

Research and Theory, Seeking things out

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One of the important things about research in general is that there are people doing interesting work all the time, but nobody hears about it. There's turgid stuff too, as well as half-baked or misinformed.

With the latter two, you need to be informed and knowledgeable as well, so deficiencies and differences can be identified and pointed out.

For instance, Annie Paul's *The Cult of Personality*, which criticised the MBTI and Isabel Myers, amongst others, has recently been issued in paperback as *The Cult of Personality Testing*. A quick leaf through the paperback suggests that it's probably the same text, which would be disappointing, given the many flaws and inaccuracies in the hardcover edition (Geyer 2005).

Newspapers often provide some interesting information on personality. Recently, whilst visiting the United States for an APTi Leadership meeting, I came across an article in USA Today titled *Not all successful CEOs are extroverts* (Jones 2006).

Initially, I wondered why anyone would presume that success, CEOs and extroversion went together in the first place, then how extroversion was defined and what the similarities and differences were with extraversion.

Historically, extroversion first appears in books and journal articles as a typographical error; C.G.Jung, the originator of the term, considered that this spelling was just bad Latin, but it's become the more common term, with a different definition to Jung's original idea. The two terms correlate well statistically, but my view is that they're better seen as separate constructs, as the underlying principles are quite different: Jung's to do with energy and the other to do with sociability.

Essentially, the article associates shyness to introverts and sociability to extroverts, with one person claiming that extroversion and sociability are almost the same thing. The CEOs, quite a disparate group in terms of the size of organisations they head are described in these terms with charisma and wisdom (both undefined) attached in some way to extroversion and introversion. The article also says introversion "might be partially explained by culture, genetics and upbringing." No rationale for extroversion is provided; perhaps it just is.

The MBTI features in the middle of the article, with an outline of unpublished research from CPP Inc. using generational terminology (baby-boomers and the like) that suggests the younger generations are "more extroverted" (sic).

It would be interesting to see the methodology for this research, as well as the rationale for using categories like baby-boomers, generation X and so on. These are essentially middle-class categories contentious in themselves with regard to the generalised attributes of each category particularly education, money, music and property.

My Australian observations of Generation Y/Millennials (the youngest generational categories) is that these people tend to express emotions more readily in certain contexts than older people, but seem less likely to have a personal identity, at least as far as Jung's ideas on consciousness are concerned. Having said that, nothing may have changed at all.

The APTi meeting included a presentation by Allen Hammer on progress on MBTI Step III. The purpose of Step III is to operationalise Isabel Myers' work on impediments to type development i.e. finding a way to measure it effectively. The fascinating examples Allen presented were interspersed with comments on Isabel Myers' acumen and originality as a psychometrician, parts of which I had heard elsewhere over the years, and all of which should be out there in the general domain in appropriate journals and texts.

The other aspect that came through was the development of a philosophy and theory of personality by Isabel Myers, which would be a significant publication in itself, outside the context of measurement and instrument development.

Another aspect of seeking things out has to do with parallels of theory and ideas. C.G. Jung and Isabel Myers both understood their work in evolutionary terms. It doesn't mean you can't use their ideas if you don't share that perspective, but you need to know that that's the perspective they took as well as that evolution, like good history, doesn't presume progress.

The biologist Sean Carroll has recently written about how animals of all kinds grow from embryos to adults, by describing the development pattern and organisation, usually starting with a four-direction orientation of a cell and then the unfolding of the attributes of the animal concerned.

This process brought to mind Jung's comment that he reported the nature of his discoveries in quaternities, or fours, not because of a personal predilection, but because that was what he found. Psychological type, of course, is an unfolding and it

seems much like Carroll's schema to me, in that it happens at a certain time of development and it's not necessarily the case that it can be physically observed.

Seeking things out isn't about justifying type for its own sake. It is about two things. Firstly, looking for clear and accurate definitions and descriptions of psychological type categories. Secondly, how psychological type fits/doesn't fit with other ideas, particularly in the sciences.

As Interest Area Co-ordinator for Research and Theory, I will be organising a Symposium for the next APTi Conference. I am working on some ideas, and would value your input. Send me an email ([alchymia@ozemail.com.au](mailto:alchymia@ozemail.com.au)) as soon as you can.

#### Some References

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