

C.G. Jung's theory of Psychological Types and the MBTI

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The purpose of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator is to implement C.G.Jung's theory of Psychological Types. However, there are some important differences between Jung's approach to the types and the MBTI.

Jung never intended to quantify his theory i.e. pursue some way of measuring it. He saw his idea simply as a compass, essential in many ways, but a guide. He had arrived at 8 types, but was open to there being more or fewer types. When Isabel Myers decided to construct a psychological instrument to implement Jung's theory, she needed a way of measuring the theory. Accordingly, she reframed Jung's concepts (extraversion, introversion, sensation, intuition, thinking and feeling) as scales or indexes in line with conventional methods of psychological measurement via questionnaire.

Jung's typology is a theory of opposites. As the scales had to reflect that in order to implement the theory, three bi-polar scales were arrived at:

- Extraversion–Introversion
- Sensing–Intuition
- Thinking–Feeling

Apparently following convention (e.g. Guildford 1939), letters were arrived at as abbreviations for these concepts: E for extraversion, I for introversion, S for sensing, N for intuition (originally I and later changed, given I was already used for introversion), T for thinking and F for feeling. These letters were placed at each end of the relevant scale.

The E–I scale was called an attitude scale, as it referred to Jung's idea of where a person gets energy from: externally (E), or internally (I), and so described as orientation to, or away from, the outer world. The S–N and T–F scales referred to Jung's mental functions and were described as the perceiving and judging scales respectively. An extra scale, Judging (J)–Perceiving (P) was added to this following a suggestion made by Isabel Myers' mother, Katharine Cook Briggs. It was designed to reflect whether a person relied primarily on a judging process (T or F) or a perceiving process (S or N) in their dealings with the outer world, or in the extraverted part of their life (Myers,1962). This was also called an attitude scale, the E–I scale being the Jungian attitude scale.

Katharine Briggs' suggestion came from her original work on personality, and a reading of Jung's book *Psychological Types* concerning auxiliary functions. It therefore identified 16 types, rather than Jung's 8. In keeping with Jung's theory, Isabel called these scales **dichotomies**, rather than the more conventional **dimensions**. As she was presenting a different view of personality (types rather than traits) dimensions was an incorrect description.

Myers constructed questions with the aim of being able to identify a preference for one of these opposites over the other. This was different to conventional methods which saw scales as measuring something continuous, rather than opposite. Although the MBTI was developed to indicate to Jung's typology, it identifies components of type, not type dynamics: e.g. whether a person is an introverted intuitive with feeling etc.). Isabel Myers developed the type formula (i.e. a letter identifying a preference from each scale) as a means of providing a result from the completion of the form and an indicator of the dynamics of the whole type result: a result of INFJ indicated dynamics of introverted intuition with feeling.

The scores on the MBTI are not intended to indicate anything other than the clarity of preference according to how its questions were answered. Level of development of a preference cannot be inferred from the relative clarity of scores as the questions are designed to ask for preference only, not how well it is used.

SOME REFERENCES:

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