

# So you want to be an ENFJ?

(article written by Roy Childs - SDR Oct 04)

**Summary:** In this article Roy Childs of Team Focus Limited reveals recent research that explores the complexity of preference and the difficulty of identifying Type through simple questionnaires. He describes work with a new Type Indicator – the TDI (Type Dynamics Indicator) and argues that we need more sophisticated methods to help people find the real Type that sometimes lies buried deep within.

**What is Typology:** People have been identifying and labelling each other as particular 'Types' since the dawn of time. We can all recognise aggressive or gentle or energetic Types (to name but a few) in the world around us. In fact literature is riddled with references to a popular model used by the Ancient Greeks – the Choleric, Sanguine, Melancholic or Phlegmatic Types. This article is not concerned with whether Type is a better way to represent individual differences than traits. Instead, it addresses some key issues which arise from questionnaires attempting to classify people according to the most popular Type model in use today, which is based on Carl Jung's theory of Psychological Type<sup>1</sup>.

**Important assumptions in Jung's Typology:** Jung's model of the psyche has several pervading themes, one of which is 'the counterbalancing of opposites.' In personality terms this means that we live with and reconcile opposite tendencies within us. For example, we can all make decisions based on either logic or on values. However, Jung believed that there is a dynamic interplay between these different approaches and that each individual learns to trust one approach over the other. More fundamentally Jung believed that we all have an underlying natural preference which is



largely constitutional. Learning to trust this preference, in spite of life's varied pressures and experiences, is an important part of becoming more self-aware, more effective, more energised and of realising our full potential.

**A simple analogy:** Consider the preference we all have for using either our left or right hand (ignoring the few truly ambidextrous people for the time being). This preference is understood to be 'hard-wired' but we may still learn to use both. On those occasions where we need to use our non-natural preference it can feel awkward, frustrating and usually tiring. Life sometimes coerces people to use their non-preferred hand and, especially if this happens early in life, such people can become very skilled and even consider themselves to be other-handed (usually left-handers forced to become right-handed). This also happens in terms of people's style and personality. Jung proposed that we all have a natural preference but life does not always help us to exercise and appreciate it. Imagine a naturally introverted child constantly being told to "do something, go out, make friends, be active" etc. You ask such a child what they would prefer to be and they will often say their preference is to be more outgoing and extravert. Given the variability and subtlety of environmental influences, it is not a surprise that our perception of ourselves and of our real preferences can be variable, divided and confused.

**Using questionnaires to identify Type:** It is clearly possible to ask people directly to judge (or guess) their natural preference. However, it can be difficult for them to let go of certain stereotypes, habits and personal histories. From an early age people are often encouraged to be 'different' – to be someone else. For example, most of us can identify with pressures such as "my father always wanted me to be an engineer" or "my sister was always so much more popular than I was." Growing up with these messages makes it difficult to separate natural preference from environmental influences. The use of questionnaires offers a way through some of these difficulties – and the best ones add value because they pose questions from different perspectives which reflect the full range and depth of the constructs involved. Unfortunately, the 'answer' revealed sometimes gets used over zealously – as if the questionnaire must be right. It is clear to me that even using the best known of the Type Indicators do not always identify a person's true natural preference. Evidence from MBTI and from Roy's experience of coaching and developing people over 20 years shows that:

- more than 50% of people report a different Type (by at least one letter change) when invited to complete the indicator again
- more than 30% will disagree with their reported Type
- people who identify their 'best fit Type'<sup>2</sup> later realise that this was not their real preference (evidence based on the author's coaching and development work).

The uncertainty and changes in reported Type does not invalidate Jung's theory – in fact Jung would have predicted that working with people's conscious mind will access stereotypes which have been built up over a lifetime. To get at the underlying natural preference sometimes requires a long process of growing awareness, which comes from exposure to many different circumstances and challenging long held beliefs about ourselves – a process often called maturity! We learn by being open to feedback and, used well, that is what good Type Indicators offer – feedback on the current self-perception. A key lesson, however, is that the Type reported from any questionnaire is simply an indicator of what the person believes about themselves at this point in time.

**Can we expect more from a Type Indicator?:** In the light of the above, it becomes clear that we are not using questionnaires as instruments to 'measure True Type'. Rather we are using them to crystallise the person's view of himself or herself. Questionnaires therefore complement other methods – they are part of an awareness development process rather than being the answer to the question. This has been recognised and incorporated into the thinking behind a new questionnaire called the **Type Dynamics Indicator** or TDI. The development of the TDI has taken 5 years of trialling items designed to:

- be closer to Jung's constructs than other indicators
- be psychometrically rigorous, providing a statistical foundation for its construction and interpretation
- provide an alternative to other questionnaires which adds value by acknowledging the complexity of Type and preference.
- reduce ambiguities found in other questionnaires.

The final published version has a norm base of over 1260 people. More data is being constantly collected. And most important of all – it has allowed people to explore the concept of preference in a more profound way.

**How does the TDI enhance the exploration of preference?:** The concept of preference is complicated. By analogy, if you asked someone whether they would prefer the orange or the cake imagine what could be going on inside their head:

"the orange is good for me and I prefer to be healthy and I need the vitamins and so ...can I have the cake please!!"

<sup>1</sup> Those who are familiar with the Psychological Type model will know that it uses 4 key, bi-polar constructs as follows: Extraversion versus Introversion (E-I), Sensing versus iNtuition (S-N), Thinking versus Feeling (T-F), Judging versus Perceiving (J-P). By asking people which of each pair they prefer 16 Types can be constructed from the 16 different letter combination. For example a preference for E and N and T and J becomes known as the ENTJ, sometimes called the Executive. For more on the basics of Type go to [www.teamfocus.co.uk/products/overview.htm](http://www.teamfocus.co.uk/products/overview.htm)

<sup>2</sup> 'Best fit Type' is the Type chosen by an individual that they feel best reflects their natural preference after taking a questionnaire.

What people prefer and what they do does not always tie up. Exploring this difference has proved to be fascinating. Type questionnaires which simply invite people to introspect and identify “what feels most natural” results in a reported Type which reflects a mix of current circumstances, historical baggage and underlying Type. Sometimes it can get quite close to True Type – in people who are relatively self-aware and who do not have lots of conflicting messages. However, it is the others, the people who have had a lot of different experiences and pressures, who have got most to gain from exploring Type. The TDI gives these people an opportunity to express some of the confusion by allowing them to indicate preference in two ways:

- how they feel most natural in their current world (called preference ‘the way it IS’)
- how they might ideally like to be (called preference ‘the way I WANT’). People who do not experience dissonance between these two elements end up reporting the same Type. People who do experience dissonance may report different Types.

The TDI allows people to express some of the inner conflict about what preference really means to them. It is true that other Type indicators could be used in this way although Roy suspects that they often are not. However, even if they were, this would be with items designed to work with one mindset – “what feels most natural”. The advantage of the TDI is that the items chosen were selected because they:

- provide a balanced representation of Jung’s constructs
- show sensitivity to the ‘IS/WANT’ mindset
- show good psychometric properties in both the ‘IS’ and the ‘WANT’ responses
- correlate with known measures of Type.

The result of this has been that more than 70% of people report different Types for ‘IS’ and ‘WANT’. The impact on the review process is often quite profound. It is immediately clear that the questionnaire is not ‘an answer’ but an aid to the process of discovering your Type. Subjective reports from people who have completed other Type indicators suggests that they are often more comfortable with the result because it acknowledges their reality – they are complex and they do have different ways of thinking about preference. Making this more explicit through the questionnaire rather than just through the discussion has been surprisingly useful.

**What has the TDI discovered:** The results from our data collection of the TDI are striking. More than 70% of people show a difference between their ‘IS’ Type and their ‘WANT’ Type (a figure uncannily close to the number who change their Type in test re-test studies). This dramatic split between two approaches to preference makes it clear that the way current Type indicators use a single model of preference leaves an enormous area unexplored. The TDI has helped to reveal some key issues, some of which are illustrated in Table 1 which shows the percentage (from a sample of 1260 collected during 2003) reporting each Type using both the ‘IS’ and the ‘WANT’ mindsets. The difference between the ‘IS/WANT’ preferences can be summarised using a ‘Desirability Index’ (DI). To illustrate, 8% of the sample reported ESFP (Energiser) when asked for their ‘IS’ preference and 4.3% when asked for their ‘WANT’ preference. Less people ‘WANT’ to be an Energiser than actually report that preference and the DI is 0.54 (4.3/8.0). DI’s above 1.0 would indicate ‘more popular’ Types.

Table 1: Type Distributions using TDI showing ‘IS/WANT’ Differences and the Desirability Index (DI)			
<b>ISTJ</b> Inspector TDI is – 12.6 TDI want – 3.5 DI – 0.28	<b>ISFJ</b> Protector TDI is – 6.4 TDI want – 1.9 DI – 0.30	<b>INFJ</b> Guide TDI is – 7.3 TDI want – 1.3 DI – 0.18	<b>INTJ</b> Investigator TDI is – 3.0 TDI want – 2.1 DI – 0.70
<b>ISTP</b> Analyser TDI is – 4.3 TDI want – 0.7 DI – 0.16	<b>ISFP</b> Supporter TDI is – 4.9 TDI want – 0.3 DI – 0.06	<b>INFP</b> Idealist TDI is – 5.8 TDI want – 1.8 DI – 0.31	<b>INTP</b> Architect TDI is – 4.5 TDI want – 1.5 DI – 0.33
<b>ESTP</b> Trouble-shooter TDI is – 6.2 TDI want – 4.1 DI – 0.66	<b>ESFP</b> Energiser TDI is – 8.0 TDI want – 4.3 DI – 0.54	<b>ENFP</b> Improviser TDI is – 9.8 TDI want – 13.4 DI – 1.37	<b>ENTP</b> Catalyst TDI is – 5.7 TDI want – 6.6 DI – 1.16
<b>ESTJ</b> Co-ordinator TDI is – 11.5 TDI want – 20.6 DI – 1.79	<b>ESFJ</b> Harmoniser TDI is – 8.4 TDI want – 12.2 DI – 1.45	<b>ENFJ</b> Adviser TDI is – 2.7 TDI want – 10.6 DI – 3.93	<b>ENTJ</b> Executive TDI is – 3.8 TDI want – 14.9 DI – 3.92
NB: the names used to identify Type in this table are specific to the TDI and are not taken from any particular model or theory.			

**What is the most popular Type?:** Table 1 shows that the ENFJ (Adviser) is the most popular Type! Nearly 4 times as many people ‘WANT’ to be an Adviser than report it as their ‘IS’ preference. (It may be of interest that our data shows the ‘IS’ reported Type correlates more highly with the MBTI reported Type. In fact the data suggests that the TDI ‘IS’ version provides a good alternative to MBTI for identifying Type, produces comparable results and may be closer to Jung’s original constructs. However, the real power of TDI comes from using the ‘IS/WANT’ version. For example, the data show a particularly strong difference between the ‘IS’ and the ‘WANT’ preference for Extraversion-Introversion – the direction is clearly towards people wanting to be more extraverted. Is this such a strong social value that introverts find it hard to accept their natural style? This is part of what makes the feedback using TDI so much richer – and exploring why differences between the ‘IS/WANT’ have occurred becomes extremely meaningful and thought-provoking for the individuals concerned.

Clearly talking about ‘most popular Type’ can be misconstrued and misused. We do not see it as in any way pejorative. However, the questions raised by TDI are interesting and important for all who use this model for exploring the concept of Type. The instrument is available on paper and online in English and French and other language versions will be published shortly. Online users have a choice of reports which identify the ‘IS’ and the ‘WANT’ reported Types (administrators can get scores and profiles but there are also full-length descriptions focussing on Type or Type and career). Users have access to a resource book called “The Essential Guide to Type” published by Team Focus, which helps them to explore the different profiles and the differences between the reported ‘IS’ and ‘WANT’. For those who are interested, Team Focus has an on-going research into Type and the TDI. In particular we are trialling a new instrument for use with younger age groups, which breaks new ground. We would welcome contact from people to whom this is of particular interest. The TDI is in fact part of a 6-step process into the wider elements of Jung’s typology covering Learning Style, Jungian Type and Archetype and the Type Dynamics (dominant, auxiliary etc) element of the TDI is still being researched.

If you have questions or would like to contribute, you are invited to indicate your interest by contacting us at [teamfocus@teamfocus.co.uk](mailto:teamfocus@teamfocus.co.uk).

#### References

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- The Essential Guide to Type 2005 Pub: Team Focus Limited

# The MBTI versus the TDI: a reply to Roy Childs (Rowan Bayne - SDR Feb 05)

I agree strongly with some of the points made by Roy Childs (2004) but think he overstated both his criticisms of the MBTI and his central argument for the superiority of his own measure, the Type Dynamics Indicator (TDI).

I agree with Roy Childs' opening discussion of the concept of preference and that the MBTI questionnaire 'does not always identify a person's true natural preference' (p.4) but not with his figure of 'more than 30 per cent' disagreeing with their reported type. The source he cites for part of his evidence for this assertion is taken from the second edition of the MBTI Manual (Myers and McCaulley 1985). However, the third edition of the Manual (Myers et al 1998) reviews studies showing that an average of about 75% of people confirm their MBTI results and about 95% confirm three of the four preferences (p.116). Kendall (1998) also cites the 75% figure (p.23) but found a 90% match for the latest UK version of the MBTI questionnaire. These figures are far more positive than Roy Childs' choice and even the second edition of the MBTI Manual includes a 75% figure, for clients 'in counseling situations' (p.52). The reliability data are also much stronger than Childs suggests (Harvey 1996; Kendall 1998).

Similarly it's true, as Roy Childs says, that some people identify their best fit type and later decide that it's not their real type. However, the reverse also happens (there aren't any data on the frequencies of these two situations as far as I know) and in any case it's not the most important evidence for the validity of MBTI theory for the MBTI questionnaire (Bayne 2004).

I agree with Roy Childs about the complexity of the concept of preference. Neither it nor 'type' have been discussed in depth or defined formally in the MBTI literature. I think an adequate definition of preference will include statements about 'most easily' and 'with most interest and energy' but energy is not necessarily easy to detect – sometimes preferences are taken for granted. I've recently tried to spell out what preference means in terms of real self, genetic influences, basic characteristics of personality and constructivist versus realist conceptions of personality (Bayne 2005).

Childs' central claim for the TDI is that it allows people 'to explore the concept of preference in a more profound way, (p.4). I like the TDI but the 'more profound way' is simply that it asks respondents about each preference in two modes: as it is for them (IS) and as they would ideally like it to be (WANT). Thus it's possible to report the same type or different types in the two modes. The MBTI questionnaire attempts to measure each preference in the IS mode but can easily be completed in the WANT mode as well, so this isn't a profound difference between the two questionnaires. Rather, the TDI pays explicit attention to a problem that's been widely discussed in the MBTI literature on verifying type (Bayne 2005). The TDI's two modes may work well in practice but that remains to be seen.

In contrast, Childs' data on the WANT mode are of great interest, and appropriately emphasised in the title of his article. The marked popularity of the ENFJ type mirrors the positive ends of those Big Five factors which are close parallels of the preferences (Bayne 2005) and seems worth exploring further. However it's not a new aspect of type theory and practice and I don't see it as making TDI feedback 'so much richer' (p.6) than MBTI feedback.

Overall I see the TDI as a considerable achievement – finding good new items to measure type is extraordinarily difficult (Kendall 1998) – but not, on this evidence and reasoning, as an advance on the MBTI. Moreover, I think the term 'Dynamics' in the title of the TDI is misleading. It suggests a direct measure of dominant and auxiliary functions etc. when essentially the TDI seeks to measure the preferences, just like the MBTI.

## References

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# TDI versus MBTI:

(Roy Childs replies to Rowan Bayne - SDR June 05)

## Introduction

I welcome Rowan taking the time to comment on my article "So you want to be an ENFJ?" in SDR (Vol 21, No 1 Feb 2005). The article was written to highlight some fundamental issues involved in identifying Psychological Type. I hope it will fuel a healthy debate, which I believe is long overdue. There is a large community of people who know and use MBTI but who may be a little uncritical of how effectively it identifies type. In Rowan's reply he makes some good points but I would like to clarify areas of misunderstanding or misrepresentation of my arguments.

There are 2 main points in Rowan's reply which deserve further debate. In order of importance they are as follows:

- does TDI encourage a more profound exploration of preference?
- what is the accuracy of MBTI type identification?

## Does TDI encourage a more profound exploration of preference?

Rowan correctly states that this is a central claim for TDI. He also recognises that a key mechanism (but not the only mechanism) used for this is to invite people to answer the TDI with a particular mindset concerning preference. This involves separating preference into two elements. The first is a person's perceived natural preference in the way they express themselves (the way it is). The second is the person's internal image of what they would like to be (the way I want). He argues that this is a known issue and that you **could** answer the MBTI twice to extract the same information. In principle this is true although I am not aware of anyone who uses MBTI in this way. However, even if it were, I believe there are two reasons why this would not be as profound:

1. **Researched items:** the TDI uses items that were specifically researched and selected on the basis of their **sensitivity to IS versus WANT** differences. The TDI items were chosen from almost 300 items trialled on nearly 700 people. Rowan states that it is hard to get good Type items. From experience I can affirm that it is even harder to get ones which work robustly across the Is/Want mindsets. Since the MBTI was not developed with this in mind it is unclear whether the items would work as effectively as those in the TDI. Furthermore, the Is/Want element used by the TDI is not simply a "good idea" – it links fundamentally to Jung's theory of type, development, individuation and the role of the conscious mind for understanding ourselves.
2. **Changing the process:** Bayne also fails to recognise the fundamental effect of adopting a mindset when completing any questionnaire. Good administration of MBTI asks individuals to focus on preferences based on some generalised underlying 'natural' orientation. My contention is that this generalised notion can be superficial. Introducing the Is/Want mindset does not seem dramatically different until it is recognised as to **how it engages the person to think in a different way**. By using more precise instructions, the TDI introduces a different mindset **at the time of completing the questionnaire**. Bayne states that you could do it with MBTI – the point is that people don't, whereas they do with the TDI. Of course one can explore the concept of ideal type during feedback but the credibility of established questionnaires sometimes constrains this exploration – the tendency to agree is a well-known phenomenon. By inviting people to consider different parts of themselves **before getting the results** does encourage a more exploratory process. It is also worth mentioning that many people who have completed TDI with the Is/Want mindset often say that they cannot conceive of giving a simple generalised response. It seems that, once the question is asked, it is hard to go back to the generalised mindset used by MBTI. People also report being more thoughtful whilst completing the questionnaire, being more comfortable with the process and intrigued by the results which acknowledges the complexity of personal identity.

In summary, people can respond to questionnaires with a generalised personal stereotype of themselves, but this is not always the most useful. The TDI sets up a more searching

mindset at the time of completing the questionnaire and this is what makes it more profound.

## What is the accuracy of MBTI Type identification?

Bayne takes issue with the figure that 30% disagree (i.e. 70% agree) with their reported type. He quotes a figure of 75% from the later MBTI manual. Whilst I do not think it is worthwhile to debate this 5% difference, I do believe readers are in danger of confusing his statements about "agreeing with Best Fit Type" and his assertion that "the reliability data are stronger than Childs suggests". I would therefore like to clarify the points:

1. **Best Fit Type – the concept of "agreeing with an Indicator"?**  
The process of feedback (in my language this is called 'the review') should involve an exploration of how this fits with the person's self image. However, it must also be recognised that people have been known to agree with a profile even if it is not their own! We should not be over cynical about this since Type theory acknowledges that all elements of type exist within us to some degree. Our type is simply a reflection of the unequal balance of the preferences and there is no part of Jung's theory which states that this balance will be unchanging. The concept of Best Fit Type can be very useful to help people explore the concept of natural preference and can prevent over-dependence on questionnaire results, but it is still heavily dependent of self-awareness and for this we have no measure. We are therefore in the dark concerning whether the published research on Best Fit Type reflects genuine enlightenment or tendency to agree. Therefore we need to be cautious in interpreting figures of "90% agreement between an Indicator and Best Fit Type". I certainly do not find it compelling evidence in the debate concerning the accuracy of MBTI or any other indicator (in which I would include the TDI).

## 2. Reliability Data

Bayne claims that "the reliability data are stronger than Childs suggests". My argument is based on the largest published test re-test data available, which are for MBTI Form G. The proportion of people who change their letter formula is clearly over 50%, although I am not concerned whether this is 30%, 40%, 50% or 60% because I believe this is something that will be strongly affected by the individual's life experiences and the mindsets established at administration (such details are clearly not reported in these studies and so give us only a top level indication with little understanding of the reasons why). However, the point of substance is that the number of people who change their letter formula is substantial<sup>1</sup>. In fact I find it is much more in accord with the Jungian model that people will experience a shift in the balance of their preferences as they mature (move towards individuation) and they will explore their 'other side'. The underlying type may not change but our experience of it will.

I regard all personality questionnaires as reflecting "the story I currently want to tell". No self-report questionnaire can get away from the fact that results are affected by self-awareness (which can change), by experience (which also changes) and by the nature of the audience (a coach and recruiter may get different stories). If questionnaire results do not change they may be insensitive – a view that may challenge one of the pillars of traditional psychometric theory which has made stability a key indicator of questionnaire quality. However, a dynamic theory of personality should not be constrained by the more static model on which psychometric orthodoxy is based.

The fact remains that substantial numbers of people change their letter formula when they complete a type indicator again. With MBTI Form G this was in excess of 50%. With MBTI Step 1 there is no test re-test data presented. The TDI, by using an Is/Want mindset, has highlighted how mindset affects reported type. It implicitly recognises that type and preference is more complex than is often acknowledged. TDI embraces the concept of different personal stories about preference and type and I would encourage people to explore these issues further and not to be seduced by getting 90% to agree with their reported type. My experience is that these conversations are richer, making this a key reason for developing the TDI.

<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, it should be noted that changes in letter formula over time can be viewed **positively**. A Jungian view of type development suggests that, whilst the underlying type might be natural and fixed (even innate), personal growth means that we experience different aspects of ourselves as we develop. The conscious mind does not necessarily read our genetic code; instead it reads these many experiences.