

Type Dynamics – The Way Out of “The Box”

“It is not the purpose of a psychological typology to classify human beings into categories; this in itself would be pretty pointless. Its purpose is to provide a critical psychology which will make the methodical investigation and presentation of the empirical material possible.”

- C.G. Jung, CW 6



I have been teaching, training, and talking about the MBTI® tool and psychological type to anyone that will listen for more than 10 years – so much so that I was once told on a performance evaluation to “temper my enthusiasm for the MBTI.” This obsession of mine is not limited to my work with my clients; it permeates my life. I listen for psychological type clues when I converse with others, in characters on T.V., when I am at the movies (and not just in the actors on the screen!), when I read a book, when I view art, when I listen to music (I am *sure* John Lennon was an INFP), and when I am in the grocery line or trying on shoes (an obsession of a different kind). When I am talking to people (I am an ENFJ, after all – I only say things that I KNOW will help, if they would only ...), I refer to my theoretical notion of what his/her type may be. When I talk to others about my inner circle (which I have been accused of, by my ISTJ husband, Scott, as includ-

ing the checker at Giant), I say, “My friend, Carol, ENFP, ...” Indeed, type permeates my life view to the extent that at my wedding four years ago, I was going to seat our guests at tables by dominant function and ask them to ... until Scott put his foot down.

Yes, you could say that I am one of those people that Annie Murphy Paul would call a “type junkie”, caught up in “The Cult of Personality”. Most practitioners have heard the age old objection to “typing” – it puts you in a box. Just looking at the type table gives ample proof of that, right? Being a reasonably intelligent and free thinking (albeit easily influenced) person, I would not be able to maintain interest in something to this extent if the theory was not complex enough to consistently surprise and challenge me; if I did not learn something from a typological perspective from every workshop I lead and from every conversation I have; and, if I did not continually need to update even my

basic introductory presentation with a new twist, angle, thought, or notion before each session.

I would have given up on the MBTI inventory and psychological type a long time ago, if I

had not seen evidence that the conscious recognition and movement between the eight mental processes – the active and dynamic nature of type – can help people grow, resolve conflict, enhance communication, understand each other, and work more effectively in teams. With a solid base of who I am from the perspective of my four-letter type, I have explored and committed to a life-long discovery of the deeper levels of type, to walk through the doorway of the MBTI tool into an ever deepening understanding of the changing nature of myself and others. I continue to see my husband gain a better understanding of, and appreciation for, my intuitive leaps, and I am sometimes surprised at how well I can tell a detailed story of a past experience in sequence as it occurred. In fact, if it were not for the dynamics of typology, I doubt if Scott and I could manage our differences as well as we do.

Here is what I now say at the beginning of each of my workshops: “You have to go into the box to get out.” It is only when you know and really understand the dynamic nature of your whole type – defined by your four letters and the corresponding hierarchy of functions – that you can understand the practicality of the Jungian theory behind the Indicator. It is then that you, and your clients,



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can begin to reap the rich rewards that the model has to offer. Jung's theory is that we move in and out of all of the eight mental functions, although we have energy to devote to some more than others. Myers created a theoretical type hierarchy of use and development of the functions of all 16 types. So we are all more, way more, than what our four letters would indicate. I could ask you to trust me on this because *I just know*, but instead of blind trust, let me give you a glimpse into how I have used the eight mental processes within the context of this article.

My appreciation and respect for the MBTI inventory and psychological type (and the fact that it colors my world view) has a lot to do with my dominant function, *extraverted feeling*, used with my auxiliary function *introverted intuition*. The model helps me to help people to grow and develop, and it supports my ability to know how to assist them. Coupled with this is my value that every human being has the fundamental right to be who they are without judgment (*introverted feeling*). Remember my love of shoe shopping? I enjoy looking at the colors, textures, and shapes of shoes (*extraverted sensing*) as I picture the different possibilities of what I could wear them with (*extraverted intuition*) and how the silhouette of shoes I am trying on match the outfits I have in my closet (*introverted sensing*). I also think about the image that the outfits would portray (*introverted intuition*). Although it is a bit harder, my ability to tell a relatively detailed story with the associated emotions to relate better to my ISTJ husband calls on my use of *introverted sensing*. It is my *extraverted feeling* that Scott sees when he refers to my wide circle of friends. Now, what I said about the seating chart at my wedding – that was just my attempt at humor.

What you have not seen is my use of *introverted thinking* to organize and re-organize sentences and paragraphs, to replace this word for that, to create what I hope is a cohesive, understandable, and accurate article. An ESFJ friend of mine read the first draft and suggested that I make it more practical – defining some of the mental processes that I used, which required me to call on my *introverted sensing*. You may be wondering what happened to *extraverted thinking*; well, I am still working on that function. Just ask my accountant.

Yes, it is true that I do all of these things in order to be a helpful facilitator, friend, wife, etc. In other words, the other functions are in service to my dominant *extraverted feeling*. But it is also true that I am actively engaging all these mental processes all of the time so that I can be as effective as possible, adapting to different situations as they present themselves.

It is type dynamics that brings the richness of psychological type to the forefront, and now it is easier than it has ever been to know and understand type dynamics. So much has been written about it that all you have to do is

Google the term "type dynamics" to get a basic understanding. The dynamic nature of type is outlined in just about every *Introduction to Type*® book. The *MBTI*® *Manual* has an entire chapter devoted to the Jungian theory behind the Indicator, and the CPP publication, *Introduction to Type*® *Dynamics and Development* by Katharine D. Myers and Linda K. Kirby is a great start. There is an abundance of material today which defines each of the eight mental processes.

If you are a practitioner and have not already done so, take the time to learn about the dynamics of type. Teaching type dynamics to your clients explains why type *really works* – it gives people a direction for professional growth and development, helps to resolve communication conflicts, and promotes team work on a deeper level. Fundamentally, a deep understanding of type and why there are normal, natural differences helps to build trust in one another – isn't that what is so sorely missing in the workplace?

Oh, if only everyone would take my advice ... ■

Editor's Note



Roy Childs co-authored an article, "The Type Mapping™ System" in the last issue of the *Bulletin* with Steve Myers. His bio information was received too late for publication, but I wanted APTi members to know something about Roy and to thank him for his contributions to the *Bulletin*.

Roy Childs, Managing Director of Team Focus, is an Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society and a Chartered Occupational Psychologist. His background in psychometrics includes having worked with some of the best known authors of personality questionnaires including Ray Cattell (16PF) and Will Schutz (FIRO). With Team Focus, he has developed a new range of instruments, some used by the MOD (both Army and Navy) and by British University medical schools for the selection of doctors and dentists of the future. He has developed a new framework for Emotional Intelligence and the development of the Type Mapping system – a suite of 5 instruments designed to facilitate access to Jung's ideas beyond that achieved by other instruments. His publications include *The Psychometric Minefield*; *Emotional Intelligence and Leadership*; *The Big Five – Bring a little colour into your lives*; and "Coaching with FIRO Element B" published in *Psychometrics in Coaching*.