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### **HBO Max Documentary on Personality Tests Fails: SIOP Responds**

HBO Max and CNN Films recently released a documentary titled: *Persona: The dark truth behind personality tests*. The documentary makes a number of assertions that are inaccurate, potentially undermining good science and practice involving uses of personality assessments in the workplace. The film focuses on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and incorrectly communicates that the types were not designed, nor should they be used, to make hiring or other high-stakes decisions. However, the focus on the MBTI obscures the fact that there is a body of research that supports the use of personality assessments to inform decision making.

Scientific research clearly shows that personality assessments developed according to modern professional standards can predict which job applicants are most likely to become successful performers, be more satisfied in their job, and less likely to quit, without unfair discrimination. Scientifically based, professionally developed Big 5-based assessments and their variants, used for workplace applications, are not medical diagnostic tools and cannot be used to diagnose or detect mental health conditions. Test questions should be screened for compliance with employment laws, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act. The film depicts personality assessment as a single source of information used by organizations. In practice, any single assessment is rarely used as the sole source of information for hiring decisions.

The field of industrial-organizational (I-O) psychology specializes in the implementation of scientifically valid assessments in the workplace. We study the requirements for success in jobs and help organizations evaluate candidates against those job requirements, using assessments as the most effective and proven method. I-O psychology was inaccurately described as supporting only organizational operations and profits. Rather, I-O psychology addresses workplace issues to protect and improve careers and lives of individuals, and to enhance the effectiveness of teams and organizations. A major focus for the field is to promote fairness, equity, and unbiased decision making in organizations.

When used as part of a job-related approach to assessment, personality assessments increase compliance with guidelines for ensuring fair and non-discriminatory hiring outcomes that organizations are legally held accountable to. We do not advocate for the use of general personality assessments without proper methods to relate specific traits measured on the assessments to job requirements, and without proper validation evidence showing that they predict job-relevant outcomes. This distinction is what sets scientifically-valid assessments apart from others. There is a dark side to personality assessments, or indeed any assessment, when they are not used responsibly or researched properly. However, there is also a bright side to personality assessments when used in an appropriate, evidence-based manner, by well-trained professionals.

SIOP has initiated a new task force, chaired by Dr. Christopher Nye, to help increase awareness of scientific research on the effective use of personality assessments in organizations.

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