

## Thinking Styles

**Our October meeting gave those attending a valuable insight into their own thinking styles. No, not MBTI, nor any of the other measures with which you may be familiar. This is the Thinking Styles questionnaire, pioneered by **Fiona Beddoes-Jones**.**

All of us had the opportunity prior to the meeting, to complete the Thinking Styles questionnaire on-line ([www.thinkingstyles.co.uk](http://www.thinkingstyles.co.uk)). Fiona then sent us a most comprehensive report. (I'm still reading mine!)

Her presentation was intriguing and original, dealing with dimensions that do not appear in any of the instruments with which most of us are familiar. This led me to put several questions to her.

### Q.1 What experiences led you to develop Thinking Styles?

For as long as I can remember, I have always been fascinated by the uniqueness, complexity, similarities and differences between people. I was about eight years old when I first realised that I seem to think differently to other people and when I began working in industry I had the opportunity to begin noticing and exploring the relationships between people, how people learn and the dynamics within teams.

I developed Thinking Styles because I wanted to create something that would be really useful to people in helping them understand themselves and others more completely. Once I had created it I had to take a psychology degree to understand just what it was that I had developed! I'm now working towards my PhD, which is in the area of how preferences for cognitive style influence learning and development.

### Q.2 Given the long and tortuous route to develop a test with good technical properties, what are your experiences?

That you can't do it alone and when you have cleared one hurdle there is always another one! I was fortunate to work with a great team of people, and the journey isn't over yet, so I'm looking forward to many more great years of developing innovative and useful instruments.

### Q.3 What makes Thinking Styles unique? What can it do that other assessments cannot i.e. MBTI, 16PF, FIRO B, etc.?

As far as I am aware, Thinking Styles is the only commercially available measure specifically of cognitive style. So although many of the other instruments include an element of how people think, Thinking Styles is more comprehensive. Thinking Styles also has a unique scoring system. For example, it gives people both ipsative and normative scores; i.e. the degree of their personal preference for each type of thinking and their sten score compared to a general norm population.

Thinking Styles also measures the degree to which people dislike thinking in certain ways. One of the implications of this is that if someone dislikes thinking in a particular way, they are likely to be less flexible in their thinking strategies when required to use that particular style (because their preference would be to avoid it.)

Although other instruments focus on behaviours, our focus is on understanding how the thinking drives those behaviours. Thinking Styles can also identify the socio-cognitive dynamics inherent between individuals and within teams and assist us in understanding them.

### Q.4 Can, or should, it be used in selection?

This is an excellent question! Thinking Styles is a meta-cognitive instrument (which the BPS categorises under 'personality'), rather than a measure of ability. The issue is less about Thinking Styles specifically and more about whether the HR department is able to defend any or all of its recruitment and selection procedures in an industrial tribunal situation. If you wanted to explore the socio-cognitive dynamics of a team to find out if a candidate would 'fit' with the existing team, then as part of the overall recruitment and selection process, it's perfectly acceptable to use a measure of personality such as Thinking Styles, as you will already know from your 16PF training.

### Q.5 How should it be used in development? How should this be done? In what circumstances?

Like 16PF, Thinking Styles can be used on a number of different levels. On an individual level it can be used for greater self-awareness and personal development. This is most effective within an ongoing coaching relationship. It has been used to help small business partnerships and 'dynamic duos' within organisations understand their relationship and their comparative strengths and weaknesses within the business. However it is most commonly used within a team environment.

### Q.6 If I want to use Thinking Styles, what training do I require? How much will it cost?

To become licensed there is a two-day fast-track programme which currently costs £1,750 + vat. The three-day programme costs £2,000 + vat and trains you to use Cognitive Team Roles as well as Thinking Styles. We have recently launched Think Smart, a meta-cognitive instrument that measures 10 dimensions of cognitive style rather than the 26 measured by Thinking Styles. There is no Licensing requirement for Think Smart.

### Forthcoming Events

6th February - Difficult Profiles, Global Factors & AGM

9th April - Detail to be agreed

17th June - Detail to be agreed

Items for 2003 - Crime and Psychology; Factor C and Beck Depression Inventory

Venue: The Naval Club, 38 Hill St, Mayfair, W1

**Q.7** How long would it take me to become competent in its use?

How long did it take you to become competent in the use of 16PF? The more often you use an instrument, and the greater exposure you have to the complexities of different people's profiles, the more competent you are likely to become. It also depends on your current level of knowledge and understanding, exposure, experience and expertise. I developed it and I'm still learning!

**Q.8** How do you see the future development of this assessment?

In a number of ways: certainly we will be adding to our statistical data, and research is an ongoing organisational remit. We also have the opportunity to explore each type of thinking in more depth and the implications that has for people at work, and to work on the identification and measurement of some of the other types of thinking not included in the current version of Thinking Styles.

I genuinely believe that understanding how people think and understanding their thinking strategies will be critical to the success of the best organisations in the future. **Fiona Beddoes-Jones is with BJA Associates**  
[www.thinkingstyles.co.uk](http://www.thinkingstyles.co.uk) Edited by David Roberts

# Managing Without Power

**Our June meeting was addressed by Dr Meredith Belbin on the subject Managing Without Power. Simon Walker, Managing Director, Human Ecology Ltd., reports – and raises some of his own queries and comments.**

Dr Belbin is now researching the origins of human behaviour, and has enlisted his wife's speciality, anthropology, to help explain the variations in people's behaviour - relevant in our current 'unisex' society. The figure of woman has swung down the ages from idolisation as a life-giver (Artemis) or a fount of wisdom, to an association with evil (Eve, Pandora, witches).

Dr Belbin began at the start of human existence, with the rise of homo sapiens about 180,000 years ago, and the emergence of a hunter-gatherer society some 150,000 years ago. The principles underlying human evolution are similar to those of animals, at least the social species. Groups of people formed, of a size appropriate to their territory. The hunter-gatherers lived in groups. Within these, the males tended to specialise in the hunting and gathering role, where their superior strength counted the most, and the females in that of the preparation of food. Traffic between groups took place, either friendly in the form of trade, or unfriendly, as raids - especially when the human species became successful enough for groups to compete for territory. Mating also took place between groups. Group survival then depended on size and aggression - a 'warrior gene'. However, the indigenous members of the group, especially the women, had to sustain a role of support for the integrity of the group - a form of 'community-mindedness'. The men defended the group, while the women controlled the men - individually rather than collectively. (Cato: 'We Romans rule the world but our wives rule us'.)

Differences in intellect emerged: those with superior brains were selected for protection, even mollicoddling, and kept separate - the ultimate origin of Jewish ghettos.

A fourth type emerged, that of slaves, a type in which the sexes were kept separate, breeding being controlled by slave owners.

We can therefore identify four human groups or types:

- 1 Warriors - the original hunters. Translated into the modern idiom, these are the people with drive and goal focus, but with the drawbacks of aggression, ambition and cruelty;
- 2 Professionals - the selected higher-intellect people. These are now people with high intelligence and specialised aptitudes, but with the disadvantage of total focus on their own careers rather than the well-being of their organisations;
- 3 Slaves - people with high loyalty and employability, but with the weakness of unquestioning obedience;
- 4 Aborigines - those with great 'community' or team spirit. but perhaps also with undisciplined lifestyles.

Hitherto, warriors have dominated groups and organisations; however, there is evidence that the 'warriors' are losing their grip on society, in the age of homo loquens. There may be a growing alliance between Aborigines and Professionals to challenge the Warriors.

Warrior men do not like warrior women, but do like slaves. Professionals like other Professionals.

The research undertaken lends support for mixed-gender teams in organisations.

My own queries and comments:

\* The four types can be related, however inaccurately and loosely, to various models of styles of behaviour and leadership behaviour put out since 1970.

They can also possibly be related, even more loosely, to the 9 Belbin team roles (which Dr Belbin didn't mention):

Belbin type Grid	Blake-Mouton Inventory	Strength Deployment (Hersey and Blanchard)	Situational leadership	Styles of leadership
Warrior	9,1	Red	Telling	Directing-dominating
Professional	1,1	Green	Delegating	Delegating-avoiding
Slave	1,9	Blue	Participating	Supporting-submitting
Aboriginal	5,5? 9,9?	White	Selling?	Negotiating-compromising?

- |                         |                           |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 Shaper                | Warrior                   |
| 2 Implementer           | Warrior                   |
| 3 Completer-finisher    | Slave                     |
| 4 Co-ordinator          | Warrior + Aboriginal      |
| 5 Teamworker            | Aboriginal                |
| 6 Plant                 | Aboriginal?               |
| 7 Resource Investigator | Aboriginal + Professional |
| 8 Monitor-evaluator     | Professional              |
| 9 Specialist            | Professional              |

Simon has also contributed the following Letter to The Editor

I have been talking via email to Meredith about the notion of profiling what he calls our 'psychogenetic inheritance'. As a biologist who studied at Oxford under Richard Dawkins, one of the chief protagonists of the dominance of genetic influence in the shape of our behaviours, I am much less convinced than Meredith (or Dawkins) that it is either possible or profitable to be searching around in our genetic past for explanation to our behaviours.

Is it possible at all to measure, using a self-reporting questionnaire, the component of our response that is driven by our genes rather than our environment or choice? Surely not! The only way to do this would be through either some kind of gene analysis (currently impossible) or through a profile of ones hereditary lineage, comparing the degree to which behaviours have been inherited down ones generational line- a score of what is called the 'heredity' of a trait.

Secondly, is it profitable to attempt this search? I am not sure. Does it help me to 'move on' and develop as a person if I know that my genes shape my 'assertive and competitive behaviours'? (for instance). I tend to think the reverse - knowing such a thing would

tend to encourage me to abdicate responsibility for my behaviour, as any eugenics programme has always proved in history or the current interest in finding a gene for homosexuality is also demonstrating. When human beings discover there is a genetic basis to their behaviours it always leads them to just accept it, therefore, as an inevitable, unchangeable characteristic. This, most social psychologists, sociologists or philosophers would agree is neither a personal or socially positive attitude to encourage.

I find it interesting that my generation (I am 31 years old) is collectively fascinated by the possibility of change and reinventing our personal self-identity. This is in contrast to the direction Meredith seems to be going down. It is a small section of the scientific community who seem interested in continually finding a genetic cause for our behaviours- a section which has always been prone to reductionism and the hubristic confidence that science will be the panacea for all evils...

I have expressed these views to Meredith and we continue to have a stimulating and lively discussion!

**Simon Walker**  
Tel: +44 (0) 1606 832 598

**Does the handwriting of others interest you? What about your own handwriting? Can you tell anything about a person from handwriting? A brave committee member submitted a sample of handwriting for interpretation by graphologist Lawrence Warner.**

Some time ago, Lawrence Warner addressed the 16PF User Group on his use of graphology in selection and development. The ensuing discussion centred on the advantages of graphology V 16PF assessment. Are they mutually exclusive? How close would a graphology report be, to scores on 16PF? If you have always wanted to know the answer to this, here is your chance to find out.

Below is Lawrence's graphology report on one of our committee members. His/her 16PF scores will be published in the next newsletter. Mark your estimated 16PF sten score(s) in the right hand column.

<b>Graphologist's Report</b>	<b>16PF scale(s) &amp; estimated stens</b>
High intelligence is shown. You have the ability to quickly understand concepts and ideas as well as appreciate the underlying meaning. This enables you to skim the surface of a subject and to extract the essentials.	
Nevertheless the very speed with which you assimilate facts and appreciate ideas means that you do not always have time to analyse the information and this carries with it the risk of jumping to conclusions.	
At the same time you do need to achieve and also to have challenge particularly of an intellectual nature. If it is not forthcoming then you can readily become bored and even disruptive as you seek an outlet for your energies. Despite your ability it appears that at the time of writing you are not challenged.	
You adopt a friendly approach but there is a basic suspicion of others and you will remain wary and maintain your distance until you are sure that people can be trusted.	
Being in control is important both of yourself and the situation. Self-discipline is strong and enables you to achieve although it may be at the expense of relaxing.	
You are well aware of the importance of detail and pay close attention to ensure that nothing of importance is missed.	
You are prepared to listen at least until such time as you have made up your mind. However once that point is reached you may hear but not always listen. You stand steadfastly, even stubbornly, by an opinion. Logic is best way to persuade you to change your mind.	
You value being your own man and having your independence. Equally, you are concerned with doing things right by your standards. You will not conform for the sake of it.	
Your feelings are strong and run deep; whatever happens affects you for a very long time.	
Tremendous initiative enables you to identify opportunities and new ways of doing things. Very much a pragmatist, you will focus single-mindedly on the task in hand and will carry through to completion, pushing yourself hard if necessary. A conscientious manner ensures that you will not back down on your word.	

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