

Social Style and Team Diversity

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I. INTRODUCTION

Personality and self-assessment tests have been widely used in many settings such as workplace and educational institutions. Students and employees answer a questionnaire by providing yes-or-no answers, degree of agreement or disagreement or rating on a numeric scale to unveil one's strengths, values, interests, personality and motivations. The self-assessment tools often categorize people into a few different groups such as personality or aptitude. Depending on the type of self-assessment tools and the setting in which it is administered, its purpose varies from helping students with career planning, educators with desire to cater teaching to their students' learning styles to improving workplace interpersonal relationships and teamwork. Many have claimed the effectiveness of the tools in self-discovery and planning action items for positive behavioral changes. In this paper, I will explore my test results for Tracom Social Style Model and Jung Typology Test (JTT) as well as discuss about my opinions regarding the results.

II. TEST RESULTS

Social Styles Inventory is designed to assess one's level of assertiveness and responsiveness. In each category (assertiveness and responsiveness), test takers rate themselves on a scale from 1 to 4 in 15 different characteristics such as "Quiet vs Talkative", "Supportive vs Challenging", "Emotional vs Unemotional" and "Humorous vs Serious". Sum of all the scores in each category divided by 15 is then used to assign the test takers into one out of square areas that represents 4 social styles: Analytical (Thinking), Driver (Sensor), Amiable (Feeling) and Expressive (Intuitive).

On Dominance Scale, my score is 2.67 and on the Sociability Scale, the score is 3.07. In other words, because 2.5 is the midpoint in both Dominance and Sociability, 2.67 in Dominance Scale means I have a slight tendency towards assertiveness ("telling") and a higher tendency towards responsiveness ("emotional"). This puts me in the Expressive social style category. According the description of the Expressive Style, I have high assertiveness and responsiveness. Social Style's further description includes:

The expressive likes the company of other people, though unlike, the amiable this is because they need to "express" themselves. Amiables complement them very well, unless the expressive becomes too aggressive and puts them off. They can be good people to have at a party, because they're enthusiastic, dramatic and "interesting" people to have around. However, if they don't receive the attention they crave, they can get upset and even "difficult" to deal with. In conflict, they become emotional, prone to exaggeration

and unpredictable. The best way to deal with this is to let them calm down. Try not to fuel the fire by saying anything controversial [4, p. 5].

I do not find "dramatic" and "upset when attention is not given" correctly describe me in social situations. The wording also shows more negative than positive sides of Expressive. However, the summary of "characteristics", "in conflict", "solution" and "basic need" as well as the bullet-pointed table describe social style in a more positive light, using more constructive than critical words. I agree with 80% of the bullet-pointed table description about Expressive social style. I do enjoy talking and being around people as well as showing genuine enthusiasm. In summary, I do not resonate much with their detailed description of Expressive style. Further explanation will be discussed later towards the end of the paper.

While Social Styles Inventory is commonly used for workplace, JTT is a more general personality test that have been utilized in various places such as corporations, educational as well as therapy settings. A popular adaptation of Jung Topology Test is Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). Jung Typology Test includes 64 questions posed as a statement rather than an adjective describing oneself. A few examples are "You are almost never late for your appointments" and "You think that everything in the world is relative" [2]. The test takers answer by choosing 1 out 5 options that show agreement or disagreement: YES, yes, uncertain, no and NO. According to JTT, my personality type is ENFP which is the abbreviation of Extravert, iNtuitive, Feeling and Perceiving. My percentage for each category is as followed: Extravert is 31%, Intuitive is 16%, Feeling is 19% and Perceiving is 9%.

JTT provides a more detailed description for each personality type and I find it resonates more with me. I consider myself as friendly, talkative and enjoy learning about everything. In addition, for me, achieving intermediate level of many different skills is better than mastery of one specific skill. I also resonate with being easily excited but also quickly getting distracted and losing focus, for example, because of another interesting issue. Additionally, I find it is easy to communicate with people of different personality types on various subjects; communication is generally effortless and pleasant. I genuinely care about other people and seek others' acceptance, in many situations by opportunities to help them. This is most prominently shown through my nursing career choice. JTT also mentions analytical and mundane discussions can hinder successful communication for ENFP, especially when dealing with people of sensing/thinking personality type. I agree with this notion to some extent but I will discuss below about my general opinions of both Social Styles Inventory and Jung Typology Test.

III. DISCUSSION

John Sample, a professor from Florida State University, who applied MBTI for his students in a Public Administration program warns that using personality assessment tools should be proceeded with caution and respect for diversity when the culture the tests are administered is different from one in which the tools were developed [3]. It resonates with me because I would not score as high in extravert or I might not even be categorized as an extravert at all if I were to take these tests years ago when I first came to the United States as an international student. At that time, my English was limited to basic conversational level; I knew nothing about American pop culture and had no American friends. I was what people usually call, a typical shy Asian girl. The locations I went to every day in the first year were school and home. I only hung out with two Vietnamese girls. However, many things happened and I moved in with another older female Vietnamese roommate. Due to the age difference, we did not go to school together and I suddenly found myself having no friends at school. I forced myself to initiate conversations and made friends with classmates who were not Vietnamese. At the same time, I also learned that to be successful in academia and life, I needed to establish good relationships with professors and other mentors. I switched from never raising my hand in class to always participating and speaking my opinions. Moreover, being married to my husband who is an extreme extravert and has natural talent at connecting to people, I was also becoming (or being converted) more and more extraverted. Now, I have a wide and diverse circle of friends and initiating and holding normal conversation with others comes naturally. Years of putting myself out of my comfort zone and experience living in the US has gradually made me into a person who is extraverted enough for people to identify me as an extrovert. In other words, for international students, being an extravert in the US requires fluency in English, well-rounded knowledge of American culture and some self-confidence. However, I am also an introvert because I need to reenergize after many hours or days hanging out with friends and carrying out other social tasks. That was when I realized being an extravert is a learnable skill. Most people are not extreme introvert or extravert but somewhere in between.

Because of my interest in human psychology and my experience of an introvert becoming more extraverted, I pay particular attention to people who seem introverted, especially when working in teams. In nursing, I am considered a reserved person but in computer science, I am suddenly one the most talkative and outgoing member as I find most of my classmates are not as talkative. I know that it just takes times to understand others and as I spend more time around people, they are naturally more open and will feel more comfortable expressing themselves. More importantly, encouraging everyone, especially those who are shy to talk and participate, acknowledge them and make sure they know their opinions matter are necessary for effective collaboration.

First, I believe exposing oneself to different cultures, ideas and even opposing opinions are important to understanding others, gaining different perspectives and reducing bias. Cristofaro's case study about an Italian organization shows heterogeneous teams of decision makers have broader and more

thoroughly considered decisions than homogeneous teams do [1]. This is due to the fact that people with similar views will have certain bias and cannot see their own blind spots. A diverse team will take longer time to reach agreement but their decisions are more inclusive and likely to avoid unforeseen reasons for failing.

Second, knowing one's strengths and preferred ways of interactions does not always mean everyone have to accommodate others, especially when a personality type is the majority [3]. Self-assessment tests are used to help us recognize our differences or similarities, strengths and areas for improvement so we can develop strategies for personal change and work more collaboratively with others. Shy speakers should not be punished but encouraged to speak more. Talkative members can talk less and listen more.

Last but not least, the focus should be on the team's common goals. At the same time, the process of collaborative work gives challenging opportunities for every team member to utilize their strengths as well as recognize and work on their less developed skills. At a result, everyone develops as whole person over his or her lifetime.

Last, one size does not fit all. Having a particular personality type does not equate success or failure. The self-assessment tools should be used with caution and advanced understanding and knowledge of its interpretation. It also adds more value when combined with other useful tools to design actionable plan that can help individuals improve their less developed areas.

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, self-assessment tools provide useful understanding of self and others, especially when working in a team. Knowing our own biases, weaknesses and recognizing other people's strengths help us improve ourselves and our relationships with others. Ultimately, working in a diverse team will be beneficial in terms of personal development and creating products or services that are more inclusive and less prone to failure. Last but not least, self-assessment tools should be used ethically, with good understanding of its interpretation and combined with actionable plans, it can achieve positive changes in others' and our own behaviors.

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