Chairperson's Address

Gina McCredie, December 2007

So much has happened since my last report in The Organisational Psychologist. It's been an exciting few weeks working with the National COP Committee to develop our new Business Plan for the College.

The National COP Committee got together in October to discuss the future directions of the College and plan our key initiatives for the next three years. As a result, we now have an agreed Business Plan for 2008-2010. Over the coming weeks we will be communicating the key elements of the Plan and seeking your involvement. In this report I will refer to some of the key influences on our plan.

Our Challenges

The National Committee discussed the challenges the profession and the College face:

• We are operating in a business world that often doesn't understand us, doesn't recognise our uniqueness, and doesn't see our value-add compared to our competitors.

• In Universities organisational psychology courses are impacted by recent government decisions to significantly increase funding to other psychologies, but not us. The pipeline of developing the next generation of organisational psychologists is under threat.

• As a College, we are a minority in the greater APS population, continually trying to ensure our voice is heard and our skills appreciated. It is the same with the media. We need to switch from standing our ground to being proactive.

• As a College, we are not attracting enough organisational psychologists to our ranks. We need more COP members to have a stronger voice and ensure a future for our specialist professional association.

Our best efforts to date have only made small improvements to our profession – a small group of volunteers has got the day-to-day work done to keep us afloat, but without a greater vision. Our recent survey about College membership reinforced this. "Same old, same old" isn't working. It's time for change.

Our Future

The National Committee discussed five thematic streams on which the College needs to focus its efforts to ensure a strong future.

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1	**Growth**	We attract members by being a thriving, forward thinking, and professional community.
2	**Reach**	We are a globally networked practitioner and academic profession.
3	**Influence**	We influence business, media and the government through our strong brand and value proposition.
4	**Innovation**	We strive to provide great services to our members, and we are disciplined and professional in our administration and governance of COP.
5	**Capability**	We support our members' growth through world class continuing professional development.

Our Next Steps

The five streams will be used to guide all that the College does. Our initiatives and priorities for 2008-2010 align to these streams.

We have three immediate priorities:

1. Development and communication of an effective value proposition for our profession (and subsequently, our College)
2. Development of an effective and far reaching communications strategy.
3. Development and implementation of a strategic Continuing Professional Development Framework.

There are many, many initiatives that College members and non-members have suggested – all need to be reviewed in light of the streams above, prioritised, resourced, and measured. Details of these initiatives, and how you can get involved, will be provided in the months to come.

Are you in, or are you not?

So how do you fit in to all this? Do you agree with the directions and priorities outlined above – or not? Let us know your thoughts, have your say, get involved in shaping our future – don't just sit on the sidelines.

2008 is the year that we, as a College and profession, need to cover a significant amount of ground. We can only achieve all we have planned with considerably more involvement and help from you.

The time has come to make your mark in the College. Please think about what you personally can do for your profession in 2008. Together we can make it great!

Best wishes for the festive season,   Gina McCredie

Submission Guidelines

The Chief Editor and Editor welcome all constructive input, articles, letters and ideas from Organisational Psychology College Members. We would just like you to help us out by abiding by some simple house keeping rules:

- **Please ensure that any articles are formatted properly, spell checked and proofed prior to being submitted for publication. (while we reserve the right to fix your copy or modify the formatting, we may not do so!)**

- **Obtain the Chief Editor's (Gina McCredie) approval prior to any articles being written on commercial sponsors.**

- **Please do not submit material that is defamatory, libellous, racist or discriminatory in nature. We will not publish it.**

- **All images, artwork and fonts to be submitted as separate files! Do NOT include Artwork or photos as a part of a Word file without submitting separately. Preferred format for photos are TIFF or high quality JPG.**

- **For 2008 the Editor will change so please note the NEW editor and her e-mail to which to send articles: Rosie McMahon <rosemark@primusonline.com.au>**

Managing Editor's Overview

Christmas greetings to all College Members,

After two and a half years, I am gearing down from being managing editor and gearing up for motherhood. It has been extremely rewarding to contribute to the College and work with Gina McCredie as Chair. The newsletter has gone from being a state specific publication to a national publication, with themes for each quarter.

Gina and the National Committee have taken the College to a new level through a strategic planning process. There is a clear outline of the values that will drive the College's future operations, as well as the challenges faced by the College. There is a lot of work to do. I have personally found that contributing to your professional association will reap many benefits in terms of raising individual profile and the College's professional profile.

In this edition we look at the issue of on-line testing, and receive a strong overview on this from Marion Power (ACER) and Tom Pietkiewicz. Marion explores some of the complexities and challenges for online testing; whilst Tom provides interesting commentary from Ray Glennon at SHL on methods of copyright for internet testing products. We are also privileged to hear from Richard Hicks about his research on Social Desirability scales in the Apollo questionnaire.

We also acknowledge Keith Taylor, this year's winner for the APS Award of Distinction. Doctor Taylor has literally provided decades of service to promoting this profession and working on behalf of all organisational psychologists.

Lastly, I would like to welcome the new editor Rosie McMahon, who will take TOP and College Communications to yet another level next year. I won't steal Rosie's thunder, but her ideas sound very exciting indeed.

Thanks again for your readership and contributions.

Martha Knox Haly

Online Testing
by
**Marion Power,
Organisational Psychologist
and HR Consultant with ACER**

Assessment is a key focus of the work of many organisational psychologists. The traditional pencil and paper delivery is familiar to us all. However, we are now able to choose online or computerised assessments and this affords its own challenges to ethical use.

Expectations of many of ACER's clients and candidates tend towards online product availability as so much of the business we transact on a daily basis occurs that way. As browsers and test developers become better equipped to accommodate the special needs of online assessment, more products are becoming available and marketing encourages access via this medium.

While acknowledging the obvious benefits of online testing (e.g. immediacy of results, ease of generation of local data sets, and video/animated item presentation); there are aspects which warrant careful consideration to ensure that the integrity of the testing process and the professionalism of the psychologist are preserved.

Some of the major issues which have been identified are:

Security of materials – ensuring screens may not be printed so that test content remains secure.

Candidate identification – ensuring the candidate accessing the test session is the person they claim to be!

Equivalence – determining that the assessment is measuring constructs as similar as possible to those considered via paper versions and that results are spread in a like manner. In fact, most research to date has indicated no concerning difference between a candidate's results on assessments be they delivered in paper and pencil or online formats. This appears to be relevant to ability and personality measures. Age may play a small part, but that effect is diminishing as all age groups embrace new technology at work and in leisure pursuits.

Assessor's role – ensuring the tester maintains a professional approach and standards i.e. conduct of session, interpretation and feedback are governed by the same code of ethical practice no matter what the delivery mode.

Client type: there are environments in which online assessment may undermine the quality of the relationship between client and professional. For example, clients presenting with clinical issues are likely to be best served by a more personalised assessment – if, indeed, any formal measure at all.

Proctored environment?

One of the most heavily debated issues concerns the need or not to supervise the candidates while they take the assessment online.

Those in favour express concerns related to the first two issues outlined above together with the possibility that cheating may occur. Those against believe a major benefit of online testing – ability to conduct the session with the candidate(s) in a remote location – is lost if personal testing is required. An interesting article by Tippins et al (2006) offers the comment that initial screening may be suited to unproctored assessment with the proviso that candidates clearly understand that follow-up assessment for any shortlisted applicants will be supervised. For high-stakes assessments, the strong recommendation is that a proctored environment is essential.

The ever-widening net of available assessments and their delivery mode means this is an exciting time for we organisational psychologists. As is our wont, we select those most appropriate to the presenting challenge.

Guidelines are available from the APS www.psychology.org.au, and from the International Test Commission www.intestcom.org
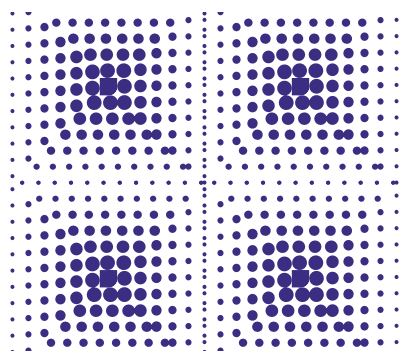
References

Tippins, N; Beaty, J; Drasgow, F; Gibson, W; Pearlman, K; Segall, D; & Shepherd, W.

Unproctored Internet Testing in Employment Settings
Personnel Psychology 2006, 59, 189-225

Online psychometric testing

by Tom Pietkiewicz, Communications Officer, Victorian COP and Principal Consultant ResolutionsRTK

Online testing is certainly not new, and as a psychologist, I am particularly sceptical about many of the services in this area. A quick Google search under 'online psychometric testing' reveals a plethora of tools and services. Many free. You can measure your IQ, discover your best career fit, find out you personality type and which animal characteristics you display. Are you a Salmon or a Tiger? Much of this is not worth our time discussing, and certainly should be steered clear of. Many tools are simply made up, or use 'borrowed' items from more established measurements. A simple rule of thumb would be that if you cannot obtain a manual or a white paper from the publisher to establish validity and reliability of the measurement, than there is probably little point evaluating it any further.

Online psychometric testing is provided by reputable publishers, for a number of purposes. In particular, in organisations, it is often used for selection and recruitment. These tests include measures of various cognitive skills such as reasoning, decision making, measures of personality, sales motivation and leadership potential, to name a few. There are a number of pros and cons for online testing; and various companies have made significant progress in addressing areas of concern. This is perhaps worth discussing further.

The concerns regarding online test administration that immediately come to mind include security, identity and accessibility. I raised some of these issues when I

spoke to Ray Glennon, Director of Professional Services at SHL, one of the largest providers of organisational psychological tools. Ray explained that their new 'Verify' suite of online tools addresses many of the common issues associated with online testing. Specifically the measures contain large pools of items that change between assessments. This minimises the chances of items being copied and distributed.

To go one step further a team performs internet searchers for any sites offering SHL items for sale; and if any are found these would be discontinued from further use. SHL recommend using honesty contracts to ensure candidates are not cheating during the testing process. Additionally the tools include internal measurements that, for example, look at the times with which items are answered to measure consistency. There are also screening processes to identify items that candidates seem to be consistently having trouble with. An additional step is added where short listed candidates can later be retested in person. This is achieved by a selection of several items to check that the candidate was not receiving help from their local chess club or their genius brother when while completing a reasoning measure. So if a candidate is to be tested in person anyway, then what is the point I hear you ask? Ray explained that since the introduction of these tools, over 30,000 assessments have been conducted in graduate selection processes. It would be logistically difficult, costly and labour intensive to conduct hundreds or thousands of supervised assessments for such a large candidate pool. It is simpler to test candidates early in the process to assist with short listing, and then verify the authenticity of their assessments later when the numbers are much smaller.

On the other side of the coin, I asked an HR professional at a large resource infrastructure company to outline their experience with online assessments. She explained that first of all its quick and easy to use, can be done remotely, (provided candidate has broadband). Additional advantages were that reports are easy to understand and cover personality and aptitude testing, and are a cheaper alternative than the face to face psych testing by a psychologist. An additional benefit was the ability to test more candidates earlier in the process rather than just the final two, for example. One flaw was that fact that the process is very generic and has no personalised perception or inclusion. It cannot assess concerns that had been highlighted from the interview. Further on some occasions test results have gone missing from the system and sometimes candidates have experienced system shutdowns.

After considering some research, there seems to be a consensus that testing is most useful when very little is known about a candidate and fit can be determined earlier. This is particularly true for volume recruitment, where online testing would seem to offer advantages.

In lower volume contexts, a psychologist considering the position description, a manager's comments and the results, can use these to develop a targeted report.

An additional benefit of supervised assessment is that it enables the psychologist to make observations. This is especially that case in terms of a candidate dealing with a stressful and challenging event such as a psychometric testing battery. Observations can add a layer of information that can be valuable in a selection process. Of course we have to appreciate that

while such an approach can be valuable, it can significantly impact on prices, timelines and volume of such work.

Whatever the administration method, psychometric testing provides a source of objective data about a candidate. When correctly used and applied psychometric testing can significantly strengthen a selection process and improve selection decisions. This is imperative as poor selection decisions are costly. The utility of the testing data depends on a variety of factors. Choosing tools and setting up a process that works can be a potential minefield for selection managers. Is anything better than nothing?

In my experience many companies are perhaps not getting the most from their psychometric testing. In many cases the testing is a 'tick the box' process and the data is not properly evaluated or linked to performance. In some instances it is hard to justify a specific measure for a particular role. For example why would an Organisational trainer need to score well on a complex numerical reasoning measure? Are there any numerical reasoning functions outlined in the Position Description? I am personally aware of a number of cases where measures have been used inappropriately. Will someone who scores higher on an abstract reasoning measure necessarily perform better as a manager than someone who scores in the average range? Are recruiting managers using the information correctly? Do we just want smarter people here? Why?

The selection and recruitment process is regulated and protected by laws and guidelines. It is important to remember that if a candidate was to challenge a selection decision, and the decision included scores from a psycho-

metric measure, reliable or not, an employer would need to explain why a particular score was 'not good enough'. Poor practices can additionally impact on a company's employment brand. Suitable candidates could be rejected and can form an opinion about the way an organisation does things. If this happens often enough, a significant portion of potential employees can be alienated.

Perhaps it is easier to simply not reveal clearly why a decision was reached, and this is probably closer to what actually happens.

In my experience a number of clients use arbitrary performance cut off points. In other cases, measures differentiate between candidates and the ones who performed better continue in the process. Alternatively, some organisations may reject a candidate if they only perform particularly poorly. In any case it is important that managers use these tools correctly and effectively to eliminate poor candidates, and to ensure that good candidates are not rejected.

I am aware of a case where a very successful senior manager, who attended a development centre and returned some rather lacklustre scores on measures of cognitive ability. As the manager's real performance was already known, this raised a few questions. What were the actual factors that determined success in the role? Would the current selection process have had rejected this valued individual? On closer investigation it was revealed that this person was able to use their leadership and delegation skills to engage their team to perform much of the intellectual 'grunt' work, analysis and evaluation. This manager focused the team, maintained morale, provided for needs and resolved staff issues. The organisation was large enough

to allow this manager support in the areas that were measured by the testing.

A quick scan of the norm groups on a measure of verbal critical thinking suggests that the higher samples are Senior executives at small growth orientated companies, Medical and MBA students and Graduate employees. In those groups, intellectual ability and individual performance is probably a key factor in success. Managers at a large airline, however, were on average scoring lower. Perhaps other factors are required for good performance in these types roles, such as customer service and interpersonal skill. Or dare I say – Emotional Intelligence? These factors and how they fit need to be understood to ensure effectiveness of a testing process. Knowing the results in combination with other factors assessed during a selection process can help build an overall picture of a candidate, and additional areas can be asked to determine fit.

I am involved with one client where all assessment results are collected and evaluated against later performance. Are candidates with higher-measured cognitive abilities necessarily performing better than others? If someone was hired with a lower score on a measure, how are they performing now? Patterns for particular roles and functions are identified and applied to future assessments. Over time the process is becoming more and more valuable and successful.

While a number of ability measures have been connected and correlated with performance in various functions, the area of personality is less concrete and needs to be treated with care.

Certain personality characteristics have been shown to be more prevalent in an occupational category (Barrick & Mount, Personnel Psychology, 44, 1–26 (1991)). There is less evidence to suggest that certain personality types were more successful in an occupational category. In short, it seems that you can use personality scores to determine fit, but not necessarily success. So a result from a personality assessment could be used to engage a candidate in a discussion about why they are applying for a particular role, rather than making statements about their likely performance, as is sometimes the case.

This is an area psychologists can help, whether the testing is online or traditional. Our understanding of people and the way they interact with organisations can help adjusting, streamlining and putting scores into a context. Psychologists can interpret the information, advise managers, provide feedback and add value at all levels.

The APS provides guidelines for the use of psychological tests which can be accessed from the APS website. These guidelines should be referred to whenever a psychologist is advising or is involved in testing. The guidelines highlight a psychologist's duty of care to the candidates, their responsibility for understanding and using measures correctly and ensuring that the information gathered is used appropriately. The guidelines further outline areas of confidentiality, security, standards and skills required to utilise psychological testing ethically. It is important that psychologists clarify these points with the provider of online psychometric testing and have all possible concerns addressed before rolling out a process.
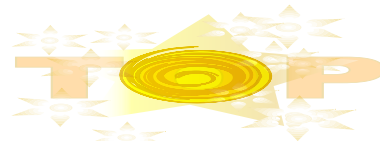
Doctor Keith Taylor

Winner of an Award of Distinction 2007

The College of Organisational Psychologists has an opportunity to nominate an individual an year as their nominee for the APS Award of Distinction. This year the College was privileged to announce Doctor Keith Taylor as the College nominee for a life time of service to the Psychological Profession. The Award of Distinction is an APS award, as compared to the Elton Mayo which is an award that is specific to the specialist discipline of Organisational/Occupational Psychology.

Doctor Taylor established the first I/O Psychology Course in Australia in 19964 after arriving here from the United Kingdom; and held the position of Senior Lecturer

in Psychology at the University of Melbourne from 1964 to 1990. He was a foundation member of the APS in 1966 and was awarded to elected fellowship in 1993. He was also made a Fellow of the British Psychological Society in 1979.

Doctor Taylor was elected National Chairman of College of Organisational Psychologists from 1974 to 1977. He was National Director of the APS from 1979 to 1982, and served on the editorial group of the Australian Psychologist and the Australian Journal of Psychology. Whilst on leave from Melbourne University, Doctor Taylor was appointed to the position of Associate Professor at the School of Management at the National University for Singapore from 1984 to 1987. From 1991 to 1994, Doctor Taylor acted in the position of Reader/Acting Head of Department of Business and Management at the City of Polytechnic of Hong Kong. Doctor Taylor was then appointed to a Professorship in the Department of Management at City University of Hong Kong.

Over the course of Doctor Taylor's career, he has co-edited a book, contributed 11 book chapters, published more than 20 journal articles, prepared 8 technical reports and presented over 40 conference papers.

Although Doctor Taylor resigned from teaching and research in 1997, he has maintained his involvement with the APS and the College of Organisational Psychologists. His influence continues through his students, two of whom, Dr Geoff Kelso and Dr Paul Power, have become winners of the Elton Mayo Award.

The search for a social desirability scale in a personality questionnaire: the unusual answer scales of the Apollo Profile

By R E Hicks, Bond University and Pacific Testing & Career Services.

Many personality questionnaires are developed on the basis that respondents will complete the items honestly and that subsequently total scale scores will be accurate. This may be an acceptable assumption for career guidance, personal development and team placement issues. However, many such questionnaires (e.g.; NEO-PI-R; the Apollo Profile) are also used for selection purposes. There are questions around such usage, however much research suggests that personality attributes can and do predict performance. There is still concern about response distortion.

One questionnaire, the Apollo Profile, was originally developed without social desirability or distortion scales. There is no indication of whether obtained score profiles might need to be treated cautiously. Yet the Apollo Profile is being used, (including extensively online), to support selection processes. A possible distortion scale was needed and this paper outlines the process by which a social desirability scale was developed from current Apollo Profile items. The paper also explores how this process could be applied to a variety of situations.

First- what is the Apollo Profile TM?

The Apollo Profile is an online questionnaire giving assessment on 28-34 preference, values and motivational scales, using 180 items.

The scales included Extraversion, Agreeableness, Innovation (cf; "Openness"), Conscientiousness and Stress Resilience (cf, "Neuroticism"), along with others that are directly workplace oriented- Teamwork; Achievement; Collaboration; Trust; Loyalty; Ambition; Recognition; Responsibility; Self-organisation; Pro-activity; Goal-setting; Intimacy; Altruism; Competitiveness and others.

Seven main factors appear to underlie the questionnaire (the big five "look-a-likes", plus two workplace factors of team-orientation, and management practice).

* Higher scores indicate stronger personal preferences, values and motivation; and these scales have shown good comparative results against other questionnaires (several reports, sources).

** However, the question of faking or distortion in the answers had not been addressed, except via the design where forced-choice ipsative type questions were used for part of the questionnaire.

*** Some practitioners, however, despite some research suggesting that such scales may not be needed in personality questionnaires or made little difference to the overall group responses, were keen to know the extent to which the overall scores "were subject to social desirability or other distortion".   This led to the current study.

Using an alternative question-naire (such as one of several available – Crowne-Marlowe and others) was considered. This approach was not adopted - as this added to time and cost for respondents. We then strove to identify items in the Apollo Pro-file directly, by noting the likely similarity to image management or to possible self-deception. *(This was harder to do than origi-nally envisaged, and very com-plex in the need to define clearly what should be included or not).* The next step was to explore the forced-choice responses vis-a-vis the single-stimulus responses. The forced-choice items were thought to be less fakable, according to the literature.   There were differences but no trends discernible in our review of the item performances over more than 4000 respondents. Finally we examined the items in

the Apollo Profile that were an-swered with extreme responses by many respondents (that is, strong-ly favoured or strongly disliked items).

These items, we thought, might be useful in identifying those people "most unlike" the normal trends. This meant a warning about the "unusual" patterns of re-sponses could be given. It wasn't clear as to whether items "hang together" as a scale or would not-they could be simply accumula-tions of items that were most often or least often chosen.

EXCITEMENT!

When the top and bottom 14 items were combined and listed in a "scale" the 28 items showed considerable affinities. An over-all alpha coefficient of 0.72 was obtained! The items "hung togeth-er". But there's more!

WHEN THE TWO SETS WERE SPLIT into "items most often preferred strongly" ('fa-voured") vs "items most often rejected or given low preferences" ('not-favoured)', the alpha coef-ficients rose substantially- to over 0.80 for the "favoured" item scale of 14 items; and 0.75 for the "not-favoured" item scale (also of 14 items). The relationship between the two scales was a low (though significant) negative -0.22. This meant we were dealing with coherent sets of items making up a variable or variables of some kind! People respond consistently and there were similarities under-pinning the responses in these sets of unusual or extreme answers.
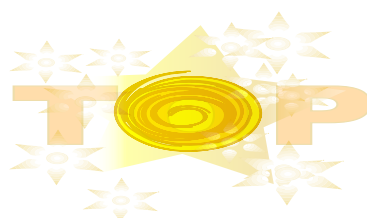
Some examples of the items follow -

"Favourable items" are items to which most people award a 7 on a seven-point scale

How important to you is

• Accepting responsibility

• Structuring your time to ensure goals are achieved

"Unfavourable items" are items to which most people award a 1 on a seven-point scale

To what extent do you agree with the following statements

• It is better to win at all costs than to lose

• I would bend the truth if it helped win an important work result

• I try to get even with oth-ers if they put me down

Then we tackled the question of construct validity. What did the scales mean? We had conducted a series of project studies. We re-lated the items (as a scale) to other scales in the Apollo Profile, and on other measures.

The "favoured items" scale (Unusual Answers Scale-1) cor-related highest – above 0.60- with the Apollo Profile scales of

• *self-organisation,*

• *conscientiousness,*

• *achievement,*

• *collaboration,*

• *trust, and*

• *interpersonal preferences;*

This suggests the high end of the UAS-1 scale of 14 items was measuring socially desirable traits in the workplace. There may be falsification or distortion of responses, though this is a question to be answered by further research: but organisations might be warned about high scores on UAS-1,

Certainly, however, and perhaps even more importantly, LOW scores also need to be noted as there may be a correspondence implicit in regards to potential counter-productive behaviour.

The "unfavoured items" scale (Unusual Answers Scale-2) correlated highest – beyond -0.60- (negatively) with

• stress resilience (that is, high scores on UAS2 correlated with low scores on resilience, or the less well-adjusted end of the resilience scale) AND

• conformity (that is, high scores on UAS2 correlated with low conformity).

This suggests the high end of the 14-item UAS-2 scale is measuring susceptibility to stressors at work (a lower ability to cope and rebound) but also a tendency to behave in non-conforming ways- not conforming to social, organisational norms. Both elements (high susceptibility to stressors, non-conforming behaviours) would be of concern to employers.

On the other hand, overly low scores on this scale might also reflect a tendency to distortion of the responses in a positive direction- it is well-known organisations would want adaptable, resilient and 'conforming' "team" members.

Further studies comparing the responses on the Unusual Answers Scales, against scores on other questionnaires (the NEO-PI-R, the Occupational Stress Inventory, the MBTI, and the Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scales) have been conducted and results will be reported in due course.

Implications and Conclusion

In conclusion both scales seemed to have achieved the aim of the project- two scales developed from the current items in the questionnaire assessing important aspects at work- the potential for unusual perhaps counter-productive behaviour and the potential perhaps for over-conformity and/or socially desirable behaviour. The study set out to see if we could find items in the questionnaire itself that would measure distortion tendencies, self-image management or self-deception or in some other way indicate caution may need to be exercised in examining and using the results. The progress suggests that the search has been successful, though more research is needed.
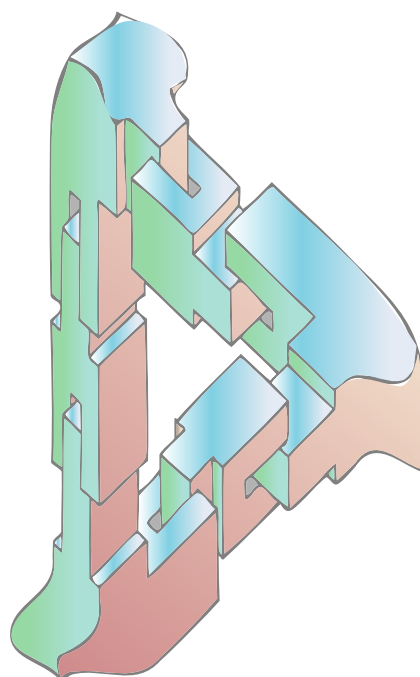
An implication is that other personality questionnaires that do not have in-built distortion scales (e.g., the NEO and shorter off-shoots such as IPIP) could have such scales developed if desired, by following similar steps. In retrospect perhaps the results could have been anticipated by those with knowledge of 'extreme responses' on personality and clinical questionnaires. But I'd not found any articles as guides, and the search and discovery, for me, was a challenging, interesting and exciting one.

T.O.P. the official Quarterly Newsletter for the College of Organisational Psychologists has been illustrated and designed for the last time by:

http://www.halyucinations.com.au