

Understanding the meaning of out-of-pattern scores from the Myers–Briggs Type Indicator (Form K), using type dynamics theory

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Abstract

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) was developed and constructed to indicate psychological preferences identified by C.G. Jung's typology, and also for its results to be interpreted in the context of Jung's ideas on type dynamics and development. MBTI Form K, a more complex instrument than the standard Forms M and G, focuses on how a person expresses these psychological preferences. It also shows, through out-of-pattern (OOPS) results on its subscales, where a person uses a non-preferred preference in particular situations. This paper provides examples of such results to illustrate how type dynamics theory can be useful in interpreting OOPS scores. The theme of the interpretation method is how is an out-of-pattern preference is used in the context of both the overall preferences and results on the particular scale, how this anomaly fits in to type dynamics theory ; how the person concerned has used that OOPS in their type development and, finally, what can happen if a person spends a large amount of time in OOPs preference.

C.G.Jung and Psychological Types

C.G.Jung's theory of psychological types provides the rationale for the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). From observation, research and discussion, he proposed sets of opposite preferences (Extraversion–Introversion; Sensation–Intuition; Thinking–Feeling) to interpret and explain psychological differences between people (Jung 1990).

In Jung's scheme, a person's attitude (Extraversion–Introversion) described whether psychological energy was oriented towards the outer world, or internally. Interest in information, whether through facts and experience, or patterns and meaning making, was via perceiving mental functions (Sensation–Intuition); whereas rational decision making, whether objective and non-personal, or subjective and personal, was via judging mental functions (Thinking–Feeling).

Jung's definition of Feeling here did not include emotions, which were for him were associated more with the unconscious and, in their expression, with extraversion. Possession of a preference (e.g. Sensing) also did not mean that its opposite (Intuition) was never used, but simply that the latter would not be as trusted as the former, particularly in important situations and would also be less developed, or conscious.

Jung also considered the mental functions to be a bridge between the unconscious and the conscious. Developing a function, by practising, or imposing will on it, led to consistent conscious control and use.

There were also varying levels of consciousness for the functions, the most-preferred (e.g. Thinking), being called the dominant, or superior, function and most in consciousness. A compensatory, or auxiliary, function from the other set of mental functions (e.g. Intuition) was considered to balance the dominant, by giving the person one preferred judging function and one preferred perceiving function. If one function were introverted, the other would then be extraverted, and *vice versa*. Balance here is not 50/50; the dominant function is expected to be so. The auxiliary's role is rather to support the dominant in providing information (as in this example), or decision making. The example used here would be described as introverted thinking with intuition.

The opposite of the dominant function (e.g. Feeling) then becomes the inferior function, least conscious and developed. Jung's typology presumed development over a lifetime, where experience and events (e.g. end of schooling; leaving home; marriage; mid-life) led a person to see the use for and so develop their non-preferences, but in the context of the dominant function.

The MBTI and Jung's Typology

Isabel Briggs Myers developed the MBTI to make C.G. Jung's theory practical and useful. For her culture, this meant constructing a psychological instrument. As its main developer, she addressed the measurement implications of this theory by constructing it as an indicator, rather than a measure of development or skill. A high score was simply clarity of preference, an indicator of the level of probability that a person would agree with their results.

She utilised bimodal rather than continuous scales, and forced-choice items that worked most accurately at the midpoint of a scale, rather than at its extremes. These items were also at times psychological opposites, not logical or language opposites. Nor was any inference made that a person had ever actually done what their answers to a question might suggest.

The MBTI measures by sorting responses into three scales representing Jung's categories of psychological opposites (e.g. Extraversion – Introversion, or E–I), as well as a fourth scale, in Judging–Perceiving categories, relating to which function was extraverted, or used in the outer world. Myers' co-developer, Katharine Cook

Briggs, considered this to be an implication of Jung's ideas that dovetailed into her own private research on personality. Accordingly, the category names are his.

The four scales of the MBTI are independent, but a whole type is inferred from the results on each of the scales. e.g. a person whose results come out as I,N,T and P would be assigned a code, INTP. From this data, a formula developed by Isabel Myers identifies type dynamics of introverted thinking (Ti), with extraverted intuition (Ne), the inferior function being (extraverted feeling – Fe) and the remainder tertiary function (Sensing – S). Note that no direction is indicated for the tertiary, as there are conflicting views (Myers & Kirby, 1994). These results, including the developmental nature of Jung's theory would then be the subject of an individual or group feedback session. MBTI results are not intended to be simply words on a report: they need to be explained and discussed. Table 1 lists type dynamics for each MBTI type code.

Table 1: MBTI Type codes and type dynamics

Code	Dom	Aux	Ter	Inf
ISTJ	Si	Te	F	Ne
ISFJ	Si	Fe	T	Ne
INFJ	Ni	Fe	T	Se
INTJ	Ni	Te	F	Se
ISTP	Ti	Se	N	Fe
INTP	Ti	Ne	S	Fe
ISFP	Fi	Se	N	Te
INFP	Fi	Ne	S	Te
ESTP	Se	Ti	F	Ni
ESFP	Se	Fi	T	Ni
ENFP	Ne	Fi	T	Si
ENTP	Ne	Ti	F	Si
ESTJ	Te	Si	N	Fi
ENTJ	Te	Ni	S	Fi
ESFJ	Fe	Si	N	Ti

The developmental nature of these dynamics is less easily presented: the most commonly used model takes insufficient account of new knowledge about human development (Geyer, 2004b) and old knowledge from Jung (Jung, 1991). Type development is considered a natural process and related to the individual's own life experience. Table 2 is therefore a broad guide only.

Table 2: MBTI Type dynamics and development

Life Stage	Preference developed
Childhood	Dominant
Adolescence - late 20s	Auxiliary
30s	Tertiary
40s	Inferior

MBTI Form K

In her research, Isabel Myers found that MBTI items could be effectively grouped in clusters of similar meaning. These were researched and reported on using Forms F and G (McCaulley, 1993) and are similar in content to Form K subscales..

In the mid-1980s. David Saunders, who had worked with Myers in the past, factor analysed all her MBTI items to produce Form J, a five-factor instrument (Saunders, 1989). The 131 items and 20 subscales in Form K are a subset of Form J scales.

Table 3 identifies Form K scales and subscales, with a brief phrase indicating meaning.

Table 3: MBTI Form K Scales and subscales

Extraversion - Introversion

Initiating - Receiving
connecting with others

Expressive - Contained
feelings, thoughts, interests

Gregarious - Intimate
breadth, depth of relationships

Participative - Reflective
communicate, socialise, learn

Enthusiastic - Quiet
energy level or kind

Sensing - Intuition

Concrete - Abstract
attention, perception focus

Realistic - Imaginative
using information for tasks/problems

Practical - Inferential
what we make out of what we know

Experiential - Theoretical
making meaning, patterns

Traditional - Original
importance of traditions

Thinking - Feeling

Logical - Empathetic
ideal way of making decisions

Reasonable - Compassionate
actual way of making decisions

Questioning - Accommodating
differences of opinion

Critical - Accepting
outlook towards differences

Tough - Tender
standing by decisions

Judging - Perceiving

Systematic-Casual
handling life in general

Planful - Open-Ended
arranging leisure activities

Early Starting - Pressure-Prompted
deadlines etc.

Scheduled - Spontaneous
life routines, schedules

Methodical - Emergent
order smaller tasks to finish larger ones

Since 1996, the standard output for the computer-scored Form K has been an Expanded Interpretive Report (EIR), which provides individual formation on the scales and subscales.

These subscales are arranged in order of importance, the core subscale first, and then others following. The Thinking – Feeling subscales are ordered according to a decision making process. Feedback is necessarily given from top to bottom on each set of subscales, building up a picture of the person and seeing how the results.

Form K's purpose is to provide, as far as possible, an individualised report that focuses on how a preference is expressed. However, in interpreting the Form K subscales, it's important to note that no claim is made that the questions or the subscales say all there is to say about the construct measured, particularly with regard to the behaviours described. It therefore requires an interpretation that focuses on the theoretical aspects and looks at the extra information provided in that context, rather than as a description of traits (Geyer 2004a).

Out-of-Pattern Scores (OOPS)

One of the features of this Step II level of scoring is the appearance of out-of-pattern scores (OOPS). These results do not imply a mistake, or something negative, as the acronym might seem to infer, but a situation where a person's results on an overall scale are for one preference scale (e.g. Intuition), but on a subscale the results are for an opposite preference (e.g. Practical).

Even though these scales are independent, experience in giving Form K feedback indicates that it's useful to ask respondents to provide context and description for how they use any of the subscales, preferred or out-of-pattern. The proposition is that each subscale result can be profitably interpreted according to the respondent's type dynamics. The principle here is that out-of-pattern results arise either in support of the dominant function or to defend the dominant function. Utility of use naturally depends on experience and circumstance.

As an example, in the United States the Questioning – Accommodating subscale has produced the highest number of out-of-pattern scores for Feeling scorers in comparison with other subscales. Quenk (1998) has suggested that these out-of pattern might relate to the organisational experience of Feeling types, particularly ENFPs, where they may find that in order to have their values realised, they must ask questions to seek clarification, rather than seeking the harmony implied by the Accommodating preference.

Practice and experience in interpreting Form K lends strength to Quenk's view. Questioning ENFPs (approx. 50% of ENFP professionals in a personal Step II workshop sample) have reported and demonstrated varying levels of skill in utilising the preference, generally endorsing Quenk's point of view. Others referred to individual experience, ranging from being a

single mother, to being brought up in a tough environment, as a reason for developing the subscale.

Many of these people also reported growing interest and development of the facet preference over time, consistent with the notion of Thinking as the tertiary function for the ENFP. This interest seems to have begun mostly in the late 20s and early 30s.

Regarding ENFPs in general in order to expand the interpretive method further, an out-of-pattern subscale result on Introversion for this type might suggest an auxiliary or inferior expression, for Sensing, an inferior expression, Thinking, tertiary and Judging either auxiliary or tertiary.

The answers to these questions lie with the person concerned, of course, not with the literal results.

Some Individual examples follow:

Examples

ISFJ

A male who worked in Australian rural settings reported and validated preference clarities of Clear for Introversion and Sensing, Slight for Feeling and Moderate for Judging.

Form K Extraversion–Introversion subscale results showed out-of-pattern-preferences for Gregarious and Participative, rather than the Introversion poles of Intimate and Reflective. Identification was reached with Receiving and Contained as general perspectives on life: he preferred to be unobtrusive, keeping feelings/emotions to himself.

But this didn't mean that groups were avoided. The Gregarious preference was interpreted as meaning liking to be in groups in a social sense, but not leading them, and with Participative, preferring interpersonal discussion to what he considered impersonal reading and writing.

The interests of group harmony were important here and it suggested that this was how this person expressed his auxiliary extraverted feeling. This was also how he adapted to rural and outback environments he worked and lived in – the mateship and stoic (i.e. not expressive emotionally) behaviours associated with these areas was congenial to him.

Finally, his enthusiasm or energy was tempered by the level of familiarity with a situation or group, or whether things had personally been too quiet or hectic for him in recent times.

The discussion on this facet, particularly the OOPS results helped this person to understand more about his overall preference for introversion, in particular that it didn't exclude his extraverted behaviours, but rather explained how he was social in his own, introverted way.

INTJ

A middle-aged male project manager reported and validated very clear preference clarity for Introversion, Intuition and Thinking with clear for Judging.

Form K Thinking-Feeling subscale results showed an out-of-pattern-preference for Tender, rather than the Thinking pole of Tough. This result was attributed to experience, in that he had discovered that he needed to have people's support and co-operation in order for a project to be successfully completed. In type terms, the vision, with its logical outcomes could be completed better by a more personal approach. Although this became a conscious strategy, he acknowledged that it took a lot of hard work and patience.

INFP

A female strategic planner in her mid-30s reported and validated a Moderate preference clarity for Introversion, Very Clear for Intuition and Perceiving and Slight for Feeling.

Form K Thinking-Feeling subscale results showed an out-of-pattern-preference for Questioning rather than the Feeling pole of Accommodating. It emerged that she had developed Thinking as part of the requirements of her chosen profession, and although this had worked well up to a point, she felt her values weren't being met. Under stress, she tended to argue and question policies and decisions from the beginning (inferior function) rather than asking open-ended questions to see how these issues might fit in with her dominant introverted feeling. In this sense, her task was to practice using her dominant and auxiliary rather than her inferior.

INTP

A male middle-aged consultant and writer reported and validated a Very Clear preference clarity for Introversion and Clear preferences for Intuition, Thinking and Perceiving.

Form K Thinking-Feeling subscale results showed an out-of-pattern preference for Tender, rather than the Thinking pole of Tough. Through discussion and reflection, this was attributed to a family background of being brought up to be nice and avoidance of conflict, as well as a mechanism to counteract shyness.

In professional life, one way this manifested itself was as a non-directive method of hopeful collaboration. If too much time and energy was spent in this aspect of his inferior function, such as when the expected outcomes of such geniality were not met, then the expression of Feeling tended to become more emotional.

ENTP

A male middle-aged consultant reported and validated clear preference clarity for Extraversion and Intuition, very clear for Thinking and moderate for Perceiving.

Form K Sensing-Intuition subscale results showed an out-of-pattern preference for Practical, rather than the Intuition pole of Inferential. Discussion established that he was interested in knowledge that was useful, or useable and so he was less interested in the what the meaning of the idea might be, or to which extent it was compatible with others in his field.

He related part of this to a leisure pursuit in which he was very successful and where getting something that worked was more important than the purity of the idea. In his field he was considered a good salesman, and the Practical aspect of his information gathering would have contributed to that reputation.

As this out-of-pattern preference was a component of Sensing, it was part of his inferior function, which he had developed in order to support his dominant extraverted intuition, which was concerned with external possibilities.

A question to ask here is to what extent the rest of the inferior function was developed, or whether it was on this narrow focus. In addition, whether spending too much time in this subscale limited access to and appreciation of ideas that may be useful, but require a depth of research in order to find that out. These questions weren't asked of this person at the time.

ENTJ

A male manager in a public corporation reported and validated a clear preference clarity for Extraversion, very clear for Intuition and Thinking and moderate for Judging.

Form K Thinking-Feeling subscale results showed an out-of-pattern preference for Accepting rather than the Thinking pole of Critical. A brief discussion indicated that, whilst he was keen to make and implement decisions and move on, he didn't feel a need to argue the point in a black and white way with those that held different views and took a non-confronting approach as a consequence.

Conclusion

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator was designed to provide insights into people's behaviours based on C.G. Jung's theory of psychological types, not only in measurement principles, but also in the interpretation of MBTI data in terms of type dynamics and development.

Data from MBTI Form K subscales, particularly in its out-of-pattern scores provides information to show how an individual develops and uses type preferences. A method of interpreting Form K out-of-pattern results has been presented to explain how these anomalies fit in with type dynamics and development, including what can happen if the person spends a large amount of time in their out-of-pattern preference.

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