

Edition 64
Spring 2012

Psyche

The newsletter of The Psychometrics Forum



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

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A few words from your Editor

*Adrian Starkey – Chartered Occupational Psychologist
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Dear Reader

Welcome to the Spring edition of Psyche. To me this edition feels like a diverse mix of content with the potential to both concern and console assessment practitioners. For those who attended Steve Blinkhorn's master class on item response theory at last November's New Frontiers event, I will not attempt to introduce embedded Dickensian characters into this piece. However, building on the neuroscience theme that we addressed in our May event last year, attentive readers of this edition will be rewarded with two references to the executive function of the frontal lobes.

First we hear from our Chair Xanthy Kallis with reflections on TPF activities from the past year, with a look forward to 2012 and beyond. Paul Barrett provides a characteristically thought provoking contribution on the application of personality assessment in individual psychological assessment. This is followed by a summary piece by Hugh McCredie on a recent discussion thread on the application of the work of Elliott Jaques' in the prediction of managerial potential. Hugh's piece reminds me of the fertile and immediate global platform for discussion that our LinkedIn site has provided in recent years.

Summaries from the most recent TPF event on Leadership are included and we hear from one of our newest members Rajesh Chopra, who provides a review of Adrian Furnham's presentation on the dark side of leadership. From the same event Lynne Hindmarch reviews the presentation from the family Metcalfe on the use of psychometrics in the study of leadership. This February event was well attended and provided those members present with some excellent networking opportunities.

Paula Cruise reports on a recent analysis undertaken by OPP looking at the stability of personality over time and the importance of person-organisation fit to achieving business objectives. No doubt this will be of particular interest to those who originally joined this group when we were the 16PF Users Group. Pete Jones builds on recent discussion an important issue regarding the perennial issue of adverse impact (AI) and provides an intriguing perspective on how the way that we use them may exaggerate (or even create) group level differences. Pete's is a very constructive piece that includes some useful suggestions relevant to practitioners and publishers alike.

Jeff Trickey introduces us to a new psychometric measure from PCL looking at individual differences associated with risk. Given the events of recent history this would seem to be a potentially useful addition to the assessor's arsenal. Also on the subject of individual differences, Matt Goff takes us on a journey through air traffic control to present the case for utilizing the assessment of personality factors in the recruitment of sales people.

Finally assessment polymath Andrew Munro provides us with an end piece musing on the similarities and potential synergies between selection in an occupational context and the technological aids available to guide our romantic choices. This takes me back over 20 years to my own postgraduate days when I undertook an empirical evaluation of the Dateline

I undertook an empirical evaluation of the Dateline Computer Dating algorithm. As I recall (for the most part) birds of a feather tend to flock together.....

So there we have it. Psyche Spring 2012 with informative, constructive, stimulating and occasionally challenging contributions from as far apart as New Zealand, Canada and Tunbridge Wells. Together they remind us of our history, but also provide some tantalizing hints at possible futures.

Forthcoming TPF Events

8th May 2012 Aspects of Coaching
 Dr. Tatiana Bachkirova on
 Developmental Coaching
 Dan Hughes on The Resilience
 Questionnaire

26th September 2012 Organisations and Culture
 (provisional title)

20th November 2012 New Frontiers in
 Psychometrics

Copy Deadline

The copy deadline for the Summer edition is 15th June.

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Report from the Chair



Xanthy Kallis – Chair of The Psychometrics Forum

Dear Member, Hello

I thought I would share some of the exciting things we have been up to over the past year as part of our on going commitment to you, our members, to provide a forum for interesting topics and speakers.

We have continued to broaden out our coverage of themes and tests in our meetings, showing the different applications of psychometric testing in the current workplace. We have also been able to break new ground with presentations of some cutting edge ideas and research with our May event (Brain and Personality) which looked at insights gained from Neuro-science that inform the world of assessment. We were also successful in setting up new ways of bringing you internationally renowned speakers such as Prof Colin De-Young via 'video link' from America (again with our May event) together with in person presentations from Rita Carter and Paul Brown.

Our website www.psychometricsforum.org, is helping us raise our profile, both nationally and internationally, as is our LinkedIn group, which now has over 2500 affiliate members, making us truly the biggest '**independent**' psychometric group on LinkedIn. The calibre of our speakers indicates how far we have achieved this raise in our profile, given that many internationally renowned speakers take notice of our group and its uniqueness. We were delighted to welcome back Bob Hogan together with Peter Saville in June as well as Adrian Furnham and Beverly Alimo-Metcalfe in February. We are now in a position where speakers approach us to present to you, such is our success.

We are also working to ensure that we continue to increase awareness of our activities and raise our profile amongst the wide range of test publishers, academics and researchers and other authorities in the field. We are already able to influence the test publishers we have worked with over the years, but are keen to extend this influence to publishers of newer tests and those with specific applications e.g. in talent management and coaching.

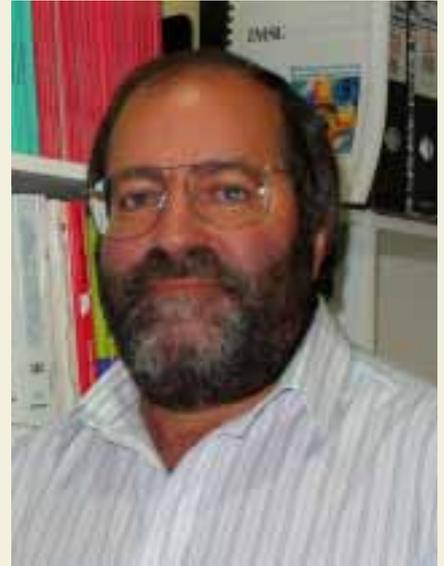
Having a rich mix of members and contributors adds tremendous value to the quality of interactions at our meetings, and is invaluable to networking. I look forward to seeing you at our next meeting (8th May, Aspects of Coaching) and welcoming you, if this will be your first time with us!

All the best

Xanthy Kallis

Chair of The Psychometrics Forum

Interpreting Commercial Personality Test Scores: Separating the Subjective from the Objective



Paul Barrett – MD Advanced Projects R&D Ltd.

Honorary Professor of Psychology, University of Auckland, NZ.

Associate Professor of Psychology, University of Canterbury, NZ.

I'm being asked a question by an increasing number of psychologist-practitioners whose practice might be described as Individual Psychological Assessment. That is, they specialize in the psychological assessment of one or more individuals for a client, using a variety of assessment tools, including psychometric personality assessment via a typical self-report personality test. There is a considerable amount of subjective judgement involved in how they arrive at a series of statements about an individual's psychological make-up and how the mix of information they have acquired from an individual will translate into likely future performance. Some practitioners even avoid using the usual narrative normative-data test reports produced by many test publishers, preferring instead to develop interpretations using the questionnaire item responses and/or raw test scores.

Usually, the question is asked of me after a practitioner has attended a conference, where they have found themselves criticized by some for being so 'subjective', for not being 'scientific', or for being a 'dinosaur' in the face of modern commercial psychometrics test practices.

The question, put simply, is: "Compared to those who use publisher test reports to inform their judgments about an individual's personality, am I being unscientific in how I arrive at my decisions"? My short answer is: "You are being no more scientific or

unscientific than someone who uses an automated report derived from any of the main personality measures".

Clearly, at a mechanical level, a computer-generated narrative test report is utterly objective, in that given a set of input test scores, fixed algorithms are applied which will produce the same or very similar text-based output and interpretation. So, it is a form of standardized reporting. But, it can be very misleading when based upon normed scores using highly skewed norms, as interpretation is based not upon the number of actual behaviours endorsed, but on the comparison between a group whose scores might nearly all be located across the top quartile range of raw scores. So, an individual who scores say 8 out of 12 with a percentile score of 30 might then be interpreted as 'low' on say "emotional Intelligence", which actually makes no sense at all if the score is meant to convey a preference for behaving in a certain way.

The design, construction, calibration, and validation of psychometric tests is where serious attention is paid to the objectivity of assessment. The score-key is the end-result of the 'appliance of science'. Now, if we wish to continue as scientists, we would be cautious about making the assumption that any psychological attribute varies according to the axioms of quantity that underpin the SI unit measures within physics (*for that is what all who use conventional 'metric' methods of analysis*

assume). So, what we would do is acquire evidence of frequencies of occurrence of certain behaviours associated with the magnitudes of test scores. If for example we propose that the higher scores on an attribute lead to greater prevalence of derailment behaviour, we would make observations of derailment behaviours associated with assessed employees within organizations, thus enabling us to state a factual probability of occurrence of specific or generic derailment behaviours associated with each magnitude attribute score.

Within a science of personality assessment, when a statement is made about the likelihood of occurrence associated with a particular test score, one might expect it to be accompanied by a quantified probability of that occurrence. But, with personality testing at least, the reality is that the science grinds to a halt after the score-key development. If you do not possess facts about the frequencies of occurrence of certain behaviours associated with a particular test score, you have to move to a more subjective interpretation of what those scores might indicate for future outcomes. You may embed someone's personal expert interpretation in a computer program or rely upon the judgment of an experienced psychologist to interpret the scores. The end result is the same, the objective 'measurement' embedded in the item responses, raw test scores, and correlational 'validity' evidence, has been augmented by subjective interpretation.

There are ways of designing and analyzing tests such that a cumulative response function can be computed, based upon actual frequencies of occurrence of certain behaviours, with those scoring very high on such a scale showing greater quantified prevalence of the construct criterion behaviours. The reporting information for such tests is in terms of the likelihood of occurrence of one or more particular events occurring. There is no subjective interpretation of a test score; its 'meaning' is provided by the cumulative probabilities of occurrence of the behaviours which form the cumulative scale. However, subjectivity can and does enter into how to weight such information in a decision-making process, unless more formal empirical work is undertaken to develop a classifier function in which the test scores may be embedded and used mechanically.

Ultimately, It is not my intention to argue the pros and cons of individual psychological assessment (*although that is a topic worthy of close examination as has taken place recently in a target article and series of peer commentaries in the APA SIOP journal Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Vol. 4, 2011*). I simply want to suggest that a similar degree of subjectivity is prevalent in how practitioners prefer to use the results of applying a score-key to a set of self-report questionnaire items. In my view, to claim 'standardized test reporting' is more scientific merely because one or more individuals have embedded their subjective expert judgments in a computer program is mistaken. Standardization does bring 'regularity', but such regularity is invariably overridden in practice by the 'optional' interpretative judgments of users, who like the individual expert psychologist-practitioner, find that they often need to take context and other information into account in order to arrive at a particular decision.

And, there is a new concern that as test publishers compete to produce more reports based upon 'plausible reasoning' rescoring, re-interpreting the same set of items in a test and changing attribute names and descriptions to make them more commercially attractive, the degree of subjectivity inherent in producing such narrative reports eventually overwhelms the objectivity of the psychometrics. Paradoxically, under such conditions, an individual psychologist-practitioner's more consistent use of item responses and psychometric test results may well prove more accurate for a client in the long run.

Paul Barrett

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Using Jaques' Categories of Mental Processes (CMP) to Predict Managerial Potential

Dr. Hugh McCredie – TPF Vice Chair

During the darkest months of winter, a good-natured, extended and informative discussion on this subject took place on the TPF LinkedIn website.

The starting point of the debate was a reminder that Elliott Jaques' Categories of Mental

Processes (CMP)¹ were reported as yielding huge correlations ($r\ 0.90+$) with senior managers' judgements of individual managers' Current Potential Capacity (CPC); i.e. the level in the organisation which they were judged capable of performing effectively. This compared favourably with the correlation ($r\ 0.58$) of general mental ability (GMA) tests and managerial performance arising out of meta-analysis².

The principal issues discussed were:

- Whether Jaques' findings were supported by anyone else, and,
- If so, why were they so much better than conventional GMA/IQ measures?
- Is there a relationship between CMP and conventional GMA/IQ measures?

Jaques had measured CMP by presenting subjects with two discussion topics: one of their own choice in which they had a real interest, the other was a given topic concerning the possibility of legalizing the use of drugs. Responses were analysed and assigned each to one of six levels reflecting the type of reasoning displayed. The following are the first four of the six processing categories in ascending order:

- *Declarative processing*: explaining their position by presenting a number of separate reasons.
- *Cumulative processing*: combining a number of different, but separately insufficient, ideas to make the case.
- *Serial processing*: presenting a sequence of linked reasons
- *Parallel processing*: examining a number of possible alternatives, each arrived at by serial processing.

With regard to support for Jaques' findings, Richard Sale of EDAC Ltd reported data concerning Career Path Analysis (CPA), a measure related to CMP developed by Gillian Stamp³. He told us of several long-term follow-up studies with predictive validities ranging between $r\ 0.70$ and $r\ 0.92$.



Steve Blinkhorn was generally supportive of Jaques' measures, along with good psychometrics, as economical predictors of potential. However, he was sceptical about 'real' validity coefficients of $0.9+$, believing these may have been due to inter-dependence of predictor and criterion measures. Maretha Prinsloo of Cognadev and author of the Cognitive Process Profile (CPP), attributed the better predictive validity of Jaques-type' measures to their wider bandwidth compared to conventional GMA/IQ scales.

Turning to the relationship of CMP, and its variants, to GMA/IQ, I found moderate (circa $r\ 0.40$) correlations between tests of verbal ability and Potentia[®], yet another measure of mental processing, but none for numerical ability⁴. Maretha Prinsloo, asserted correlations of between $r\ 0.3$ and $r\ 0.6$ between CPP and IQ test results, especially with verbally-saturated scales.

I conclude that CMP, and its like, has real predictive value over conventional GMA/IQ and have become convinced of Maretha Primisloo's argument that its secret was a question of bandwidth. I was reminded of what I had read in Elkhonon Goldberg's *The New Executive Brain*⁵, that IQ tests were devised to assess scholastic educability and most involve only the selection of a 'right answer', from a range of given alternatives. In the real world of both life, in general, and management, in particular, readymade options are rarely available and there is invariable uncertainty about what constitutes the right answer. Invading Afghanistan seemed appropriate at the time but will we still think this to be the case in the next ten years and beyond?

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Scriven, R, Savage, A. & McCredie, H. (1994) The search for executive intelligence. *Selection & Development Review*, 10(2)

Goldberg, E. (2009) *The new executive brain*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Hugh McCredie

*Hugh is Vice-chair of The Psychometrics Forum and author of **Selecting and developing better managers**.*

The Dark Side of Leadership; Too Much of a Good Thing, is a Bad Thing



Dr Adrian Furnham

Dr. Adrian Furnham, TPF Speaker February 2012

Summary by Rajesh Chopra – Intern at Glow at Work



Rajesh Chopra

As the coffees were being poured, introductions between attendees were being made and preparations for the exciting day that lay ahead were being finalised, there was a real sense of expectation around the room. It was a great pleasure for the Psychometrics Forum to be hosting such an esteemed academic. By his own admission, Professor Adrian Furnham, is a management "guru" (because they're more expensive), having written articles for the FT, the Guardian and the Sunday Times. As well as this, he is a prolific publisher, in areas ranging from personality to leadership to management. Having previously held a post at The University of Oxford as a Lecturer in Psychology, he has been Professor of Psychology at University College London (UCL) since 1992. He took to the stage with a chorus of ice-breaking jokes and instantly, the audience were at ease and engaged with what was to be a talk surrounding issues of derailing leadership traits and the dark side of personality.

During the introduction, two key points were eloquently emphasised by Adrian, as take-home messages. The first was the need for 'selecting-out' in recruitment, which referred to the process of looking for traits, qualities or characteristics that you don't want for a leadership role and eliminating candidates on this basis. This should accompany a 'select-in' process, more commonly used, where competencies are set, and the more evidence of these competencies is advantageous for the candidate in their bid for a vacancy. Secondly, too much of a good thing, is a bad thing. This refers to the idea that extremes of personality traits, based on the Eysenckian Spectrum Hypothesis that they are normally distributed, are abnormal. The key is curvilinearity, as an optimum is what is desired, hence too little is incompetence, while too much is derailing.

Adrian went on to persist that we as Psychologists, wrongly attribute all the blame for derailed leadership, to the leader themselves. However, in order for the full picture to be clearly seen, the environment and the followers must be considered as crucial pieces of the derailment jigsaw. In terms of followers, they must be vulnerable enough to allow such a leader to touch upon their needs and indoctrinate them into allowing corruption and chaos. On the other hand, the environment must be unstable and unregulated, in order for the dark side of traits to thrive. The three elements together constituted the 'Toxic Triangle'. This very interesting notion is supported by Tim Judge, as his extremely comprehensive and frankly quite complicated model depicted in the presentation, shows a number of traits, mediators and moderators which effect leadership behaviours.

A key moment in the talk was the description of Adrian's profile of good leadership in terms of the Big five factors:

- Very high in IQ – the need for leaders to be 'bright' enough.
- Very low in Neuroticism – the ability to perform under stress and pressure.
- Introverted or Extraverted made little difference - but the former had to look like the latter at times.
- Intermediately Open to experiences – too high could lead to schizotypal behaviours.
- Low on Agreeableness – nice people come second.

- Very high on Conscientiousness – achievement orientated.

This sparked large debate and controversy, amongst a group of Big 5 practitioners, who were particularly troubled by the assertion that low Agreeableness was associated with good leadership. The data was what Adrian used as his defence, a good defence at that. However, the most important factors were claimed to be Intelligence, low Neuroticism and high Conscientiousness, and there was a very interesting discussion of the dark sides of each of the 5 factors.

The final part of the talk saw Adrian discuss personality disorders and how leaders tend to be good-looking, talented and articulate individuals who cross over into the extremes of these personality domains. The personality disorders discussed were anti-social or psychopathic, characterised by a lack of remorse, narcissism - associated with grandiose and power need, paranoia - which could be good in some sectors i.e. security, schizoid – which was linked to creative types, histrionic (which Adrian jokingly compared himself to) and finally OCD i.e. the perfectionist. Ultimately research showed that the higher individuals were in these personality disorders, the more likely they were to be bad leaders. This led quite neatly to research which outlined that too much of certain competencies can lead to negative outcomes. For example, a very good team player, ends up relying on others to get work done or being good with people can lead to you become 'Mr.Soft'.

To round off an intriguing and thought-provoking talk Adrian stressed that most, if not all of the successful, powerful and influential leaders that he had worked with, had some 'dark side' to them. However, whether they sank horrendously or swam seemingly effortlessly depended on the awareness of their extreme personality and the effectiveness of their *compensatory* behavioural strategies.

As I begin my journey as an Occupational Psychologist, what really struck me as a result of this talk, is that we all have weaknesses. Even the most successful and celebrated individuals, the people I look up to most and those who would be role models, are not perfect. Rather, their talent in their particular domain is rivalled by their ability to embrace these weaknesses, rather than ignoring them. And for me, this is where the role of an Occ Psych is so crucial, as we have the power and responsibility to raise this awareness in the

them to be able to sustain excellence. This was my first Psychometrics Forum event, after which I have promptly become a member. It was a great chance for a student and a budding Occ Psych to gain such intimate knowledge and meet such friendly and knowledgeable professionals in an informal, yet

intellectually stimulating arena. Overall, a fantastic event and I am thoroughly looking forward to the next Psychometrics Forum.

For more information on Professor Adrian Furnham, see <http://adrianfurnham.com/>.

Leadership & the Use of Psychometrics

Beverly Alimo-Metcalfe, John Alban-Metcalfe & Juliette Alban-Metcalfe, TPF Speakers February 2012

Summary by Lynne Hindmarch,
Business Psychologist.
TPF Committee Member.



TPF Chair Xanthy Kallis and Beverly Alimo-Metcalfe



Leadership: Engaging hearts and minds for a win-win situation

The afternoon session was very much a family affair, with Beverly Alimo-Metcalfe and her husband John Alban-Metcalfe, who both founded Real World Group, and their daughter Juliette Alban-Metcalfe, who is Managing Director of the Group, all present at the event, though the delivery was led by Beverly and Juliette.

Beverly began by discussing the history of studies in leadership, and the difficulties associated with those

studies. It has been a fascinating journey. She explained that most studies have been cross-sectional, and few have shown a causal link between leadership and organisational performance, when measured objectively and controlled for contextual variables, such as resources. A number of studies have used subjective assessments of effectiveness by individuals, rating the leader's behaviour, style or competencies. Even when objective measures have been used, the range has been limited to, for example, financial measures, or non-financial measures (such as employee attitudes),

rather than adopting both types of outcome measures, which would strengthen criterion validity. As is so often the case in organisational psychology, there has been a lack of longitudinal studies.

The difficulties with researching leadership.

Beverly emphasised the need to be critical about models of leadership. There has been a lack of distinction between studies of leadership at macro-level and at micro-level (socially distant versus close). This means that 'distant' famous leaders are described in terms such as decisive and charismatic – and these terms are then applied to 'close' leaders, although the situations are different. She said that we appear to be drawn to

charismatic leaders, although there is no correlation between them and the success of the organisation. But there is a correlation between charisma and pay!

Beverly also pointed to the narrowness of focus on a limited range of leadership models. This has meant that, for example, paying attention to dyadic processes and neglecting the influence of leadership in team-based contexts (ie, leadership based on leader-follower, not the effect of leadership across the whole organisation).

There has also been a presumption that US models can be generalised to non-US contexts. Most models have been developed based on predominately male samples. Beverly said the history of research in leadership since the 1930s (which is when academic studies of leadership started) is based on white US males, with the findings extrapolated to other cultures. So there are important questions to ask when looking at leadership research, such as: what population was studied? who paid for the research?

Notions of leadership evolve

Beverly described the early studies in leadership, which initially focused on trait theories, suggesting that leaders are born not made. But no consistent traits were identified except that a leader might be expected to exhibit high dominance, energy and to be fairly bright. At this stage the context in which the leader operated was not investigated.

During the 1960s, behaviour and situational models of leadership were developed, such as the Hersey-Blanchard situational leadership theory, which states that successful leaders should change their leadership styles based on the maturity of the people they are leading and the details of the task. Fiedler's contingency model emerged during this decade, which indicated that there is no one best style of leadership. Instead, a leader's effectiveness is based on the situation. This is the result of two factors – 'leadership style' and 'situational favorableness'.

Other leadership models emerged during the 1980s, such as Bass's transactional and transformational leadership model, with transformational being seen as the most important element, displayed by characteristics such as integrity, articulating a vision, and consideration for the individual.

With the growth of other economies, leadership studies began to focus more on dealing with ambiguity, change, complexity and competition. There was increasing concern that the 'heroic' models of leadership, where power was vested in one person which at times left blood on the carpet, was no longer appropriate in a complex and fast-changing world.

The criticism of the heroic model was made on both conceptual and methodological grounds. There was a lack of conceptual clarity, and it was also seen as elitist and anti-democratic; it stressed that the leader 'does things to' others in the organisation. It fails to acknowledge the influence of the follower in the follower-leader relationship, and has the potential for damage depending on the leader's ethical disposition. Furthermore, business schools were uncritically exaggerating the contribution leaders made to business success, emphasising how powerful and charismatic leaders routinely rescued organisations from the brink of failure. The emphasis on the power of the individual leader also encouraged business students to develop inflated notions of their own leadership potential and likely future role, invoking leadership theories that overstate the directive role of leaders and underestimate the potential role of followership.

Leadership: future directions

Beverly explained that old models of leadership focused on the position and influence of a few; they are now obsolete as new models have disrupted this order. Models of team leadership and shared leadership that have been neglected in the past are starting to emerge. This has resulted in a move from leadership as position to leadership as practice (i.e. behaviours); from an individual to a collective focus. Also, leadership has been viewed as a social process – a dynamic, collective activity, which emerges in and through relationships and networks of influence. Interactions are collaborative, and the influence is a two-way dialogue. These social interactions result in learning and growth for the individuals involved, and for their organisation.

There is now a major interest in 'engagement'. In 2010, HR Magazine reported that 59% of HR Directors picked out employee engagement as key for their businesses over the next year, suggesting it will play a major part in driving businesses out of recession.

public sector, and over 1,200 in the private sector. They then developed and distributed a pilot questionnaire, analysing the data from over 4,500 responses.

The resulting 'Engaging' Transformational Leadership Questionnaire (TLQ) comprises 4 elements and 14 dimensions:

Leading and Developing Individuals

Showing genuine concern
Being accessible
Enabling
Encouraging change

Personal Qualities and Values

Being honest and consistent
Acting with integrity

Leading and Developing the Organisation

Supporting a developmental culture
Inspiring others
Focusing team effort
Being decisive

Leading the Way Forward Together

Building shared vision
Networking
Resolving complex problems
Facilitating change sensitively

This formed the basis for 360 instruments and team instruments, with content, construct, convergent, discriminant and predictive validities, which are

generalisable across both sectors (e.g. health, local government, police, FTSE 100 companies) and countries (USA, Singapore, Australia, Canada).

A 3 year longitudinal study was carried out on the impact of these leadership behaviours on productivity in 46 teams (N=743). The outcomes assessed were: productivity, morale, well-being. Contextual factors were controlled for. The findings indicated that competencies do not predict effectiveness; it is a pre-requisite but not a predictor. However, the level of engagement does predict effectiveness.

At this point Juliette Alban-Metcalfe took up the story. She spoke about the practical application of the Engaging Leadership Model. The key considerations are: start the process as high in organisation as possible; assess both individual and cultural leadership factors; separate perceptions of senior leaders from others; emphasise the need to focus on competencies as well as behaviours.

Juliette explained that one of the benefits of the TLQ is that it can be applied in various forms as there are 26 different instruments, including versions for Board level, public sector, and private sector.

Further information on the work of the Real World Group can be found on their website:

www.realworld-group.com and on the TLQ from: juliette.albanmetcalfe@realworld-group.com.

The Stability and Organisational Value of Personality Assessment

*Dr. Paula Cruise, Managing Consultant
– Research & Development, OPP Ltd.*



The measurement of personality represents a key component in identifying individuals who are best suited for particular situations, contexts and planned objectives. However, sceptics of standardised testing often voice doubts about the stability of personality assessment findings as well as its impact on real-world outcomes. We recently conducted research to demonstrate both the stability of personality over time and its role in accomplishing desired organisational objectives.

The relationship between personality and job performance has been consistently documented. Despite this, recent research by the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD, 2011) found competency interviews (70%), traditional interviews (63%) and structured interviews (56%) were the most common methods used to select applicants in the UK. In addition, 58% of the 480 organisations surveyed cited managerial and professional roles remained the most difficult positions to fill and retain. With organisations experiencing the same recruitment challenges for the past five years, findings emphasise that interviews alone are not effective enough to identify and keep candidates with the best fit.

Person-Fit and Positive Organisational Outcomes

The notion of 'fit' is based on the premise that people are likely to be more satisfied when what a job supplies is what an individual wants or desires or where an individual's abilities meet the demands of the job (Daniels & deJonge, 2010). Therefore, occupations that provide the most satisfaction are the ones that offer the greatest congruence with a person's preferences, interests, values and abilities. Indeed, it has been found that perceived person-organisation fit is a significant predictor of job satisfaction, turnover intentions and organisational commitment (Swyny & Albrecht, 2003).

Personality is central to the concept of fit. Individual values, interests, preferences and abilities represent core composites of personality. Similarly, organisational values, structures and processes are all components of a company's personality – generally classified as culture. The use of personality assessment is therefore integral to any process that identifies 'fit' as a key objective. Given the evidence from the last twenty years, personality testing remains one of the best predictors of both job performance and training potential and certainly a better measure of 'fit' than traditional interviews (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Robertson & Smith, 2001).

Research and Key Findings

Stage 1: We administered the 16PF personality questionnaire to 1,212 residents of the UK and Ireland. Participants were nationally representative of gender, age, ethnic orientation, educational level, employment status, job level and job type. The 16PF is trait-based and measures sixteen primary and the Big-five global personality factors. The instrument has established reliability and validity and is designed for use in both employee selection and development. We compared findings to the previous study conducted in 1994 and found:

Personality stable over time:

As shown in Figure 1, the personality of the UK and Irish populations has remained consistent over time. Thirteen of the 16 factors generated no or marginal differences. Small effect sizes (≤ 0.20) meant that these

differences would not be visible to an observer nor would they affect an organisation's ability to select or develop a candidate. Scores for traits such as reasoning, dominance, liveliness, rule-conscientiousness, sensitivity, privateness, apprehension, perfectionism and tension were generally identical to those found 18 years ago.

Personality consistent across regions: Examination of mean scores across England, Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland also generated no or marginal differences. The most significant difference found was on the dimension of liveliness with residents in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland scoring significantly higher on this trait than their English, Welsh and Scottish counterparts. The moderate effect size (0.55) on this dimension means this difference would be generated in a real-world context. Dimensions of reasoning, dominance, vigilance, abstractedness and perfectionism were generally identical across regions.

Stage 2: Nine hundred and eighty five adults (males = 475) in paid employment completed the 16PF as well as questions on job satisfaction and work enjoyment; turnover intentions; leadership preferences; and perceived stress at work. We found:

Personality and positive organisational outcomes: Employees working in organisations that fit with their preferences enjoyed their job significantly more ($X^2(8)=48.35$; $p \leq .001$) and reported significantly higher job satisfaction ($X^2(8)=60.93$; $p \leq .001$). They also reported being significantly lower on thoughts relating

to quitting their job ($X^2(8)=68.19$; $p \leq .001$); likelihood of changing job ($X^2(8)=49.88$; $p \leq .001$) and perceived stress at work ($X^2(6)=26.70$; $p \leq .001$).

Findings here confirm that personality is both stable over time and consistent across regions. For personality assessment, sample representativeness and size are more important factors than timeline of norms. In addition, with evidence establishing the effect of individual personality on positive organisational outcomes, personality assessment has a significant role to play in ensuring organisations achieve their resourcing and talent planning objectives.

To learn more about OPP's survey on UK personality traits please visit www.opp.eu.com/resources/norm_tables/Pages/default.aspx. If you wish to use the 16PF personality questionnaire as part of your research please contact us on +44 (0)1865404519 or rdqueries@opp.com

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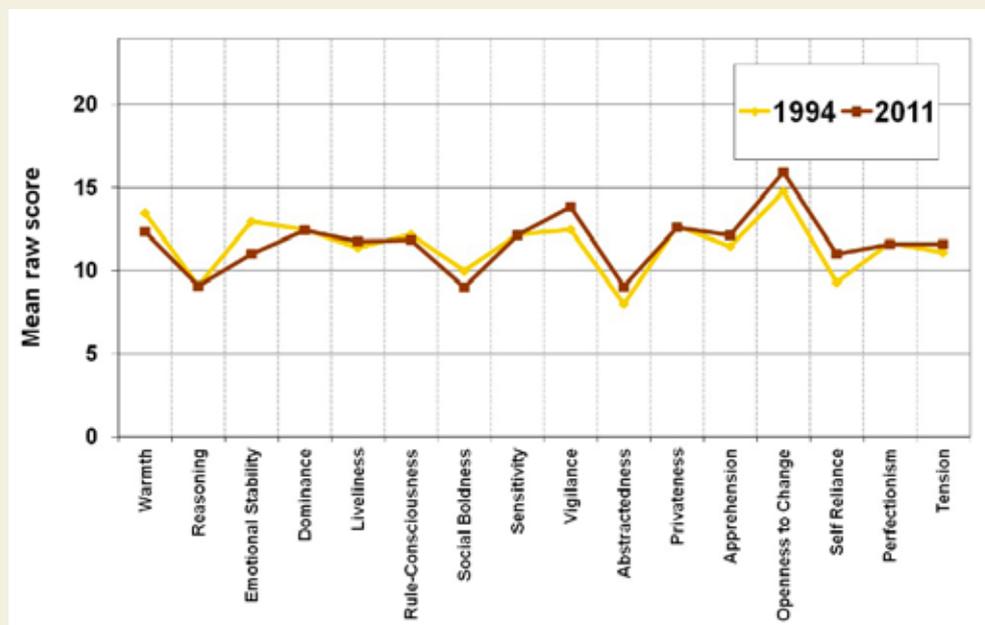


Fig. 1: UK and Irish population 16 primary personality traits between 1994 and 2011



Stereotype Threat

*Dr. Pete Jones – Research Psychologist,
Shire Professional*

Nic Hammarling's recent article in the Winter 2011 edition of *Assessment Matters* entitled "Adverse impact and cognitive ability tests...Or systematic discrimination endorsed by psychologists" provoked a good deal of debate. It was Nic's conclusion that we should not "continue to use cognitive ability tests with high levels of AI (Adverse Impact) in recruitment and selection processes, given that there are certain candidate groups that this simply does not serve fairly. While we continue to turn a blind eye to AI issues, the use of such tests in recruitment simply becomes a source of discrimination that is endorsed by psychologists." This must and perhaps should have kept some publishers awake at night.

This particular chicken-and-egg debate has taken place regularly with two fairly fixed positions: tests are simply measuring real group differences in ability and psychologists are not responsible for social inequality, versus; tests are poorly developed and biased. Both positions are fairly unpalatable for test users.

Before we throw the test baby with the AI bath water I would like to offer a third perspective; that it is the way in which we describe and use tests which at best may exaggerate group differences, and at worst creates them.

Reframing the test with a less stereotypical lens

There is plentiful academic evidence that how we think others view our own group(s) impacts our performance in testing as a result of stereotype threat. Stereotype threat (ST) refers to "being at risk of confirming, as self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about one's own group" (Steele and Aronson, 1995). If I come from a group stereotyped as being lower or being tested as being lower on a particular construct (e.g.

intelligence), the implicit or explicit anxiety induced by the risk of confirming that stereotype undermines my performance by depleting the executive functioning of the frontal lobes which are required to perform higher level processing, such as that required for test completion.

Adapting task or assessment descriptions so that conscious or unconscious stereotypes are not invoked or are minimised can reduce or even eliminate the stereotype threat effect. Publishers may enhance ST by giving tests and scales sexy names which have more to do with marketing than the desire to get an accurate test score by reducing the impact of ST. The use of words such as 'intellectual', 'strategic', 'reasoning' or 'emotional' all have stereotypical assumptions about which groups may perform in particular ways. Shia et al (2007) induced an 11% difference in test scores by manipulating implicit cues around competing gender and ethnicity stereotypes before numeracy testing.

De-emphasising the threat

Adapting procedures that heighten the salience of stereotyped group memberships within selection can help reduce the adverse effects of stereotype threat. For example, by simply moving standard demographic information about ethnicity and gender etc. to the end of the testing process may result in significantly higher performance by stereotyped groups.

Encouraging self-affirmation

A general means for protecting the self from perceived threats and the consequences of failure is to allow people to affirm their self-worth. This can be done by

encouraging people to think about their characteristics, skills, values, or roles that they value or view as important. Encouraging individuals during pre-testing to think of themselves in ways that reduce the salience of a threatened identity can mitigate ST effects.

Emphasising high standards with assurances about capability

The effectiveness of critical feedback, particularly on tasks that involve potential confirmation of group stereotypes varies as a function of the signals that are sent in the framing of the feedback. Constructive feedback appears most effective when it communicates high standards for performance but also assurances that the individual is capable of meeting those high standards. High standards and assurances of capability appear to signal that people will not be judged stereotypically and that their abilities and “organisational fit” are assumed rather than questioned.

Providing external attributions

Several studies have shown that ST can be diminished by providing individuals with explanations regarding why anxiety and distraction are occurring that do not implicate the self or validate the stereotype.

For example, reminding candidates that selection is an anxious time for everyone and that the best performance requires some degree of anxiety can normalise the feelings of threatened groups and reduce the impact of the anxiety felt.

Emphasising an incremental view of ability or intelligence

Any concern with confirming abilities believed to be fixed or biologically-determined can interfere with one’s capability to perform well. Emphasising the importance of effort and motivation in assessment performance and de-emphasising the inherent “talent” or “natural ability” aspects can reduce domain related stereotype threat effects.

Conclusions

There is much that can be done to mitigate stereotype threat, but little within publisher materials indicates this literature is being integrated to test development, user training or into materials such as web sites, test taker instructions or administration scripts. As a first step, publisher might consider using what we already know about reducing the anxiety of stereotyped groups, to improve their test scores and level the emotional playing field of testing.

Risk Type – The Human Factor in the Risk Equation

Geoff Trickey – MD Psychological Consultancy Ltd.

The Problem

Profligate attitudes towards financial risk at all levels have wreaked havoc on a global scale and kept risk matters centre stage, but every industry and profession has its own particular risk issues. After decades of blanket regulation that has largely ignored individual differences, getting a grip on human factor risk has to be high on the agenda. It is surely time to make a closer examination of the roots of risk taking behaviour.



Risk attitudes, risk awareness, risk perception, risk knowledge; all have featured in research and the assessment of individuals. They all have some relevance, especially with regard to short-term performance, but deeply rooted personality factors clearly determine an individual's emotional and strategic responses in high-risk situations, especially when under stress or when intoxicated by success. After all, fight or flight responses are an established and integral part of human nature.

The key to the human risk factor is not about what a person WANTS to do, or what they know they SHOULD do, or even what they are CAPABLE of doing – it's about what they actually DO. In our risk taking we are affected by many things, and particularly by what the people around us are doing, but the influence of Risk Type is persistent and pervasive. To use a boating analogy, the anchor on the sea floor restrains the influences of wind and tide over the boat's movements above, just as our Risk Type limits the variability of our risk taking behaviour. The impulsive person knows what they should do, knows that sometimes (with restraint) they can do it, but their behaviour will always be vulnerable to their impulsivity. Similarly, an anxious person knows they should keep calm, knows from experience about the dangers of over reacting, but they will always be susceptible to over reaction. Each Risk Type has to manage a different set of deeply rooted dispositions. This is our nature and these are dispositions that, over the long-term, shape our lives.

Risk tolerance is often presumed to be synonymous with risk attitude and many assessments have been based on this assumption. However, attitudes can be transient, unstable and subject to a wide range of influences – not a great basis for any long-term decisions. Recent financial events illustrate this point well. Attitudes made a dramatic vault-face when the bubble finally burst in 2008. Both businesses and private finances flipped from unprecedented debt to unprecedented rates of repayment - almost over night.

In contrast, personality is constitutional and has a strong genetic influence. It determines whether, at root, we are anxious or reckless, optimistic or pessimistic, trusting or wary, organised or spontaneous, excitement seeking or cautious. All these factors set the baseline for risk tolerance. Certainly, as in the financial example above, attitudes to specific areas of risk are influenced

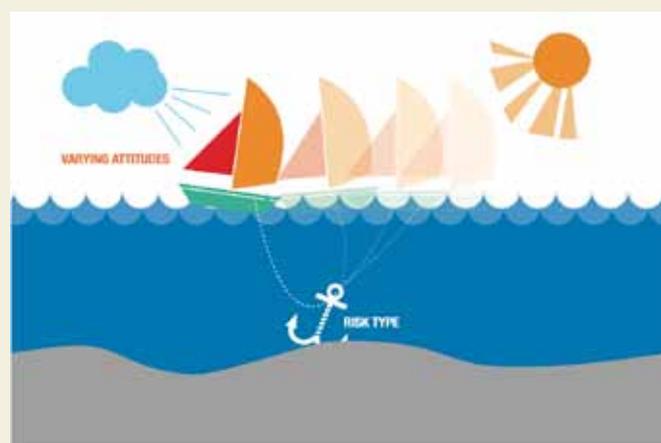
by circumstances, exposure and past experience but, when the chips are down, we revert to type.

The Instrument

The Risk-Type Compass™ is a new psychometric measure that assigns individuals to one of eight Risk Types. It offers a typology and vocabulary that facilitates planning, research and discussion about risk tolerance, about the suitability of Risk Types for risk related roles and, within the investment domain, allows portfolio management to achieve higher levels of risk suitability for clients.

Development

Personality provided the basis for the development of a Risk Type measure for one of our financial services clients. Our blueprint was that the instrument should be easy to understand and easy to use, should capture the psychological essentials and, should be well researched. On the basis of the rationale in the previous section, our strategy was to identify and extract risk-related themes from the FFM personality domain. Our typology was founded on the four very clear factors that were identified by the research edition of the questionnaire. These four factors provided the poles for our compass style Risk Type assessment (the four 'pure' types). We also differentiate individuals falling at the quarter points between these poles (the four 'complex' types). The illustration below shows a continuous spectrum in which neighbouring Risk Types blend into each other and the facing types are opposites. Each individual assessed by the questionnaire is allocated to one of these eight types. The more distinctive examples of any Risk Type are positioned nearer the outer edge of the compass. The Typical Group at the centre have scores too near the mean to be usefully differentiated.



The Continuous Spectrum of Risk Types

Spontaneous

Uninhibited and impulsive, they enjoy the elation of unplanned decisions, but are distraught when things go wrong. Their enthusiasm and imprudence can make them exciting but unpredictable.

Intense

They are ardent, anxious and feel things deeply. Passionate but edgy by nature, they invest heavily in people and may enthuse about projects, but they are their own most severe critic and take disappointments personally.

Wary

Self-disciplined, cautious and uneasy, they are organised and systematic but unadventurous. Their need for security ensures that all the bases are covered but they never quite dispel misgivings that it may all go wrong.

Prudent

Very self-controlled and detailed in their planning, this type is organised and methodical and work hard to eliminate uncertainty. Tending towards conformity and convention, they are most comfortable with familiarity and continuity.

Deliberate

Analytic and compliant, they never walk into anything without careful preparation. They experience little anxiety but, as a matter of convenience, plan things meticulously and manage their lives in purposeful and business-like ways.

Composed

This type is cool-headed and self-contained. At the extreme they seem almost oblivious to risk and unaware of its effect on others. They take everything in their stride, seem imperturbable and manage stress well.

Adventurous

The Adventurous Type is uninhibited and fearless. At the extreme, they combine a deeply constitutional calmness with impetuosity and a willingness to try things out, with little concern about challenging tradition or convention.

Carefree

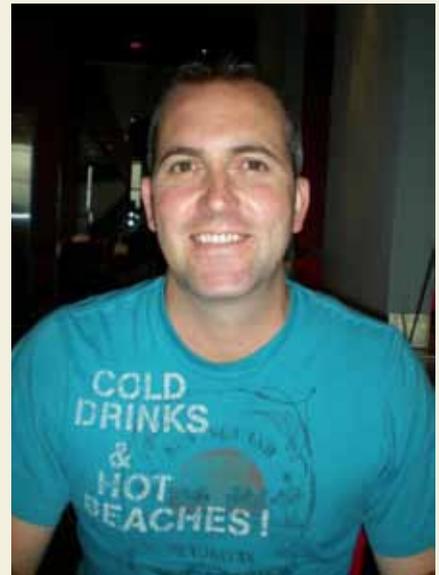
Easy-going, daring and excitement seeking, they deal with fast moving situations 'on the fly' and may appear either flexible or reckless. Through latitude or casualness, they are prepared to accept the risk of making hasty decisions.

The Research

The Risk Type Compass was developed during a three year research programme which is summarised by PCL in '*Managing Risk – The Human Factor*'. This can be downloaded from the PCL website (hard copies are also available). A White Paper '*Personality and Risk Tolerance*' providing details of the original literature review and early development by Matt Stewart and Geoff Trickey can also be downloaded. The full Technical Manual is in the process of being updated to incorporate the most recent research.

Evaluating Dominant Personality Traits of Potential Sales Reps – Is there value in testing for personality during the sales recruitment process?

Matt Goff – Partner TQF Inc.



There has been much the recent debate across some of the discussion boards on linked in on the subject of using Psychometrics as part of the hiring process for sales people. Some feel it is extremely sensible to incorporate a more robust recruitment model that involves a tool such as a personality assessment. Some feel – well not so much. One comment from a high performing sales rep used the phrase ‘mumbo jumbo’ – and continued - ‘why bother looking at all this psychoanalysis stuff – if I have sold successfully in my previous roles, then don’t insult me with some test if I am part of a recruitment process’. Considering most of my career has been involved in measuring and understanding personality and job performance in one way or other, this was like questioning my total professional existence. Stubborn resistance! I had to retort. I wanted to provide him some context first though however.

In a previous role, I was part of a team who were contracted to assist with Air Traffic Controller (ATC) recruitment. A key factor for this agency’s decision to outsource what their HR team had been doing for the past few years, was that approximately 30% of new recruits were dropping out prior to graduating from training college – and this was costing the agency literally millions of dollars a year. We were tasked with finding out the motivational factors and personality traits that correlated not only with ATC performance, but also with training completion. Reduce the number of drop outs, but don’t reduce the quality of graduates. A sound business reason and a sound ‘we don’t want to crash planes’ reason. During our analysis, we were able to pinpoint a couple of motivational factors that caused ATC trainees to drop out. But the concept of looking at personality traits and ‘not crashing planes’ seemed to work and draw sage nodding from my skeptical high performing associate. I went a bit further.

When it comes to ‘mission critical’ roles such as ATCs, it is obviously incredibly important to get the hire right in terms of technical skills and capability, and the behavioural / personality type of the individual. Special aptitude skills aside (such as spatial & diagrammatic reasoning), it was

important for these individuals as an example to NOT demonstrate ‘thinking outside the box’ type behaviour (i.e. innovative thought) – we don’t want ATCs during times of busy air traffic trying to creatively fix the back log by landing planes on the next best landing strip. We want them to think very much inside the box – follow instructions and avoid accidents.

Most would agree that it is important to seek to understand and measure personality traits and correlations with ATC performance. In my opinion, it is no different with mission ‘uncritical’ roles like sales. Seek to understand and measure the correlations between a sales rep’s performance and their dominant personality traits – it’s not life and death, but why not take the time as a business leader to increase your chances of bringing on board the sales reps with the potential to be good for business?

During my client work with International sales forces, I have been fortunate enough to be involved in validation studies linking successful sales performance with

specific personality traits. Although some of the results did indeed vary from organization to organization (all B2B complex selling environments, however different industries), there were three consistent findings over and above a high level of 'Achievement Orientation' (e.g. driven to succeed, sets high standards and goals) which were:

- Lower levels of 'gregariousness': contrary to popular belief around sales reps being extroverts, this more 'introvert' type trait was associated with sales success – individuals preferring to keep a low profile.
- Higher levels of 'conscientiousness': a strong focus on finishing what one starts and being in control of the sales process, whilst taking personal responsibility for results.
- High levels of 'optimism' and 'resilience': the 'cup half full' individual is more likely to take knock

backs and sales failures in their stride, and to dust themselves off and track down the next opportunity.

In support of these findings, I came across a Harvard Business Review article from last year (June 2011) authored by Steve Martin, which listed seven personality traits that he found to be resident in top sales people based on his research. Encouragingly, the three (four) above were present, in some shape or form. In conclusion, my doubting sales rep adversary started to come around when presented with this data. Whilst not a convert, he could see the value in using psychometrics to evaluate important and relevant personality traits of potential new hires, with a caveat of "as long as I don't have to take one of those tests". Progress, I guess.

Finding the perfect partner; can work psychology learn anything from the world of on line dating?

Andrew Munro - Director of AM Azure Consulting

Freud suggested that the two aims of life were work and love. What can I-O psychometricians learn from the world of online dating systems to help individuals find love with their perfect partner? **If the predictive power of psychometric tests in the work place has stalled** (1), does compatibility testing for romantic success offer any new directions for improved practice in occupational testing?

Where should we look for better predictive validity?

Progressive practice is now engaged with the challenges of:

- identifying robust criteria to pinpoint performance outcomes within different organisational design models

- moving away from one size fits all tests to target content to reflect the specific selection scenario and candidate profile
- utilising the psychometric data that is captured within selection to make better decisions

This third challenge requires a better understanding of intuition and its strengths and shortcomings to improve judgement. It also looks for ways to deploy smarter heuristics to review candidate data (e.g. short-listing and weighting with other available information). And it is building intelligent algorithms to apply the kind of formulae that will enhance predictive power. After all if the "number crunchers" (2) can now predict the quality of vintage wine in 20 years time or box office returns from an analysis of movie scripts, why can't

the psychometricians develop the analytics to improve selection decision making?

As far back as 1954, Paul Meehl's "Clinical vs. Statistical Prediction" (3) suggested that actuarial approaches out-trump the intuition of experts. But it is not a challenge that many psychometricians have gone on to tackle. Psychometric thinking has largely been directed at providing advice to assess the validity of a test rather than how to interpret test data to enhance decision making and improve overall utility.

What can we discover from the psychometrics of romantic profiling?

The world of online dating was quick to spot the potential of smart algorithms to apply the technology of compatibility testing for partner matching for long-term relationship happiness.

"The new generation of dating sites have staked their success on the idea that long-term romantic compatibility can be predicted according to scientific principles and use them to help their members finding lasting love. To that end they've hired high-powered academics, devised special algorithms for relationship matching, developed sophisticated personality questionnaires, and put in place mechanisms for the long-term tracking of data." (4)

Compatibility testing has a number of parallels with the person job matching of the occupational psychometricians. Both:

- promise better prediction for enhanced outcomes using the science of psychological profiling
- assume an underpinning model of success but still remain caught up in controversy about fundamental theory
- operate across a spectrum of practice, reflecting different levels of rigour, research and cost
- face the challenge of impression management as individuals look to put their best forward within the dynamics of a social game
- recognise that number-crunching still requires intuitive judgement for final decision making

Does compatibility testing work? And what does "work" mean in the context of couple matching? Online dating systems work in that they do help potential partners find each other in cyber-space. But do the couples

"live happy ever after" as evaluated by measures of relationship satisfaction, longevity or divorce rates?

Here the evidence is unclear or mixed, in large part due to the proprietary nature of the commercial systems. Sprecher concludes there is "limited and mixed evidence for the premise that scientific-based matches are more compatible than those that have their origin in more traditional ways." (5)

In a comprehensive review (6), Eli Finkel and his colleagues argue that matching systems must achieve two outcomes to establish their value: in the short-term, identify partners that ignite the romantic spark; and in the longer-term, pair those individuals who go on to have a satisfying and lasting relationship.

It is the prediction of long term success that is problematic for the matching algorithms. The overwhelming research on relationships suggests the strongest predictors of the success of a relationship only emerge from the interaction of the individuals as they respond to the rough and tumble of life's events. Context and interaction appear to out trump any evaluation and matching of the personal characteristics of each potential partner. In so far as any characteristic is indicative of romantic success, it seems that neuroticism is the generic predictor of unhappiness, in any relationship. Here, online dating systems "work" as a screening device to identify those individuals who are likely to be poor partners – with anyone. It's a helpful function but not one that meets the matching claim to find that "unique mate who is right for you".

Person-job matching in occupational selection is of course different to compatibility testing for romantic success. But it may be that person-job matching, like romantic compatibility testing, has some success in candidate short-listing and short-term fit but struggles with longer-term prediction. Both assume stability when the reality is of complex dynamics between individuals and situation. Just as in relationships, each individual changes within the context of a changing partner and shifting life situation; employees, jobs and organisations do not stand still. And like romantic matching, much of the predictive power of person-job testing is probably gained through generic traits rather than pinpointing the distinctive dynamics of the specific organisational situation.

So what?

The industry report, “Consumers Are Having Second Thoughts About Online Dating” (7), summarises the state of play within the field, pointing out a number of hazards, and also the opportunities for the field to evolve, including for example a rethink of the dynamics of relationship success, the use of “thin slice” video clips, and how feedback through social media may provide an important reality check for individuals in search of partners.

Online dating systems also provide another important lesson for the work psychometricians. Users like - and are willing to pay for - the experience because it’s about something that is engaging and about something that matters to them as individuals. And they feel in control of the process.

Thompson concludes: “online dating has a promising future, but we’ll never realize the potential if we pretend we’re already there”. Person-job matching still has a way to go.

1. See for example the decline in assessment centre validity highlighted in “Fairy Tales, Facts and the Future” (2011) <http://www.amazureconsulting.com/files/1/39199746/FairyTalesFactsPredictingLeadershipEffectiveness.pdf>

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3. Meehl P (1954) Clinical versus Statistical Prediction

4. Gottlieb L (2006), How Do I Love Thee, Atlantic Monthly <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/print/2006/03/how-do-i-love-thee/4602/>

5. Sprecher S (2011) Relationship Compatibility, Compatible Matches and Compatibility Matching, Acta De Investigacion Psicologica

6. Finkel E (2012) Online Dating: A Critical Analysis from the Perspective of Psychological Science, Psychological Science in the Public Interest

7. Thompson M, Zimbardo P & Hutchinson G (2005) Consumers Are Having Second Thoughts About Online Dating <http://www.singleboersen-vergleich.de/dossier-partnervermittlung/us-stanford.pdf>

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