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Welcome to our final Assessment & Development Matters of 2010. I believe we have an excellent range of articles of benefit to your practice. McDowall, Eib and Kinman report on a meeting held at the British Psychological Society by the DOP Work-life balance working group. Brutsche presents research on conscientious individuals. Bywater and Krig share the outcomes of a study evaluating the technical properties of a Situational Judgement Test (SJT) used in a restructuring/redeployment setting. Donaldson-Feilder, Lewis and Yarker discuss the Health and Safety Executive ‘management competencies for preventing and reducing stress at work’ in the context of helping managers manage team stress. Pryce-Jones discusses her research on happiness at work.

Burden discusses assessing pupils’ academic self-concept. Humphrey reviews key issues in the measurement of children’s social and emotional competence. Frederickson discusses the assessment of children’s mental health and wellbeing. Kirby reviews the Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP) in relation to use for teachers of students with Specific Learning Difficulties.

In From the Journals to your Practice, I review individual responses to feedback and the development and validation of the feedback orientation scale.

With grateful thanks to the authors who have submitted such a variety of interesting articles to ADM throughout the year.

We encourage you to send articles for consideration for publication in 2011.

Jan Bogg, Senior Editor, on behalf of the Editorial Team.

Assessment & Development Matters features a wide range of articles on occupational and educational testing and brings practitioners the latest news and perspectives on assessment and development. If you would like to submit articles, questions and letters, please refer to the submission guidelines or the test research template towards the back of the magazine.

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Do conscientious individuals strive to achieve?

Melanie Brutsche

Measures: Cubiks In-depth Personality Questionnaire; Revised NEO Personality Inventory.

This paper considers whether achievement striving forms part of the Conscientiousness factor. It uses Confirmatory Factor Analysis to compare a model of Conscientiousness that includes a measure of achievement, with a model of Conscientiousness without. The results reveal good fit for both models. Some aspects of achievement striving, however, appear to be more closely related to Conscientiousness than others.

The link between Conscientiousness and performance has been well established. High performers, both in academic and occupational contexts, tend to demonstrate conscientious work behaviours. The findings pertain not only to actual task performance, but also to contextual performance and some outcomes related to adaptive social functioning, such as college retention (e.g. Roberts et al., 2005). The consistency of such results could lead one to infer that the Conscientiousness construct is well-defined, and that researchers generally make use of a similar definition. However, this, is not the case.

One area of contention is whether or not Conscientiousness should encompass ‘achievement striving’, i.e. the extent to which an individual values and pursues personal achievement. For example, Jackson et al. (1996) have argued for a six factor model of personality, in which achievement orientation loads on one factor, and planfulness and organisation load on a different factor. Others have highlighted the differential effects of achievement-related and dependability-related constructs on performance (e.g. Le Pine et al., 2000; Moon, 2001).

A review of existing personality questionnaires reveals that some questionnaires place achievement striving with Conscientiousness (e.g. NEO-PI-R), while others allocate it to a different factor, predominately Extraversion (e.g. HPI), and still others do not include it at all (e.g. 16PF). Such discrepancy raises the question of what conscientious individuals actually look like. Are they simply dependable, or do they actively strive to achieve?

Research objectives
An exploration of how best to represent Conscientiousness formed a key component of the development of the Cubiks In-depth Personality Questionnaire (CIPQ). As a first step, the researchers investigated whether or not all facets of the questionnaire’s Self-disciplined and Rule Following scales formed part of a Conscientiousness factor. This was followed by an investigation into how these facets related to another measure of Conscientiousness to provide external construct validity. The relationship of achievement striving to the Conscientiousness factor was then considered.

Methodology
CIPQ is a normative self-report questionnaire designed to assess the main underlying aspects of personality. The initial design of CIPQ was informed by the extensive research
carried out by Raymond Cattell into the structure of personality (Cattell & Cattell, 1995), but with a view to aligning the model to the Big Five. The current project was carried out within the context of revising the original CIPQ instrument.

Two of the original CIPQ scales belong to the Conscientiousness construct: Rule Following, and Self-disciplined. To create a measure of achievement striving within the revised CIPQ, items were written for nine achievement-related areas that were considered to have a close conceptual link to Conscientiousness. Based on item properties and content, 10 items were identified for inclusion in the new Striving scale. These covered six of the nine achievement dimensions identified previously: mastery of difficult tasks, working hard to achieve, persistence, goal setting, commitment, and ambition.

The study participants were employees and postgraduate students from a range of organisations and universities in the UK. The data were broken down into three groups:

- **Group 1**: 171 individuals who were invited to complete CIPQ and the NEO-PI-R. 161 completed both assessments; 10 completed CIPQ only.
- **Group 2**: 269 individuals who completed CIPQ.
- **Group 3**: 103 individuals who completed the new achievement-related items, from which an additional scale for CIPQ was to be developed, and the existing Rule Following and Self-disciplined items.

Testing the research questions occurred in four stages:
1. The two existing scales were examined and refined using Group 1 data.
2. The model was cross-validated using Group 2 data.
3. The model was compared to NEO-PI-R results for external construct validity.
4. Striving was added to the model and it was re-examined using Group 3 data.

**Analysis and results**

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to address the research questions. CFA showed that the initial two-scale Conscientiousness model had good fit (Chi²/df=0.250, CFI=1, RMSEA=0) using the first dataset (Figure 1). The second dataset confirmed the fit (Chi²/df=1.277, CFI=0.997, RMSEA=0.032).

On average, across datasets, the contribution of the Self-disciplined items to Conscientiousness was somewhat greater than the contribution of the Rule Following items, as assessed by path strength.

The next stage of the analysis involved examining the overlap between the CIPQ and NEO definitions of Conscientiousness. The correlation between the CIPQ and NEO Conscientiousness factors was moderate (r=0.568, p<0.01). When the NEO Conscientiousness factor was added as an additional variable to CIPQ's two-scale model of Conscientiousness, fit was reduced (Chi²/df=3.139, CFI=0.935, RMSEA=0.116). This suggested that CIPQ and NEO conceptualised Conscientiousness differently. One of the key differences between the two constructs was the absence of a measure of achievement in CIPQ's two-scale Conscientiousness model.

To test the three-scale model of Conscientiousness, the Striving items were added to the two-scale Conscientiousness model using the Group 3 data. Fit was good when all 10 Striving items were included (Chi²/df=1.124, CFI=0.994, RMSEA=0.033). However, the path from Conscientiousness to Striving was non-significant (p=0.157). An analysis of the content of these items to identify those with the closest conceptual link to Conscientiousness led to the exclusion of four items. The remaining items covered aspects of working hard to achieve, persistence, goal setting and commitment. The
The resulting model fit the data well (Chi²/df=0.567, CFI=1, RMSEA=0) and all paths from Conscientiousness were significant (Figure 2). As observed previously, the Self-disciplined item parcels made a stronger contribution to Conscientiousness than the other item parcels.

**Discussion**

The results indicated good fit for both the two-scale and three-scale models of Conscientiousness, suggesting that being self-disciplined, following rules and striving to achieve can all be considered part of Conscientiousness. Showing self-discipline, moreover, appeared to make a stronger contribution to Conscientiousness than the other

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1 The Self-disciplined scale was broken down into three parcels reflecting the different content areas: 1) being perfectionist 2) being orderly 3) completing work in good time. An initial breakdown of the Rule Following items was dropped as it did not contribute to the analysis.
constructs. Consequently conscientious, and thus often higher performing workers, may first and foremost be described as orderly individuals, who plan ahead, pay attention to detail and stick to a task.

Of the achievement-related aspects included in the study, i.e. the facets of achievement contained within the CIPQ Striving scale, those found to be most closely related to Conscientiousness were: working hard to achieve; persistence; goal setting; and commitment. The relationships of other aspects of the Striving scale to Conscientiousness were much weaker.

In developing the current version of CIPQ, the aim was to include a comprehensive measure of achievement striving as well as to create good measures of the higher order Big Five. It was anticipated that some CIPQ scales would fall cleanly within a single Big Five factor, whereas others would contribute to several factors. The present results suggest that Striving/achievement fits best within Conscientiousness, though not all aspects of Striving.

This is somewhat contrary to the work of Jackson et al. (1996) which purports that striving is conceptually separate from being planful and orderly. The discrepancy may possibly be due to definitional differences. Jackson et al., for example, included a measure of ambition within their achievement construct, whereas this component of Striving was excluded from the CIPQ Conscientiousness model.

Work to further confirm the three-scale model of Conscientiousness using an additional dataset is in progress, as is analysis to determine whether those components of Striving not loading on Conscientiousness contribute to a second Big Five factor i.e. Extraversion.

References


Potential conflict of interest

Source of funding: Cubiks

The author

Melanie Brutsche is a consultant at Cubiks.
Why leveraging the science of happiness at work matters: The happy and productive employee
Jessica Pryce-Jones & Dr Simon Lutterbie

For the past five years we have been running a research project about happiness at work. Our aim was to investigate the old question: is the happy worker a productive one too? We began with protocols, focus groups, interviews and three separate studies (Edmunds & Pryce-Jones, 2009) and have now gathered responses from more than 5,000 employees. This article illustrates the key findings so far.

Five factors for happiness at work
Rotated varimax analyses revealed that we have five very clear factors that give us a concrete and practical understanding of happiness at work. They are: Contribution; Conviction; Culture; Commitment; and Confidence. Meanwhile Pride, Trust and Recognition are associated with all the items in each factor, as is Achieving Your Potential. These are illustrated in Figure 1.

Happiness and productivity
How did we investigate the link between happiness and productivity? We hypothesised that people who were happiest at work would spend more time on task. And that’s what we found (p = .000). When we divided respondents into ‘happiness groups’ (1 being lowest and 5 the highest) we could see that people who were most happy at work reported that they spent 78 per cent of their day on task. The rest of their time was taken up by the kind of thing that gets in the way of real work; frozen screens, late colleagues, missing facts, coffee, etc.

In stark contrast, people who were least happy at work said that they spent only 53 per cent of their time on task. That’s a 25 per cent difference between both groups. Table 1 illustrates what this looked like across all of the happiness groups (N=1940).

In terms of time, seventy eight percent of a week is about four working days. Fifty one percent is two and a half days. So the least happy people at work were, in effect, working only half a full working week. This data was collected before the recession. Many of this group also demonstrated that they were intending to quit in the following six to nine...
When we look at Table 2, we can see that people who are happiest at work have in fact become slightly more productive. They’re telling us that they now spend 80 per cent of their week focussed on task.

But the people who are least happy at work, whose numbers have swelled considerably (more or less double the pre-recession data) are now only focussing 40 per cent of their time on task. That’s two days a week. So they’re working even less than before.

The bad news is that not only are they working less, they’ve also decided that because jobs are so thin on the ground there’s no point looking for one. The data that we have gathered suggests that, on average, they’ll be in their current work for the next 36 months. In other words, employees who are unproductive and not performing well are not planning on moving any time soon. And that’s not good for bosses, colleagues, business partners, customers or vendors.

When we analyse the data we can see that people who are least happy at work have decreased by between 25–30 per cent in the following areas:

- Goal achievement
- Helping colleagues
- Feeling they’re having a positive impact in what they do
- Self-belief
- Confidence
- Resilience
- Motivation
- Engagement
- Pride
- Trust
- Recognition
- Feeling that they are achieving their potential

The results could often be delayed projects, fewer new ideas, less innovation, less acceptance of and adaption to change. And it may well affect overall happiness with life
too – something we have also been tracking for the past five years.

Most strikingly, all of the scores in these areas increased regardless of happiness levels when the recession was in full swing. During the recession, time on task went up, regardless of happiness level, and all the areas above showed positive improvements in the numbers. We know that this is because respondents felt they learned, overcame challenges and achieved their goals to a much greater extent. It’s important to understand that an element of happiness at work is made up of experiencing and dealing with tough stuff, as that is how we often extend our comfort zones and grow.

We are now seeing that all numbers in the above important areas have dropped back again – unless you consider yourself to be particularly happy at work. Employees in this category, and admittedly there are far of them than before or during the recession, have maintained and even increased their scores in the above areas.

So, what does this all mean? It’s clear that happiness at work isn’t just a nice to have. Unhappy employees are not delivering what organisations need. It’s a business imperative for all: leaders, managers, employees, coaches and consultants to start to address.

References

Conflict of interest
The research was funded and conducted by iOpener Ltd.

The author
Jessica Pryce-Jones is CEO of iOpener Ltd; Dr Simon Lutterbie is head of research.
THE HOGREFE GROUP: PSYCHOMETRICS FOR A CHANGING WORLD

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'Good judgement' and 'tough decisions': How robust are Situational Judgement Tests in a restructuring/redeployment setting?

James Bywater and Nina Krig

Although Situational Judgement Tests (SJTs) have been in existence since the 1920s, in recent years they have become a hot research topic and are used extensively within organisations for personnel selection and development (Whetzel & McDaniel, 2009). SJTs are a measurement method that can be designed to assess a vast spectrum of constructs (Christian, Edwards & Bradley, 2010), and have been shown to predict job performance with incremental validity in relation to personality and cognitive ability tests (McDaniel et al., 2007). SJTs are viewed relatively favourably by candidates (e.g. Weekley & Ployhart, 2006) and positive candidate experiences are important to maintain perceptions of employer brand in a recruitment context.

When the macro economic situation worsens, organisations often seek to create ‘ultra high stakes’ (Bywater, 2006) assessment processes, for restructure purposes. The word ‘restructure’ carries a direct or implied suggestion of compulsory job loss for candidates not selected for new roles. In these contexts, it is fundamental that the assessment process is objective, fair and defensible to all parties involved and the scrutiny of the press (Bywater & Bard, 2009). This study evaluates the technical properties of an SJT in a restructuring/redeployment setting, discussing psychometrics, issues of ‘faking’ (e.g. Nguyen, Biderman & McDaniel, 2005) and practical implications.

Assessment in restructure
There is little data to show the capability of assessment tools in a restructure/redundancy setting. There is an emerging picture that, when used cautiously, personality measures can be useful within a restructuring context to assess and select applicants into new job roles for which there is no pre-existing job-specific performance evidence available (Bywater & Glennon, 2009). There are also some unique challenges placed upon assessment tools in this context that are not commonly met in more typical assessment situations, such as ‘faking bad’ (Bywater & Thompson, 2005.)

There is no published evidence, however, to examine whether SJTs are equally accurate measurement techniques within a restructuring/redeployment context. This study aims to evaluate the robustness of the ‘Scenarios’ Situational Judgement Test within an ultra high stakes context. Scenarios is an online managerial judgement test (Howard & Choi, 1998; Howard & Choi, 2000) that measures managerial judgement based on three sub-scales: managing objectives, people management and reputation management.

Method
Bartram (1994) identified four main methods for identifying the equivalence of psychometric measures across different contexts and settings:
This research will use these as ‘acid tests’ to evaluate the extent to which Scenarios is able to demonstrate this equivalence in a redundancy setting.

Scenarios were part of a restructuring programme in a large UK public sector organisation, together with other assessment tools. From April 2005 to June 2006, 1184 applicants completed Scenarios across a range of locations throughout the UK. The sample included 51 per cent male and 49 per cent female applicants from a range of managerial positions. Their results were compared with the Scenarios technical manual and norm group tables (Howard & Choi, 1998.)

Results

Questionnaire response patterns
As shown in Table 1, similar questionnaire response patterns were found in means and SDs for the ultra high stakes sample and public sector norm group. This suggests that questionnaire norms can be generalised from one context to the other.

Some positive skew (extreme scores) in the ultra high stakes environment was found for the Reputation Management (28 outliers) and People Management scales (17 outliers). These applicants performed extremely poorly on both these scales which could suggest issues of 'faking bad'.

Questionnaire reliability
Test scale Chronbach Alpha reliabilities for the ultra high stakes applicant group were somewhat lower than the test scale reliabilities from the Scenarios manual (table 1). This is consistent with other research showing a drop in reliabilities of scales of personality questionnaires in ultra high stakes setting (Bywater & Thompson, 2005.)
**Correlates with other variables**

Table 2 shows that small and medium inter-correlations were found between scales that were comparable to those found in the manual. This suggests that the underlying factor structure was being maintained in the new environment.

**Table 2**: Inter-correlations between Scenarios questionnaire sub-scale responses. Ultra high stakes’ group & public sector norms

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<th>'Ultra high stakes' applicant group N =1184</th>
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**Group differences**

A series of mixed between-within subjects ANOVA was conducted to examine the impact of gender and age on questionnaire responses. Consistent with the findings in the Scenarios manual, zero to small gender effects were found. Moreover, there were no significant differences found in questionnaire responses across applicant age groups.

**Conclusions**

This study shows:

- Similar means and SDs for both the ultra high stakes applicant group and public sector norm group were found. This indicates questionnaire response patterns to be similar across groups.
- Questionnaire scale reliabilities were somewhat lower than the benchmarks presented in the Scenarios manual. The Overall Managerial Judgement scale performed best, and it is possible that this is the scale that should be relied upon in restructure settings, rather than the other constituent scales.
- These reduced reliabilities may be caused by erratic candidate behaviour. The positive skew observed in the Reputation Management and People Management scales could genuinely reflect poor applicant performance or attempts to ‘fake bad’. Faking bad or ‘cognitive malingering’ has been spotted in personality questionnaires in both clinical (Graham et al., 1991) and occupational contexts (Bywater & Thompson, 2005), but it is relatively unexplored in SJT research.
- The inter-correlations between test scales are in line with those reported in previous validation studies of Scenarios (Howard & Choi, 1998). This suggests that the factor structure has remained intact.
- In line with findings presented in the Scenarios manual, there were no significant gender and age group differences in questionnaire responses. This provides further evidence to support SJTs being favourable from an equal opportunities standpoint.
Conclusion
The results suggest that when used cautiously, SJTs can be useful assessment tools in a restructuring context to assess and select applicants into new job roles for which no pre-existing job-specific performance evidence is available. Existing test norms remain comparable and the underlying psychometric structure remains robust. There is some evidence, however, that the scale reliabilities drop in this transition, and this may be down to ‘faking bad’ or other situational response styles that are increased by the ultra high stakes of this assessment.

The best practice advice remains: that test scores should not be used in isolation when making decisions and larger margins of error than normal should be considered (Bywater & Thompson, 2005).

References

The authors
James Bywater and Nina Krig are psychologists at SHL Group Ltd.
If you want to know how to improve your work–life balance, ask a psychologist
Almuth McDowall, Constanze Eib & Gail Kinman

Report on a Breakfast Meeting held at the British Psychological Society: DOP Work-life balance working group
In 2009, Almuth McDowall and Gail Kinman launched a working group on work–life balance supported through the Division of Occupational Psychology. This group aims to raise awareness of work–life balance as a core issue for occupational and organisational psychologists, and to identify and promote best policy and practice to help employers and employees manage the work-home interface more effectively. On 27 September 2010, the start of the UK’s first Work-Life Week, Anna Allan, together with the co-chairs, organised a breakfast meeting at the BPS London Office attended by HR managers, practitioners and academics. Key findings from a recently commissioned review undertaken by a researcher, Constanze Eib, were presented at the meeting. Several issues were highlighted that stimulated debate, which we briefly outline below:

What is the most up-to-date psychological evidence on work–life balance?
One of the confusing issues when newcomers start researching the topic is that the actual term ‘work–life balance’ is not ideal for a literature search. We introduced the audience to alternatives, such as conflict, enrichment and facilitation. The literature is in fact dominated by a role conflict paradigm that is frequently measured bi-directionally: work-to-family and family-to-work. This body of evidence highlights the factors that make individuals more or less likely to experience conditions whereby demands from one domain (either work or family) make it harder to participate actively in the other domain. Where conflict is high, people are more likely to leave their organisation, perform less well, be less satisfied and experience detrimental health outcomes.

What does the research literature have to say about good practice?
The positive aspects of the work–home interface, generally operationalised as work-family facilitation and enrichment, have only recently been examined. Relevant evidence shows that it is important not only to try to reduce conflict, but also to actively increase and promote opportunities for facilitation or enrichment. However, there are not yet any clear intervention studies that can guide practitioners.

An increasing number of organisations offer flexible working to their staff to enhance work–life balance. The available research findings suggest that the impact of flexible working is equivocal: a very recent review shows that flexible working which promotes perceptions of employee control and choice enhances health, whereas interventions that are perceived to be motivated purely by organisational interests may have neutral or even negative health effects.

What are the recommendations arising from the literature?
Integrating evidence presented at the meeting, it is clear we know most about work-family conflict. Moreover, factors that may initially appear positive (e.g. job commitment and...
involvement) can also be detrimental in the long run (resulting in burnout and lack of engagement). Thus, there is a need to raise awareness amongst employers and employees alike about the causes and consequences of work-life conflict, for instance work role conflict, work demands, unpredictability, lack of control and inequity. These could be addressed through better job design and through the fostering of a culture where it is acknowledged that all types of employee have a right to a life outside work.

In summary, the event stimulated a rich discussion which showed that psychological evidence is readily taken on board by practitioners. We hope to continue our activities with a series of future events.

Helping managers manage stress in their teams

Emma Donaldson-Feilder, Rachel Lewis & Jo Yarker

RESEARCH suggests that line manager-employee relationships are a commonly reported cause of stress at work (e.g. Tepper, 2000). Various studies have shown a link between particular management/leadership models and the wellbeing of those being managed (e.g. Alimo-Metcalfe & Alban-Metcalfe, 2001).

Most studies used a priori measures of management/leadership, developed in the context of managing performance. Further research was needed to identify the full range of management behaviours important for employee wellbeing. For practitioners, the Health and Safety Executive introduced Management Standards for stress at work (HSE, 2004) to give employers guidance on workplace factors that present risks of work-related stress and how these can be managed. The achievement of these standards is influenced, if not determined, by how line managers carry out their people management responsibilities. Evidence-based guidance was therefore required to help line managers understand what to do in order to prevent and reduce stress in their team.

The ‘management competencies for preventing and reducing stress at work’ research aimed to meet these needs, through a three phase research programme (research reports below). The research revealed four themes of line manager behaviour important for preventing and reducing stress in employees:

- **Respectful and responsible**: managing emotions and having integrity includes acting with integrity, managing emotions and being considerate.
- **Managing and communicating existing and future work** includes proactive work management, problem-solving, keeping employees informed, and encouraging participation.
- **Managing the individual in the team** includes being personally accessible, being willing to be sociable, empathising with employees, and recognising that every individual is different.
- **Reasoning and managing difficult situations** involves managing conflicts effectively, taking responsibility for resolving issues, and seeking advice from others when necessary.
While these behaviours are general good management, many management frameworks currently used by organisations include only a subset (Yarker et al., 2007). This means that behaviours relevant to employee wellbeing may not be included in organisational HR and management development activities.

The research demonstrated that it is possible to change manager behaviour, particularly when they have development needs. It also suggested that providing managers with upward feedback, so they understand how their behaviour is perceived by their team, may be a key factor in helping them make changes.

**Further resources and information**

- Full scientific research reports:
  - www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/health/stress/_preventing_stress
  - www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrhtm/rr633.htm
  - www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrhtm/rr553.htm
- Self-report version of the questionnaire: http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/mcit.htm
- Online learning for managers and materials for practitioners: http://preventingstress.hse.gov.uk

**References**


**The authors**

Emma Donaldson-Feilder, Rachel Lewis and Jo Yarker, Affinity Health at Work.
ONE of the many challenges a practitioner faces is to integrate current academic theory and research into robust assessment and development solutions. As Hugh McCredie points out, it is often the case that there is poor connection between the worlds of research and practice, with the former developing formal theories and the latter finding pragmatic solutions to real-life problems. This book attempts to fuse the two worlds and provide an accessible summary of McCredie’s research across the fields of assessment and development over 30 years of research in organisations. It is strongly data-driven and details many of the author’s studies. However, by using only percentiles and re-labelling correlation sizes small/medium/large, it caters to those practitioners who are less interested in, or have less need of, the raw data.

McCredie works steadily through questions concerning the selection of managers and prediction of performance using personality and competencies and moves on to developing and coaching managers. The first section, on selection, compares current research with the author’s own findings, drawing conclusions on the typical characteristics and competencies of successful managers. He suggests guideline cut-off scores for using personality questionnaires in selection, whilst emphasising that these need to be used with care due to likely measurement error. The second half of the book follows on with the conclusion from McCredie’s own research that whilst personality factors do not mean that someone cannot undertake a particular role, if relevant personality factors are not present, there is likely to be an emotional cost, in the form of burnout or derailment. McCredie suggests that we can be successful in developing skills where they are not contraindicated by personality factors. This has implications for those managing access to development solutions within organisations or for different talent pools – suggesting that assessment may be helpful in determining personality, prior to acceptance onto a development programme.

The book concludes with valuable chapters on coaching and conducting development conversations. There are frameworks for structuring conversations plus practical guidelines for modelling/role playing difficult conversations. These chapters will be helpful to those first venturing into the management development world. The final summary, presenting answers to questions addressed in the book, acts as a useful quick reference guide for practitioners seeking data/research to back up decisions on assessment and development solutions.

In summary, McCredie presents us with some of the findings from a long and fruitful career. The book outlines some interesting conclusions, backed up with the research that practitioners often need, if only as a reference. It would be particularly useful for those working in-house who are relatively new to the field and will value having robust data to hand. It is, however, based entirely on work in the industrial sector, which may limit its appeal.

The reviewer
Tamsin Martin is a senior manager at PricewaterhouseCoopers.
THE Coaching Relationship – Putting People First
Stephen Palmer and Almuth McDowall (Ed)
Routledge, 2010
ISBN: 978-0-415-45874-0 (pbk)
Reviewed by Philippa Hain

This collection turns a welcome focus on an irony of the coaching profession. Most coaches would agree that their most productive work is based on the quality of relationship they co-create with the coachee, yet this area of practice has to date been little researched, in comparison with other topics. Palmer and McDowall have invited contributions from various researchers and coaching professionals which, viewed as a collection, highlight the complexity of the coaching relationship and attempt to shed light on critical aspects of the relational dynamics that are so important.

I suspect that most coaches, like me, tend to ‘fly by wire’ in respect of relationship building, using experience and intuition to guide their approach, tone and intervention strategy. Many have (or make) limited time for reflective practice about the way they communicate and the impact of their behaviour, or the coachee’s, on the content, quality and outcome of coaching discussions. In this book they will find several useful signposts to evidence-based research that will help them to engage more effectively in reflective practice. Much of this research has come, of necessity, from related disciplines rather than coaching itself, but this is not so much a limiting factor for the book as a reflection of the work that needs to be done within the profession on relationship dynamics and the wider context in which they take place. Indeed, the authors conclude with a timely ‘call to arms’ to coaches and coaching psychologists to get involved in refining our understanding of interpersonal relationships in coaching.

The collection focuses on four elements of relational dynamics in the coaching relationship. Firstly, the relationship itself is examined and compared with other helping relationships, such as counselling. Secondly, there are a number of thoughtful contributions about the way coaches communicate in relationships, highlighting the importance of language used, cultural issues and the impact of setting clear boundaries and rules of engagement through effective contracting. Various processes such as feedback (or ‘feed-forward’, an interesting concept) and assessment techniques are discussed with an emphasis on how they can enhance the coaching relationship where utilised appropriately. Finally, there are a number of contributions about the wider contextual issues surrounding coaching relationships, issues such as diversity, coach training, ethics and supervision.

As with any collection, some of the chapters made more impact on me than others, and the ones that I consumed with most relish were on the practice-based end of the spectrum, rather than the more academic, where I found some of the writing a little complex and opaque. I particularly enjoyed the considered, framework-rich discussion, on supervision and the discussion of coaching across cultures.

There is something here for every taste, however, and comprehensive reading lists will satisfy the academically inclined, while reflective practice questions at the end of each chapter will give the more pragmatic members of the profession much food for thought.

The reviewer
Philippa Hain is a Chartered Occupational Psychologist, Director of Transformation Partners (Wales) Ltd and a coach.
Individual responses to feedback: The development and validation of the Feedback Orientation Scale (FOS)

Linderbaum and Levy’s research aimed to develop and validate a measure of feedback orientation; to identify its ability to predict work-related outcomes and to explore the results in two employee samples. Linderbaum’s doctoral dissertation was used as the basis to develop and validate a multidimensional measure of feedback orientation to incorporate individual differences in the feedback process. Feedback orientation is an individual’s overall receptivity to feedback. Effectively using performance feedback to incorporate individual differences can support engaging work environments. As individuals have shifted from an organisational career to a protean career (i.e. an individual directs and shapes their career trajectory) organisations have focused on leadership development and career pathways to retain talented employees.

The FOS was developed and refined using two pilot studies and the two focal studies. Across these studies, substantial support was obtained for a four-dimension scale – utility, accountability, social awareness, and feedback self-efficacy.

The validated Feedback Orientation Scale (FOS) consists of 20 questions, five questions per dimension. The scoring is on a Likert scale from 1–5, strongly disagree to strongly agree.

The **Utility** dimension includes questions such as:
- Feedback contributes to my success at work.
- Feedback from supervisors can help me advance in a company.

The **Accountability** dimension includes questions such as:
- I hold myself accountable to respond to feedback appropriately.
- If my supervisor gives me feedback, it is my responsibility to respond to it.

The **Social Awareness** dimension includes questions such as:
- Feedback helps me manage the impression I make on others.
- Feedback lets me know how I am perceived by others.

The **Feedback Self-Efficacy** dimension includes questions such as:
- I believe that I have the ability to deal with feedback effectively.
- I feel confident when responding to both positive and negative feedback.

For the future, the authors suggest that longitudinal research on the development and shaping of feedback orientation will be useful and outline the benefits of conducting a study that follows individuals as they change jobs, supervisors, or companies to provide greater understanding of how individual feedback orientation can develop and change over time. The authors will continue with scale validation.

For practitioners, this scale may be of use as a diagnostic tool on the degree to which an individual is open or receptive to feedback. Specific information on the dimensions or
openness to developmental feedback or support could be used to tailor feedback.

The paper details the final validated scales and scoring.

**Reference**

**Further reading on feedback**


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For information on how to access test reviews/registered tests and for information on the difference between test review and test registration, please visit the PTC home page www.psychtesting.org.uk and click on the home page tab called Test Registration and Test Reviews.

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Key issues in the measurement of children's social and emotional competence

Neil Humphrey

RECENT years have seen a rapidly growing interest in children’s social and emotional competence (SEC). As an academic working on a number of projects evaluating the effectiveness of school-based programmes designed to promote children’s SEC (Humphrey, Lendrum & Wigelsworth, 2010), I have become increasingly interested in issues relating to how researchers and practitioners approach assessment and measurement in this area (Humphrey et al., in press).

Terminology and definition
We come across a wide range of terms in the literature on children’s SEC, including social and emotional intelligence (Salovey & Mayer, 1990), emotional literacy (Park, Haddon & Goodman, 2003), and social and emotional skills (DCSF, 2007). Although some people have argued that each of these terms describe qualitatively different constructs, inspection of the relevant literature and instruments suggests that they are extremely similar and can probably be used interchangeably. Denham (2005) talks about emotional competence as referring to self-awareness (understanding our own emotions), self management (managing our own emotions) and social awareness (empathy), and social competence as referring to social problem solving and relationship skills (co-operation, listening skills).

Developmental trajectories and individual differences
A second key consideration in this area of measurement is that children’s SEC follows an established developmental trajectory (Saarni, 1999), which needs to be reflected in measurement instruments. For example, it is unrealistic to expect a three-year-old to be able to manage their emotions as well as a six-year-old. However, some domains of SEC may also influence the appropriateness of using certain measurement instruments. For example, accurate self-report requires a level of proficiency in self-awareness that younger children often lack. Individual differences also play a role; girls are often better than boys at recognising their own emotions (Saarni, 1999).

Scope and specificity
Measures of children’s SEC vary greatly in their breadth and specificity. At the broadest level, some instruments provide a single, uni-dimensional indicator (Petrides & Furnham, 2001). At the most specific level, measures provide a single indicator of a discrete domain within SEC (e.g. self-management; Penza, Zeman & Shipman, 1998). Somewhere in between, some measures provide a multi-dimensional index of SEC that cover most of the domains outlined above (Gresham & Elliott, 1990). The broad, uni-dimensional measures tend to be short, and easy to administer and score, but they lack specificity and tend to be less ‘change sensitive’ than the more detailed, multidimensional measures that are available (meaning they are less useful in the evaluation of interventions).
Typical and maximal behaviour
A critical distinction among measures is the type of data they provide. Typical behaviour measures are attained through self- and informant-report (e.g. a respondent reads a statement and ticks a box to indicate their level of agreement) and are considered advantageous in that they are easy and quick to administer and score. However, they are subject to high levels of bias and social desirability. Maximal behaviour measures require respondents to complete a task that actually taps the underlying construct in question (e.g. a respondent is shown a picture of a face and asked to describe how the person is feeling). They are considered to be a more direct ‘measure’ of SEC, but are more time-consuming to administer and score. Furthermore, there are problems here in identifying ‘correct’ answers – developers have therefore had to rely upon expert and consensus opinion (both of which are susceptible to cultural bias). The correlation between typical and maximal measures of SEC is usually very small (Brackett & Mayer, 2003), raising the question as to whether they are in fact measuring the same underlying construct(s).

Who provides information
SEC measures typically derive information from one or more of the following sources: children, parents, and teachers/school staff. The advantages of using children’s self-report are that, through introspection, they have access to the most detailed information about themselves and in large studies this method can be the only practical way forward. However, their responses can be confounded by their levels of self-awareness. Teachers benefit from seeing a child’s behaviour in school, and can use their collective experience with other children as a frame of reference in providing accurate ratings, but there can be the issues of recruitment and retention. There would also be concerns about the burden imposed and loss of sensitivity in the measure itself when a single teacher is required to complete it on every child in a class. Parents, on the other hand, can provide detailed information about children’s behaviour at home, but typically have quite a restricted frame of reference.

Psychometric properties
SEC measurement is still in its relative infancy, and this is particularly apparent when one inspects the psychometric properties of available instruments (Humphrey et al., in press). Although most of the widely used measures do demonstrate acceptable properties of internal consistency, test-retest reliability, factorial validity, construct validity and discriminative validity, there is scant evidence of more advanced analysis (e.g. Item Response Theory).

References
Assessment of children’s mental health and wellbeing

Norah Frederickson

There has been increasing concern in the UK in recent years about children’s mental health; this may be defined as ‘a state of wellbeing in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community’ (WHO, 2009). An international questionnaire survey of wellbeing found that rates were lower in the UK than in 20 other industrialized countries (UNICEF, 2007). An Office of National Statistics survey found that 10 per cent of children and young people aged 5–15 had a clinically diagnosable mental disorder (Green et al., 2005). Some groups of children are at particular risk. For example, nearly 50 per cent of children in public care have a mental health disorder, a figure that increases to nearly 70 per cent among children living in residential care. Around 40 per cent of young people in contact with the youth justice system have diagnosable mental health problems – rising to 90 per cent of those in custody (DH, 2008).

Mental health problems in childhood often have long-term consequences, for example strong associations have been found between conduct disorders in childhood and later negative outcomes in interpersonal relationships, offending behaviour, erratic employment and social exclusion (see the review by Fraser & Blishen, 2007). In response to this well-founded concern, there has been an increasingly strong and explicit focus on promoting the social and emotional competence, mental health and psychological well-
being of children and young people (Appleby et al., 2006). This has been particularly marked in schools as the result of a new emphasis on investment in universal services, prevention and early intervention.

**Figure 1. Increasing Role of Schools in Promoting Children’s Mental Health & Wellbeing.**

Government guidance and programmes.

- **DfEE (2001)** Promoting children’s mental health within early years and school settings
- **Ofsted (2005)** Healthy minds: Promoting emotional health and well-being in schools
- **DH & DfES (2005)** National Healthy Schools Programme
- **DCSF (2008)** Targeted Mental Health in Schools
- **DH (2008)** Children & Young People in Mind (CAMHS Review)

The role of, and expectations on, schools have rapidly increased (see Figure 1), such that they are now seen as important sites of provision at Tiers I and II in the overall CAMHS delivery mechanism; resulting in greatly expanded responsibilities for providing entry-level assessment and intervention. A growing literature is supporting the effectiveness of such school-based intervention (Hoagwood et al., 2007). Given the pace of change in this area, it is not surprising that research has also highlighted the need for additional support for schools and allied staff to recognise and respond to social, emotional and psychological difficulties in pupils (NICE, 2004; Moor et al., 2007). This was the basis for the development of a portfolio of Measures of Children’s Mental Health and Psychological Wellbeing (Frederickson & Dunsmuir, 2009).

The measures portfolio comprises an introductory booklet (which covers guidance on assessment, intervention and evaluation), and seven booklets of assessment measures, each focused on a different aspect: Enjoyment, Belonging, Resilience, Responsiveness, Distress, Social Behaviour and Healthy Living. The measures in the Belonging booklet will be described in outline to illustrate the range of approaches:

- **Sense of a School Community Scale** – primary and secondary self report scales assessing supportive relationships and participation in decision making.
- **Family & School Connectedness Scales** – 12 and 6 item self report scales, developed for the US longitudinal study of adolescent health.
- **Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale** – pupils report the extent to which they feel accepted, included, respected and supported at school.
- **Social Cognitive Mapping** – an online activity collects information from children about ‘who hangs round with who’ in their class.
- **Four Field Map** – an interview identifies significant others – at school, in the family, among relatives, in the neighbourhood and maps closeness/conflict.
- **Student Engagement Instrument** – pupils self report on relationships with teachers, schoolwork relevance, peer support, family support and future goals.

Across all booklets of measures a standard format is adopted. Along with each measure a description of the instrument, its background in the literature and the purposes for which it can be used is first provided. Information on administration, scoring
and interpretation is then presented. The section on each measure concludes with technical details, for example information on reliability and validity, comparison with similar measures and references. In addition, the introduction to each booklet of measures provides a description of the topic, an outline of relevant theoretical frameworks, an overview of the instruments contained in the booklet and advice on planning interventions on the basis of the assessment information, where appropriate. The portfolio represents a collaboration between Chartered Clinical, Educational and Health Psychologists and is designed to support professionals working in schools and multidisciplinary children’s services contexts with identification, prevention and early intervention in this important area.

References


The author

Norah Frederickson is Professor of Educational Psychology at UCL and Senior Educational Psychologist in Buckinghamshire.

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Assessing pupils’ academic self-concept
Robert Burden

Burns (1982) defined self-concept as ‘a dynamic complex of attitudes held towards themselves by each person’ (page 7) and goes on to suggest that it can be identified as a compound of two elements, self image and self evaluation. Self image has subsequently come to refer to the set of beliefs that people hold about themselves in various aspects of their lives, whilst the evaluation of these beliefs is usually considered to contribute to a person’s sense of self esteem (see Lawrence, 2006). However, there are those, such as Marsh (1992), who do not find even this distinction helpful, and prefer to employ the term self-concept to cover both aspects, claiming that statistical studies tend to show that they are not as separate as they might appear.

One of the most contentious issues in self concept research and theory is that of whether to focus on a global measure, often referred to as General Self Concept (GSC); an approach taken by the widely used Rosenberg Scale (1965), or to consider the ways in which specific sub areas, such as one’s views about one’s academic abilities, social interactions, bodily self image and moral or religious beliefs all interact. On the whole, most widely used self-concept scales, such as those by Marsh (1992) and Harter (1985) tend to take a cumulative approach, providing a means of examining a person’s view of themselves and their attributes in various sub-areas, all of which are considered to contribute to the general self concept. Unfortunately, this can also mean that the scales themselves, whilst fairly long and time consuming, may only provide a short number of items devoted to any one area. For this reason, some researchers have constructed questionnaires that focus more explicitly on specific areas such as academic self-esteem (Lawrence, 2006) or academic self-concept (Burden, 2005).

The issue of what exactly self concept/self esteem scales are attempting to measure is an important one. As Hansford and Hattie (1982) point out in their meta-analysis of research studies into the relationship between people’s self perceptions and their academic achievements, terms such as self-concept, self-image and self-esteem are often used interchangeably without adequate definition and applied without valid and reliable measurement techniques. There is little indication of marked improvement since that study.

As a result of his own studies, Burns (1982, p.126) concluded that ‘children whose self-concepts do not include the view that they can achieve academically tend to fulfil that prediction’. Subsequent research in a multitude of studies has borne this out (Frederickson & Jacobs, 2001). Moreover, the importance of focusing on domain-specific self perceptions rather than on global self esteem has been emphasised in many other studies (Skaalvik & Hagvet, 1990; Carr et al., 1991). The way in which scores in these different domains, particularly with regard to different school subjects is clearly shown in the self-concept scales of Marsh (1992) and of Harter (1985). It should be noted, however, that what these studies and many others tend to show is the existence of an association between self concept and academic achievement in the nature of 0.3 to 0.4, but this does not necessarily indicate causality. The study by Muijs (1997) is a rare example of an investigation that takes this into account and concludes that self concept is likely to act as a mediating variable between general academic ability, as measured by cognitive tests and academic achievement in various domains, but may be more likely to function more as a result of high achievement than as a contributing factor.
Whilst the most conventional approach to assessing academic self-concept is by means of standardised scales, such as those of Burden (2000), Lawrence (2006) or, in relation to more specific academic domains, the scales produced by Harter or Marsh, the broader motivation literature has given rise to less structured but more soundly theoretically based investigations into such areas as self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997), locus of control (Connell, 1985), learned helplessness/optimism (Seligman, 1991) and attributional style (Dweck, 2000). What these perspectives suggest is that it is likely to be a mistake to take a uni-dimensional view of learner self-perceptions. A more helpful approach would be to consider students’ self-confidence in their ability to successfully complete a task, to take into account how far they consider their success or failure to be in their own hands or largely controlled by others and whether they took a more optimistic or pessimistic approach when faced with difficulty, possibly based on whether they hold a flexible or ‘static’ view on the nature of intelligence. Burden (2005) provides an overview of the two different approaches to assessing the self-perceptions of dyslexic pupils and how they can be employed to complement each other.

References

The author
Robert Burden is Emeritus Professor of Applied Educational Psychology and Director of the Cognitive Education Centre at the Graduate School of Education, University of Exeter.
The Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing and students with specific learning difficulties

Ellen Kirby

The Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP; Rashotte, Torgesen & Wagner, 1999) is fast becoming an essential piece of diagnostic equipment for the Specialist Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) Teacher as its tests provide important data to formulate specialist teaching programmes and its results contribute to the management of the student in other learning situations. Compared with other phonological tests, such as the Phonological Assessment Battery (PhAB), its strengths lie in the delivery, nature, variety and timing of tests.

CTOPP covers a wider age range (5:0–24:11) than PhAB and can be used for the purposes of access arrangements to provide measurements of the underlying skills required for processing sounds; it is accepted for the same purposes for Disabled Student Allowance. Moreover, it provides useful data to inform SpLD teachers working in educational settings and those working independently, when they are dealing with struggling learners, particularly those with reading and auditory difficulties.

The subtests are divided into three areas: Rapid Naming, Phonological Awareness and Phonological Memory.

■ Rapid naming: Unlike PhAB, rapid naming of ‘letter names’ is measured in CTOPP. As a SpLD teacher I have found this to have value as poor readers often have co-existing/underlying difficulties retrieving letter names. Rapid naming deficits can inform choice of reading scheme, such as the Active Literacy Kit (Bramley, 1998): ‘These [activities] contain the fundamental building blocks for accurate and fluent reading. They concentrate on alphabetic knowledge and phonological skills’ (page 7).

As with PhAB, rapid naming of numbers can be measured in CTOPP. Whilst useful information can be gleaned, I have found that the ‘well compensated dyslexic’ often displays no problems processing digits at speed and can often be seen excelling in maths within the school curriculum.

Testers are required to add together the rapid naming digits and letters scores to give a composite score and, often, the deficits in rapid letter naming are disguised by a good score in rapid naming digits. This is why the ‘alternate rapid naming’ tests are available, which involve naming colours and pictures at speed. These tests allow the tester to come to a conclusion as they reveal where the language retrieval difficulties might be.

■ Phonological awareness: For this test, the learner is required to listen to ‘non-words’ and repeat them. It is imperative that the examiner listens vigilantly and marks exactly the responses given as a temptation here is to interpret a response as ‘good enough’. For example, when students are asked to repeat ‘nigong’, many students say ‘nigone’; this should be marked as incorrect because it is these subtle sound differences that are being measured. Importantly, the processing of sounds may contribute to the barrier preventing the learner from reading fluently and, whilst the results of the test may have implications for ensuring that the learner has their hearing checked, it also has implications in how the specialist teacher will teach phonics.
Phonological Memory: This test is essential in the diagnosis of learning difficulties. Learners are required to listen to strings of numbers and repeat them back within a short time span. The test measures ‘the examinee’s ability to code information phonologically for temporary storage in working or short-term memory’ (Rashotte, Torgesen & Wagner, 1999). I have found that students with deficits in this area often have difficulties with comprehension of reading at sentence level. Importantly, whilst reading is affected by this difficulty, it is a different difficulty from weaknesses at single word level. Learners with deficits in phonological memory are helped by specialist teachers in the breaking down of sentences into constituent parts and teaching the learner the function and use of parts of the sentence. This teaching provides students with the tools to unravel sentences.

In my experience, students with weaknesses in phonological memory often struggle with other areas of listening, such as the aural exercises in listening to music and in the classroom processing large amounts of auditory information. Furthermore, I have found that students who present to SpLD assessors are often described as having concentration and motivational difficulties in the classroom.

Unlike PhAB, the CTOPP auditory tests are presented to learners on a compact disc player. This form of delivery is advantageous in that it takes away the responsibility of reading accuracy and timing for the tester ensuring parity with other testers.

Confidence bands
The reliability of CTOPP is an area where the SpLD teacher should exercise caution. When quoting standard scores on reports, especially if registered with Professional Association of Teachers of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties (PATOSS) and the PTC, assessors are bound to quote confidence bands. However, for an 11-year-old scoring a composite score of 88 in phonological memory on CTOPP, the 95 per cent confidence band would be a standard measurement of error of 12 either side of this score, giving a score range from 76–100. The score of 88 is ‘below average’ (as described in the CTOPP manual) but the confidence band ranges from ‘poor’ to ‘average’. Where does this leave the specialist teacher in terms of descriptions? Moreover, where does it leave the specialist teacher in terms of reliability and interpretation and therefore remediation?

Conclusion
CTOPP is a highly valued diagnostic tool in terms of the learners’ skills that it measures; it is essential for SpLD teachers in the identification of auditory and reading difficulties. However, because of the wide confidence bands, it is advisable to use the results in the context of other assessment data when drawing conclusions in the writing of reports. The sources of such data may vary from teachers’ observations, parents’ views, SpLD teachers’ findings and, perhaps most importantly, the student’s perspective on him or herself as a learner.

References:

The author
Ellen Kirby is a Spld Teacher and Assessor at Ipswich High School for Girls and works for Suffolk and Norlf County Councils and has her own private practice: www:ellen-kirby-educational-assessments.co.uk
Assessment & Development Matters

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Participants: State if national/international sample.

Digested Key Message: Brief summary here of what the main message/implications/findings are.

Introduction: Literature/background here.

Research Objectives: Outline research objectives/aims.

Methodology: Detail method.

Analysis: Detail your analysis.

Discussion: Findings, key points, implications for practice.

References/Sources: Websites, etc. can also be placed here.

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