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MYERS-BRIGGS TYPE INDICATOR

NOTE:
Do Not Read This Until You Have
Completed the MBTI
Distributed Separately

At this point, you should have already completed the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and been instructed by the booklet or your instructor how to score it. This scoring procedure will give you a four-letter classification such as ENTI or ISTP. If you have not already done this procedure, please do so before you read on. The instrument is available only to qualified test administrators and only through Consulting Psychologists Press of Palo Alto, California.

Background

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is arguably the most commonly used assessment instrument in American industry today. Many companies conduct seminars and, indeed, many consultants have built their entire clientele around this particular instrument. This level of activity means that new versions of the instrument continue to be developed and that training seminars on how to use the instrument are growing in number. Given the instrument's unique history, this development is significant.

Before World War II, Katherine Myers and her daughter, Isabel Myers Briggs, became increasingly interested in the behavior of Isabel's husband, Clarence G. Myers. In the midst of their affection for him, they found that he behaved differently from what they, as mother and daughter, were used to. This observation and family interactions surrounding it, along with an interest in the recent (1921) publication of a theory of psychological types by Carl Jung, stimulated their interest in understanding human behavior, particularly the differences in human

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behavior. This mother-daughter team embarked on what was to become a remarkable professional stream of research that has lasted thus far over 40 years. That such a work should begin in large part out of the desire to understand a son-in-law and a husband illustrates how significant insights often grow out of reflection on 'simple' daily events by 'usual' people. This underscores our fundamental thesis that you, while not trained in psychological assessment, can understand the theoretical underpinnings of the various instruments that we will use and can make reasoned, conservative conclusions from data generated by them.

Carl Jung

Carl Jung was a student of Sigmund Freud's. There was a close relationship, one often reviewed as an example of mentor-protégé relationships. After a highly publicized break with Freud, Jung continued to develop and establish his own reputation in the field of psychology. He proposed and then spent much of his career refining a theory of psychological types suggesting that human behavior was not so random and chaotic as it seemed but, given the proper framework for viewing it, really quite regular and predictable. His work grew largely from his studies of his patients in psychotherapy over many years.

Jung's theory, in brief summary, said that, in a person's conscious mental activity, there were four fundamental psychological processes: Sensing (S), Intuition (N), Thinking (T), and Feeling (F). These, 'functions' as Jung called them, were distinct and unique from each other. The four formed two bi-polar dimensions, S-N and T-F. People used all these activities or processes but not all in predominant ways, and these characteristic patterns endured over time and across situations. This patterned use of each mental activity gives rise to a certain predictability in a person's behavior that allows an observer to categorize the individual according to a relatively simple classification scheme.

Furthermore, one can observe distinct variations in these patterns depending on an individual's orientation to life, or 'attitude' (in the sense of posture) toward the outside world. People seemed to attend more to either things outside them (which Jung called the extraverted world) or to the inner world of thoughts and ideas (the introverted domain). This distinction provided a third dimension, E-I. These three dimensions allowed Jung to categorize people according to eight fundamental types: extraverts with a dominant sensing activity, introverts with a dominant sensing activity and so on.

Myers and Briggs added a fourth 'preference' dimension to Jung's theory by noting that some people are generally open to new information while others are more interested in reaching closure. They termed the 'open' characteristic Perceptive and the 'closure' characteristic Judging.

