



Charles Worth, MA, Dip.Ed, has a Master's degree in Adult Education. He has worked in secondary schools, as Education Adviser to Christian Aid, and as Training and Development Officer for the Methodist Church in the West Midlands. He currently offers supervision for church leaders. Charles is a qualified Myers-Briggs® practitioner.

Email:
Charles@perceivetraining.co.uk

BAPT MIDLANDS GROUP WORKSHOP

“A RESPONSE FOR THE MBTI® SCEPTICS”

A PRESENTATION BY PENNY MOYLE (ENTJ)

HELD ON TUESDAY, 9 OCTOBER, 2018

REPORT BY CHARLES WORTH (INFP)

The Midlands group was delighted to welcome Penny to share with us some of the research she has recently completed. The timing was perfect, a day after Myers Brigg (as one psychologist constantly called it) received a less than enthusiastic treatment on Radio Four's 'Start the Week.'

Penny is a psychologist who completed her doctoral studies at Oxford University, worked briefly in a small consultancy before joining OPP, where she served in a variety of roles and was CEO for five years until the end of 2016. She has recently co-written a paper with John Hackston entitled *Personality Assessment for Employee Development: Ivory Tower or Real World?* in which the published literature on the use of the MBTI® instrument is thoroughly reviewed – there are over one hundred and fifty books and articles listed in the bibliography. As one of the early slides in Penny's PowerPoint presentation shows – a trusty medieval knight complete with sword and shield – she is Defender of Type Instruments for Personal Development. Those last two words are key: much of the literature critical of MBTI® does not focus on personal development but on selection (despite repeated warnings from OPP and CPP that this is a misuse of the instrument).

An interesting starting point is the apparent paradox that MBTI® is the most widely known and used personality assessment in the world, taken by between 1.5 million to 5 million people every year, and yet it is also the subject of more criticism than other instruments. Penny suggested

that this may partly be because it is 'the tallest tree in the forest' and therefore gets attacked more because of its high profile than for what is its true purpose. At the moment MBTI® is getting a mainly negative press, including articles in *The Times*, *Financial Times*, *New Statesman* and *Nature*. Penny estimates that a ratio of around only one out of ten press references is currently positive. This led to a discussion about what appears to be lazy journalism before we were invited to share what criticisms we have heard in our work as practitioners.

The points on our list were covered by Penny's more comprehensive collection of criticisms which she arranged under three categories: academic, journalistic and additional. In the academic section were

- Type not Trait – often based on a misunderstanding of the concept of preference and the main purpose of MBTI® which doesn't claim to measure or predict behaviour by raw test scores alone
- Test-Retest Reliability – the agreed standard for internal consistency is 0.7: MBTI® scores are all at least 0.8 and some up to 0.9. On test-retest 95% show three or four preferences the same.
- Predictive Validity – this has in fact been demonstrated in a range of relevant contexts
- Factor Structure (the absence of Neuroticism) – the assessment was deliberately constructed to keep the focus on the positive and productive differences between people
- Faking – when it is used appropriately for development and not selection there is no pressure to fake results, and in any case questionnaire scores are only one element of feedback with a trained practitioner
- Barnum Effects – what on earth are these? A new category to us, this describes a 'horoscope effect', where each type description could apply to anyone. Again, studies have shown there is no evidence to support this accusation.



The ‘journalistic’ criticisms echoed some of the academic ones and included

- Puts you in a box
- Type changes all the time
- Not scientifically valid
- Too positive

The responses to the academic criticisms also work for countering these. The ‘additional’ criticisms included

- Developed by amateurs – Penny has a great response to this when she cites the first manned powered flight in the US, which was won not by professional trained aerodynamic engineers but by the Wright brothers, the owners of a bike shop, who brought commitment and practical knowledge – and who were the **pioneers**. Which is the great achievement of Briggs and Myers too.
- Jung was a crackpot – we didn’t think this was worth serious consideration
- It’s too old – ditto, noting that a 60+ year history means that there is a lot of accumulated research and several revisions of the assessment.

We tried our hand at an exercise where we looked at an arrangement of numbers from 1 to 54 and were invited to find each number in sequence: we realised that there was a basic framework and this enabled us to see patterns more clearly. This is a metaphor for using Type theory to understand people.

One theory of evidence-based management identified four different kinds of evidence: scientific, organisational, practitioner and stakeholder. Scientific evidence may be the most important for selection purposes, but for development we may need to rely more on the others – in part because there has not been much published on the validity of type instruments for development purposes.

Penny concluded a fascinating morning by proposing a new kind of validity assessment based on the test-taker’s perspective. She is calling this Experiential Validity. Components of experiential validity could include:

- Did the person experience the process as personally valuable?
- Were the intended outcomes from development achieved?
- Can key learnings be recalled months later?
- Is there ongoing impact at work?

As practitioners with considerable experience of working with MBTI® in our various contexts we know how highly many people value the insights they have gained from it. We are grateful that this Champion was willing to travel to Birmingham to share the evidence of her defence with us, and we greet her invention of Experiential Validity with enthusiasm.

[Dr Penny Moyle is a business psychologist, who combines a background in both academic and commercial research with decades of consulting and training experience, as well as hands on experience of management, ultimately as CEO of OPP Ltd. (2011-2017). Since leaving OPP, Penny has been honing her skills as a business coach, joining the Meyler Campbell Faculty, and working on a variety of coaching and interim management assignments – always with a keen focus on people development. Email: pennymoyle@hotmail.com.]



BAPT ‘In Conversation...’ Webinars

In our answer to the BBC Radio 4 programme, ‘A Life Scientific’, BAPT board member Richard Owen interviews experts, innovators and leading figures from the world of personality psychology. Hear stories, experiences, thoughts and opinions on current topics in Psychological Type - where is it now and where is it going?



Join us for this relaxed evening chat!

40 mins at 8pm UK time

4 Dec 2018 – *In Conversation with... Penny Moyle* (Business Psychologist, UK)

15 Jan 2019 – *In Conversation with... Catherine Stothart* (Essenwood Consulting, UK)

5 Feb 2019 – *In Conversation with... Roger Pearman* (Matrix Insights, LLC, USA)

5 Mar 2019 – *In Conversation with... Markey Read* (Career Networks, USA)