PERSONALITY TRAITS OF MANAGEMENT STUDENTS

AND BUSINESS PERSONNEL

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PERSONALITY TRAITS OF MANAGEMENT STUDENTS
AND BUSINESS PERSONNEL

THESIS

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By

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There has been considerable concern by executives in business and industry as to the need of an accurate method to use in the selection of potentially successful managerial personnel. A higher degree of accurate selection of potentially successful management trainees on the college level would result in more productive management and enable management to function more efficiently.

Selection and training costs continue to be a factor in personnel employment. Naturally, personnel selection will become even more important with advancing technology. This will require better management at all levels in order to guide and direct the nation's businesses and industries in the future.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of the present study was to determine if there are "cores" of similar personality traits among successful business and industrial managers and senior management students in the School of Business Administration at North Texas State University. The major problem involves the following sub-problems:

1. To determine those factors used as criteria by executive managers in defining and describing successful managers' work
2. To determine those successful management majors presently enrolled in the School of Business Administration at North Texas State University

3. To administer the Kahn Test of Symbol Arrangement to each selected subject

4. To score and evaluate the performance of each selected subject on the Kahn Test of Symbol Arrangement.

Hypothesis

It is the hypothesis of this study that there are "cores" of similar personality traits among successful industrial managers and graduating management students in the School of Business Administration at North Texas State University, and that these "cores" of personality traits can be operationally detected by the utilization of the Kahn Test of Symbol Arrangement.

Definitions

1. "Success" (management)—adequate performance, competence in the field, emotional stability, and level of aspiration of managerial personnel

2. Success (student)—the degree of student achievement at North Texas State University

3. Criteria—a standard used in forming a judgment or comparison

4. Level of Aspiration—the level of performance or the goal that a person (or a group) derives or hopes to reach in a specific activity
5. Core of Personality Traits (type)—a construct according to which individuals with a similar personality trait or cluster of traits are considered collectively for descriptive purposes.

6. Levels of Management
   a. First level—managerial trainees
   b. Second level—supervisors
   c. Third level—top executives, vice presidents, and presidents.

Limitations

In order to solve the problem of the present study it was necessary to establish certain limitations, as follows:

1. The study was limited to selected graduating senior management students in the School of Business Administration at North Texas State University. This selection was made by management professors at North Texas State University.

2. The sample of selected subjects (business and industrial managers) was limited to an area which could be encompassed in a 300-mile circle, using Denton, Texas, as the center of the geographical circle.

3. The study was limited to the academic years 1962-1963.

4. The sampling of subjects (students and management personnel) was limited to fifty subjects in each category.

5. The business firms which were used were selected on the basis of willingness to cooperate in the present research.
6. The study was limited to the areas of management in the curriculum of the School of Business at North Texas State University; namely, personnel, production, and administrative.

Related Studies

Buel (1) investigated the use of rating scales in personnel selection and found that ratings often serve as criteria for test validation, the end product of which may be criticism of ineffective tests. Many times, tests prove ineffective because ratings, as criteria, do not represent the contents of the task or differentiate between levels of efficiency on the job. Ratings, in every context in which they are used, must be valid and job-specific.

Prien (8) used the interview method in an attempt to predict job performance. The dimensions that he used to differentiate between successful and non-successful job performance were personal relations effectiveness and intellectual functioning. The subdivision of traits under these two broad dimensions were distinctly similar, as shown by the listing below:

1. Personal Relations Effectiveness
   a. High in leadership
   b. High motivation and energy
   c. Persuasiveness
   d. Social skills

2. Intellectual Functioning
   a. High in leadership
   b. Motivation and energy high
c. Problem solving

d. Intellectual capacity

e. Creativeness

f. Planning.

Another attempt at predicting job performance success was made by Hughes (2), utilizing the analysis of personal documents. He developed a method of identifying and objectively scoring personality variables in personal documents which make an independent contribution to predicting an aspect of success in a specific occupation. There appeared to be no reason why the predictive method proposed might not be useful in personnel selection situations involving other selling and occupational groups.

McCorkey (5) devised a method to measure managers by the results achieved. He stated that traditional measuring of managers using personality methods are weak because they do not measure results achieved. He suggested measuring managers by results achieved against result expected and measurement by objectives. The method of result achieved against result expected would resort to measures of profit and loss centers, cost centers, and objectives. The method of measurement by objectives would break down the broad responsibilities of the manager to measure able segments of his ability to define and delineate job planning and problem solving.

The role of personality factors in vocational choice is emphasized by Segal (10). The findings validated the generally held clinical
idea that personality factors are an important determinant of vocational choice. Different and differing theories of management have been favored and disfavored. Owen (6) has taken a rather diverse approach to a theory of management that should result in a more widely accepted theory that might culminate in a balance between favored and disfavored theories of management. His approach differs in that he considers the necessity of breaking down management into the following six essential categories for consideration (6, p. 14):

1. Objective
2. Action
3. Environment
4. Drive energy
5. Method
6. Decision making.

One of the most essential elements of management is action. Such action involves people and things, since the concern of management is not with the question of the origin of man nor with the destiny of man, but with the action involved in feeding and clothing the present population.

La Place (4) conducted a study concerned with the relationship between personality and probability of success in professional baseball. In his attempts to differentiate between personalities of successful and unsuccessful professional baseball players, he found the existence of personality traits that relate to success in professional baseball. He found that successful players were characterized
by three distinct personality traits that could be used to differentiate between successful and unsuccessful professional baseball players. These traits were strong drive, characterized by ambitiousness, aggressiveness, and vigor; self-discipline; and the ability to get along well with others.

Much concern has been expressed as to the desirability of having successful managers in every management position. Wood (14) conducted a study in an attempt, through identifying management training needs, more nearly to be guided in training managers to reach the optimum of a successful manager for every management position. He utilized a questionnaire method in isolating the relevant areas of training for producing or training management groups. The seven areas deemed pertinent were subordinate relations, personal development, labor relations, wage and salary, management control, technical knowledge, and knowledge of company. He concluded that training needs of specific management groups can be objectively assessed through the utilization of the questionnaire method.

The fact that a well-satisfied manager is a more productive person was the reasoning behind Vroom's study that concerned the relationship between ego involvement, job satisfaction, and job performance. Through the utilization of performance ratings, Vroom (12) found that performance ratings were generally higher for those persons who are ego involved in their jobs than for those not thus oriented. The relationship between ego involvement and performance was even
greater for those individuals high in autonomy. He stated that these traits were positively related to self-expression opportunities afforded the individuals on the job. Inferences from this study would be that of matching men with jobs in which each respective man could develop ego involvement as a result of the job affording opportunity for self-expression and some degree of autonomy.

A testing of second- and third-level supervisors by Peters (7), using Gordon's Survey of Interpersonal Values and Fleishman's Leadership and Opinion Questionnaire, was concerned with the relationship between interpersonal values, leadership, attitudes, and managerial success. The resulting conclusions from this study were:

1. Managers scored higher on the conformity scale than did college students.

2. Higher conformity managers were rated less effective by higher management.

3. Top management tends to identify the effectiveness of subordinate managers with the effectiveness of their superiors.

While much concern is evidenced relative to selection, training, and recruitment of successful managerial personnel, lack of concern has been expressed in the area of follow-up studies of selected personnel. Williams (13) conducted such a study on 220 Master of Business Administration graduates from Stanford University. These managers were from the classes of 1927 to 1943 who were earning an
average salary of $14,500 in their positions in the San Francisco Bay area. Validation of individual predictors was not high, but four r's were significant at the .01 level: leadership, .24; grade-point average on elective graduate courses, .22; M-F score on the Strong Test, .19; and professors' ratings, .18 at the .05 level. Williams expressed a desire and a need for a more effective evaluation or predictor of success at an earlier period of time in the life of the individual managerial aspirant.

Recruiting of potential successful managerial personnel on the college level appears to be the solution to replenishing the diminishing staffs of some of the larger industrial corporations. Shaw (11) expressed a concern related to the importance of alleviating this problem by selecting college managerial recruits that have special skills comparable to the qualities quoted by Theodore Yntema, Director of Finance for the Ford Motor Company. The following are the basic skills that are widely transferrable and essential for success in all walks of life (11, p. 25):

1. The mastery of scientific method, which is defined as the process of seeing and solving problems

2. The ability to understand people and be able to work with them effectively

3. The skill of communication, both as sender (speaking and writing) and as receiver (reading and listening)
4. The skill of organization, which includes organizing one's own time, effort, and knowledge as well as the time and efforts of others.

The concern over whether or not psychologists can predict the assessments of high-level personnel based on systematically varied information was the basis for a study by Huse (3). The findings of this study were:

1. Psychologists can make relatively reliable ratings based on psychometric data alone.

2. Relative validity of predictor ratings based on psychological data appears higher than ratings based on interviews or projective tests.

3. Relative validity of predictor ratings based upon complete information usually does not increase over ratings based solely on psychological tests.

In an attempt to get a comprehensive view of the managerial situation in the United States, a global study was conducted to emphasize that high-level human resources cannot be stockpiled for future corporation expansion. Stockpiling will cause deterioration of the managers because of their being denied the stimulus of accomplishment and growth.

There was an attempt to project management development into the future by conclusions from this study by Harbison and Meyers (9). Their conclusions follow:
1. Management will grow toward professionalization and constitutional authority whether it be nurtured by or in a market economy, socialist economy, or totalitarian economy.

2. The pace of the march toward industrialization may be accelerated by early development of dynamic professional managers or retarded by tenacious patrimonial or political management.

3. There is little reason to fear that the working masses in modern industrial states will be exploited by the emerging professional managerial class.

Harbison and Meyers further emphasized the importance of productive and professional management by the following statement:

"The second half of the Twentieth Century, more than the first half, will be an era of technical and managerial brain power in the service of an industrial society." (9).
CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY


CHAPTER II

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Subjects

The subjects for this study were selected from a geographical area within a 150-mile radius of Denton, Texas.

The fifty graduating management students selected for the present study were from the School of Business Administration at North Texas State University. These subjects were selected by a jury of management professors in the School of Business Administration. The jury used the following criteria for academic selection: (1) graduating senior status, (2) unusual proficiency, and (3) aptitude.

The fifty business and industrial subjects utilized were selected by plant managers, top-level personnel managers, and superintendents of selected corporations who used the following criteria for selection: (1) competence and success on the job, (2) emotional stability, and (3) high level of aspiration.

The sample of successful managers in business and industry was selected from the following cooperating firms: International Business Machines Corporation, Sherman, Texas; State Farm Mutual Insurance Company, Dallas, Texas; International Business Machines Branch Office, Dallas, Texas; and Morrison Milling Company, Denton, Texas.
The Kahn Test of Symbol Arrangements was administered to each subject, and individual test results were computed. The scores on single items and aggregate scores for each subject were then recorded for further statistical consideration.

Description of the Kahn Test (KTSA) of Symbol Arrangement

The KTSA is a symbol-sample situation representative of the totality of life where the basic physical structure of the universe (the so-called "nature" of the universe) is represented by the form factors and physical characteristics inherent in the test objects and the strip. The essence of temporal continuity and sequence contiguity is represented by the numbered segments. The culturally acquired and environmentally conditioned factors (the so-called "nurture" of the universe) are represented by (1) naming, and (2) meaning and values assigned to the test objects by the test subject. The element of individual freedom is represented by the self-expressive choice offered the test subject in selecting and placing the objects and making value judgments and using the objects configurationally. In this manner the KTSA test performance represents an interaction between nature, nurture, and individual choice (1).

The stimulus material of the test consists of sixteen culturally structured object symbols. They are three dogs, which vary in size, color, thickness, and translucence; three stars, two of which are identical; two butterflies varying in outline, size, width, and color; a green amorphous, phallic symbol, which also resembles a parrot; a blue anchor; a transparent circle; and a black, equilateral cross. A geometrically shaped section of a circle is also used briefly in the administration. A felt strip is provided with fifteen equally spaced segments, which are consecutively numbered 1 through 15.

In the administration of the test, the subject is asked to arrange the fifteen objects five times on a felt strip divided into
equal segments numbered 1 through 15. After arranging the objects as to the subject's choice, on arrangement one, two, and five, the subject is asked why or for what reason he chose to arrange the objects as he did. After the first arrangement, the subject is asked to give the name of each object. Following the second arrangement, the subject is asked what each symbolizes to him and is told to place the circle sector on one of the objects on the strip. The third arrangement is a task of recall in which the subject is asked to arrange the objects exactly as they appeared on the second arrangement. Before the subject attempts this reproducing of the second arrangement, he is asked for an estimate of the number of objects that he can replace correctly on the felt strip. After giving his first estimate and completing the task, the subject is asked for a second estimate of the number of objects replaced correctly. The examiner then removes the four transparent objects from the strip and asks the subject to place the objects, one at a time, over any of the remaining objects on the strip. In the fourth arrangement, the subject is asked to arrange the objects as to his likes and dislikes for each object. He is asked to place the most desired object on space number 1 (from a gradual most liked on 1 to most disliked on 15) on down the strip in rank of likes and dislikes until he places the most disliked object on space number 15. The last item of the test is a sorting task, in which the subject is asked to place all the objects on the rectangles on the back of the test booklet labeled LOVE, HATE, BAD, GOOD, LIVING, DEAD, LARGE, and SMALL.
Table I presents a description of the objects utilized in the KTSA.

**TABLE I**

**DESCRIPTION OF TEST OBJECTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anchor</td>
<td>Blue plastic</td>
<td>2 1/2&quot; X 1 1/2&quot; X 1/4&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butterfly</td>
<td>Brown plastic</td>
<td>2 1/4&quot; X 1&quot; X 1/4&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butterfly</td>
<td>Transparent plastic</td>
<td>2&quot; X 1 1/2&quot; X 1/32&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circle</td>
<td>Transparent plastic</td>
<td>1 1/2&quot; diameter X 1/32&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross</td>
<td>Black plastic</td>
<td>1 1/2&quot; X 1 1/2&quot; X 1/4&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dog</td>
<td>Black plastic</td>
<td>2&quot; X 1 5/8&quot; X 1/4&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dog</td>
<td>Black plastic</td>
<td>1 3/4&quot; X 1 1/4&quot; X 3/16&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dog</td>
<td>White plastic</td>
<td>1 3/4&quot; X 1 1/4&quot; X 3/16&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart</td>
<td>Blue plastic</td>
<td>1 1/2&quot; X 1 1/4&quot; X 3/16&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart</td>
<td>Transparent plastic</td>
<td>2&quot; X 2&quot; X 1/32&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart</td>
<td>Red plastic</td>
<td>1&quot; X 1&quot; X 1/4&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parrot</td>
<td>Green plastic</td>
<td>2 1/2&quot; X 5/8&quot; X 1/4&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Star</td>
<td>Transparent plastic</td>
<td>1 7/8&quot; X 1 7/8&quot; X 3/16&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Star</td>
<td>Red translucent plastic</td>
<td>1&quot; X 1&quot; X 3/16&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Star</td>
<td>Red translucent plastic</td>
<td>1&quot; X 1&quot; X 3/16&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown felt strip</td>
<td>Brown felt*</td>
<td>2&quot; X 30&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This strip is divided by white lines forming 15 2-inch squares, numbered consecutively 1-15 by white numerals 1/2" in height.*
CHAPTER BIBLIOGRAPHY

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Presentation of Data

The hypothesis of the present study was tested through the utilization of test data from the two sampling groups being statistically treated through use of regression analysis. This was facilitated through the data being programmed on a 1620 IBM computer in an attempt to exhaust all possible processes. Emphasis on thoroughness and accuracy which would result in a higher degree of validity of the degree of significance found prompted the use of the 1620 IBM computer.

There were forty-seven variables in the first programming of the successful management personnel test data. The computer invalidated and reduced the variables to thirty-five. The nine most significant variables were then programmed and a regression analysis comparison of corresponding traits of the management analysis was made.

Table II presents the nine variables produced from the statistical computation that were found to have varying degrees of significance. Five of the variables were significant at the .01 level of confidence, one variable was significant at the .05 level,
TABLE II
LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE OF VARIABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>F Level</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
<th>Level of Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of scoring number 14</td>
<td>3.4686</td>
<td>.15073</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First estimate</td>
<td>3.6335</td>
<td>.14309</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second estimate</td>
<td>3.0088</td>
<td>.16436</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total error</td>
<td>4.5725</td>
<td>.16997</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dead</td>
<td>5.6541</td>
<td>.13049</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad</td>
<td>2.4544</td>
<td>.12638</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C level of scoring</td>
<td>1.4049</td>
<td>.16320</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>1.9409</td>
<td>.16043</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated error</td>
<td>1.8048</td>
<td>.15800</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Coefficient of correlation squared (R squared) = .65418
Coefficient of correlation = .8088

and three of the variables were not significant. The coefficient of correlation squared of the nine variables is .65418 with a coefficient of correlation of 0.8088.

The five variables that were significant at the 0.01 level and the clinically established personality traits associated, through graphic logic, with each variable are as follows:
Level of scoring of object number 14 is associated with the subject's reason for rejecting or disliking the object placed on the fourteenth square of the strip. Even though there is an expressed rejection of the object, the level of scoring for the object indicates utilization of higher intellectual functioning in rational and abstract expression of reasons for disliking the object.

First estimate—the subject is asked to reproduce, from memory, the second arrangement of the fifteen objects on the felt strip. Before the task is performed, the subject is asked by the examiner the estimated number of objects that he can reproduce exactly as in the previous arrangement. The subject's reply as to the number that he can reproduce successfully is an expression of his perceived level of aspiration. This indication of aspiration level might be ill-based as far as individual potential of functioning is concerned, but does remain as the current self-concept of the individual as to his level of aspiration.

Second estimate—upon completing the task of reproducing the arrangement from memory, the examiner asks the subject for a second estimate of the number of objects that he has replaced on the strip. Whether he underestimates or overestimates the degree of success or failure on this task, this variable is a valid indication of the subject's self-evaluation of his capacities to perform varying tasks.

The total error variable is concerned with the reality factor, in that this is the actual score of the performance of the subject
from the reproducing task. This factor is the actual indication of the degree of success of the subject's performance compared to the optimum score for the task. This is an indication of the accuracy of his perception as to his awareness of the reality of his present functioning level.

**Dead** is a variable on the sorting task of the test. The personality traits related to this variable are an emphasis on present reality. As is the case of persons being aware of given aspects of good and bad, the personality trait expressed by this variable would indicate an awareness of and concern for the present reality situation (**Living**) with accompanying projection of awareness of reality pertaining to the future (**Dead**).

The **Bad** category variable on the sorting task of the test was significant at the 0.05 level. This trait is a projection of and capacity for judgmental and aggressive acts related to the projection of self toward self actualization.

The three remaining variables were not significant, but will be included since these variables were part of the nine variables used in the computation of the $R$ squared (coefficient of correlation squared), 0.65418 and the coefficient of correlation, 0.8088.

**C** factor is a scoring category of responses on the test that are indicative of an unimaginative and rigid personality. Subjects that give an excessive amount of **C** responses tend to form and cling to a given concept, thus making them not susceptible to adjusting to an ever-changing way of life.
Love is a sorting category on the test. People scoring high in this category would tend to be overly idealistic, labile, and insincere. Subjects scoring low would tend to be characterized by feelings of affective deprivation. This trait is symbolic verification of the subject's ability or inability of expression and control of his emotions.

Estimated error is the variable associated with the postulation by the subject of the amount of error in his attempt to reproduce all of the objects correctly. Subjects that would make excessive error concerning the estimated error of the number of objects correctly reproduced would tend to be unrealistic as to their level of capability. Subjects that estimated a large amount of error but reproduced nearly all the objects would tend to be characterized by feelings of inferiority and inadequacy.

Discussion of Data

From the data gathered in this study, it would appear that a core of personality traits can be detected and operationally defined by using the Kahn Test of Symbol Arrangement. The scores of the subjects in the two samplings were found to have a predictive level of significance on six of the nine variables in the established core of personality traits.

The variables in the core of personality traits that had a .01 level of confidence are associated with such reliably established
clinical personality traits as objective expression, self actualization, self evaluation, reality orientation, and a high level of vocational aspiration.

Although three of the variables did not have a positive predictive level of confidence, high scores in these three areas could possibly be used to facilitate preliminary screening of potentially undesirable personnel.
CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

The solution to the problem of the present study involved the selection of a sample, administration of a test instrument to the sample, computation of results on each individual record, and statistical treatment and analysis of the collected data. From these data of statistically significant variables were determined relevant conclusions.

The purpose of this study was stated as an attempt to detect and determine a "core" of personality traits that are to be found among successful business and industrial managers and senior management students in the School of Business Administration at North Texas State University.

The solution of this problem appeared to necessitate the solution of several sub-problems. They were as follows:

1. Determination of those factors which are used as criteria by executive managers in defining and describing successful managers in their work situations

2. Utilization of a jury of management professors who determined those successful individual senior management majors, who are presently enrolled in the School of Business Administration at North Texas State University
3. Administration of the *Kahn Test of Symbol Arrangement* to both subject samples under prescribed clinical conditions

4. Individual record of each subject, scored and evaluated under similar conditions through the utilization of identical statistical procedures applied individually and collectively to the two groups

Certain limitations were established in order to accomplish the purposes of the study. They included the following:

1. The present study was limited to graduating senior management students in the three basic management areas of personnel, production, and administrative in the School of Business Administration at North Texas State University. These students were selected as successful students by a jury of management professors at the School of Business Administration at North Texas State University.

2. The sample of selected successful business and industrial managers was limited to an area encompassed in a 300-mile geographical circle, using Denton, Texas, as the center.

3. The study was limited to the academic years 1962 through 1963.

4. The sampling of subjects (student and management personnel) was limited to fifty in each category.

5. The business firms utilized in this study were selected on a basis of their willingness to cooperate in this research.

The hypothesis of this study was that there are "cores" of similar personality traits among successful industrial managers and
among graduating senior management students in the School of Business Administration at North Texas State University, and that these "cores" of personality traits can be operationally detected by the utilization of the Kahn Test of Symbol Arrangement. The data obtained warrants the acceptance of this hypothesis.

Conclusions

A core of similar personality traits between successful managers and management students was found in this study to exist and to be statistically significant. This core consisted of nine variables, of which five were significant at the .01 level, one at the .05 level, and three were not significant.

The coefficient of correlation squared for these nine variables was .65418 and has a coefficient of correlation of .8088.

On the basis of these data it may be concluded that the Kahn Test of Symbol Arrangement can be used to detect and determine a "core" of personality traits that could be useful in predicting the probability of successful functioning of management students in business and industry.
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