

SUMMERAGE COVER STORY

That's just so typical

In the second in our series on the booming industry of psychological profiling, **Karen Kissane** looks at the world's most popular test, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.

THE students in a Year 11 classroom in a Melbourne private school have just sat a personality questionnaire, and now they are divided into groups depending on whether they have come out as "Feeling" or "Thinking" types. Their task is to pretend they are managers who must first stay in a meeting.

The Feeling types brainstorm and come up with a plan that involves convincing staff about who should go, letting people down gently and providing them with counselling and career advice as they leave.

The Thinking types have an entirely different approach. They draw an XY graph, charting each employee's productivity and salary. Then they draw a 45-degree line through the dots. Those below the line — those who are paid a lot to do little — are out. As for how the sackings are to be informed...

Says one of the Thinkers: "You could re-engineer the employee's office culture into a giant catapult. When the employee burns on his computer, it links to a switch that will have him launched out the window. Or the employee could be straddled into the manager's office and coaxed into coming over closer to the manager's desk. When the employee is standing in the right place, the manager would press a button that sprays a napalm into a pot of alligators. End of problem."

In this case, the Thinking types also happened to be teenage boys who enjoyed learning with their teacher's company. It takes a month, but the students were forming close bonds with different outlooks would handle the same situation in quite different ways, to the point where one type might find the other's approach utterly foreign.

The students had done the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, which is the most widely used personality assessment in the world. Most

than two million people take the questionnaire each year, and it is used by *Wired*, America's Fortune 500 company.

It is a commonly used tool in staff development and training. It promises to help an individual better understand him or herself and others and thus improve communication, reduce conflict, and help build teams and retain employees.

For those of us who are not interested in what makes different people tick, the MBTI is also a lot of fun. Central to it is the idea that all types are to be respected for their differences, and its descriptions of type are rich and deep. It is based on work about psychological types done by early psychiatrist Carl Jung, who invented a number of the concepts we now take for granted, such as "introvert" (the term is related to, but not the same as, "extrovert"), "singles" and "archetype".

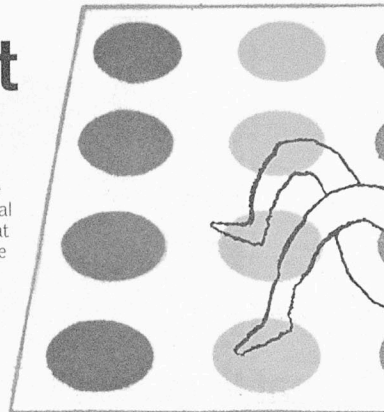
Attention to mother and daughter Katherine Cook Briggs and Isabel Briggs Myers were well-educated but neither psychologists nor social scientists when, in the late 1930s, they began using Jung's framework and their own observations to develop a questionnaire to assess the accuracy or otherwise of the psychologist's personality type preferences. Their work was copyrighted in 1943.

Not everyone is a fan. The MBTI has been criticised for not being solidly grounded in reliable psychological methods. It has been revised extensively by psychologists but many trained psychologists continue to regard it with disdain.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The MBTI examines four sets of preferences:

1. *Where do you direct and organise your energy?*
 Extraversion (E): energy flows is outward towards other people and things
 or
 Introversion (I): energy flows is toward to one's own thoughts and ideas
2. *How do you prefer to take in information?*
 Sensing (S): Receive data from the five senses, focused on the here and now and past experience
 or
 Intuitive (N): Receive data via the unconscious, see relationships via insights, focus on future possibilities
3. *How do you prefer to make decisions?*
 Thinking (T): Decide with your head, using logic, impersonal connections
 or
 Feeling (F): Decide with your heart, using subjective, personal evaluations
4. *How do you prefer to order your life?*



Judging (J): Organized, plan ahead, prefer quick closure
 or
 Perceiving (P): Casual, open to alternatives, prefer to leave options open until the last minute

Jung wrote that Thinking is the way what things mean. Feeling tells you what they are worth. Sensing is tells you what they really are, and Intuition tells you the possibilities of a situation.

The various combinations of these four letters (for example, ESTJ) which would make you an Enforcer make for 16 types. There are also five subtypes that result in many different possible combinations, from "organismic interest" to "logical lover".

The MBTI refers to your type as your "preference". You can develop the "skills" of your opposite as one of the dimensions (for example, an introvert can work on his social skills to make himself more comfortable with large groups and public speaking).

The test does not check for falsehood or manipulation of the answers. The MBTI reports what you tell it as an accredited teacher Peter Geyer acknowledges: "There's a scale. You can crank the Myers Briggs."

It is also an evaluator in the sense that it does not judge any type as better than any other. "Isabel Myers' proposition is that it's good to be you," Geyer says.

Research suggests that three-quarters of Australians tend towards Sensing. Different combinations of preferences play out in many ways. Says Geyer: "SPs, like Shane Warne, for example, are very physically oriented. Don Balfour is probably an ISTP — he ran a very physical electronics company, which is unusual; there was a photo of him in the bush where he was almost literally swinging around a sign. A lot of ISTPs are in finance — Spengler, Clayton, Eric. George W. Bush also seems to be an ISTP."

It is because they are decisive and like structure, tend to be over-represented in roles such as politics and banking, the armed services and so on. Sensing types are very concrete

as teachers, except in English where they are more likely to be NA. If you are an Introvert, your 10 English might be the first interesting thing you run into at school. If you are a Sensing person, your 10 English might be under you. "What the hell is this?" — because you are being asked to interpret things.

"On the other hand, in a math class with a teacher who wants you to go through things literally step by step, Introverts can drift off into the atmosphere or get the answer without doing any work. They have just worked it out."

Different types can be touchy about different things. "Don't say to a Feeling type, 'Don't take this personally', because they will," Geyer warns. "Don't say to a Thinking type, 'You're not going to like this.' They decide that, not you."

"NPs want to be loved, by their boss and their teachers as well as their partners. In Feeling types, emotion is data. Thinking types take emotion as something that clouds data. It can actually trouble a Thinking type to ask them how they feel. (Former Prime Minister Paul Keating's shoulders often went up when he was asked how he felt. If you want to get some real information, you need to ask him what he thought."

"When it comes to personal relationships, Isabel Briggs Myers believed that partners should have two or three letters in common, although she spent 60 years married to a man who did not fit this formula. And, says Geyer, "this might be to be, but you might be quite different in terms of what things you each like to be ordered about."

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MBTI teacher Peter Geyer

Geyer says the most common type, making up about 15 per cent of the population, is thought to be ESTJ. The Enforcer. ESTJs are those who marshal resources, implement, and follow through. They make their events continually and more than that

everyone honours their commitments. They are at their best in structured situations that involve activity, not contemplation.

The rarer type is INFJ, at about 2 per cent. This is The Mystic, someone with a deeply intuitive understanding of the inner workings of others, who is skilled with language, and a champion of the oppressed. They often become writers or counsellors. "They can pick the mood of a room like no one else can. I have seen it done in management meetings and it can unsettle Sensing types, for whom seeing a believing. Introverts see what's not there, it's the ability to see inward corners."

Geyer warns that type is not behaviour, and the different types can do the same things for different reasons. "You need to look at the motivation."

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Illustration by Peter Geyer

SUMMERAGE

How it feels... to catch a serial killer

David helped save a young woman's life, but his sense of achievement was tainted by his brush with evil.



I WAS coming home from work in north-eastern Victoria in the late '80s. My workmate was driving and was anxious to get back so he could go to the pub.

As we came up to the Ovens River Bridge, I immediately noticed a bicycle partially obstructing the narrow country bridge. My immediate thought was that some accident had just happened because the back wheel on the bicycle was still spinning.

There was no one in sight but I told my mate to stop the car. At the moment, two people came out from behind some bush on the side of the bridge. There was a man of about 35 years. He had his arm around the shoulders of a young girl of about 10 or 12.

I said: "Are you all right?" The young girl opened her mouth. She didn't say anything, but there was blood in her mouth. I found out later that he was waiting on the bridge and had punched her off the bicycle.

I said: "What's going on?" He looked at me and said, "She'll be all right mate, she'll be all right," and he was holding her quite firmly. We didn't know it then, but he had a knife stuck under her jacket in her armpit.

I knew that this was very, very serious. I could feel the intensity and the emotion.

A couple of other cars were waiting to cross the bridge. In the first car was an elderly couple who pulled up and asked what was going on. Sally, the young girl, then screamed at the top of her lungs: "He's attacked me, he's trying to attack me."

He let her go and ran into a little area of bush to hide, as I drove my car as far as I could into it. By this stage several people had come around and we had him trapped. Another guy, Johnny, and an elderly farmer were standing on one side of the road and they had a rifle to stop him. Some local apple farmers were guarding the other side of the road. The elderly couple were comforting the young girl; she was screaming and screaming.

I went to the back of my car to get two little punch bats to defend myself when he sprang up out of the bushes straight in front of me. That's when I spotted the big hunting knife. It was about an eight- or 10-inch (20-25 centimetre) blade.

He took off into the scrub and a young lad and I gave chase and were right on his tail but felt a little bit intimidated by his knife, so we stopped and grabbed a couple of big rocks. We chased him through the bush and every time he looked like turning around I yelled out: "Shoot him, blow his leg off."

We little punch bats went up to him as he was crawling through a barbed-

wire fence, we were getting closer and closer. He turned at that point and looked me square in the eye. I just kept screaming at the top of my lungs. "Blow his leg off, shoot him, shoot him," just to bluff him. I knew that we were heading towards a farmhouse and I thought that if we just kept an eye on him and cornered him inside one of the buildings we'd be OK.

He ran through the yard of one of the most prominent high plains cattlemen. He had about 100 dogs, all tied up on chains, and several horses. As the offender ran through, he woke up all the dogs and horses and I was jumping sideways to avoid these dogs biting me.

We kept chasing and chasing. It seemed like eternity to me. We broke into an open paddock and I was really frightened that he was going to get away. I didn't think I could run any more, I was buggered. I was starting to feel disorientated but then I heard the coppers pull into the paddock behind us and the senior sergeant yelled, "Give it up mate, you'll be regretting it," and then they were running beside me, merging with me.

That's when the fellow gave up; he threw the knife into the creek and lay down in the bush.

I don't know why it was so important for me to catch him; it just meant a lot to me that he was to be caught for what he'd done. I met the girl's father shortly afterwards and he was very appreciative and thankful. He was just devastated by the whole thing. She was a very robust girl and at the time didn't seem to have suffered too badly with the effects of it, but later she really fell apart over it. She was very, very distressed.

He got four years for attacking her, but a few years later I saw an article about him. The headline said something like "Serial killer never to walk the streets" and it said this man had been terrorising women all up the east coast of Australia. That was when I learned that he'd been put away for life.

I took the article home and I sat on my bench for weeks, but I never, ever read it. I looked at it one day and the tears welled up in my eyes and I thought: "This article has taken so much from so many people, but he can't take anything from me. I can't spend the rest of my life thinking about what he'd done to these girls." So I burnt it. I suspect me for years I'd wake up at night thinking about it. To think that someone like that would attack a young woman; it will always be with me.

MICHELLE HAMER
Michelle Hamer is the author of *How It Feels* (New Holland), \$24.95.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

These questions are asking what you would prefer to do, not what you might actually do.

- 1. Are you**
(a) easy to get to know or
(b) hard to get to know?
- 2. Can you**
(a) talk easily to almost anyone for as long as you have to, or
(b) find a lot to say only to certain people or under certain conditions?
- 3. In reading for pleasure, do you**
(a) enjoy odd or original ways of saying things, or
(b) like writers to say exactly what they mean?
- 4. Do you generally prefer courses that teach**
(a) concepts and principles, or
(b) facts and figures?
- 5. Do you more often let**
(a) your heart rule your head, or
(b) your head rule your heart?
- 6. Is it a higher compliment to be called**
(a) a person of real feeling, or
(b) a consistently reasonable person?
- 7. When you have a special job to do, do you like to**
(a) organise it carefully before you start, or
(b) find out what is necessary as you go along?
- 8. When you go somewhere for the day, would you rather**
(a) plan what you will do and when, or
(b) just go?

MBTI and Myers-Briggs Type Indicator are registered trademarks of the Myers-Briggs Trust in the United States and other countries.

What the answers mean:
1a, 2a Extraversion/ 1b, 2b Introversion
3a, 4a Initiative/ 3b, 4b Sensing
5a, 6a Feeling/ 5b, 6b Thinking
7a, 8a Judging/ 7b, 8b Perceiving.

FURTHER INFORMATION BOOKS
Type Talk, by Otto Kroeger and Janet Thomson
I'm Not Crazy, I'm Just Not You, by Roger Pearman and Sarah Albertson
Psychological Types: Mykle Sira of the Collected Works of C. J. Jung

LINKS
None of the free type inventories on the Web are the "real thing". But there are some interesting links, the first of which has a free questionnaire on Jungian psychological types, and the last of which will perform a genuine MBTI online, for a price:
www.humanmetrics.com
www.typepic.com
www.typecity.com
www.greocities.com/infoplease
www.petergrygor.com.au
www.mtbi.com
www.myersjbriggs.com

CONTACTS
To find a qualified assessor in Melbourne, contact the Australian Association for Psychological Type, or ANAPT, at www.aapt.org.au (its website has an Howard as an ISTJ).
The local distributors of the MBTI are austpsychpress.com.au.
The Australian Council for Educational Research holds a Jungian-based questionnaire called the Major PTI at www.cer.edu.au

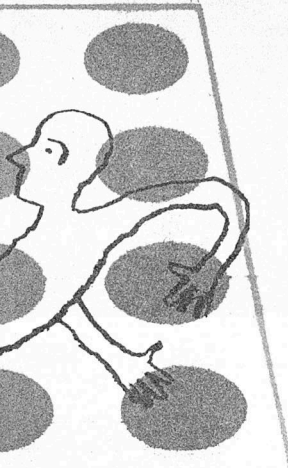


ILLUSTRATION: JIM FAVLONIS

to design and conduct accreditation training administration for the MBTI.

Fuller explains how she might teach two opposite types to communicate better.

ISJTs (The Reliant) are systematic, painstaking and hardworking. They are deeply private people and serious and sincere in whatever they do. They work well within a structure, are cautious and driven by tradition, and focus on the present.

ENFPs (The Visionary) are joyous extroverts who are keenly perceptive of future possibilities and energise others through their contagious enthusiasm. They prefer the start-up phase of a project or relationship. They are at their best in fluid situations that allow them to express their creativity and use their charisma.

"Let's say your boss is an ISJT and you are an ENFP and you want to go to a conference and need his approval to get funding," Fuller says. "What you would most naturally do is push up to him in a corridor, excitedly talking about all the ways in which you could use the information from this conference down the track. Usually, the ISJT will look at you and say, 'I don't think there's enough in the budget, and walk off'."

"You need to present your information in a way that will make your ISJT manager understand the benefits. He needs time to consider things, so never just grab him in the corridor."

Make time for a meeting. Prepare a list with dot points that you can leave for him to study, including cost, and who will cover for you while you're gone. Explain how the conference is directly applicable to your work."

If the types are reversed, and the ISJT has an ENFP boss: "Be aware that the ENFP manager hates filling out forms and signing off on things. Take paperwork prepared. Make it easy for her to sign her name. If you make it an obstacle course where she has to check dates and names, she will get irritated and probably say no."

If Fuller is in a workshop with the two types, she asks them to role-play each other's persona and coach each other. "For the ENFP, it's, 'Stop waving your arms around and stop laughing and don't talk so much. And ISJTs have to learn to walk in with a big smile and show enthusiasm.' We coach them in enthusiastic behaviour, and on how to brainstorm what the future applications might be."

Like any personality assessment, Fuller says, the MBTI does not define an individual, but it does shed light on some of the ways he or she prefers to operate. "We need to understand who we are, and we also need to understand that who we are is in movement across the 16 types throughout the day."

"We can access all the functions needed to survive in everyday life, but there will be one performed as our signature."

THE 16 TYPES

- | | |
|---|---|
| IDEALISTS
ENFJ - The Sage
ENFP - The Visionary
INFP - The Mystic
INTP - The Dreamer | GUARDIANS
ESTJ - The Enforcer
ESTJ - The Helper
ISFJ - The Reliant
ISTJ - The Mortar |
| RATIONALS
ENTJ - The Leader
ENTP - The Innovator
INTJ - The Free Thinker
INTP - The Wizard | ARTISANS
ESTP - The Adventurer
ESFP - The Joker
ISTP - The Realist
ISFP - The Aesthete |

KEY:
E=Extroversion, I=Introversion, S=Sensing, I=Intuition, T=Thinking, F=Feeling, J=Judging, P=Perceiving