

Edition 65
Summer 2012

Psyche

The newsletter of The Psychometrics Forum



Visit our website at www.psychometricsforum.org

You will find information about forthcoming events, speakers, the origins of the group and much more.

Want to add something to the website? Contact our Administrator – **Caro Leitzell**: admin@leitzell.com

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A few words from your Editor

*Adrian Starkey – Chartered Occupational Psychologist
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In this edition we find ourselves looking back and looking forward. Firstly I am delighted to be able to share with you that all previous editions of Psyche dating back to 1991 are now available on the Psychometrics Forum website. There are two exceptions to this and the hunt is on to track down editions 2 & 9 – If you happen to have these in your archive then please let one of the committee know through any of the usual channels. Other recent developments include our Linked-In affiliate membership passing the 3000 mark, the introduction of a new blog as described by Rajesh Chopra in this edition (now with improved interactive comments facility) and a Twitter feed thanks to committee member Harpal Dhatt. There have never been so many ways to contribute to active debates within the Psychometrics community.

Another TPF first was a workshop event in May run by Pete Jones & Tinu Cornish focusing on the sources of bias that are inherent in our judgments and steps that we can take to understand and help mitigate them. This was a fascinating and well-presented day and I am grateful to Claire Barnes who provides us with a write up in this edition. Also in this edition

Harpal Dhatt contributes a summary of her personal experience in the burgeoning field of mindfulness, including her participation at the Mindfulness at Work Conference that she attended in February of this year. Her summary of the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) is likely to be of particular interest to readers.

Turning to our regular TPF meetings Nick Bateson provides a summary of Tatiana Bachkirova's session from the May event. This session sparked lively debate on the day by challenging the outcome focused coaching orthodoxy that is dominant amongst practitioners. Also from the May event Jay Roseavere provides us with a reminder of Dan Hughes' presentation on the Resilience questionnaire that has recently been developed by A&DC. Resilience is a popular current theme within the industry and the A&DC measure seems to be a timely contribution.

Looking back I would like to thank all contributors to this edition and looking forward I would like to invite all readers to consider making a contribution to a future edition of Psyche, the copy deadline for our the next edition being **26th October**.

Event Announcements

Two further TPF events to look forward to in 2012:

Wednesday 26th September

Creating & Cultivating a Thriving Organisational Culture

- Prof. Philippe Rosinski & Dr. Mark Batey

Tuesday 20th November

New Frontiers in Psychometrics Seminar with Dr. Hugh McCredie

- Prof. Dave Bartram – The Big 5, Hofstede cultural dimensions and international competitiveness
- Rob Bailey – Round up of recent OPP research
- Dr. Rainer Kurz – The Great 8 Factors & Team Roles
- Prof. John Rust – Concerto – An open source online adaptive test development platform

To book a place at either of these events please contact our Administrator **Caro Leitzell** on **01962 880920** or email her at admin@psychometricsforum.org

Details of membership are available on the Forum website: www.psychometricsforum.org

The organising committee is currently actively considering ideas for speakers at TPF events next year. As ever we would welcome your thoughts on potential speakers for 2013 and beyond.

Hard Science & Hard Lessons: what our neurology can teach us about managing our biases

– Reflections on Dr. Pete Jones' & Tinu Cornish's May Forum Workshop

On one of the last of the very rainy days in May, thirty or so members of the Psychometrics Forum gathered at the University of Westminster for a special TPF sponsored workshop. Our presenters were chartered psychologists Dr Pete Jones (Shire Professional) and Tinu Cornish (Coach for Change) and their mission was to further our understanding of how our biases are created and maintained by our neurology, socialisation, experiences and the media, and how this affects performance. Along the way, they interspersed insights from their research in organisations and used case studies as a basis for discussion as to how we might advise organisations to counter bias and stereotype threats in day to day activities.

One of Pete's opening remarks was that the discussion of bias is not politically correct. This had the effect, for me at least, of letting the audience relax a little in the face of the minefield that this area has become. He then talked about the business case for tackling diversity in organisations and the benefits of managing it – surely a message that many are beginning to take on board. Pete and Tinu also suggested, however, that some of the ways organisations go about managing bias can make it worse, and in turn, make it even more difficult to discuss and deal with. By way of illustrating this, Pete presented the neurology of bias, showing us how it can deplete our resources by using processing capacity and interfering with our ability to make fair decisions. He suggested that organisations, in laying down well meant diversity policies, can unintentionally exacerbate bias by making it salient in people's minds and reinforcing associated neural pathways. This has the primary effect of depleting precious cognitive resources. It can also have the secondary effect, as shown in Tinu and Pete's research, of making managers overly formal in their relationships with team members from different backgrounds to themselves, and killing what Tinu described as the 'Friendship Potential' in these relationships.

Further effects on manager behaviour included the reluctance of managers to give stretching goals to people they perceive to be different, for fear of having to give negative feedback in case of failure, and the tendency of bias sometimes being greatest in senior managers, probably due to cognitive overload and limited direct observation of performance. Based on these findings, we discussed ways to advise managers as to how they might deal with bias in the workplace. Suggestions followed the key theme of getting to know people as individuals, valuing individual



Claire Barnes

contributions and strengths, allocating work in the office (not the pub) fairly, and highlighting and discussing the team's goals and values to give them a common identity.

We also discussed how understanding one's own biases is essential to all of us. Pete presented *Implicitly* as a diagnostic tool. He contrasted it with the Harvard IAT, which is available on the internet, but is neither norm referenced nor has sound test-retest reliability. The Harvard IAT also gives immediate feedback, whereas Pete recommends that feedback should be contextualised for the individual. And with that, we ran out of time!

We had such an enjoyable and stimulating day that, had it not been for trains and other commitments, many of us would have lingered well past packing up time. For me, the event's success lay in its blend of theory, research and practical application. I came away with lots of ideas to inform my practice and with which to lobby my colleagues. I hope that this will be the first in an occasional series of such workshops.

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Mindfulness at work 1st Annual conference

Brain-based approaches to improving
employee resilience and productivity

*Harpal Dhatt – CEO at Glow at Work &
Chartered Occupational Psychologist*

My journey into mindfulness started at the Association of Business Psychologists conference in 2008 when I heard Sir John Whitmore deliver the keynote presentation. He asked how many people had a psychology degree, and most people put their hand up (he himself, does not have a psychology degree). During his presentation he shared the importance of real life psychology and knowing yourself. His presentation made me realise a key point, with real practitioner relevance - how can I help others without first working on myself? My curiosity about mindfulness led me to learn more about meditation. To do this, I needed to experience the process. So, I went to a vipassana, which means 'seeing things as they really are', retreat to learn more about mindfulness at a place called Dhamma Dipa. I experienced 2 separate 10-day silent retreats, where approximately 100 people spent 10 hours a day meditating. A crazy thing to do you might think, and it definitely was a difficult endeavour. However, it was at the same time, one of the best things I have done to learn about mindfulness without distractions of daily life.

What is mindfulness? It involves being mindful of what you are doing. Further to this, it is the awareness that each moment is changing and consciously thinking about the 'present'. A quote from Thich Nhat Hanh, a famous Vietnamese Buddhist monk, neatly encapsulates my understanding of this concept:

"Waking up this morning, I smile. Twenty-four brand new hours are before me. I vow to live fully in each

moment and to look at all beings with eyes of compassion."

(Thich Nhat Hanh)

This year there have been many events on mindfulness. It is the new buzzword. If you type mindfulness into Google, you get 14,300,000 results. Google in fact have been running a programme on mindfulness since 2007 called 'Search Inside Yourself.' It is being applied to help people to be in control of lots of situations in healthcare, at work, in prisons and in education. It is a practical tool that is very simple and teaches the importance of focusing on your breath, thinking before you react and being conscious of your emotions and thoughts. As human beings, we find the simplest things can often be the most difficult. But, if we can learn to complete daily tasks mindfully (eating, walking and brushing our teeth) we are on the path to being more mindful. After all, as Thich Nhat Hanh teaches, 'peace is every step'...

Measuring Mindfulness

There are 6 different scales that can be used (see link below for ways to measure mindfulness). The Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) has the longest empirical track record as a valid measure of trait mindfulness. The MAAS is a 15-item scale designed to assess a core characteristic of dispositional mindfulness, namely, open or receptive awareness of and attention to what is taking place in the present. The scale shows strong psychometric properties and has been validated

with college, community and cancer patient samples. Correlational, quasi-experimental and laboratory studies have shown that the MAAS taps a unique quality of consciousness that is related to, and predictive of, a variety of self-regulation and well-being constructs. The measure takes 10 minutes or less to complete.

During the Mindfulness at Work conference in Feb 2012, I completed the MAAS which comprises 15 statements about people's everyday experiences. I scored 4.5, with the closer one's score being to the maximum score of 6, the more mindful one would be. To score the scale, you simply compute a mean of the 15 items. Higher scores reflect higher levels of dispositional mindfulness.

There is now hard evidence to show the impact of mindfulness on the brain. From my personal experience of meditating it has made me more compassionate. There is evidence that shows mindfulness training as a highly effective way of developing attitudes of corporate social responsibility in managers. (RESPONSE)

Mindfulnet.org who sponsored the first conference have produced a summary of all the research outcomes relevant to the workplace. Some highlights include research which shows that practising mindfulness helps managers to deal better with complexity at work (Hunter & McCormick, 2008). Mindfulness training has been shown to shift activity in the brain from the right prefrontal cortex to the left prefrontal cortex. Greater activity in the left prefrontal cortex is associated with a more positive mood, while greater activity in the right is associated with states such as depression (Davidson, R et al, 2003).

There are also neuroscience findings on the benefits of mindfulness for focus and concentration. A lack of focus and concentration can really undermine your work performance. Practising mindfulness can improve your focus and concentration, even when in a busy or stressful environment.

- Research into mindfulness in a work context suggests that mindfulness widens your attentional breadth, allowing you to be aware of a lot of things simultaneously (Dane, E, 2010).
- A recent study conducted in the US Marine Corps investigated the impact of mindfulness training on working memory capacity. The study suggests that mindfulness training may improve working memory in a stressful environment (Jha Ap et al, 2010).
- Researchers at Harvard used MRI scans to look at the brains of people who had practised mindfulness meditation for many years, and found that areas of the brain associated with attention and sensory processing were thicker than in people who had never meditated. (Lazar S et al, 2005).

For more information on ways to measure mindfulness go to <http://www.mindfulexperience.org/measurement.php> and the business case for mindfulness in the workplace <http://www.mindfulnet.org/page35.htm>

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- 'Citizens and Governance in a Knowledge Based Society': Understanding and Responding to Societal Demands on Corporate Responsibility (RESPONSE)

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Developmental Coaching: Working with the Self

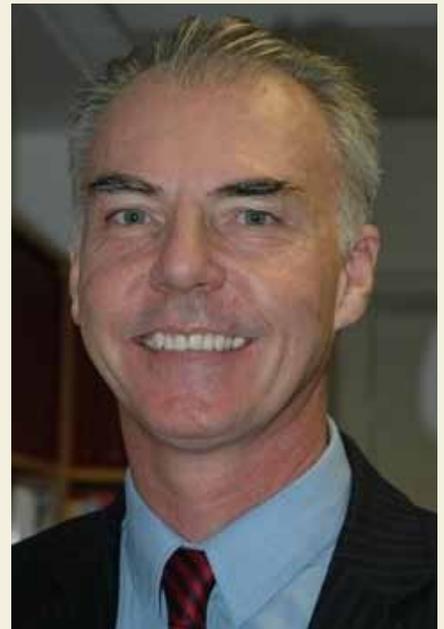
Reflections on Dr.Tatiana Bachkirova's presentation at The Psychometrics Forum event on 8th May 2012

At the May Forum event we had a very stimulating, lively and thought-provoking presentation from Dr Tatiana Bachkirova at the Caledonian Club near Hyde Park, London. The presentation espoused many of the ideas put forward in her latest book, launched last year – **Developmental Coaching. Working with the Self** (Oxford University Press)

In brief, Tatiana introduced the “cognitive-developmental” approach to coaching. This is based on research that shows people differ in ways that could not be explained by personality types alone. Instead, people not only differ from others, but undergo significant change themselves, for example by making meaning out of their experiences. The coaching process therefore focuses on areas of client development such as cognitive, needs, spiritual, self and moral values. Thus this coaching “model” seems more akin to the developmental models of Piaget and Kohlberg, rather than the more “solution focused” approaches employed by many contemporary coaches.

The cognitive development approach does not employ specific tools and techniques. Rather, it carefully considers the appropriateness of all techniques. This emphasis implies the importance of the personal growth of the coaches themselves. The difference is made by the coach themselves rather than by the techniques they employ!

Tatiana's presentation sparked a lively debate amongst the delegates, the main thrust of which was how such an approach could be “sold” to the “HR Gatekeepers”! Most executive coaching in organisations is outcome focused with a “contract” between the coach, the organization and the client with agreed measurable outcomes. Tatiana agreed that this was a major obstacle, but was optimistic that it could be overcome by educating HR personnel and organisational stakeholders about the merits of this approach. She also agreed that this approach was most likely to be adopted by executives with the power to make the decision to employ this approach (e.g. senior management), thereby bypassing the HR gatekeepers, or by “self payers “. In support of this Tatiana gave some compelling examples of when this approach has worked well. It certainly made sense to the delegates operating in this field as we all know of instances where the client seeks to deviate from the agreed organisational outcomes.



Nicholas Bateson

Dr Tatiana Bachkirova is Programme Director for MA in Coaching and Mentoring Supervision at Oxford Brookes University, UK. She is a Chartered occupational Psychologist, an experienced coaching supervisor and co-editor of *The Complete Handbook of Coaching*

Nicholas Bateson, Director of Capital Psychometrics Limited, is a well-known business psychologist specialising in career and executive coaching. He writes and speaks regularly on topics such as emotional intelligence at work, optimism at work, organisational stress management and egomaniacs at work! He is external adviser to the University of Roehampton on their new post graduate certificate in Soft Skills Development and Experiential Learning, launching October 2012.

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A&DC's Resilience Questionnaire

From her introduction to this session, it was clear that Ann Rodrigues research had both surprised and disappointed her. She was surprised to see a Google search produced over thirty-six million hits for 'resilience' within ten seconds, then disappointed to discover the promising sounding 'Celestial Resilience' was in fact an American techno band! For us, though, it was Dan Hughes and Kate Sobczak who took the stage to present on A&DC's Resilience Questionnaire.

Dan is A&DC's Director of Product Development and one of the authors of the questionnaire while Kate is Managing Consultant and a regular user of the product with clients so we were shown the instrument from both design and user perspectives. Having been given a rapid overview of theories of stress, in an interactive session we considered the components of resilience and how the instrument had been structured. Those who had been able to complete the online questionnaire in advance were then given their own reports to consider.

Using three well-known personalities as examples, we discussed the range of circumstances which might call for resilience and the different ways in which individuals manifested the ability to adapt and get on with their lives. The consensus was that the triggers were subjective but, while we varied in the way we responded, there were some common elements to successful coping strategies. The current heightened need to be able to identify and develop successful coping strategies is borne out by a 2011 CIPD Employee Outlook survey in which over half the respondents reported an increase in work stress as a result of the economic downturn. Research suggests the benefits to employers of more resilience in their staff include not only improved engagement, performance, positivity and sense of wellbeing but also that it buffers against stress and burnout.

A&DC have chosen to define resilience as "an individual's capacity to adapt positively to pressure, setbacks, challenge and change in order to achieve peak performance". This definition emphasises the positive and pragmatic benefits of our ability to adapt, and the resulting potential for peak performance, while also underlining the damaging effect of allowing everyday pressures to accumulate. Responding to this client need, A&DC have designed the instrument within a working context, focused it on eight attributes that can be developed – and ensured it is quick and easy. It can be completed online within fifteen minutes.

Kate's experience with clients showed the instrument could be used successfully in development centres built around competencies, group settings and in one to one telephone coaching.

The eight attributes or scales used are Self belief, Optimism, Purposeful Direction, Adaptability, Ingenuity, Challenge Orientation, Emotional



Dr Jay Roseveare

Regulation, and Support Seeking. Having been given a brief description of the scales, delegates were able to confirm the face validity of a selection of items by pairing the two correctly. Internal consistency for all eight is greater than the customary 0.7 benchmark and correlations were supplied for related constructs in four other instruments (The Resilience Scale, PANAS, The Personal Wellbeing Scale and The Engagement Questionnaire). The overall UK working population norm group currently numbers 1085 with four subgroups ranging in size from 138 to 478. No particular gender differences have been noted.

The individual report can be supported by a workbook – the current costs being £20 and £35 respectively – and the conversion course for those Level B qualified is currently £95 + VAT.

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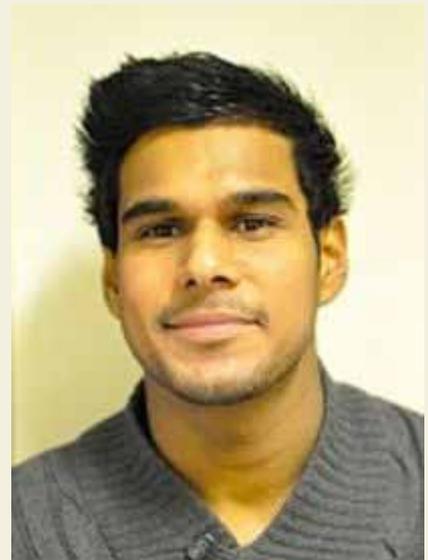
Blogging – Fresh Perspective on Psychometrics

Dear readers of *Psyche*,

I hope you're enjoying the current edition. I'd like to introduce myself, as the newest committee member of the Psychometrics Forum and the author of their new blog – 'Fresh Perspectives on Psychometrics'. The choice of title reflects my current position, as a new test user and a soon to be Occupational Psychologist in training, rather than any claim that the blog will be revolutionising the field of Psychometrics with brand new discoveries. Instead, it aims to provide a candid perspective on new experiences, topical issues and new research from Occupational Psychology and Psychometrics. Hopefully, the blog will provide insights into issues that the recent graduate may be able to relate to, hence further providing awareness of such topics, for the seasoned practitioner. The first blog entry focused on the topic of 'Resilience' and a discussion about the importance of this concept for individuals and organisations. The second blog will be focusing on the seemingly age-old, but as ever, controversial issue of the academic-practitioner divide.

A little about me... I am currently completing an MSc in Occupational Psychology, at The University of Nottingham (Institute of Work, Health and Organisations). My applied research project is all about Organisational Culture and the relationship certain culture types have with Organisational Effectiveness. I am also interested in the processes at work here, so 'Psychological Meaningfulness' and 'Value congruency' are also being measured as mediating factors. Stay tuned for a blog regarding the findings of this research. Whilst completing my masters, I have been working part-time for Nurture Market Research Ltd., looking into Employee Engagement and maintaining a blog surrounding this very topical area. As well as this, I assisted in creating a commercial 'Engagement model' for Nurture, with plans for it to be used as a diagnostic moving forward. In terms of my background, I completed my Undergraduate degree in Experimental Psychology at Balliol College, The University of Oxford. This was a fantastic learning experience for me, and has been a large influence on the importance I place on an evidence based approach. A proud moment for me was my final year research project being accepted to be published in the Journal of Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry. It investigated the underlying cognitive causes of anxiety within adolescents (currently in press).

I have also been fortunate enough to have worked for a short time at The MindGym, as a solutions coordinator. It was a fantastic and enjoyable experience for me, applying psychological theory to coaching workshops



Rajesh Chopra

and webinars for large commercial clients and getting an insight into this creative and dynamic organisation. I am about to take my first real step into the world of work, as a Trainee Occupational Psychologist for Glow at Work in October (I am currently an intern), and could not be more excited about it. I'm sure the experiences I will gain and the knowledge and training which I accumulate will collectively shape this blog. I hope that you read and enjoy the various pieces as much as I will enjoy writing them. Please feel free to comment and provide feedback, perhaps via the LinkedIn group. This is a fantastic opportunity for me and this blog is something which I want to continually improve. You can find the blog at: <http://www.psychometricsforum.org/news-and-events/blog/>. Thanks, I look forward to meeting some of you at the Psychometric Forum events.

Enjoy the blog,

Rajesh Chopra

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