# 8. Facet Live - A Question of Sex

## Seeking a Balanced Sample

The original sample on which the Facet norms were based was collected somewhat opportunistically and was designed to provide a broad representation of the working population. Therefore there were more men than women (67:33), there were more young people (87% < 40 years old) and they were in general well educated (83% had at least finished 12 years of schooling).[1] In the original research we found few differences in the overall scores gained by men and women. The only scale to show a reliable and consistent difference between men and women was Emotionality where men scored slightly lower than women. Although this difference was significant statistically it was not large enough warrant a different interpretation strategy. More recently we have been asked about these differences and whether the position had changed over the 10 years since we first started collecting data.

This should have been a simple question to answer since we had access to a large amount of data. We have thousands of cases of our own collected during assessment and development programmes. We also had large amounts of data collected by our clients. It should be a simple exercise to calculate the statistics and see how they had moved. However each time we tried it we got a different answer. Why was this?

The answer probably lies in the inconsistent and serendipitous way in which the data was collected. Our database was supplied from, by definition, our own clients, and therefore the composition will change depending on the source of the data. We had one organisation who used it extensively for recruitment of call centre staff (mostly female) and their data showed a marked shift from the population norm. Another company used Facet extensively for selection of finance staff (mostly male) while a third focused on recruitment of field sales support staff (female). Our own data on the other hand was largely from development centres so this introduced a different bias again. We then added 2000 cases of Australian data which introduced a third possible source of bias.

## Sources of Bias

The fact that each of these sub-samples is biased is not surprising. In fact ASA (Attraction-Selection-Attrition) theory suggests that this is exactly what we should expect. This theory states that an applicant group will be pre-selected and that this pre-selection will be shaped by the demands of the organisation. The organisation's culture will define the way in which it represents itself to the world and therefore its attractiveness to different people. For example a very stable business with a long history of customer service will emphasise this in its recruitment advertisements. People who like the idea of a job serving customers will be attracted (the "A" part of ASA) to such an organisation. People who are more interested in an aggressive, commercial operation may find the role (as described) uninspiring and walk on by.

Such an organisation will then set up a selection process designed to bring forward those people who it feels share its corporate values (Service) and weed out those who don't (the "S" part of ASA).

Finally, if the "wrong" people do slip through in spite of the selection process it will not take long before they realise that they and the organisation are not "getting along" and they will be the first to leave (or be pushed out - "the face doesn't fit"). This is the final "A" from ASA.

It is this ASA process which is claimed to be responsible for the long term success of people in organisations. In the short term success depends on how good they are at the job (how "Competent") but in the long term it's more about the degree to which they share the corporate values and vision. Technically this is the difference between Person-Job (P-J) fit and Person-Organisation (P-O) fit.[2]

So what does this mean to us. It is clear that ASA theory is affecting the composition of the data base and therefore we need to find a way of balancing (or removing) the effects as much as possible. One solution is to take a "balanced" sample. Such a sample would select cases from the data but in such a way as to make sure that different organisations and job functions are equally

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represented. Given that some functions are heavily sex biased (there are far more female call centre operators) we should also balance for sex.

## Creating the Sample

To do this we identified the cases in the database where the function was known and where there was a sufficient number of both males and females. This was laborious but in the end we identified 12 such job functions which would give us 10 males and 10 females in each function. We used SPSS version 10.0 to calculate the significance of the differences between the two sets of scores on the five main Facet factors (we assumed equal variances - no F's were significant so it seems reasonable to make this assumption). The results are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**

| | Will | Energy | Affection | Control | Emotionality |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 4.96 | 5.93 | 6.37 | 6.15 | 4.82 |
| Female | 4.58 | 5.69 | 6.49 | 6.16 | 5.32 |
| T | 1.54 | .916 | -.483 | -.008 | -2.14 |
| Sig. | .125 | .361 | .630 | .994 | ***.034*** |

This shows that, as with the original sample, the only factor where there is a significant difference is Emotionality. Females scored slightly higher than males (5.32 vs. 4.82) which is in keeping with the original research. It is also in keeping with most other research which shows Women to be a little more "Emotional" than Men.

## What does this mean?

This research suggests that, while there may be suspicions that women score differently from men (higher on affection etc) this feeling may only be due to selective sampling. Experience with Facet in a specific environment can easily leave a user with the feeling (and indeed the fact) that there is a consistent pattern appearing in the profiles he/she is seeing. However when the data is looked at more carefully and the effects of pre-selection and function specific differences is ruled out, these differences disappear.

## How does Facet compare to other approaches?

It is helpful to note that the original 16PF showed significant sex differences on 14 of the 16 factors (only factor B - Intelligence and Q2 - Self-sufficiency showed no difference). [3] In the new 16PF5, 13 of the 16 factors show a sex bias (all except F - Liveliness, Q1 - Openness to change and Q4 - Tension).[4] The OPQ Concept 5 cites significant sex differences on 6 of the 30 scales[5] and the MBTI, while not citing specific studies looking at the significance of sex differences, does produce separate Norm tables for Males and Females[6].

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[1] Buckley, NL, "**Facet User's Manual**", Redfield Consulting, 1998

[2] For a discussion on research in this field see Kristof, Amy L, "*Person-Organisation Fit: an Integrative review of its Conceptualisations, Measurement and Implications*", **Personnel Psychology**, Vol. 41, No 1, 1996, p3

[3] Cattell, RB, Eber, HW and Tatsuoka, MM, "**The Handbook for the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF)**", 1970, IPAT

[4] Smith, P, "**The UK Standardization of the 16PF5: A Supplement of Norms and Technical Data**", ASE, 1994

[5] SHL, **OPQ Manual**, Saville & Holdsworth Ltd,

[6] Briggs-Myers, I and McCaulley, MH. "**Manual: A Guide to the Development and Use of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator**", CPP 1989