This newsletter, produced by the 16PF User Group, aims to promote discussion about personality testing, particularly use of the 16PF, and keep you in touch with developments in the field. We hope that it caters for both new and experienced 16PF users.

If you wish to contribute an article or have ideas about issues that can be discussed in it please contact the Editor, Dawn Beeson.

**USER GROUP MEETINGS**

Wendy Lord and Stevan Rolls led the 11th May meeting on Feedback Skills, a most informative day. Particularly getting across the importance of seeking to understand the assesses’ perspective. Wendy and Stevan have both contributed an article on the “Feedback” theme in this issue.

Ken Rawlings introduced the June 10th meeting - comparing 16PF and OPQ. Everyone joined in the lively discussion and debate which centred around the key issues explored in Issue 2 of this newsletter by Roy Childs.

It was the User Group’s first evening meeting and it seemed to be very successful - quite a turn out. Therefore, we hope to run evening meetings next year.

We had hoped to hold a meeting out of London, perhaps in Manchester, for our Northern members. Unfortunately insufficient interest has been shown to organise such a meeting. However, if anyone is interested in setting up an evening meeting get in touch with Andrew Life.

**FUTURE MEETINGS**

- 23 November 10am - 4pm  
  Venue: IARC, 17 Portland Place, London  
  Subject: Computer Narratives

- 26 January 10am - 4pm  
  Venue: To be arranged  
  Subject: Assessing Competencies

- 17 March 7pm - 9.30pm  
  Venue: To be arranged  
  Subject: Difficult Profiles

**NEW MEMBERS**

We mentioned in Issue 2 that we would like to recruit more members and we have had a good response. If you know a colleague who may be interested in the User Group invite them along to a meeting. Similarly, let the Editor know if you would like to add a 16PF user onto the newsletter mailing list.

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SOME THOUGHTS ON THE FEEDBACK INTERVIEW

The feedback interview is at its best when used as an integral part of assessment by 16PF. When the assessor first sits down with the client, the analysis of the profile is not complete. The interview is part and parcel of it. Preparing properly for the interview takes time, however, the potential rewards in terms of the increased richness of the data derived, make it time well spent. Below are some questions that may be useful to consider when preparing for the interview:

1. **How is the client likely to respond generally?**
   In your analysis of the profile you will have come up with some hypotheses about the individual’s behavioural style so bear these in mind when deciding how to present hypotheses and phrase exploratory questions. For example, if the profile suggests a thinking style that is logical, unemotional and not reflective, then don’t expect the client to be able to easily introspect about his or her subjective life or emotions. If the profile suggests an unassertive person, beware of the possibility of passive acceptance of what you say. Be prepared to probe deeply for disconfirming evidence.

2. **What if the client disagrees?**
   If we are genuinely seeing the interview as an integral part of the assessment then it is important to accept that a hypothesis may need to be modified or rejected. If a client disagrees it may well be because you have misinterpreted part of the profile but it may also be because:
   a. the profile isn’t valid for the client
   b. the client has misunderstood what you said, or
   c. this is a blind spot for the client.

The assessor’s task is to discern which of these it is but without forcing the issue and thereby raising the client’s defences. It is wise to remember that you are likely to get your best evidence from real life situations so prepare questions aimed at deriving concrete examples of behaviours that either confirm or disconfirm your hypotheses.

One way an assessor may misrepresent an aspect of the profile is by failing to take account of the normative nature of the data. If, for example, a general population norm has been used for a person whose time is mainly spent with high-flyers then aspects of that person’s self-image may be different to that suggested by the profile.

3. **Will the person be ready to hear what you say?**
   When some stark reality is presented as a verbal statement, the individual may not be ready to deal with it even though there may be, at some level, an awareness of it’s accuracy. It is always more effective and more satisfying for people if they are allowed to work through the process of putting the bits together themselves. The assessor’s role is to facilitate the process; to cue clients into an area and encourage them to explore it. The cue may be a question or a presented hypothesis. Ideally, it will be brief, it will be neutral or positive and it will be expressed as a description of behaviour rather than a global label. In your preparation you may have to consciously replace negatively valued labelling words with positive or neutral words. However, remember that your values will not necessarily be the same as your client’s so having convinced yourself of the positive or neutral side, go a step further by moving away from the label and considering how the quality will manifest as an observable piece of behaviour; think about situations where the behaviour would be an asset. You can shape the client up to tell you the rest.

4. **What about factor combinations that contradict?**
   Too often we approach the feedback interview feeling a pressure to be "the expert". So much more is gained if we see it as a learning opportunity for us as well as for the client. If there is confusion in the profile, the client is the best person to consult and the feedback interview the best place to do it.

5. **What non-verbal behaviour do you expect to see?**
   The spoken word is not the only source of evidence for your hypotheses. In your preparation think about the non-verbal behaviours suggested by the profile. Which of these might be observable at the interview? Also consider what you don’t expect to see. During the interview be on the look out for non-verbal behaviours that provide evidence to confirm or disconfirm hypotheses.

Wendy Lord, ASE

THE 16PF INTERVIEW - THE POTENTIAL FOR BIAS

The Nature of Feedback
The feedback interview is one of the most important stages of interpreting the 16PF. Normally occurring before any report is written, it provides an opportunity for the assessor to compare hypotheses formed from the profile with the client. This involves an assessor describing impressions of the client and using the responses to refine this description.

Feedback patently relies on the assessor’s social skills to gain the most appropriate information from a client. However, the social nature of this exchange can result in the intrusion of a number of naturally occurring human biases which can influence the validity of information provided.

Bias in the Process
Perhaps the most problematic bias in feedback concerns the way in which human beings approach the search for evidence. Wason (1960) carried out a series of experiments which showed that when evaluating hypotheses people have a natural propensity to search for evidence that confirms their impressions. Bremer (1980) points out that although this strategy will indicate if a hypothesis seems to work, it in fact says little about its actual validity.
For example: in feedback situations it is quite possible that clients will confirm details about themselves which are not in reality descriptive of their temperament or behaviour. Phrasing questions to clients using vague or double-headed language such as

"it seems that in some situations you may well be quite outgoing but will also need to be on your own from time to time".

may introduce the Barnum Effect, i.e., using a statement most people would consider to be descriptive of themselves (Dickson & Kelly, 1985).

A second concern associated with confirmatory research is the assessor’s ability to inappropriately interpret evidence. Gergen et al’s (1986) research showed that those familiar with using complex language were able to plausibly infer many different (and conflicting) conclusions from the same piece of evidence. Thus almost anything a client says during feedback can be interpreted as evidence of an impression formed from the 16PF p. Gergen argues that this can result in fully circular descriptions of personality which need not have any external validity.

What Can We Do?
The Barnum Effect, interpretation of evidence and confirmatory search can have serious effects on the validity of inferences drawn from the feedback interview. Gergen et al. (1986) suggest that dissent should be allowed to enter the interpretive process: thus the search for disconfirming evidence should be as thorough as any for that which confirms a conclusion. Assessors should also be aware of the ability of expectation to influence perception and try to avoid, as much as is possible, the temptation to over-interpret evidence. To inhibit the Barnum Effect during feedback it may be helpful to make very direct and specific statements to which the client can react. Hopefully, just keeping a watchful eye open for the appearance of these biases should help to improve the quality of inferences drawn from feedback interviews.

References

Stevan Rolls
ASE

BOOK REVIEW

Lawrence A Pervin (ed.), The Guildford Press, New York and London, pp 752, £49.95

The Handbook of Personality: Theory and Research comprises 27 chapters divided between an Introduction, Theoretical Perspectives, Interface with Other Fields, Research Topics (Intrapersonal and Interpersonal, Private and Public Aspects of Personality) and an Overview. Amongst the distinguished contributors are some notable "oldies" like Raymond Cattell, Hans Eysenck and David McClelland, and amongst the younger generation Oliver John, Nancy Cantor, Tony Higgins and Hazel Markus.

In "Advances in Cattellian Personality Theory", Cattell vigorously defends the number of factors in the 16PF and points out (what practitioners sometimes overlook) that "one gets further prediction from knowing the nature of each factor - its life course, its genetic element, its interaction with the environment". His short chapter focuses mainly on Structured Learning Theory and the Dynamic Calculus, linked with the development of the Motivational Analysis Test and the vida systems theory model of personality.

Oliver John’s chapter on "The 'Big Five' Factor Taxonomy: Dimensions of Personality in the Natural Language and in Questionnaires" traces the origins of the five factor taxonomy to use of the lexical approach by Allport and Cattell. The five factors are described as Survency, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability versus Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience, reminding one of some of Cattell’s second-order factors. John also displays an interesting table relating the Big Five to similarly broad dimensions in other models of personality, including those developed by Eysenck and Myers-Briggs.

The thoughtful 16PF user could also read with profit Rorer’s "Personality Assessment: A Conceptual Survey", Marcus and Cross’s "The Interpersonal Self", Cantor and Zirkel’s "Personality, Cognition and Purposive Behaviour" and Higgins’s "Personality, Social Psychology, and Person-Situation Relations". A book strongly recommended, not least because the editor has insisted that his contributors indicate guidelines for the future.

Andrew Life
THE 1131 NOW ARRIVING AT THE FACTORY ....

Sam Krug - prolific writer and researcher of 16PF material - had been in full anecdotal flight at the end of a 2 day session on the interpretation of 16PF profiles. Specifically, he had been referring to "Krug Profiles"* and some of the more unusual ones he had encountered.

The rarest of all, he said, was the 1131 pattern - Second Order Factors referring to Introversion, Low Anxiety, High Tough Poise, and Dependency. He recounted an incident when he was required to give evidence at the trial of a murderer - a 1131 no less. The accused and another man planned to rob an isolated farmhouse while the owners were away. To their surprise it was occupied. The accomplice told the accused to murder the farmer; if he did not do so, he would be killed himself. A gun was aimed at his head to emphasise the point.

The accused had no hesitation in shooting the farmer. After all, that’s what a task-centred person would do. His dependency did not allow him to query the instruction or to suggest a better way. As an introvert, he felt no compulsion to say "Can we talk about this?" His low anxiety levels kept a very steady finger on the trigger.

Sam had given the court his analysis of a man whose personality enabled him to follow instructions without question. It was a very rare profile, said Sam. Addressing our conference, he said, "If any of you guys ever have a profile like that, I’d sure like to see it".

I had just finished a two day testing session, looking for cooperative staff to work at a brand new plant and I had a brief case full of 16PFs. Could it possibly be...? To my amazement I found a 1131. I checked the scores again. Checked the arithmetic. Yes it was a 1131. Did we really have such a man at our plant? What was he like? - apart from being low on anxiety etc etc. Fame and glory beckoned. I telephoned the works manager who was surprised to hear from me at 7pm. I was careful not to give anything away. Don’t contaminate the answers, don’t give a clue about a 1131.

"Good worker" said the works manager. "He’ll do anything for you". Sounded familiar I thought. "We have no trouble with him. I think there are a few problems though", he said darkly. He paused. "He goes to the pub every night, sinking 12 or 15 pints, I know that. But he’ll be in the next morning. Never late. Treats his wife badly, I think. He gives her a hard time. I’ve heard all sorts of strange stories". He paused again. "I wouldn’t say he was a people-centred person." The works manager had not only learned the language, but had become a master of understatement. He warned to his task. "He’s tough and stable, I’d say. He’s a very safe worker. Dependable. Anyway, what’s the problem?"

It didn’t seem right to go into the 1131 anecdote over the telephone. Unprofessional. He summarised his views again, ending with "... 12 to 15 pints. But he’s always in the next morning. There are a few problems, though....". The works manager had his standards as well.

The next morning I greeted Sam with enthusiasm and told him about my find. He looked sceptical. Many people claimed to have had a 1131, he said, but they all turned out to be false. Usually the arithmetic was wrong. I showed him the profile. He checked the figures. Any moment I’d see his reactions to a highpoint of his 16PF career. I gave him a summary of the works manager’s comments. "Sounds about right", said Sam. "Interesting", he added, in a rather flat tone that belied the words.

Visions of 16PF history-making faded.

"There are a few other problems with this man", I said.

But Sam was already heading for the podium to begin the second day of the conference. His quest was over. Perhaps profiles even rarer beckoned.

David Roberts, David Roberts & Partners

The 1131 Profile
\[ A = 2 \quad B = 6 \quad C = 9 \quad E = 5 \quad F = 2 \quad G = 8 \quad H = 3 \quad I = 2 \]
\[ L = 5 \quad M = 4 \quad N = 6 \quad O = 5 \quad Q1 = 3 \quad Q2 = 7 \quad Q3 = 8 \quad Q4 = 3 \]

* Interpreting 16PF Profile Patterns (1981). Sam C Krug, IPAT

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Readers may remember that in the last Newsletter we printed a letter from Arthur Unwin enquiring about the credibility of a person who is E2 and H9.

Here are two replies:

Dear A N Unwin

In response to your query, the E2/H9 person relishes new situations and risk, but, being subservient, will not question instructions. I would recommend that he/she becomes an astronaut.

Yours sincerely
AB

Dear Arthur

I noticed in the last newsletter that Mike Westwood described someone who is L++ as possibly "resentful, hostile and a drinker".

Well, on the whole, I think I’d rather have a drink with your latest candidate, the E2/H9, particularly if I was feeling a bit down and in need of "strokes".

I think that you might find this person to be very sociable, but also socially conservative in the sense of being eager to please and do or say the right thing.

If I was working with him, though, I’d be wondering if his opinions and views might be likely to change according to how he feels the wind is blowing.

By the way, where is he on Q2?

Yours sincerely
AK