



Type Development

By Paul Knudstrup

Jung's model of type development is a theory – a hypothesis based upon observations. He believed that a person's psychological type served as the compass directing their growth and development as a human being. His theory says that this process of development starts at an early age and continues throughout life.

In youth a person's energy is directed toward developing their most preferred, dominant function. Once the dominant function is fairly well developed the focus shifts to the auxiliary function. Later in life, the focus again shifts, to the less-preferred functions. These shifts in focus do not change the basic type preferences. Rather, the individual develops different aspects of their basic personality at different times during their life.

The development of each individual's true type occurs within an environment and a context. The path each individual takes is influenced by a significant number of factors that affect type development. Some of those factors are:

- Family expectations and norms
- Cultural expectations and values
- Educational level and breadth of learning
- Factors that require or encourage the development of behaviors and skills in non-preferred areas

For instance, a substantial portion (about 70%) of the United States population are Extraverts. As a result the development of extraverted behaviors and skills is supported by the mainstream U.S. culture. Those with a preference for Introversion frequently report being criticized by parents and teachers about their preferred attitude. Even parents and teachers with a preference for Introversion express concern about children who prefer to play alone, engage in private fantasies, or read in their room.

Introverts in the U.S.A. frequently direct more of their energy and attention on their extraverted auxiliary function instead of their introverted dominant function. Often this results in their extraverted auxiliary function being more fully developed.

Development is an interaction between a person's innate type preferences and the environment. When the environment is supportive, growth will follow the innate preferences. When the environment is not supportive, the person may adapt to the requirements of the environment even if those requirements go against the innate preferences.

Any preferences that are opposite of the prevailing family norms may receive critical attention from parents. The Extraverted child in an Introverted family may find him/herself isolated, disapproved of, and discouraged from developing their extraverted preference.

Educational systems are not typically structured to support diversity in type preferences, with most systems being oriented toward Sensing and Judging preferences. Many students are forced to work in non-preferred areas to be successful in school. For instance, Intuitives are often criticized for being messy, daydreaming, and not following the detailed rules inherent in most school environments. Students with a preference for Feeling as a decision-making function may be criticized for using “illogical” processes in making decisions. As a result they develop the ability to use Thinking, at least for their schoolwork.

In Western cultures colleges and graduate schools have a pronounced bias for Intuition. High value is placed on grasping concepts quickly and essay tests play to the Intuitive’s preferred method of test-taking. Higher education tends to weed out those with a Sensing preference, except in fields where practical applications are central, such as engineering, medicine, and scientific disciplines.

Type development broadens an individual’s perspectives and skills. Observations and perceptions become more accurate and decisions become more sound. Development softens a person’s biases against those who are different. Human interaction becomes more effective and people learn to understand, appreciate, and make use of each other’s differences.

Adapted from Introduction to Type Dynamics and Development by Katharine D. Myers & Linda K. Kirby.

1994, Consulting Psychologists Press