



**THE PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILE
OF
SURVIVAL, EVASION, RESISTANCE, AND ESCAPE
INSTRUCTOR PERSONNEL**

J. M. Govia, Ph.D.

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This technical report has been reviewed by the NMRI scientific and public affairs staff and is approved for publication. It is releasable to the National Technical Information Service where it will be available to the general public, including foreign nations.

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13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words) The Psychological Profile of Navy Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape (SERE) Instructor Personnel is critical to the success of this type of training. Sixty-four SERE instructors were administered a clinical interview; the Shipley, MMPI-2, NEO PI-R, Rosenzweig P-F Study, Locke-Wallace Marital Inventory, and the Holmes-Rahe Life Change Index. The findings revealed that the SERE instructor personnel were a mature, bright, and psychologically healthy group of individuals. The extant Navy criteria for SERE instructor duty is appropriate and should be continued. REF: NMRI 83-15 Report No. 1

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Method 5

Results 8

 Table 1 9

 Table 2 10

 Table 3 11

 Table 4 13

 Table 5 14

 Table 6 16

 Figure 1 12

 Figure 2 15

Discussion 17

Acknowledgement 23

References 24

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SERE Instructor Personnel

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5	6
7	8
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17	18
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21	22
23	24
25	26
27	28
29	30
31	32
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35	36
37	38
39	40
41	42
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SERE Instructor Personnel

The Psychological Profile of SERE Instructor Personnel

Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape (SERE) training is critical to the men and women of the armed forces who may someday be at risk for capture by a government hostile to the United States. SERE training involves rudimentary instruction in emergency first aid, evasion and land navigation, resistance to interrogation, and ideas on how to escape from captivity. SERE training also enables an individual to become familiar with some of the psychological effects of detention; it aids the individual in preparing him/herself for the many ways in which a captor will attempt exploitation; and, it also enables individuals the opportunity to acquire the skills necessary to survive such an experience with honor and integrity.

The importance of SERE training is widely recognized and accepted by each of the uniformed services. Individuals most at risk for capture - pilots, navigators, intelligence officers, and air crew personnel, are encouraged, if not required, to receive this specialized training. After action analysis of Prisoner of War (POW) experiences from World War II, Korea, Viet Nam, and, more recently, Desert Storm, forced military planners into dealing with this possibility of

SERE Instructor Personnel

capture or detention. Indeed, military planners now recognize that without SERE training, personnel are likely to be manipulated and coerced into divulging information that would put themselves or other Americans at risk for capture or compromise. Without such training, there is concern that under extreme duress individuals may lose respect for themselves, experience a loss of honor, or even question their own integrity.

Amidst the recognized need for SERE training, the next concern becomes "who are most eligible to train the men and women who may likely fall into harms way?" Within the Navy, active duty enlisted personnel must clear two hurdles to become eligible for SERE instructor duty. First, the Enlisted Transfer Manual (NAVPERS 15909E) provides guidelines for anyone seeking to become a SERE instructor. Individuals must volunteer for such duty. They must pass both a physical and psychological evaluation to insure their suitability for the training. They must also be qualified second-class swimmers, career designated, and possess a secret security clearance.

The second hurdle involves a commanding officer's responsibility for determining an individual's suitability for SERE instructor duty. Commanding officers are required to evaluate prospective instructors for appearance,

SERE Instructor Personnel

deportment, physical fitness, freedom from financial burden, the absence of alcohol-related incidents, oral and written communication skills, good character, and amiability. Performance requirements on a 4.0 point scale for service-members in the rank of Chief Petty Officer through Master Chief Petty Officer should have an overall average of 3.6 or greater, with evidence of continued improvement. Individuals in the rank of Petty Officer Second Class and Petty Officer First Class must obtain 3.6 scores for at least 24 months. Deficits in any of these requirements are sufficient to preclude them from participating in SERE instructor duty. Irrespective of pay grade, all prospective instructors must possess a secret security clearance.

The Navy SERE School in Brunswick, ME, is approximately thirty years old. Conceived from the lessons learned about American POW behavior during World War II and Korea, the program was active in preparing Naval and Marine Corps personnel for duty in Southeast Asia during the Viet Nam Conflict. More recently, participants in Operation Desert Storm also had the opportunity to apply the skills acquired in SERE training.

Curley and deCspikes (1983) conducted a study which sought to identify the personality and demographic characteristics of a sample of twenty-eight SERE instructors.

SERE Instructor Personnel

This study focused on the delineation of superior performing, high performing, and [average] performing instructors and their salient personality characteristics. Curley and deCspikes observed their sample was free of psychopathology and was significantly achievement-oriented. The current investigation is an attempt to replicate their efforts; however, unlike their study, no attempt was made to have level of performance evaluated as superior, high, or performing.

As in the earlier study, recent staff at the Brunswick school are a varied admixture of job occupations and seniority. They represent a cross-section of the many highly qualified individuals who make up the Navy and Marine Corps. The results of their psychological assessments are reviewed below. In doing so, attention is given to their demographics, performance on standardized testing, and self reports of level of stress and typical pattern of coping. Such information should prove helpful in discerning whether the extant criteria for selection to SERE duty is effective in screening out psychopathology.

Method

Subjects

Subjects¹ for this study were 64 men and women enlisted active duty, U.S. Navy personnel who had been assigned to the Navy SERE School in Brunswick, ME. As assignment to this school was not available to everyone, the sample was not a random one; rather, it reflected the reality of individual choice, initiative, and careful screening. Psychological assessment was required of all individuals who were assigned to SERE training; they received this assessment after completion of the SERE course but before they were formally enrolled in the SERE instructor curriculum. Additional psychological assessment was also required of all instructor personnel at yearly intervals to detect any changes in their psychological status.

Instruments

Shipley Institute of Living Scale. The Shipley Institute of Living Scale (Shipley; Zachary, 1991) is a brief screening measure of intellectual functioning. It specifically attempts to assess word knowledge and abstract analytical reasoning skills. On the basis of the ratio of

As a result of the limited number of women participating in SERE instructor duty (N=5), no effort was made to separate their data from their male counterparts. Additionally, only male pronouns were used in referring to the subjects.

SERE Instructor Personnel

vocabulary to abstract reasoning scores, an estimated Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale - Revised IQ score is obtained (WAIS-R; Wechsler, 1981). Previous research with the Shipley revealed that it is an acceptable screening measure of intellectual ability (Heinemann, Harper, Friedman, & Whitney, 1985; Zachary, Crumpton, & Spiegel, 1985).

Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory - Revised.

The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory - Revised (MMPI-2; Hathaway & McKinley 1989) is a revision of the original Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI; Hathaway & McKinley, 1940). It is a 567-item, true-false, multi-dimensional measure of personality functioning. The MMPI-2 was developed to measure personality functioning, in general, and detect the presence of psychopathology, in particular. Considerable research supports the use of the MMPI-2 for these purposes (e.g., Butcher, Dahlstrom, Graham, Tellegen, & Kaemmer, 1989; Graham, 1990; Greene, 1991).

Revised NEO Personality Inventory. The Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI-R; Costa & McCrae, 1992) is also a multi-dimensional measure of personality; however, unlike the MMPI-2, the NEO PI-R is not concerned with psychopathology. Instead, it is primarily focused on the assessment of "normal" personality functioning. The NEO PI-R is based on a five-factor model of personality functioning.

This model advocates that personality can be most parsimoniously described across five factors: Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness. Considerable research has been generated on the five-factor model of personality functioning, and the reader is directed to McCrae and Costa (1990) for a thorough review of this research.

Rosenzweig Picture-Frustration (P-F) Study. The Rosenzweig Picture-Frustration Study (P-F Study; Rosenzweig, 1978) is a semi-projective measure of aggression. The uniqueness of the measure is noted in its neutral view of aggression, where such behavior is labelled positive or negative depending on the outcome. Rosenzweig postulated that individuals respond to frustration by becoming preoccupied with a given source of frustration (Obstacle-Dominance), taking it personally (Ego-Defense), or else seeking a constructive solution to a perceived source of frustration (Need-Persistence). In addition, reactions to frustration are directed toward others (Extraggession), inward (Intraggession), or else by disregarding the experience (Imaggession). Considerable research has been generated on this instrument and a review is offered by Govia (1983).

SERE Instructor Personnel

Procedure

Upon reporting to the Navy SERE School, most subjects were given a clinical interview, the MMPI-2, and the P-F Study. Approximately one year later they were given another clinical interview, administered the NEO PI-R and the Shipley. Although 69 instructors received a psychological assessment, incomplete data existed for some instructors, and the sample sizes for the specific analyses varied.

Results

A review of the demographics of the instructor personnel revealed the average instructor was 32 years old and had been on active duty for approximately 12 years and 9 months. He possessed 13 years of education and had an estimated WAIS-R IQ in the average range of ability. Fifty-seven instructors were married, seven were single and unmarried, two were separated, and three were divorced.

SERE Instructor Personnel

Table 1

Demographics of SERE Instructor Personnel (N=69)

	<u>Current</u>		<u>Former (N=28)</u>	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Age	32	5	35.3	7.4
Active Duty (Months)	152	56	181.7	63.9
Education	13	1	12.8	1.5
IQ	103	15	Not Available	
Married	57		"	"
Single	7		"	"
Separated	2		"	"
Divorced	3		"	"

The data from the earlier study by Curley and deCspikes (1983) was gleaned from their article and was presented here for purposes of comparison.

Summary statistics for the MMPI-2 clinical scales are presented in Table 2 and summary statistics for the MMPI-2 content scales are presented in Table 3. On the MMPI-2, T-Scores less than 65 are considered normal while scores above 65 connote less health. A review of the validity scale indices revealed the presence of the "V" configuration for L, F, and K. All of the clinical and selected content scales fell within normal limits. The

SERE Instructor Personnel

validity and clinical scales profile is presented in Figure 1.

Table 2

Raw Score Summary Statistics for the MMPI-2 Clinical Scales (N=64)

	Mean	T-Score	SD
L	6	61	3
F	3	45	2
K	19	66	4
1	12	48	2
2	17	47	3
3	20	47	3
4	22	48	3
5	22	42	5
6	9	46	3
7	24	44	3
8	24	45	4
9	20	49	3
0	21	47	7

A T-scores is a standardized score with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10. The MMPI-2 denotes any score greater than 65 as significant and indicative of pathology.

Table 3

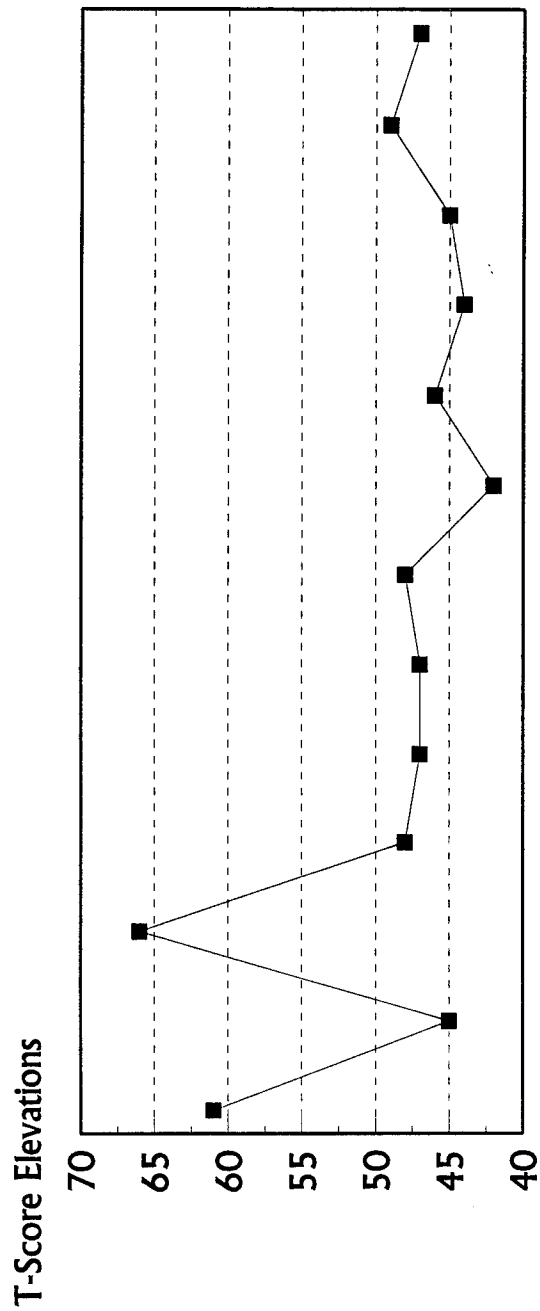
Raw Score Summary Statistics for selected MMPI-2
Content Scales (N=64)

	Mean	T-Score	SD
ANX	2	42	2
FRS	2	45	2
OBS	2	41	2
DEP	2	45	2
HEA	3	44	2
BIZ	1	46	2
ANG	4	46	2
CYN	8	47	4
ASP	6	46	3
TPA	5	43	3
LSE	1	41	2
SOD	6	47	4
FAM	3	44	2

A T-score is a standardized score with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10. The MMPI-2 denotes any score greater than 65 as significant and indicative of pathology.

Summary statistics for the Revised NEO Personality Inventory are presented in Table 4. The five factors of Neuroticism, Extroversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness were all within normal limits. Individual traits of the five factors are presented in Table 5. All traits fell within normal limits. Figure 2 displays the profile of scores on the NEO PI-R.

**Figure 1:
Profile of MMPI-2 Clinical Scale Scores
(N=64)**



MMPI-2 Scales	L	F	K	Hs	D	Hy	Pd	Mf	Pa	Pt	Sc	Ma	Si
-■-	61	45	66	48	47	47	48	42	46	44	45	49	47

SERE Instructor Personnel

Table 4

Raw Score Summary Statistics for the NEO PI-R
Dimensions (N=64)

	Mean	SD
Neuroticism	65	17
Extraversion	112	15
Openness	109	17
Agreeableness	117	15
Conscientiousness	126	16

SERE Instructor Personnel

Table 5

Raw Score Summary Statistics for the NEO PI-R Traits

(N=64)

	Mean	SD
Anxiety	12	3
Angry Hostility	11	4
Depression	10	4
Self-Consciousness	12	3
Impulsiveness	13	4
Vulnerability	7	3
Warmth	21	3
Gregariousness	16	5
Assertiveness	18	4
Activity	18	3
Excitement-Seeking	18	4
Positive Emotions	21	4
Fantasy	17	4
Aesthetics	16	5
Feelings	19	3
Actions	17	3
Ideas	19	5
Values	21	3
Trust	21	4
Straightforwardness	20	4
Altruism	23	3
Compliance	17	3
Modesty	17	4
Tender-Mindedness	19	4
Competence	23	3
Order	18	4
Dutifulness	23	3
Achievement-Striving	20	4
Self-Discipline	23	4
Deliberation	19	3

Name SEBE Instructor Data

Date _____ Age _____ ID _____

Revised NEO Personality Inventory (NEO PI-R)

Paul T. Costa, Jr., Ph.D. and Robert R. McCrae, Ph.D.



Males — Form S (Self-Report)

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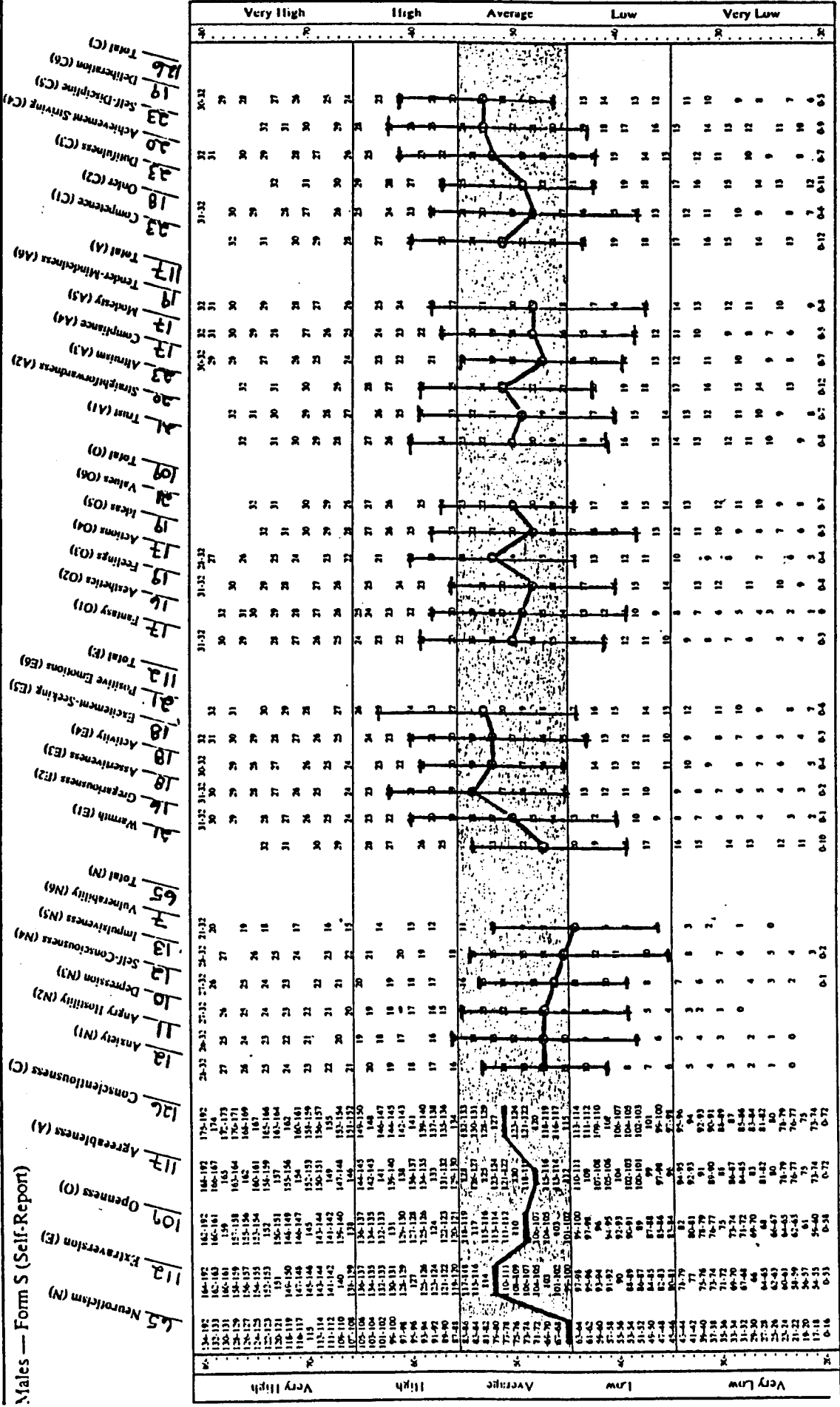


FIGURE 2: Profile of NEO PI-R Factor and Trait Scores

SERE Instructor Personnel

Summary statistics for the Rosenzweig P-F Study are presented in Table 6. The three types of aggression and the three directions of aggression were all within normal limits.

Table 6

Raw Score Summary Statistics for the Rosenzweig P-F Study (N=47)

	Mean		SD
Type of Aggression			
Obstacle-Dominance	4	16.7 (19.6) *	1 (7.2)
Ego-Defense	11	45.8 (53.2)	2 (10.7)
Need-Persistence	8	33.3 (27.2)	2 (8.5)
Direction of Aggression			
Extraggession	9	37.5 (43.3)	3 (12.1)
Intraggession	7	29.2 (28.1)	2 (7.6)
Imaggession	7	29.2 (28.6)	7 (9.3)

* The values presented in the parentheses are the means and standard deviations obtained by the normative sample. Thus, the data reported herein does not differ from the normative sample.

The mean score on the Holmes and Rahe Social Readjustment Scale was 180 and the standard deviation was 71. This score indicated the instructors reported

"Mild Life Crisis Level with a 35 percent chance of illness."

The mean score on the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test was 121 and the standard deviation was 17. This score corresponds with the original research of Locke and Wallace (1959) wherein 96 percent of their well-adjusted couples scored 100 or higher.

Discussion

The findings of the present investigation revealed that the psychological profile of SERE instructor personnel differed very little from the previous research of Curley and deCspikes (1983). The typical SERE instructor is a mature and more senior member of the U.S. Navy. According to the Shipley, he possessed average intellectual acumen. The MMPI-2 indicated he approached the psychological assessment with a propensity to present himself in the most favorable light. He did so by minimizing the significance of any potential psychological concerns, which suggested good ego-strength and good coping skills. Such an observation reflected two considerations: First, the instructors were a fairly psychologically healthy group of individuals. Thus, the data presented herein actually mirrored their current state of psychological health.

SERE Instructor Personnel

Second, but no less significant, like most vocational assessment findings, the SERE instructors were uninclined to reveal anything about themselves that might be construed as negative, or potentially disqualifying. Amidst the increased competition for promotion, the revelation of any potentially damaging, or job-threatening, psychological issues would jeopardize their career potential, especially when the relatively high status of instructor duty is considered.

That the Revised NEO Personality Inventory should correspond so closely with the MMPI-2 should come as no surprise. The findings revealed that the current group of SERE instructors was a generally relaxed group of individuals. They were free of anxiety or feelings of remorse or guilt, and they reported being comfortable in a variety of social situations. They further reported the capacity to delay gratification for desired objects and to handle stress without needing to rely upon others.

The average SERE instructor is friendly and enjoys the company of others. He is comfortable in taking charge or assuming leadership positions and also likes to be on the go. He likes to engage in stimulating activity, and he has little difficulty in showing his enthusiasm during such times.

SERE Instructor Personnel

The SERE instructors further indicated they preferred a balance between novelty and routine. He has an appreciation for such things as art, beauty, drama, or poetry without a compulsive urge to indulge himself. He is open to exploring his feelings and valuing this part of his life. He sometimes likes to go to new places, try new foods, and he is intellectually curious about the world around him. He is also comfortable with his political, religious, and social beliefs.

Interpersonally, the average SERE instructor accepts others at face value, seldom doubting their sincerity or motivation. He is candid with others, cares about the general welfare of others, and is able to convert such caring into acts of kindness and sympathy. He is cooperative on projects and often displays humility and deference in dealing with others.

The typical SERE instructor is conscientious. He has a good sense of his abilities, is generally organized, and can be expected to follow through on his commitments. He is achievement-oriented, has good self-discipline to obtain his goals, and he often refrains from thinking or acting hastily, preferring to weigh his options.

SERE Instructor Personnel

That SERE instructors should be a psychologically healthy and versatile group of individuals is obvious. No less significant in any evaluation of instructor personnel is the nature in which they handle frustration. While both the MMPI-2 and the NEO PI-R reveal a solid foundation of healthy psychological functioning, the Rosenzweig P-F Study provides a unique window through which we can examine individual reactions to common, everyday stressors, for it is only in the more subtle, prosaic situations that individuals reveal their mettle.

The Rosenzweig P-F Study is instrumental in discerning whether individuals get hung-up on myriad sources of frustration, whether they react to such frustration defensively, or whether they can maintain equanimity and aplomb at such times. No less important, the P-F Study can also tell us whether individuals aggress against others or internalize their frustrations, thereby placing prospective students in harms way, or a less than healthy training environment.

The findings revealed the SERE instructors were flexible in their responses to frustration. They were neither inclined to consistently become preoccupied with a given source of frustration, take it personally, nor to seek out constructive solutions to sources of

SERE Instructor Personnel

frustration. Similarly, they were neither inclined to consistently aggress against others, themselves, nor to simply disregard sources of frustration. Rather, their responses to the Rosenzweig P-F Study suggested greater ego-resiliency and flexibility of response to a broad array of potentially frustrating situations.

Finally, the SERE instructors arrived at this assignment with minimal sources of stress in their lives. Their marriages were well-grounded, characterized by mutual give and take, and a keen capacity to resolve any differences as they arise. These findings are in accord with the data presented by Curley and deCspikes. Thus, the data further suggest that the steps necessary for consideration and selection for SERE instructor duty are reasonable, useful, and worthy of continued adherence.

SERE Instructor Personnel

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