomy, measures your preferred ways of relating to authority. The higher your score on this dimension, the greater your disposition toward working *without* supervision. Individuals with higher scores probably will prefer to have more direct influence over defining their work roles and providing their own direction and would feel more at home in jobs that do not require subordinate relationships with strong authority figures.

The third personality predisposition, predisposi-

tion toward solitude, measures your attitude towards being alone in a work situation. A higher score on this dimension indicates that you prefer to work more individualistically and to be more alone than with others. If you have a preference for being and working alone, you will probably enjoy and be more competent in a job where little interaction with others is required. Alternatively, if you prefer spending time with others, you will prefer a work environment which requires more coordination and communication with others.

The usual way of making relative sense of scores like these is to compare them with the scores of various reference groups. For the present, scores for a wide variety of reference groups do not exist for the predisposition test. Nevertheless, after scoring your responses, you will have personal scores along three interesting and provocative personality dimensions, which you can utilize in two ways.

First, you can compare your results to the two reference groups used in the Lorsch and Morse study for which we do have data: (a) scientists and engineers working in research organizations, and (b) managers and supervisors working in manufacturing organizations. In these two organizations, chosen because they represented extremes of environmental ambiguity, Lorsch and Morse found that the employees in the jobs in the uncertain environment (R&D organizations) tended to score higher on all three dimensions than the employees working in the more certain environment (manufacturing). (See Exhibit 10-1.) If your scores for the three dimensions are closer to the scores in a more uncertain environment, such as an R&D laboratory, a consulting firm, or marketing company, you might conclude that you would feel constrained in a more structured industry, such as durable goods manufacturing. If your scores are mixed—that is, one or two of them high and the remaining score or scores low—you should consider each dimension first individually and then in combination with the other two scores.

The implications one could draw from these scores are fairly straightforward. If, for example, you scored high in tolerance for ambiguity, you *might* prefer working in an uncertain environment, but not necessarily. Your score indicates that you are tolerant of ambiguity, not that it is essential to you. If, however, you scored high on both the tolerance for ambiguity and the preference for autonomy scales, the implication might be that you *would* prefer working in an environment which is both uncertain and unsupervised. Finally, if your solitude score were low, you would probably conclude that you

Exhibit 10-1 A Note on the Predisposition Test

Personality Dimensions of Members in Research and Manufacturing Environments: Overall Means for Combined High- and Low-Performing Sites

	Research Organization	Manufacturing Organization
Tolerance for ambiguity	2.91	2.57
Preference for autonomy	2.83	2.17
Predisposition toward solitude	2.96	2.40

J. W. Lorsch and J. J. Morse, *Organizations and Their Members: A Contingency Approach* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), pp. 53, 55.

would feel most at home in a job in which you could work together with others in a collegial, rather than a hierarchical, way, on unusual and varied tasks with uncertain results.

Your score on the autonomy scale has implications not only for the kind of organization and the job you may want to work in, but also for the kind of person who should be your supervisor. While it is not wise to judge a whole potential career on the merits of one's first supervisor, that relationship has been shown to significantly affect young managers' success. (See *Formative Years in Business: A Long-Term AT&T Study of Managerial Lives*, by Douglas Bray et al., [New York; 1974 Wiley].) Your preference for autonomy or attitude toward authority may suggest some implications about the kind of supervisory relationship that would be most effective for you and your career development in the early years.

These comments on the implications of your scores are intentionally vague. Taken alone, these scores are not accurate enough or descriptive enough to provide the basis for a job decision. When they add to and confirm trends or patterns that run through other bits of data, these scores can help to crystallize important personal characteristics.

The second way you can use your results is to compare them to the mean scores of business school students. By analyzing your scores in relation to those of others, you can gain a further indication of the direction and strength of your own personality predispositions for these three dimensions (see Exhibit 10-2).

Exhibit 10-2
A Note on the Predisposition Test
Personality Dimension of HBS Students*

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Your Score</i>	<i>Overall</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>	<i>Married</i>	<i>Single</i>	<i>USA</i>	<i>Foreign</i>	<i>Age 20-25</i>	<i>Age 26-30</i>	<i>Age 31-40</i>
Tolerance for ambiguity		2.84	2.82	2.86	2.77	2.87	2.82	2.91	2.86	2.80	2.84
Preference for autonomy		2.61	2.58	2.66	2.61	2.61	2.59	2.70	2.58	2.62	2.64
Predisposition toward solitude		2.62	2.60	2.64	2.65	2.61	2.59	2.78	2.60	2.58	2.71
(Number of students in group)	(1)	(120)	(75)	(43)	(40)	(79)	(102)	(17)	(51)	(42)	(26)

*This information has been taken from the average test scores of the 1978 Self-Assessment and Career Development class at the Harvard Business School.

Summary

An individual's predispositions can have a great effect on that person's sense of competence and work-derived satisfaction. While there are many predispositions in one's personality, three useful ones are tolerance for ambiguity, preference for autonomy, and preference for solitude. Although the measurement of these predispositions is imprecise, the results from the predisposition test can add to your pool of personal data and can suggest, both singly and in combination with each other, some implications for the kind of organization and job in which you would like to work and would feel most at home.

Predisposition Test Scoring Instructions

1. Tear out scoring sheet on page 111.
2. Cut or fold margins on page 111.
3. Place scoring sheet over the test on page 106.
4. Write the scores corresponding to the letters you circled on the tally sheet, page 110, under the column matching the dimension of each question.
5. Sum the scores for each dimension.
6. Divide your total scores by seven to get your average score.

Assignment

Once you have scored your Predisposition Test, turn to page 112 and read Steven's and Carrie's scores. What inferences do you draw about them from these data?

Predisposition Test Tally Sheet

	Tolerance for Ambiguity (Questions 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 18)	Preference for Autonomy (Questions 3, 11, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20)	Predisposition toward Solitude (Questions 1, 6, 8, 12, 13, 14, 21)
	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____
	_____	_____	_____
Total	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 80px; height: 25px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 80px; height: 25px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 80px; height: 25px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>
	$\div 7$	$\div 7$	$\div 7$
Average			

Predisposition Test Scoring Sheet

Ques. Number	Dimension	Score			
		DA	IA	ID	DD
1.	Predisposition toward solitude	4	3	2	1
2.	Tolerance for ambiguity	4	3	2	1
3.	Preference for autonomy	1	2	3	4
4.	Tolerance for ambiguity	1	2	3	4
5.	Tolerance for ambiguity	4	3	2	1
6.	Predisposition toward solitude	4	3	2	1
7.	Tolerance for ambiguity	1	2	3	4
8.	Predisposition toward solitude	4	3	2	1
9.	Tolerance for ambiguity	4	3	2	1
10.	Tolerance for ambiguity	1	2	3	4
11.	Preference for autonomy	1	2	3	4
12.	Predisposition toward solitude	1	2	3	4
13.	Predisposition toward solitude	4	3	2	1
14.	Predisposition toward solitude	1	2	3	4
15.	Preference for autonomy	4	3	2	1
16.	Preference for autonomy	4	3	2	1
17.	Preference for autonomy	4	3	2	1
18.	Tolerance for ambiguity	4	3	2	1
19.	Preference for autonomy	4	3	2	1
20.	Preference for autonomy	4	3	2	1
21.	Predisposition toward solitude	4	3	2	1

Steven Taylor's Predisposition Test

	<i>Tolerance for Ambiguity</i>	<i>Preference for Autonomy</i>	<i>Predisposition toward Solitude</i>
Steven Taylor	3.57	3.40	3.40
Research Organization*	2.91	2.83	2.96
Manufacturing Organization*	2.57	2.17	2.40

Prepared by Lori Wilson and Jim Clawson. Copyright © 1989 by the Darden Graduate Business School Foundation, Charlottesville, VA. UVA-PACS-027

*From J. W. Lorsch and J. J. Morse, *Organizations and Their Members: A Contingency Approach* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974). Research and manufacturing data from a working paper, "Personality Dimensions of Members in Research and Manufacturing Environments: Overall Means for Combined High- and Low-Performing Sites," pp. 53, 55.

Carrie Baugh's Predisposition Test

	<i>Tolerance for Ambiguity</i>	<i>Preference for Autonomy</i>	<i>Predisposition toward Solitude</i>
Carrie Baugh	2.86	3.14	3.00
Research Organization*	2.91	2.83	2.96
Manufacturing Organization*	2.57	2.17	2.40

DATA:

1. Tolerance for ambiguity is average as compared with women (2.86) and age group (2.86), but slightly greater than married people (2.77) or Americans (2.82). Class average: 2.92.
2. Preference for autonomy—3.14, as compared with 2.66 for women and 2.61 overall. Class average: 2.73.
3. Predisposition toward solitude—3.0, compared with 2.64 for women and 2.62 overall. Class average: 2.73.

INFERENCES:

Carrie is a person who:

1. Can work in undefined, changing environments.
2. Prefers to work alone?
3. Values independence.
4. Does not mind being alone or working alone.

Prepared by Lori Wilson and Jim Clawson. Copyright © 1990 by the Darden Graduate Business School Foundation, Charlottesville, VA. UVA-PACS-062

*From J. W. Lorsch and J. J. Morse, *Organizations and Their Members: A Contingency Approach* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974). Research and manufacturing data from a working paper, "Personality Dimensions of Members in Research and Manufacturing Environments: Overall Means for Combined High- and Low-Performing Sites," pp. 53, 55.