Type vs Trait Based Personality Assessments

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Personality assessment can be divided into two categories, type and trait based personality assessments. Across both types of personality assessments, it is assumed that personality remains stable over time, involves a genetic basis and influences individuals to demonstrate similar behavior in most situations.

Trait based personality assessments

These assess various aspects of an individual's personality which contributes to them behaving in particular ways. Across the population, different people's aspects of their personality will tend to vary and this explains the wide variety of personality descriptions. Such assessments have tended to be developed to fulfill a certain need to explain personality in various contexts such as work. Although these assessments may be more difficult for people to understand and can be difficult to use in team building activities, they are more psychometrically sound and allow for more accurate comparisons between individuals. These assessments can be used in conjunction with other methods in activities that require differentiation between individuals such as in recruitment and selection.

Type based personality assessments

These assess an individual's personality by categorizing them in particularly distinct theory-driven types. One way to understand this is that these types are collections of particular personality traits that influence them to behave in particular ways in certain situations. A number of personality theories have proposed classifications of certain personality types that explain a wide range of human behavior. These assessments are attractive as they are easy to understand and possesses utility in team building activities, but they are less psychometrically sound and have the tendency to "pigeon-hole" individuals into particular types. This results in less accurate comparisons between individuals. As such, they should not be used in activities that require accurate differentiation between individuals. Nevertheless, these assessments may be particularly useful in team building activities.