Sample Answers to In-Text Questions

#### Note: Answers to Case Questions are available in the Case Notes.

# Chapter 2: Personality and Person–Environment Fit

## Critical Thinking Questions

1. Given the limited research support for the MBTI, what are the concerns regarding organizations continuing to use it?

Question Location: Limitations of the Myers–Briggs Type Indicator

Ans: I would primarily be concerned on organizations relying solely on the MBTI for personnel decisions. It was developed on well people, and it is the most popular personality test in use for organizations with over 2 million people taking it every year. It is a popular approach with many organizations in their leadership training and development programs. There is limited research support for the reliability and validity of the MBTI. If you take the test again, you may not receive the same score, and the matter of whether people are actually classifiable into the 16 categories is questionable. It has not been validated for selection purposes.

2. What are the fairness issues involved in using personality tests for selection of new employees?

Question Location: “The Big Five”

Ans: Oftentimes applicants will try to fake or invent a personality that they think the company is looking for. Also organizations may miss out on very qualified employees just because they don’t fit into the personality box that the organization think would be best suited for a position. For example, introverted individuals may be excellent salespeople because of other aspects of their personality but may be overlooked because they lack extroversion.

3. How might knowledge of whether you have the Type A personality affect your decision about taking a job in a high-stress environment? If you were to accept such a position, how would you plan to cope with the stress?

Question Location: Personality Traits and Health Research

Ans: I would want to know the type of environment I was getting into if I had a Type A personality. Given a Type A personality, I may likely welcome the challenge that comes with a high-stress position as I think I would be able to handle it well given my hard work ethic and ability. As a Type A, I would be at risk for heart disease in a high-stress environment, but I could reduce this risk by expressing my emotions in a healthy manner, such as talking to another person about my job. I would also want to take proactive measures to offset the potential negative effects of my personality in the given work context.

4. Explain why you think high Mach and high self-monitoring behaviors good or bad for organizations? List some other positive and negative consequences of these traits.

Question Location: Self-Monitoring

Ans: Both high Mach and high self-monitoring personalities have a tendency toward unethical behaviors. High Mach behaviors may include bullying and amoral manipulation. High self-monitors may engage in counterproductive work behaviors. On the other hand, both pay attention to the behaviors of others and may adjust their behavior to suit the situation. The result could be more positive work behaviors over time.

5. Evaluate the personality-fit theory by explaining why you think the personalities adjacent to one another in the hexagon are most similar. Which personality type is most like you? Does this provide insight into which occupations you might best fit with?

Question Location: Person-Job Fit

Ans: In many ways, Holland’s theory explains the obvious--people are happiest in jobs that match their personality. In the hexagon, Holland provides a useful guide to matching personality types. For example, a social is adjacent to both enterprising and artistic. This explains how a social, or helper, is able to persuade others and is also able to work in unstructured or creative situations.

## Research in Action

### Leaders: Are They Born or Made?

1. In your opinion, is leadership born (hereditary) or learned (through training, for example)?

Support your position.

Question Location: Research in Action

Ans: Short answer yes… both born and made. There are arguments on both sides of the issue. Research suggests genetic factors contribute as much as 40% to the explanation of transformational leadership (meaning 60%+ may come from other factors such as experience or training.) Many people believe that transformational leadership can be learned. Experimental research has shown that leaders can be trained to exhibit charismatic behaviors. The best thinking at present is that it is most likely a combination of inborn and learned behaviors.

2. If leadership is both born and made as some researchers believe, what do you think is the best way to identify leadership potential?

Question Location: Research in Action

Ans: I think the best way to identify leadership potential is to give individuals a chance to display their leadership qualities. Challenging employees with a dilemma or an unexpected problem can help determine who is a leader and who is a follower. Also simply observing individuals in a social environment can help you see who gravitates to whom and which individuals are displaying the leadership qualities you think are important. Prior experiences and training can give some insight but do not provide the full picture on who may or may not be an effective leader.

3. What type of leadership training would you recommend to complement the selection process?

Question Location: Research in Action

Ans: I would recommend diversity and ethics training for leaders. We cannot assume that people can deal with all types of people so diversity training is important. We should not take for granted the ethical makeup of others either, so training in ethical decision-making would also be recommended. In addition, ongoing functional and interpersonal training can help leaders fully develop their expertise and interpersonal skills in the workplace.

## Best Practices

### Can Psychological Capital Be Acquired Through Training?

1. Do you think that things such as hope and optimism can be increased through training?

Question Location: Best Practices

Ans: Maybe. Research by Luthans produced mixed results. His training program involved asking participants to anticipate obstacles and then to create alternative pathways to minimize these obstacles. Being prepared may be effective in some situations with some subjects.

2. Which of the four PsyCap variables do you think accounted for the results the most (hope, optimism, self-efficacy, and/or resiliency)? Explain your choice(s).

Question Location: Best Practices

Ans: I would argue that self-efficacy and resiliency are more situation specific while hope and optimism are more related to an individual’s personality. The research indicated that self-efficacy and resiliency can be affected through training--setting goals, identifying setbacks, discussing risk factors.

3. Why do you think that the results for the high-tech manufacturing firm were slightly lower than the student and manager groups?

Question Location: Best Practices

Ans: High-tech manufacturing firms tend to attract a specific personality type--perhaps Realistic and Investigative, preferring to work independently in unstructured situations. Students and managers may be more social and enterprising and are more dependent on others.