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Let's Get Visual! - Using creative solutions to link personality to career choice

This paper provides evidence that clearly establishes a link between personality and career choice. In this instance 'personality' refers to the preferences described by Isabel Briggs Myers and Katherine Briggs in the assessment tool known as the MBTI. The purpose of their work was to make the theory of psychological types described by the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung understandable and useful in people's lives. I will also look at the influence of the 'function pairs' on career selection. Function pairs describe the combination of perceiving and judging functions which are the essence of Type theory. A central part of my presentation will look at function pairs and explain how to combine language and image to enhance understanding of what is considered to be complex psychology and put it into a format which is easy to understand and relevant to careers professionals.

- What is personality type?

Personality type is the generic term that is used by many to describe different ways of being, often exploring typical behaviours, motivators and stressors. There are many theories, some more researched than others, and many offer a window into self-awareness which can be relevant and helpful.

- What is psychological type?

The term psychological type refers specifically to Jung's work on personality. Jung wrote a book called *Psychological Types* which was published in 1921. In the book Jung proposed four main cognitive functions; two perceiving functions, Sensing and Intuition, which relate to what information our minds are most attracted to, and two judging functions, Thinking and Feeling, which relate to what factors we take into account when we make decisions. These four functions can be focused either on our outer world and therefore be extraverted, or on our inner world and therefore be introverted. There are eight psychological types.

- What is the MBTI®?

The MBTI® is the Myers Briggs Type Indicator®. It is a self assessment test, now available on-line, which was developed in the 1940s by Isabel Myers and Katherine Briggs, a highly educated mother and daughter team. They became fascinated by personality type, discovered Jung's work and spent decades of their lives perfecting a questionnaire that would give everyone easy access to Jung's theory in a way that would be meaningful and valuable.

"Whatever the circumstance of your life, whatever your personal ties, work and responsibilities, the understanding of type can make your perceptions clearer, your judgments sounder, and your life closer to your heart's desire." (Myers, 1980)

Myers and Briggs extended Jung's theory to add another set of preferences which was intended to honour the complexity of Jung's work whilst making the interpretation of it easier to communicate and understand. These added preferences are Judging and Perceiving. The four scales they identified are:

Extraversion (E) and Introversion (I)
Sensing (S) and Intuition (N)
Thinking (T) and Feeling (F)
Judging (J) and Perceiving (P)

We all have a preference on each of these scales which come together to give a four-letter code which, when correctly interpreted, gives an in-depth description of who we are, what's important to us, how we are soothed, motivated, stressed, challenged and much more. There are 16 variations of type preferences, for example ESTJ, INFP or any combination of these eight functions.

A quote from the MBTI® manual (third edition) clearly defines the intention of the author of the instrument with regard to career choice.

“The use of the Myers Briggs Type Indicator® personality inventory in careers counseling to help people find meaningful and productive work was one of Isabel Myers original motivations in the development of the MBTI® instrument and was one of the first areas of applied research on Type, and the field continues to develop a large number of research studies.” (Isabel Briggs Myers, 1998)

- Where is the MBTI® used?

CPP became the exclusive publisher of the Myers Briggs® instrument in 1975 and has held this position since then. Their web site states:

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI®) assessment is the best known and most trusted personality assessment tool available today. As many as 1.5 million assessments are administered annually to individuals, including employees of most Fortune 500 companies. Today, the MBTI® assessment is available in 21 languages, with more translations and international research efforts in development. With its long and distinguished history, it continues to be used by people around the world to improve individual and team performance, explore careers, and reduce workplace conflict. Through these and other applications, the MBTI assessment is playing a part in the vision laid out by Briggs and Myers, helping people understand and appreciate themselves and others. (CPP, 2009)

- Where is it misused?

By far the biggest issue here is that many assume the test tells them who they are. This is far from the truth. The test tells you the results of the information you have given it.

The MBTI®, as the name suggests, is an indicator. It does not tell a person what personality type they have, rather it suggests what psychological preferences may be dominant and also those that are less so. When used according to the ethical guidelines the results should always be verified by further discussion or guidance and best-fit type can only be identified by the person themselves. It is possible your self-selected type may be different from the report received following completion of the questionnaire. This is because the test reveals results from a snapshot in time and this may vary according to context, state of mind and well-being. Your true best-fit type is, however, static across the lifespan.

It is not actually necessary to take the assessment. Finding your type can be done through reading, attending workshops or using other self-assessment resources that facilitate a discussion and lead to clarity.

It is also highly unethical to use the assessment for either hiring or firing purposes. This is because someone with a particular set of preferences can be more competent at using their non-preferred functions as someone for whom those functions are preferred. This is not a means to measure skill or aptitude or IQ, it is an indicator of natural preference.

- How do careers advisors use Myers Briggs®?

This model is used extensively by many careers professionals all over the world. When used wisely it is an invaluable part of the careers counseling process. It is used for careers guidance at every level from students to career transitions and also career enrichment. In this difficult economic climate many people are needing to find increased satisfaction in the role they have rather than risk making a move. At all times discussing personal preferences creates an ideal coaching environment in which to help people move forwards.

It is important to note that the MBTI® does not predict career satisfaction or success for every individual; however, most people have gained many helpful insights from knowing the careers that are frequently chosen for people who share the same type. The 'Personality Puzzle - Type for Teens' cards have the following advice on each of the careers cards.

"The careers information here is a guideline only. If you have an interest or passion please follow it. Finding a career you enjoy is essential to your well-being. A professional career practitioner is a wise investment and can help you further.

Key skills, along with others, can be used in any career, anywhere, at any time!"

- What is the research?

The validity and reliability of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®) instrument has been documented in thousands of peer-reviewed journals and case studies, and its publisher, CPP Inc. freely makes its supporting data publicly available. CAPT, the Centre for Application for Psychological Type holds a library of over 10,000 document, articles, books, resources and theses, many up to PhD level which document research on a very wide range of areas where type is applied.

The current MBTI questionnaire was published in 1998. Based on results from a broad, nationally representative sample of 3009 people, each of the four preference scales has internal consistence reliability of .90 or greater.

Validity has also been examined in behavioural observations, exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, correlations with related measures and brain scans. Studies have revealed the following:

- Introverts spend significantly more time than Extraverts conducting “heads down” work, while Extraverts spend significantly more time doing work in open areas (Schaubnut, 2008)
 - INTuitives express significantly greater interest in artistic occupations than Sensors (O'Hara, 2006)
 - Thinkers score significantly higher than Feelers on dominance, while Feelers score significantly higher on nurturance (Quenk, 2001)
 - Judgers score significantly higher than Perceivers on order, while Perceivers score significantly higher on change (Quenk, 2001)
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- What is the neuroscience research?

Prof. Dario Nardi at UCLA has undertaken research using EEG (Electro Encephalograph) technology which validates the work of Jung, Myers and Briggs. The research is ongoing and the results show that there are patterns in activity in the cortex of the brain which correlate with Jung's eight psychological types. This is exciting for all type professionals as what we have seen for many decades in our work is now corroborated by science.

Dario has written about his research in his book 'The Neuroscience of Personality' in which he writes:

“I have confirmed that individual differences truly matter. People of various personality types don't merely rely on different brain regions. They use their brains in fundamentally different ways. I use the ideas of Myers-Briggs and Dr Jung because there are clear neurological and psychological similarities when I do side-by-side comparisons of two people of the same personality type. At the same time every brain is unique. No two persons are alike.” (Nardi, 2011)

His lecture at 'Google' is available on You tube. (AtGoogleTalks, 2011)

- What is the research related to career choice?

The MBTI manual is the obvious place to start find out about research that has been undertaken in this area. The chapter 'Uses of Type in Career Counseling' reveals a plethora of studies which support the use of type by careers advisors.

“There are clear cut trends in occupational choices by type but also individual differences within occupations. Practitioners can point out both patterns as clients assess jobs for themselves. The function pairs play the greatest role in occupational choice, therefore, helping clients see how they can access their function in a job is important.” (Isabel Briggs Myers, 1998)

My presentation has a focus on the ‘function pairs’. These are the four combinations of the middle two functions represented in the four letter type code.

These functions are:

Sensing and Intuition – what information attracts our mind?

Sensing: Attracted first to what is real and focuses on facts supported by evidence.

Intuition: Attracted first to patterns, possibilities and concepts, taking the ‘big-picture’ view.

Thinking and Feeling – what information do we take into account when making decisions?

Thinking: First takes an objective view, solving the problem with analysis and logic.

Feeling: First takes a subjective view solving the problem by considering implications for the people involved and how the decision sits with personal values and beliefs.

Please note that this is not an ‘either/or’ process but rather a ‘first/and then’ process. It is natural for us all to use all four functions with varying degrees of ease. We may also be competent using all four functions, but some take more energy and may be less available to us in times of stress. Knowing the pattern of how we use our innate cognitive functions is just the start of knowing how to adapt when our non-preferred functions are required.

A study was completed showing the “Distribution of Types within Occupational and Academic Group” (Myers, 1980) The results are in the table on the next page and clearly demonstrate that although all types can have careers in any area there are certain types which are overrepresented in certain occupational and academic groups.

Distribution of Types within Occupational and Academic Group (Myers, 1980)

	<u>ST%</u>	<u>SF%</u>	<u>NF%</u>	<u>NT%</u>
<u>Occupations</u>				
Accountants	<u>64</u>	23	4	9
Bank employees	<u>47</u>	24	11	18
Sales, customer relations	11	<u>81</u>	8	0
Creative writers	12	0	<u>65</u>	23
Research scientists	0	0	23	<u>77</u>
<u>Fields of graduate studies</u>				
Theology	3	15	<u>57</u>	25
Law	31	10	17	<u>42</u>
<u>Fields of College Studies</u>				
Finance and commerce	<u>51</u>	21	10	18
Nursing	15	<u>44</u>	34	7
Counselling	6	9	<u>76</u>	9
Science	12	5	26	<u>57</u>
Health related professions	13	36	<u>44</u>	7
Education	13	<u>42</u>	39	6
Journalism	15	23	<u>42</u>	20
P.E and health	32	34	24	10

A further study was done showing the percent of overlap in occupational selection between those who shared the same two middle letter of their type code but opposite outer two letters and vice versa. The results show that the overlap is much higher where the middle two letters are the same i.e. ISTJ and INFJ have a 4% overlap and ISTJ and ESTP have a 36% overlap. (G.P.Macdaid, 1992)

Types	% overlap
ISTJ and INFJ	4
ISTJ and ESTP	36
ESFJ and ENTJ	2
ESFJ and ISFP	32
ENFJ and ESTJ	4
ENFJ and INFP	44
INTJ and ISFJ	4
INTJ and ENTP	52

- Why use visual images to explain Type theory?

Trying to teach people a new concept with the aim of making the information 'stick' is an area which interests me enormously. It became clear from early on in my career with type that this information is life changing for so many, and yet their ability to apply the information is hampered by a failure to recall the language and terminology used. I started to use simple graphics to explain the type preferences and found that the ability to memorise the concepts increased dramatically.

I use this strategy at all times, predominantly using The Personality Puzzle as a resource with which to help people understand and retain the information. (Blair, 2013) I further created similes to describe the mental functions used by each of the function pairs. Using these has also greatly enhanced the rate at which type concepts are learnt and the depth of understanding which is achieved. I will be showing these in my presentation.

In a recent study by Mayer and Moreno mentioned in the CISCO report called 'Multimedia Learning through Media : What the Research Says' it states that researchers have shown that significant increases in learning can be accomplished through the informed use of visual and verbal multimodal learning and further that retention is improved through words and pictures rather than through words alone. (Mayer, 2001) (Richard Mayer, 2003)

- Conclusion

There is a clear correlation between personality type, as described by Myers Briggs® and careers selection. The influence of the function pairs is particularly strong. Using visual and verbal cues together increase both the speed and retention of learning.

®MBTI is a trademark or registered trademark of the Myers Briggs Type Indicator Trust

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