



16PF User Group Newsletter

Most test users will have seen a profile that seems too good to be true. You look at the Social Desirability scale and see that it is very high. What do you do? Scrub it? Tell your client (that although you will be charging him) the profile is worthless as a predictor? Ann Rodrigues reports.

Professor John Rust of City University addressed the group about the Psychometrics Centre he helped establish there 18 months ago. The Centre offers training in psychometrics via MA, PhD and short courses. Interestingly, there is a world shortage of psychometricians (good news for us independent practitioners!), since psychology graduates increasingly lack the necessary level of numeracy. The Centre also designs bespoke tests for public and private sector organisations, and undertakes research – e.g. examining the use of Artificial Intelligence and neural networks to improve prediction.

The second part of Prof Rust's talk focussed on **Impression Management** (aka Social Desirability, 'faking good', lying), particularly in the recruitment context. Response bias – which may be conscious or unconscious – includes acquiescence (choosing the 'yes', or 'no', option to all questions); contradiction (an inconsistent pattern of responses, due to carelessness or lack of interest); and dissimulation. In selection, candidates are expected to present themselves in the best light in the interview, and this can continue into the personality questionnaire. It can be interpreted positively as reflecting motivation and interest in the job.

Attempting to eliminate distortion in test design is complex. Some respondents may 'fake bad' e.g., due to depression or when seeking compensation. So, how much adjustment should be made for the possibility of distortion? Devising an effective 'lie scale' is also challenging. For example, Eysenck found older people tend to score more highly because they believe that they rarely commit misdemeanours – self-delusion rather than lying.

In interpretation, the tester has a number of choices – one is to ignore it (some tests do not have a scale),

though Prof Rust felt that a high score cast doubt on the validity of the whole test, and suggested that an ipsative test could be given, since the respondent is forced to choose between equally positive and negative options. One member said that he examines individual responses and then selects one or two items to discuss with the respondent.

Prof Rust finished his thought-provoking talk by stressing that the most important things in psychometrics are getting away from the notion that everything can be proved/disproved, plus awareness of the limitations of all tests and, crucially, the experience and skills of the tester.

*Ann Rodrigues
ACER HR Insights*

*Last year, Hugh McCredie evoked some memories when he talked to the group about Eliot Jaques's *Time Span of Discretion*. Never heard of it? Read on...*

In the early 1960s Jaques's *Time span of Discretion* seemed to be required reading for management students. Then...silence. I had not heard of him for many years until Hugh reminded us of his theory. Jaques's book has been gathering dust on my shelves, and successfully evading charity jumble sales since...well a very long time ago. So what was Jaques's theory? Essentially it was the maximum period that could elapse before a manager could be sure that his subordinate was not exercising sub standard discretion – put simply, making mistakes.

In low level work, mistakes usually come to light very soon. In more advanced and complicated work, it may be months or years before that is apparent. It can also be described as the longest completion time in a task or a role.

We know from published findings that managers are typically intelligent, extravert, stable and independently minded. They are also moderately conscientious and open minded. But this is not the whole story.

Several researchers have suggested that IQ tests are not always relevant, and have invented new measures (for example practical intelligence, and emotional intelligence), but these are only slightly better than IQ tests.

Jaques's contribution was to profile what he called *The Universal Organisation*, using industry and the Army as examples. There are 7 levels. At the top is the Corporate CEO and a General. Their time span of discretion is 20 years. This span reduces (2 years for a General Manager and Brigadier or Colonel) down to 3 months for an operator and an NCO or Private.

Next, he devised a *Complexity of Mental Processing* test, and individual's results correlated almost perfectly with their ability to perform at the levels indicated above. The CMP has 4 levels and shows how an individual might argue a case using simple mutually exclusive reasons (*this, or this, or this,*) up to more complex reasoning identifying and linking several cause and effect chains (*if this, then this, plus this...*)

Jaques believes that a person's maximum CMP (his potential) is 'fixed' at any age and will develop along a predictable pathway. Therefore, if an employee is performing entirely satisfactorily in the more junior appointment at the age indicated then, provided the appropriate skill/knowledge is acquired, s/he should be ready for the next senior role by the next age point. The usual caveats apply of course. It is not always easy to detect whether success is really down to the employee or some other factor, such as a lenient boss, a bright subordinate, or favourable circumstances, therefore an additional test may be helpful.

Jaques's formula for success is:

Complexity of Mental Processing plus Values/Commitment plus Skilled Knowledge minus Dysfunctional Personal Qualities

Hugh McCredie has carried out his own research over the years. He found:

Correlations with measures of general mental ability (GMA).

- Correlations between GMA and a measure of job size
- Correlations between skills and performance
- Correlations between personality and performance

Interestingly, he found that 16PF Factor B, Abstract Thinking, did **not** correlate significantly with Job Size as measured by the Hay system.

Ed

SELECTED REFERENCES

- Jaques, E., (1967) *Equitable Payment*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books
 McCredie, H., (2003) *Realtime Management Development: Trainer's Manual*. Coventry: Co-ordinates.
 Scriven, R., Savage, A., and McCredie, H., (1994) *The search for executive intelligence*, Selection & Development Review, 10, 2.

In Edition 35 October 2004 we ran the first of a two-part series on aspects of the work of Maslow and Rogers. Part Two traces the development of the ideas of Carl Rogers.

Some readers will remember the 60s as times of great social change. Interesting how these great changes of mood can sweep across nations, continents. What starts it? Increased prosperity, the arrival of the 'teenager' and his money? (The word 'teenager' hardly existed before the mid-fifties.)

The beginnings of 'pop' culture. And if you can have 'pop culture', it's only a small step from that to 'pop psychology' isn't it? Deference to authority waned; the message was that you were as good as anyone else – probably better - and that you could be anything you wanted to be. The unspoken question was not "Why?" but "Why not?"

Surely this all emanated from the influence of the Humanistic psychologists? Did they not pave the way for more liberal ways of thinking? Perhaps they were opportunists who recognised an era when society was likely to be more amenable to their ideas than hitherto?

Or was it the other way round? Were they simply responding to the mood of the time? Perhaps they were saying that people now realised they can grow and develop - "Hey, let's help these good folks!" might have been their response.

Carl Rogers believed that people are inherently good and that they aspire to self-actualisation. He believed that people had the

ability to grow, to mature, and make positive changes in their lives within the limits of their heredity. He thought that people may not always clearly see which actions may lead to growth and which may lead to regression, but that once the path was clear, people choose to grow rather than regress.

Rogers and the 'self concept'

The key difference between Maslow and Rogers is that whilst they both believed in progression to 'self-actualisation', Rogers did not see personality development through a hierarchy of needs, but through the self-concept, or one's opinion of oneself. He argued that we need to develop a positive self-image. We are likely to be happy if we feel that others are happy with us. We are unhappy with ourselves when others are disappointed in us. (Shades of "I'm OK, You're OK")

So what turned Carl – and to a lesser extent Abraham - into the progenitors of our "You can have it all and 'beanythingyouwannabe' culture?

Carl was one of six children and had little social life outside his large family. The Protestant work ethic was high on the agenda of the Rogers family. At the age of twelve he moved to a farm and, as an avid reader he became fascinated with the literature on scientific agriculture. He raised lambs, pigs and calves. He studied and bred moths. (He probably read the classic "*Lepidoptera Genitalia*" translated as "Moth Balls" but I have been unable to find written evidence of this.)

Carl went to University to study agriculture, but switched to prepare for the ministry in his second year. By the end of his studies he doubted the fundamentalist thinking of his parents, and began to believe that one must rely on one's own personal experiences for developing a philosophy of life. He then turned to psychology. He trained in clinical psychology and developed a highly successful child study department.

Then, there was trouble.

The psychiatric profession felt that psychologists should not be allowed to practice psychotherapy or have any administrative responsibility for it. They waged a campaign to have him sacked. None of them criticised his work – they just felt that he shouldn't be doing this kind of thing. The campaign failed. He later held a series of university

appointments, all the time asserting his view that psychologists could conduct therapy. Eventually, this led to the reconciliation of psychiatry and psychology. But the aggravation he experienced must have strengthened his belief in what he was trying to do, and his determination to develop his theories of client-centred therapy. It must have generated the legacy we have today.

Towards the end of his life, he brought together people with opposing political views, such as Catholics and Protestants in Belfast. His son said, "He moved from one-to-one therapy, to small groups, to nations."

We now think of him as the originator of client-centred therapy, for advancing the notion of the self-concept, of the Q-Sort technique, and for the concepts of positive self-regard and conditional regard – very useful when bringing up the kids.

So there you have it: I think there is the clearest link between the work of Maslow and Rogers, and our self-absorbed, gossamer-thin society today. It was ground-breaking stuff – but have we gone too far? In the pursuit of our own wishes for fulfilment, concentrating on the 'self', have we not overlooked the needs of the wider community? Both US census returns and our own, show that more and more people live rootless, almost nomadic lives, changing jobs and houses frequently in pursuit of self-actualisation. Most of us don't even know our neighbours.

I am sure Maslow and Rogers would dislike the extremes to which we have taken their theories. It has resulted in a world in which only celebrities seem important. They're lionised.

I'm a psychologist – get me out of here.

David Roberts

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR 2004

During 2004 we arranged five meetings: These have been reported more fully in the Newsletter, so this is a brief summary of each: Jo Maddocks of JCA talked about Measuring Emotional Intelligence in Super Humans; Helen Barron discussed the Big Five personality measures and the Great Eight Competencies, showing how they can

complement each other; Steve Woods explained how five bipolar items were constructed to measure the Big Five and discussed the single-item measures of personality (SIMP) in terms of their psychometric properties; Hugh McCredie posed the question of how far we are able to assess and measure individual management potential within organisations drawing on Jaques' work and his own research; Chris Blakeley, and I talked about the 'retreat' approach we use at Waverley Learning for developing individuals both personally and in their leadership capacities; Lynne Hindmarch and Rob McPherson, discussed the relationship between the 16PF5 and the Myers Briggs Type Indicator in an outplacement and career counselling context; our social evening allowed people a '3 minute' slot to talk about any aspect of 16PF. It proved to be a very varied and rich discussion that was particularly popular; during the year we also continued to look at specific factors of the 16PF. This has also proved popular and we will continue to include this at future meetings.

Newsletters:

David Roberts has been working with OPP to produce the newsletter this year. More input from members would be welcome.

Relationship with OPP

We have continued to build our relationship with OPP and thank them for their support in attending the meetings.

Administration

Caro Leitzell has taken on the responsibility for the administration of the group. We thank her for a much improved data base and admin back up.

Membership and Communication

Membership has stabilised at 75. There are still 11 members who haven't given us e-mail contact details – if they could let us have them it would be most helpful. It would save on admin.

We have set up an on-line facility for people to communicate by bulletin board. Caro has sent out an invitation to us all. The take up has been a little slow although those who have joined have been enthusiastic about it.

The committee

The committee has met twice during the year to discuss User Group related matters.

Regrettably, Wendy Lord has resigned from the committee. On behalf of the Group I would like to extend our thanks to her for support over the years and for her expert input. We hope that she will continue to attend whenever possible. The new committee is: Belinda Smith, chair; Chris Chater, treasurer; David Roberts, newsletter editor, Hugh McCredie; Ann Rodrigues; Nicholas Bennett.

Looking ahead

The User Group exists only for the benefit of the members – it has no other purpose – and for it to thrive it needs the active interest and involvement of everyone. We would like more people to become involved – organising events, marketing, getting a website going, writing articles for the newsletter or indeed editing the newsletter.

Future meetings: Wed 13th April; Tues 21st June; Mon 3rd Oct; Wed 30th Nov

There was a lively discussion at the AGM about membership, and several ideas will be pursued: popularity of subject matter; issuing of CPD certificates; reviewing objectives; attracting more corporate clients; advertising in Selection and Development Review. Contacts could be made at universities, and a CIPD conference promotional event was a possibility.

Belinda Smith

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