
A Comparison of the
Personal Profile System[®] and the
Myers-Briggs Type Indicator[®]

Research Report

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Research Summary

Both the *Personal Profile System*[®] and *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*[®] are currently used in business settings for the purpose of employee development and team building. Each has its origin in theories developed during the first decades of the twentieth century. The *Personal Profile System* is based on the theories of Dr. William Marston, while the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* is based on the theories of Dr. Karl Jung.

The purpose of this research report is to compare and contrast the *Personal Profile System* and the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* as instruments used for employee development and team building. It is written to explain the theoretical origins of both instruments, to elaborate on how they differ in purpose, and to suggest the appropriate application of each. It will also address how the profile obtained from one instrument relates to the profile obtained from the other.

This report shows that in addition to arising from different theoretical origins, the instruments measure different things. The *Personal Profile System* describes behavior based on how people view themselves in their various environments. The *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* describes how they approach the environment intellectually and attitudinally and how they process information.

The profiles obtained from each instrument can not be expected to be correlated. They were designed for different purposes and based on different views of human behavior. Because the two instruments provide different kinds of information and might very well augment each other as separate views of the same individual.

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A Comparison of the *Personal Profile System*[®] and the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*[®] As Instruments Used for Employee Development and Teambuilding

Theoretical Origins

Each of these popular instruments reflects important theoretical developments which started when psychology was in its infancy and theorists were exploring ways to explain human behavior. Each one has been refined by more contemporary students of the theory. Carlson Learning Company refined and expanded on the theories of William Marston to create the *Personal Profile System*, and Katherine Briggs and her daughter Isabel Myers adapted the theories of Carl Jung to create the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*.

An important distinction between the two measures is found in their theoretical origins. Both original authors sought to find a systematic way to understand human behavior.

Dr. Marston intended to explain how normal human emotions lead to behavioral differences among people as well as to changes in a person's behavior from time to time. His work focused on finding practical explanations which would help people understand and manage their experience in the world. He also related his ideas to issues in interpersonal relationships.

Carlson Learning Company used Marston's theories to develop a measuring tool using word choices in forced-choice, four-item sets. In so doing, they built on a body of research into the semantic meaning of words. Unlike most word-choice measures, they focused only on positive words and created a four-dimensional profile which highlights preferred behavioral strategies for coping with a particular environment (point of view).

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This instrument, the *Personal Profile System*[®], is a measure of "surface traits" or characteristic ways of coping with the environment. It is not designed to describe human characteristics that are not readily observed. The assumption is that inferences about core personality traits are best left to someone trained in the clinical use of tests designed for that purpose.

Dr. Jung intended to explain both the conscious and unconscious forces affecting behavior and to identify core personality traits that differentiate among people. As a medical doctor working in the analytic tradition begun by Freud, he looked for explanations in the "inner core" of personality that first appears at birth and into human history and literature for myths and symbols that explain how people through the ages have tried to understand their experience. His theories were designed to explain how abnormal, as well as normal, behavioral adjustments occur.

Myers and Briggs added to Jung's three, bi-polar dimensions of personality a fourth dimension, grounded in his theory. These four dimensions comprise the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*[®] and are scored in an either-or format depending on an individual's forced-choice response to pairs of phrases and single words. The scoring format is based on Jung's belief that while both facets of a bi-polar dimension are present in personality, one is emphasized more than the other. In fact, an individual may use one consciously and with deliberate intention, while the other influences behavior only unconsciously.

The following discussion highlights major similarities and differences between these theories and the instruments designed to measure them.

Theoretical Basis of the Instruments

The *Personal Profile System*[®]

Dr. William Marston, a physiological psychologist writing in the 1920's and 1930's, explored the meaning of normal human emotions by relating how a person perceives himself or herself in relation to the environment and describing how the person is likely to behave in response.

The two dimensions of Marston's model are the following:

- The environment is perceived as favorable or unfavorable.
- The individual perceives himself or herself as more or less powerful than the environment.

As a result the individual either acts on or accommodates to an environment that is seen as favorable or unfavorable.

***Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*[®]**

Dr. Carl Jung, a psychiatrist originally affiliated with Sigmund Freud, developed during the 1920's and 1930's a typology for explaining human behavior—both normal and abnormal. The essential ingredients of Jung's model are the following:

- Individuals are predisposed to pay more attention to either (a) the external world of objects or (b) the inner world of ideas and feelings. Thus, they exhibit either *extraversion* or *introversion*.
- Individuals naturally prefer to use one of two "functions" for gathering information—either *sensing* what the objective facts are or *intuiting* relationships and possibilities. One is grounded in reality, the other in imagination.
- How individuals process and evaluate information depends on their preference for the *thinking* versus *feeling* "function." The first approach is based on logic and objectivity, the second on subjectivity and personal values.

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Myers and Briggs added to Jung's three dimensions a *judging-perceiving* scale, which is designed to measure one's attitude toward the "outer world"—i.e., how people manage their lives.

Theorist's Purpose

Marston sought to explain how people adjust to varying environments, by starting with their emotional response to it and relating this response to behavior.

Jung sought to explain why people differ from one another by identifying fundamental personality traits or preferences rooted in biology.

Appropriate Applications

Because Marston focused on the individual in relation to his or her environment, it is appropriate to use this instrument to help people understand individual behavior—their own and others. Such information may be used by the respondent to determine how he or she may want to adjust behavior to work more effectively with others or better adapt to a situation. However, neither the *Personal Profile System*® nor the theory behind it evaluates one kind of behavior as preferable to another.

Because Jung focused on trying to explain individual differences, including a range of normal and abnormal behavior, it is appropriate to use this instrument to help people determine whether their behavior should change to become more effective. Many individuals use this instrument to further understand themselves and others. However, the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*®, and theory on which it is based, can also be used to identify underdeveloped behavioral strategies which can be developed to enhance interpersonal effectiveness. The assumption is that more mature persons bring unconscious elements of their nature into conscious use and try to employ the little-used parts of their profile more and more as life goes on.

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Practical Uses

The *Personal Profile System*[®] is primarily suited for increasing self-awareness in a setting where the individual can decide how to use the information in his or her relations with others.

The *Personal Profile System* is self-scored, and self-interpreted and respondents may keep their information private if they choose. In the software version, respondents either work interactively and get their profiles on screen, or the response page is scored elsewhere and reports are prepared and given to respondents.

The *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* is primarily suited to increase self-awareness for the purpose of getting along with others more effectively. It is also used to identify the source of problems in relationships with the help of a skilled counselor, and to prepare a therapeutic plan for growth or change.

The *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* is available in a self-scored form. However, greater use is made of forms which must be sent to the publisher to be scored. From the forms, the publisher is able to develop norms for determining how normal or abnormal a particular response pattern is.

Ease of Interpretation:

Sufficient information is provided in the *Personal Profile System* instrument itself to aid the respondent in interpretation. The trainer or facilitator adds to participant understanding through (a) a broader knowledge of the theory behind the instrument, (b) illustrative examples, and (c) answers to individual questions derived from their own training and experience. The computerized version of the *Personal Profile System* includes additional interpretive information on what to expect in a relationship with the respondent.

With the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*, however, little information is provided in the instrument itself to aid the respondent in interpretation.

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Most forms of the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*[®] are sent in for scoring; thus the instrument itself is a response form. Individuals receive a computer-generated profile and narrative report from the publisher once the instrument is scored. It includes a description of the person's type and descriptions of how indicated preferences relate to the work setting, communication style and problem-solving style. Group- or organization-level applications are also available.

User Qualifications

In addition to a three volume facilitator's kit for the *Personal Profile System*[®], a one-day training program is offered to those who wish to expand their information on the use of the instrument as a trainer, counselor or consultant. The respondents are considered the experts on themselves and the instrument is self-scored and self-interpreted. No other educational requirements are made.

Purchasers of the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* are required to submit evidence of one or more college courses in behavioral measurement and complete a three-day training program on the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*.

Additional Resources for Interpretation

Periodic conferences on the *Personal Profile System*[®] offer additional learning opportunities to attendees. Books and articles written by users are available to explain and illustrate a variety of applications. The facilitator's manual and occasional white papers offered by the publisher are available to justify claims made for the instrument.

A variety of books and manuals are available to persons using the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*[®] in training, team development, and counseling. In addition, a number of academic research studies are available.

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Comparing Results

Users sometimes ask how a profile obtained from one instrument relates to the profile obtained from the other. The following discussion addresses this question.

There are significant difficulties encountered in trying to infer one profile from the other, because they clearly measure different things. At the start, they are designed for different purposes.

The *Personal Profile System*[®]

- The *Personal Profile System*[®] addresses behavioral responses based on the individual's emotional reaction to a particular environment. This model is not designed to support inferences about what an individual is like at the core of his or her personality. Further, it does not attempt to determine how effective the person's behaviors are, only to explain what behavior is likely to occur under certain conditions. If behavioral consistencies are evident over time, it is either because
- people develop a predominant view of the world and themselves that emphasizes one view of the environment over others
- people find opportunities to create or find environments that have similar characteristics.

We can suppose the pull toward similar environments is based on stable characteristics of a person which make them prefer certain environments over others. However, these characteristics are not measured by the *Personal Profile System*. Nor is it appropriate to suppose one can match a person to an "ideal" environment and count on the match to remain intact. Learning how to adapt is a more functional approach, given the dynamic character of the environment.

This instrument helps individuals recognize the environmental cues to which they are reacting and the strategies they are using to adjust to their environment. It helps respondents determine whether another environment or strategy may be more effective and to become more skillful in adapting to circumstances in which they find themselves.

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The software version also provides printouts of how to best manage the respondent and how he/she will interact with others in a team setting, as well as in other settings. These are helpful in developing management strategies and enhancing teams.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator®

The *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*® addresses both thinking and behavior responses based on acquired habits of viewing and responding to the world in general. Preferences are categorized into types, with a belief that certain habits predominate. The assumption is that people will act on their preferences regardless of the situation. However, it is also assumed that as people mature, they can learn to use more of the neglected approaches in an effort to increase their capacity for being successful in a variety of situations.

This instrument offers a prescription for increasing interpersonal effectiveness and individual problem solving ability when present strategies prove less than optimal.

Specific Comparisons

The *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* starts with an assumption that some individuals preoccupy themselves from birth with looking outward at the world, including people, around them (extraversion or outer focus of attention); while others come into the world paying more attention to what they are thinking and feeling inside (introversion or inner focus of attention). An argument can be made that this dichotomy is unrelated to D, i, S, and C, because individuals scoring high on these *Personal Profile System*® scales can theoretically score either high or low on the EI scales of the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*. The rationale is:

- Those persons who feel they are in a vulnerable or subordinate position in the environment may either (E) focus more on the outer world to recognize objects and cues that will inform them how they should respond to it or (I) focus more on self-directed activities to satisfy themselves when they're unsure of the rewards available from the environment.

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- Those persons who feel they are in a comfortable or superordinate position in the environment may either (E) engage the outer world to enjoy the rewards of membership or (I) retreat from it, satisfied there is nothing there with which to concern themselves.

The *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*[®] measures two dichotomous functions for receiving and evaluating information from the environment. The Sensing/Intuiting scale identifies an individual's preference for receiving information from tangible objects and facts (S) versus imagined possibilities and perceived interrelationships (N). The Thinking/Feeling scale identifies a preference for evaluating information based on impersonal analysis and logic (T) versus personal values and group goals (F). The instrument also measures people's attitude toward the world in which they live: The Perceiving/Judging scale distinguishes people who are typically more open, curious, interested and ultimately adaptable (P) from those who are organized, purposeful, logical and decisive (J). These scales are theoretically more closely aligned with the *Innovate with C.A.R.E. Profile*[®] published by Carlson Learning Company than the *Personal Profile System*[®] — primarily because they measure both thinking and behaving.

The Spontaneous-Methodical approaches on the *Innovate with C.A.R.E. Profile* contrast people who approach problem solving with a certain openness, curiosity and spontaneity (P) with those who prefer a more organized, purposeful and logical approach (J). The Conceptual-Normative approaches contrast people who take an impersonal, logical approach (T) with those who identify solutions based on tradition and values (F). Based on this comparison, it is worth examining the relationship between Creator and TP, Advancer and FP, Refiner and TJ and Executor and FJ.

There may also be more C and S profiles on the *Personal Profile System* associated with the TJ and FJ types on the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*, based on the relationship of *Innovate with C.A.R.E. Profile* and the *Personal Profile System*; but the correlation is expected to be small.

As with the attitudes of Extraversion/Introversion, the Judging/Perceiving attitudes are expected to bear no systematic relationship with *Personal Profile System* scales. The JP scale measures an orientation toward the environment, not a reaction to how the environment is affecting the individual emotionally.

Because of the cognitive elements at work in planning, analyzing, deciding (J) and in adapting and "going with the flow" (P), little correlation with the DiSC behavior measures is expected.

Some observers have hypothesized about how the sixteen types in the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*[®] output relate to the fifteen classical patterns. If the fundamental scales measure different things, there is no basis for generating valid assumptions about the relationship among profiles from each instrument. However, research should explore whether any empirical correlations exist, and the study should include *Innovate with C.A.R.E. Profile*[®] in the comparison.

Conclusion

The *Personal Profile System*[®] describes how respondents tend to behave when they respond emotionally to their environment, especially when the emotions have to do with how they see themselves in relation to the environment. The level of scores indicates how intensely they react to the perceived relationship.

The *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*[®] describes how respondents approach the environment intellectually and attitudinally, and what modes of information processing they use most often. The level of scores indicates how strongly they prefer one approach over another.

The *Personal Profile System* is preferred when an inexpensive, self-scored instrument is desired for the purpose of helping others gain awareness of their own behavior and their behavior in relation to others, and when individuals are *free to decide* what to do with the insights acquired. It is also preferred when facilitators need no formal training in behavioral measurement and personality test interpretation.

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The *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator*[®] is preferred when the facilitator has a background in behavioral measurement and when the purpose for instrumented learning is to *prescribe* a strategy for improving effectiveness. If a self-scored form is used, the facilitator will need to prepare or purchase a number of handouts to supplement the form. Otherwise, instruments need to be completed in advance of an applications seminar.

Publisher's Note

Carlson Learning Company is committed to maintaining the highest professional standards of instrument development and application through careful research and development processes and periodic evaluation by independent behavioral measurement experts. If you are interested in conducting a research project for a master's degree, doctoral program, or for your own application, please contact us. We are interested in on-going independent research on our instruments and programs, and we would be happy to help you with your study.

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