

The Historical Basis for the iWAM

Measures of Motivational and Attitudinal Patterns

The purpose of this module is to introduce the core concept on which the iWAM and its applications are built. The concept is *metaprograms* or what are called motivational and attitudinal patterns (MAPs) in North America. Metaprograms or MAPs have their roots in cognitive psychology. The field of study within cognitive psychology is known as neurolinguistic programming or psychology (NLP).

NLP and the concept of metaprograms are not prominent in academic arena or popular press. Why not? Perhaps some of the lack of prominence is due to the fact that professionals in the field of NLP are said to have three characteristics. First, many do not tend to pursue classic forms of research and classic research is one requirement for “admission” to publication in scholarly literature. Second, professionals in the field of NLP tend to focus on application rather than theory; as a result, they tend to be practitioners, not theorists. Third, globally, much of the education and training in NLP is done within the field rather than in colleges and universities.

The Historical Link – Noam Chomsky’s Research

In 1957, Noam Chomsky published a Ph.D. dissertation at MIT entitled *Transformational Grammar*. His research represented a breakthrough in the field of linguistics and became the cornerstone of a whole new field of work. Transformational Grammar explains how people modify the experiential information they have gathered to be able to communicate that information to others.

When an individual has an experience, he or she gathers and stores great volumes of experience-specific information. Since this experience cannot be directly transferred to another person, words are formed to communicate and explain the experience. In the course of explaining, the individual can only communicate an overview or “map” of the particular experience. In creating this “map,” the individual only passes along 1% or 2% of the information that was stored from the experience.

Transformational Grammar is the study of the various processes (called “syntax violations” in the field of linguistics) that individuals use to reduce their experiences to these “maps.” Transformational Grammar identifies and catalogues the ways individuals use syntax violations to reduce an experience to a limited set of information that can be verbally communicated. Where Transformational Grammar is the study of *how* an individual transforms their experience, tools that assess MAPs are focused on *what it means* for an individual to transform their experience in certain ways and with certain kinds of language. A test such as the iWAM is based on the fact that when an individual uses particular words, phrases, or syntax (in a given context), that individual has some behavioral patterns (in that context) similar to the behaviors of other individuals who use the same words, phrases, or syntax. Once this connection is understood and known, there is a basis for understanding the relationship **between language and behaviors in a context!**

This document is the product of the work of many people including Patrick Merlevede of jobEQ, Dr. Marilyn Powell, whose dissertation was based on the assessment of metaprograms and whose literature review provided extensive content, and Dr. Carl Harshman of The Institute.

Origins of NLP and Metaprograms

NLP is a branch of cognitive, applied psychology that studies the structure of subjective experience and how thinking produces outcomes (Dilts, Grinder, Bandler & DeLozier, 1980). NLP is said to have originated in the early 1970s through the work of Dr. John Grinder, a linguist, and Dr. Richard Bandler, an information scientist. They were interested in duplicating the behavior and effectiveness of people who attained a high level of excellence in a specific area of endeavor. Grinder and Bandler utilized foundational concepts from linguistics and information science with insights from general systems theory and behavioral psychology to develop a methodology known as human modeling. The modeling process involves identifying and describing the important elements and processes that people go through to produce highly skilful or excellent results. These elements can then be taught to others, so that they may achieve a similar level of excellence (Bandler, Gordon & Lebeau, 1985).

In the late 1970s, NLP researchers Richard Bandler and Robert Dilts investigated the widely varying responses of clients to the same therapeutic (NLP) interventions. Study results included the identification and labeling of 13 categories of filters, termed *metaprograms*, believed to influence the perceptions, motivations and decision making processes of clients (Dilts et al., 1980).

These metaprograms were later framed by Steward and Bailey in 1982 into an oral screening tool known as the Language and Behavior Profile (LAB Profile), which was subsequently validated in the Ph.D. research by Steward (1983) for use in a range of Human Resource specialty areas, such as selection and training. The LAB Profile is still used globally by consultants in recruitment, performance improvement, and communications as well as by coaches in work with their clients.

By building upon formulations in general semantics and developments in cognitive and perceptual psychology metaprograms have been tested and expanded by James & Woodsmall, (1988), Dilts (1990), Charvet (1995), O'Connor & McDermott (1995), Hall & Bodenhamer (1997), Engel & Arthur (2000), and Merlevede (2001). Currently 51 metaprogram categories have been identified. A number of assessment tools—including the Language and Behavior Profile, (1982) and the inventory for Work Attitude and Motivation (iWAM)—utilize varying metaprogram categories.

Definition of metaprograms

According to the author of the concept of metaprograms, John Lilly, ‘... the mind is defined as the sum total of all the programs and the metaprograms of a given human computer, whether or not they can be elicited, can be detected, and are visibly operational by and to the self or others’ (Lilly, 1967). Metaprograms are programs that run above everyday thoughts and emotions that serve as “programs” for more isolated portions of our daily functioning (Hall & Bodenhamer, 1997).

According to James & Woodsmall (1988), metaprograms are the deepest level, content-free programs that filter our perception and that operate above the content of thoughts. These programs function as the sorting and perceiving frameworks that govern how we think and

emote. They have also been described as the sorting devices used in perceiving, paying attention to information, as well as for inputting and processing stimuli in the external world (Hall & Bodenhamer, 1997). This operating system determines the structure of our thoughts and feelings, directing what we notice or filter out of awareness.

Hall & Bodenhamer (1997) claimed that the philosophical basis of metaprogram measures is a positive alternative to psychological labeling and psychological typing. The mainstream philosophy and practice of reducing people to traits, types or personality characteristics runs counter to a philosophy based on the richness of diversity of the individual. The authors argue that people operate with too much complexity to categorize, label, and classify them in limited boxes (types) and that people change, grow, and learn different ways of being and doing.

Assessing Metaprograms or MAPs

Metaprograms have evolved as a construct in the field of cognitive psychology. The theoretical basis for these patterns is founded in theories and research from the fields of cognitive psychology, anthropology and sociology.

Metaprograms can be recognized in individual expressions and behaviors as well as in the way one answers questions (Charvet, 1995). Metaprogram patterns provide a blueprint of how the person motivates him- or herself and, in turn, how they may approach problems and opportunities. Metaprograms are also used as a means of recognizing patterns which control an individual's frame of mind, which, in turn, provides information on how to communicate effectively with and relate to the individual.

Language and Behavior (LAB) Profile

The *Language and Behavior Profile* consists of a series of well-defined questions designed to elicit the structure of a person's metaprograms through the use of a simple interview. Professionals trained in the LAB Profile are able to ask the questions and record answers in a way that provides the information needed to understand an individual's metaprograms.

Inventory for Work Attitude and Motivation (iWAM)

In devising the iWAM patterns Patrick Merlevede drew upon the extensive set metaprograms that have been identified and researched in the field of NLP.

The iWAM instrument includes 16 of the 51 metaprogram categories (or sets of patterns) identified in NLP during the past 30 years. The 16 pattern categories chosen for inclusion in the iWAM were based on their applicability to the work context and their suitability to measurement. The iWAM questions, while conceptually based on metaprogram patterns, are framed specifically for the work context.

The iWAM instrument assesses 48 patterns (within the 16 categories) that focus on and measure motivational preferences at work including work organization styles, primary areas of interest and motivations and attitudes at work that unconsciously drive or motivate individuals towards specific choices and actions.

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