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# INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRO-B® INSTRUMENT

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**T**he *Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation–Behavior*™ (FIRO-B®) instrument is a short but powerful self-report tool designed to measure behavior that derives from interpersonal needs. It can be used to address a variety of issues including one-to-one relationships, teamwork, career development, organizational culture, and leadership development. When used properly, it provides individuals and teams with increased insight into and appreciation of interpersonal behaviors. This in turn can lead to increased interpersonal effectiveness and satisfaction in working with or relating to others.

The purpose of this manual is to compile and update the relevant technical material available on the FIRO-B instrument. In recent years new information about the assessment has become available in the form of validity studies, cross-cultural norms, and applications. New administration options and important new support materials have also been developed. A large-scale study of the FIRO-B instrument, based on a national representative sample of the U.S. population, has also been conducted, and the results are reported here for the first time. This survey has enabled research on the relationship between FIRO-B scores and a plethora of variables previously absent from the

FIRO-B literature. Data showing the relationship of the instrument with other psychological instruments, including the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*® (MBTI®) and *California Psychological Inventory*™ (CPI™) instruments, are also presented.

## Overview of Uses

The FIRO-B instrument can be used with individuals, couples, and groups in any situation where insight into interpersonal behaviors may prove useful. This assessment is most commonly used to help people

- Become aware of their interpersonal needs
- Develop strategies to meet those needs
- Become aware of how their needs may be perceived by others
- Identify sources of career dissatisfaction as well as careers, organizations, or tasks that might increase their satisfaction
- Identify sources of conflict with others, both at work and in personal relationships
- Build more satisfying relationships
- Understand their own leadership behaviors

The FIRO-B instrument can be used in organizations to

- Identify organizational culture and its implications
- Identify potential sources of conflict between two cultures

# THEORY OF INTERPERSONAL NEEDS

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The FIRO-B instrument was created in the late 1950s by William Schutz (1958). FIRO-B theory was developed in the context of understanding and predicting how high-performance military teams would work together. Schutz started from the premise that “people need people”—that in addition to physical needs such as food and shelter, interpersonal needs also motivated the behavior of individuals.

Schutz used the term *interpersonal* to indicate any interaction, real or imagined, that occurs between people. For example, a manager might delegate a task to an employee through face-to-face conversation, by phone, or in a memo. This behavior on the part of the manager constitutes an interaction and thereby expresses an interpersonal need. However, that same manager might decide *not* to delegate the task, perhaps due to a concern that the employee might dislike the task and therefore the manager for having assigned it. This behavior on the part of the manager would also be considered an interaction because it anticipated (rightly or wrongly) a reaction on the part of another person.

The term *need* was used by Schutz in a manner that was congruent with how biological needs are commonly understood. A need is a physical or psychological condition of an individual that if not satisfied leads to a state of discomfort or anx-

iety. To avoid this unpleasant outcome, people are motivated to take action to meet the need. However, individuals vary greatly in what constitutes satisfaction and dissatisfaction and therefore in the level of interpersonal need experienced by each.

With these definitions in mind, the interpersonal theory was further informed by Schutz’s reading of the psychological literature, including that of Freud, Adorno (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, and Sanford, 1948), Fromm (1941, 1947), Adler, and Jung; the group literature of Bion (1948–1951) and Kaiser; and his own observations of group behavior. This led him to posit that interpersonal needs could be summarized in three areas: inclusion, control, and affection.

## The Interpersonal Needs

### Inclusion

The interpersonal need for *Inclusion* (I) is the need to establish and maintain satisfactory interactions and associations with other people. It describes the extent of contact one desires with others and the degree to which one wants to join with others in shared activity. Underlying the need to interact with others is a recognition of the significance and importance of the self and of others as unique individuals. Inclusion behaviors represent an attempt to establish areas of mutual interest and common ground based on this recognition. It operates through an attempt to include others in one’s activities and to want to be included in their activities. The need for Inclusion is particularly

**TABLE 1 • CHARACTERISTICS ASSOCIATED WITH THE THREE INTERPERSONAL NEEDS**

<b>Inclusion</b>	<b>Control</b>	<b>Affection</b>
Association	Power	Being personal
Interaction	Authority	Closeness
Distinction	Influence	Openness
Prominence	Responsibility	Supportiveness
Attention	Leadership	Being affirmed
Participation	Consistency	Warmth
Involvement	Decisiveness	Empathy
Contact	Dominance	Encouragement
Belonging	Competitiveness	Appreciativeness

relevant to the relationship between an individual and a group. It describes an individual’s need to feel a sense of belonging and a desire to be noticed either within the group or by outsiders as a result of being a member of the group. In either case the desire to be noticed suggests that the extent of prominence a person seeks is also a component of Inclusion. Some characteristics associated with Inclusion are shown in Table 1.

**Control**

The interpersonal need for *Control* (C) describes an individual’s behavior with respect to responsibility, power, influence, and decision making. It reflects the degree to which one desires to influence or direct the behavior of others. A related concern is how much responsibility a person wants or is willing to accept, and therefore the degree of comfort one experiences in assuming the role of a leader or a follower. It also reflects the extent to which a person wants to be perceived as competent, decisive, and in charge. Control needs are related to the extent to which people seek dominance in group or interpersonal settings by seeking to set the agenda and structure the activities. Some characteristics associated with Control are shown in Table 1.

**Affection**

The interpersonal need for *Affection* (A) describes a person’s behavior in forming close, personal relationships with others. It applies primarily to one-to-one interaction rather than to group behavior, which is the realm of Inclusion. It determines the degree of openness, warmth, and personal connection one seeks with others: the amount of closeness or distance one seeks to establish. It also describes the extent to which people need to feel liked and appreciated. In addition, in some contexts it can reflect the desire to love and be loved. Another aspect of this need is the amount of personal disclosure one desires and is comfortable with, either from oneself or from others. Some characteristics associated with Affection are shown in Table 1.

**Expressed and Wanted Needs**

In addition to the three interpersonal needs, FIRO-B theory also describes how much each of the three needs is *Expressed* (e) or *Wanted* (w). The Expressed dimension of a need describes the extent to which a person initiates the behaviors associated with the need: the degree to which he or she behaves in that way toward others. The Wanted dimension of a need describes the extent to which a person prefers to receive those behaviors from others: the degree to which one wants others to behave that way toward oneself. Expressed and Wanted behaviors operate dynamically between individuals. How individuals respond to Expressed behavior from others depends on how much they want that type of behavior.

**The FIRO-B® Model**

The FIRO-B model describes the interaction of the three interpersonal needs with the Expressed and Wanted dimensions of those needs. The model is represented in the form of a 3x2 grid. The definition of each cell is shown in Table 2. Some examples of behaviors associated with each cell are shown in Table 3. A person can have any combination of High, Medium, or Low needs

TABLE 2 • THE FIRO-B® MODEL

Dimension/Need	Inclusion (I)	Control (C)	Affection (A)
<b>Expressed (e)</b>	The extent to which you make an effort to include others in your activities, to join and belong to groups, and to be with people	The extent to which you make an effort to control and influence others or situations, to organize and direct others, and to assume responsibility	The extent to which you try to get close to people and to engage them on a personal level; your degree of comfort in being open with and supportive of others
<b>Wanted (w)</b>	The extent to which you want others to include you in their activities and to invite you to join or belong to groups; the extent to which you want to be noticed	The extent to which you are comfortable working in well-defined situations with clear expectations and instructions	The extent to which you want others to act warmly toward you and to take a personal interest in you; the extent to which you want others to share things with you and to encourage you

Source: Adapted from Schnell and Hammer (1993). Used with permission.

TABLE 3 • BEHAVIORS ASSOCIATED WITH THE EXPRESSED AND WANTED DIMENSIONS OF THE THREE NEEDS

Dimension/Need	Inclusion (I)	Control (C)	Affection (A)
<b>Expressed (e)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inviting others to join in your activities</li> <li>• Involving others in projects and meetings</li> <li>• Incorporating everyone's ideas and suggestions</li> <li>• Taking a personal interest in others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assuming positions of authority</li> <li>• Managing the conversation</li> <li>• Attempting to influence others' opinions</li> <li>• Establishing policies and procedures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reassuring and supporting others</li> <li>• Showing concern about others' personal lives</li> <li>• Sharing your personal opinions and feelings with others</li> <li>• Being trustworthy and loyal</li> </ul>
<b>Wanted (w)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting involved in high-profile activities and projects</li> <li>• Doing things to get noticed</li> <li>• Going along with the majority opinion</li> <li>• Wearing distinctive clothing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deferring to the wishes, needs, and requests of others</li> <li>• Asking for help on a job</li> <li>• Raising issues for others to consider or decide</li> <li>• Involving others in decisions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being flexible and accommodating</li> <li>• Listening carefully to others</li> <li>• Trying to please others</li> <li>• Making yourself available to others</li> </ul>

Source: Adapted from Schnell and Hammer (1993). Used with permission.

in the six categories defined by the model. Additional behaviors associated with the needs may be found in Schnell and Hammer (1993).

### **Compatibility Theory**

Because FIRO-B theory is concerned with interpersonal needs, a natural extension is to the construct of compatibility. In FIRO-B terms, compatibility generally deals with the extent to which people's needs are satisfied in a relationship. Schutz discusses three kinds of compatibility: originator, reciprocal, and interchange compatibility.

Originator compatibility measures how much two people will come into conflict about who will initiate and who will receive behaviors. For example, two people having High needs for Expressed Control and Low needs for Wanted Control will both want to originate the behaviors associated with the Control needs, and neither will want to receive those behaviors. Both persons will want to set the agenda, take responsibility, and direct and structure the actions of others; neither will feel comfortable taking direction. The result could be competition or even conflict.

Reciprocal compatibility measures how well each person can get what he or she wants and can act in ways to meet his or her needs in a relationship. For example, if one person has a High need for Expressed Control and a Low need for Wanted Control and a second person has the opposite pattern (a High need for Wanted Control and a Low need for Expressed Control), there is a high degree of reciprocal compatibility because both individuals will have their Control needs met in the relationship. One will take charge; the other will be happy to let him or her assume the responsibility.

Interchange compatibility measures how much individuals share the same need strengths.

For example, two people with High needs for Expressed and Wanted Affection will be compatible because both will see Affection behaviors as the basis of the relationship, and they will engage each other around Affection needs.

Once compatibility between two people is defined, it is easy to look at the compatibility of groups and teams. Schutz (1955) stated that compatibility as outlined in FIRO-B theory is the dominant factor in explaining the productivity of groups. Research on compatibility theory is presented in the Validity chapter of this manual.

### **Group Development**

Another extension of FIRO-B theory is in the area of group development. Schutz (1966) posited that all groups must deal with the issues of Inclusion, Control, and Affection, in that order. As a group is forming, the first order of business is to determine who is to be a member, who will be "in" or "out," and how to recognize members and membership (Inclusion). The group then turns to the issues of decision making, responsibility, and the distribution of power and influence (Control). Once these issues are resolved, Affection becomes an issue, as the group members must then decide how close or personal they want to be with one another. Schutz warns that these issues do not necessarily represent distinct phases, as they are always present to some degree or other; rather, certain issues will be emphasized at different points in the life of the group. However, if these issues are not addressed and resolved by the group, then the functioning of the group can be impaired. Unfortunately, there has been little research to date on this fascinating extension of FIRO-B theory.

# ADMINISTRATION, SCORING, AND MATERIALS

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**T**he publisher, CPP, Inc., classifies the FIRO-B instrument as level B. Qualifications for this class of instruments are set forth in the CPP catalog, or may be obtained by calling the publisher. Generally, the classification requires that those wishing to purchase and administer the FIRO-B instrument and provide computer-generated reports to clients must meet a specified level of education and/or training. The classification system is designed to protect clients from inappropriate or misleading interpretations of the FIRO-B results. While the items and scoring keys are restricted in this manner, print support materials such as interpretive booklets are available to anyone.

## **Appropriate Populations**

The instrument may be administered to anyone whose vocabulary is sufficient to understand the items and the instructions and whose level of cognitive functioning will enable him or her to understand a verbal or written interpretation of the results. The instrument has been successfully administered to individuals ranging in age from 14 to 90. There is no specific educational level recommended because, as noted above, it is the

level of vocabulary and comprehension that is important. However, use of the self-scoring version of the instrument may cause problems for those who cannot follow precise directions, add long columns of integers, or find and transfer numbers from one page to another. It is the responsibility of the user of the instrument to determine whether his or her local population can successfully understand and answer the items and, if the self-scorable format is used, accurately calculate the scores.

Although the FIRO-B instrument has a wide range of applications, for the following reasons it is recommended that the instrument *not* be used alone for the purposes of employment selection: the instrument is designed to provide developmental or learning feedback to clients, the interpretive model designates the respondent as the owner of the responses and the results, and currently available research does not support the use of the results in selection situations. This recommendation, however, would not apply to the use of the results as part of a battery of instruments administered by a professional trained and qualified in the area of selection. In such cases the results would be integrated with and mutually supported by the results of other instruments and presented in a professional report along with expert judgment.

## **Factors That May Affect Results**

When administering the FIRO-B instrument, it is important to be cognizant of factors that may