

To Promote Inclusivity, Stay Away from Personality Assessments

August 28, 2019

My first experience taking the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (M.B.T.I.) was at a job where it was mandatory. The company's chief executive announced that all employees would take the test as part of a quarterly staff retreat.

The assessment concluded that I was an I.N.T.J. (Introversion, Intuition, Thinking, Judgment.) At the retreat, we were all encouraged to share our results with one another as we participated in various team-building activities. I reluctantly revealed mine, as I wondered how this detailed profile of my personality traits and communication style would translate to my colleagues. Not only was I the sole black woman in the organization, [a demographic](#) notoriously misunderstood in the workplace, I now had the additional strike of being outed as an introvert, in the company of extroverts.

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Several experts have [questioned the validity](#) of assessments like the M.B.T.I. in the workplace, including Sarah Gaither, an assistant professor of psychology and neuroscience at Duke University. Dr. Gaither maintains there is little evidence a personality assessment actually predicts job-related performance.

“When thinking about different assessments, race/ethnicity, gender, region, socioeconomic status and disability can all impact not only how someone interprets a question when taking a given assessment, but it can also color how someone interprets a score,” Dr. Gaither said.

“It is also highly possible for personality scores to be weaponized within an organization and used to justify either progress or lack of progress at a company level,” Dr. Gaither explained. “This is problematic as it sends the message that employees are static and unchangeable, going against messages of improvement and growth that other research highlights are necessary to encourage productive, positive and inclusive work spaces.”