Abstract

"How Do I Reach These Keeeds?"

A New Teacher Uses Personality Type to Rethink

Cognition, Motivation, and Engagement

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The following study investigates one teacher's experience using the Myers Briggs Type Indicator in teaching first-year writing, contrasting my personal experiences as a novice composition instructor with mythic pop-culture representations of effective learning and teaching. More specifically, the thesis is framed by research in three areas as they relate to the teaching of writing: cognition (how we learn), motivation (why we learn), and engagement (where we learn).

In these three core chapters, I explore what I perceive as "learning myths" attached to each subject. Using my teaching journal and supporting research, I explore ways that the MBTI might be used to help novice instructors understand their own preferences, biases, and assumptions. I analyze how my preconceptions/preferences manifested in the classroom and interfered with learning. Then I make suggestions for adjusting my future teaching behaviors.

Much of the study includes personal experiences with implementing the MBTI, against the backdrop of others' experiences. While I acknowledge that psychological type theory doesn't deal with learning explicitly or directly, I argue that the successful application of personality type theory is one way in which a new instructor might reflect and reconsider how the composition classroom is approached in order to approach cognition, motivation, and engagement more effectively.

“How Do I Reach These Keeeds?”

A New Teacher Uses Personality Type to Rethink Cognition, Motivation, and Engagement

A Thesis

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Jeffrey Gilbert

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A New Teacher Uses Personality Type to Rethink

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Chapter 1 Introduction: Why Cognition, Motivation, and Engagement?

As a new teacher, I entered the classroom with beliefs and expectations that impacted the way I approached my students, learning, and teaching in general. I was surrounded by images and ideas about what an effective teacher does. I'd seen other people teach and I'd watched movies about it. But it quickly became apparent that my classroom didn't resemble many of these popular images. I wondered: *what have I done wrong?* In my teaching journal, there are trends: I had a preoccupation with *motivating* students, *engaging* them in learning, and also on learning in general. I became convinced that I could catch learning in action, that I could physically observe the processes of learning through the teaching of writing.

Wondering what learning, motivation, and engagement would *look* like, I tried to visualize it but had difficultly imagining anything. In films and TV shows featuring students and teachers, the instructor is nearly always the classroom's central figure. The teacher is the source of knowledge, inspiration, motivation, engagement, and in fact, often seems to have control of learning overall. This contrasted with both my personality and what I had learned about teaching writing. In my classroom, it seemed that I could never be the source of all these things. What I was seeing, though, pedagogically speaking, wasn't much. Where was the discovery? Where was the hard work? Upon closer inspection, it seemed that in many ways, these filmic and cultural representations of star-teachers might have a deleterious effect on the beginning teacher.

Ask someone what his or her favorite movie is that involves teaching, and you'll probably hear *Dead Poets Society* (Weir, 1989) or something else from the list of

standards. Ask them why a certain film is their favorite, and they'll often use words such as *inspiring* and *motivational*. These mythic representations can be seen in films and TV shows ranging from "Saved by the Bell" (Bobrick, 1989-1993), "Boys Meets World" (Jacobs & Kelly, 1993-2000), *Kindergarten Cop* (Reitman, 1990), *The Karate Kid* (Avildsen,1984), *Dangerous Minds* (Smith, 1995), *Stand and Deliver* (Menendez, 1988) and *Finding Forrester* (Van Sant, 2000).

Mythic mentors and saviors are demonstrated in a variety of forms, from Yoda to Dumbledore, Kindergarten Cop to instructor from *The Paper Chase* (1978-1986). These representations also carry with them subtle ideas and messages about how learning happens, what "motivation" means, and who is charge of what in the classroom. In *Dead Poets Society,* John Keating (Robin Williams) is jumping on desks, doing everything to get the students riled up. And it works—the students do everything in their power to please him. But, as one critic points out,

> The trouble is that the film never bothers to establish how they were inspired to do that. Sure, Keating's methods are unconventional, but this cause is never satisfactorily connected dramatically to its onscreen effect. Keating stands on his desk, does an impression of Marlon Brando performing Shakespeare and, bang, his students are reading poetry in a cave. (McElligott, 2005)

The ways in which Professor Keating is able to inspire and motivate his students seems far removed from the realities of the classroom. It is, however, a common theme among films involving teachers and students: the teacher as master-motivator. But nowhere in the film can evidence of learning be found. Keating's performance masks whether or not actual learning takes place. Throughout the film, the class sessions are centered on the instructor's performance; there are no small groups and there are only surface level

disruptions from the typical lecture-based course. I have nothing against breaking away from the tedium of the traditional classroom experience, and romantic notions of what it means to be an inspiring instructor are alluring, but they do little to prepare first time instructors for the reality of the first year writing classroom.

Consider another well-known example: Ramon Menendez's *Stand and Deliver* (1988), based on the teaching experiences of Garfield High School mathematics instructor Jaime Escalante (Edward James Olmos). Escalante taught at the East Los Angeles high school depicted in the film between 1974-1991, the film focuses on the year 1982, in which he helped 18 students pass the state's AP Calculus exam (Jesness, 2002). Like most films about teaching, *Stand and Deliver* offers a typical formula: the teacher arrives in a classroom of disinterested or even combative students; then through unconventional teaching methods and motivational speeches the teacher inspires students to learn; and then the teacher overcomes astounding obstacles (gang violence, societal pressures, administrative interference, etc) to beat the odds, and then the students finally accept their instructor as a hero, and everyone's lives are forever changed.

This assessment can be dismissed as cynical, but I'm attempting to separate movie myth from reality. Escalante had a real effect on real students: during the peak success years, a higher percentage of his calculus students passed the AP exam than the students who attended the more privileged and better-funded Los Angeles schools. Before he died in 2010, when facing terminal cancer, many of his former students rallied to raise funds to help pay for the teacher's medical costs. Many of his former students went to universities and credited Escalante for changing their lives for the better. His impact was real, but the film glosses over the realities of teaching and motivating.
In the article "Stand and Deliver Revisited" (2002), author Jerry Jesness agrues:

> The *Stand and Deliver* message, that the touch of a master could bring

> unmotivated students from arithmetic to calculus in a single year, was preached in schools throughout the nation. While the film did a great service to education by showing what students from disadvantaged backgrounds can achieve in demanding classes, the Hollywood fiction had at least one negative side effect. By showing students moving from fractions to calculus in a single year, it gave the false impression that students can neglect their studies for several years and then be redeemed by a few months of hard work…The lessons of Escalante's patience and hard work in building his program, especially his attention to the classes that fed into calculus, were largely ignored in the faculty workshops and college education classes that routinely showed *Stand and Deliver* to their students. To the pedagogues, how Escalante succeeded mattered less than the mere fact that he succeeded. They were happy to cheer Escalante the icon; they were less interested in learning from Escalante the teacher. They were like physicians getting excited about a colleague who can cure cancer without wanting to know how to replicate the cure. (Jesness 2002)

The teacher-as-martyr myth is pervasive, and audiences enjoy the notion that through tough love and discipline, even the most unreachable students can become masters of any subject. In all of these films, the teachers work hard, confronting a wide variety of obstacles both inside and outside the classroom, and yet these representations are still too simplistic. Nowhere is the reality depicted with accuracy.

In this thesis, I use my own first-year teaching journals and experiences up against both popular and scholarly representations of engagement and motivation in order to examine where I (and my tv/film mentors) may have been going in the wrong direction. To do that, I use research on cognition and learning, as well as the Myers

Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) to rethink my approaches to teaching writing.

These filmic representations can cloud new teachers from interacting with their students as real people. I think that the MBTI can give teachers a way to better understand their own behavior as writers and as people, and to encourage the same self-awareness in their students. The MBTI is a useful tool because its methods avoid misguided assumptions about gender, intelligence, or sources of motivation. It encourages writer self-awareness by defining preferences. I use its theoretical framework throughout this thesis to make sense of the concepts of learning, motivation, and student engagement as it relates to writing and writing pedagogy. In the use of personality type, my goal is to more closely reflect student writers as living human beings, as opposed to an amorphous mass, or as a group of observers who are witnessing a star performance.

Chapter 2 Cognition and Personality Type: How we Learn

Gruber, Jack, Keranen, McKenzie, and Morris, offer the assessment in a 2011 article that neuroscience is on the cutting edge of new discoveries, both because of advances in brain scanning technology and because scientists have continued to develop a clearer understanding of cognitive processes. The authors make the argument that more interaction between rhetorical scholars and neuroscientists is needed because of the possible implications for better understanding "language, perception, and consciousness" (Gruber, et al., 2011, p.2).

In the fields of neuroscience and cognition, most of the published work is prefaced with a reminder: for all our improvements in technology, we still know little about human brain function, and less about how learning takes place. It can be easy for teachers to get carried away by reported solutions and the promise of quick fixes. Brain scientists observe brain activity, but the conclusions they often reach come mostly from assumptions based on observation; the fact is we know a good deal about the brain, but there remains a distinct inability to explain most of what's happening in it with any certainty. For example, measuring increased metabolic activity in the anterior region of the neocortex is not the same as understanding how things happen in this section of the brain, although scientists are working on it to better understand how knowledge is processed and developed.

Cognitive researchers point out that new brain data can lead to knee-jerk reactions because our understanding of learning is so limited—thus, any research should be used with caution. As a new teacher, despite good intentions, I came to the

classroom with several flawed assumptions about learning, which ranged from the instructor's role in facilitating learning, to how the students build knowledge on top of their previous experiences, to understanding the differences between students' individual preferences and abilities.

In an attempt to decode my first year of teaching composition, I've researched pervasive myths about learning and cognition. These myths provide a framework for my pedagogical reflections, providing examples that illustrate the ways in which myths and misconceptions can interfere with the teaching of writing.

From a Teacher's Perspective: *What is Learning?*

What is writing and how is it taught? What are the goals of a composition course? Ken Bain's *What the Best College Teachers Do* (2004) is a tidy collection of questions, testimonials, and implications for the teacher who is aspiring to achieve "excellence." It was among the earliest texts I was exposed to that dealt directly with teaching, and when I first read it, I wanted to highlight every passage. Ken Bain strongly emphasizes that the best teachers achieve their goals in a wide variety of ways, and acknowledges early on that there are no magic methods to achieve greatness. I admired his clear description of the reasoning behind his approach. For the purposes of his study, he looked for teaching achievements across several indicators, such as student feedback, recommendations from colleagues, teaching awards, and evidence that the material taught had a lasting impact. In his research, and in his selection of teachers identified as "excellent," he

> looked for signs that students developed multiple perspectives and the ability to think about their own thinking; that they tried to understand the ideas for themselves; that they attempted to reason with the concepts and

> information they encountered, to use the material widely, and to relate it to previous experience and learning. (Bain 2004, p.10)

In a freshman composition course designed to improve students' skills as writers, then, and attempting to use Bain's reasoning as a guideline, one could argue that the best teachers would challenge students to think about writing in new ways, and improve upon their students' abilities to critique their own writing, to *think* about their writing. The skills developed in a writing course should be applicable across the curriculum, and beyond, usable in a variety of ways.

In a composition course, for example, a student might see no value in creating a reflection essay. The student might argue that his ability to reflect effectively is irrelevant, because he *won't need to reflect on past experiences when he's a doctor.* Bain might argue then, that if I'd done a good job as an instructor, students (including those who aspire to become doctors) should understand that the skills developed in a composition course are significantly useful. It should become clear that the ability to reflect and self-analyze is a critical skill. But as an instructor, if I'm unable to frame the reflection assignment in a meaningful way, or in a way that seems useful to the student, it is likely that I have merely wasted that student's time. Is it possible to frame a reflective assignment so that it appeals to a wide group of learners? Can the assignment be tailored to fit the preferences of students as individuals?

Bain points out that in many ways, research in neuroscience merely proves the existence of cognitive processes—processes that were guessed at centuries ago. For example, Plato declared that "all learning has an emotional base" and neuroscience has only recently begun to provide observable data that supports his notion (Emmerling, Shanwal, & Mandal, 2008, p. 161). In his research, Bain discovered that many of the "best" instructors had a fundamental understanding of learning and how it transpires. In

the second chapter of *What the Best College Teachers Do*, titled "What do they [the best teachers] know about how we learn?" Bain writes:

> To put it simply, the people we analyzed have generally cobbled together from their experiences working with students' conceptions of human learning that are remarkably similar to some ideas that have emerged in the research and theoretical literature on cognition, motivation, and human development. (Bain, 2004, p. 26)

Recent advances in science aren't necessarily upending anyone's understanding of teaching. Goswami puts it succinctly, arguing that brain research technology is helping to "compliment rather than replace traditional methods of educational enquiry" (Goswami, 2006, p. 35). Even if the latest scientific research on learning and motivation can only reinforce solid pedagogy, the current influx of evidence might help put to bed possibly harmful myths about learning. At the same time, the latest research can help inform both new and experienced teachers about the behaviors and processes that drive learning. My argument is that new teachers, despite good intentions, are more likely to misstep if they misunderstand how learning works.

From a Cognitive Scientist's Perspective: *What is Learning?*

From a scientific standpoint, when students and teachers discuss learning, what's being discussed? Because the brain isn't fully understood, it can be tempting for educators (as well as scientists) to misuse what little information is available. Cognitive Scientist John T Bruer laments, "[f]or nearly a century, the science of the mind (psychology) developed independently from the science of the brain (neuroscience) …. We know relatively little about learning, thinking, and remembering at the level of brain areas, neural circuits, or synapses; we know very little about how the brain thinks, remembers, and learns" (1999, p. 52-53). There is a lot of groundbreaking research

being done in several related fields, however, and a willing public has ingested the resulting outpour in information; the rise in popularity of neuroscience and its related fields has been noted by scholars. But it can also be observed by glancing at the latest popular publications. For example, recent copies of *Scientific American* feature cover stories dealing with the field: “The Neuroscience of Resilience: How Minds Bounce Back” and “Neuroscience: the Science of Better Learning.” It seems that the public wants science to provide the answers, a key to unlock the secrets of our brains. Some of it has the same vibe as a fad diet cookbook. Much of the material published is based around child development, centered on questions like: *Why are American kids falling behind other countries in math and science? What makes students less likely to learn critical thinking skills?* It’s dangerous to validate assumptions using a young science. It can be easy to find data that supports whatever the researcher wishes to see.

Neuromyths

However, while cognitive neuroscience has yet to provide answers to all our pedagogical questions, there are many myths about cognition that recent research has attempted to debunk, myths which many new teachers carry with them to the classroom.

1. Right Brain vs Left Brain

Conventional wisdom has held that because the brain is divided into two hemispheres, those two spaces must surely have distinct functions. With advancements in brain scanning technology, it’s possible to observe which sections of the brain are the most active during an activity. We have discovered that the brain is far too complex to categorize a person as left- or right-based, because the different sections of the brain work together on a massive scale, says Goswami, in literally “every cognitive task so far explored with neuroimaging” (Goswami, 2006, p. 45). The right/left brain myth is so pervasive for several reasons, partly because “there is some hemispheric specialization

in terms of the localization of different skills. For example, many aspects of language processing are left-lateralized (although not, as we have seen, in blind people or in those who emigrate in later childhood to a new linguistic community)" (Goswami, 2006 p.45). But the idea that people are either "left-brained" or "right-brained" is a myth. The myth seems pervasive for several reasons, partly because many believe that there is a fundamental disconnect in one's logical/rational side and their creative/emotional side, which oversimplifies the brain, as well as humans in general, and is also completely false.

I suspect that the pervasiveness of this myth is also rooted in the false belief that men are *rational* and women are *emotional*. It seems as though the theory is primarily a way to justify prejudices about men and women. It also seems like a way to make distinctions between "creative types" and those who value the "bottom line" in a more practical, business-like manner. The majority of articles featuring left-brain/right-brain theories also emphasize assumed differences between the sexes, and they include statistics of men vs. women who are, for example, "visual learners"; or find another way of saying that learning preferences between men and women are fundamentally different.

2. The notion that teaching should be tailored to appeal to different genders

"No neuroscientific data suggest that boy's [sic] brains are better suited to any given domain or subject or vice versa" (Jennifer M. Worden, et al., 2011, p. 12). This myth has been so thoroughly debunked that it would seem pointless to mention here, but many current academic publications essentially argue in a variety of ways that the brains of men and women are fundamentally and inherently different. Take for example, the article, "Different, not better: gender differences in mathematics learning and achievement" (Geist and King, 2008), which begins by proclaiming "boys and girls are different" (p. 43), and after arguing that "[g]irls need to resist the 'princess' culture, where

appearance and helplessness are supported" goes on to claim:

> In a broad sense, girls tend to be read/write or auditory learners and boys tend to be visual and kinesthetic learners. However, each individual, no matter what his or her gender, will have a preferred learning style and as a teacher or parent, it is important to know what this is so the curriculum can be tailored to the child's strength. (Geist & King, 2008, p. 45)

It seems that a "preferred learning style" suggests that these things are socially constructed and nurtured through cultural norms. An individual, male or female, learns to find a certain thing comfortable based on the surrounding environment. Many people have a sense of what is deemed appropriate behavior, and gender prejudices have an effect. My point is that these statistics aren't proving that fundamental gender differences exist. They're illustrating the existence of socially nurtured behavior of what one should prefer or find comfortable. People develop an idea of what they find comfortable (or of what they prefer) on such an individual level that it would be difficult to design curriculum to meet the needs of all learners completely. The pervasiveness of these ideas about the brain and gender can lead researchers and educators to make faulty conclusions that result in knee-jerk reactions, and ultimately misguided teaching practices.

For example, Geist and King continue: "Girls are also more willing to learn and see learning as the outcome of their academic work. Girls do better on open-ended, process-based experiences that encourage independent thinking. Boys also tend to get bored more easily than girls thus requiring more stimulation to keep them attentive and on task" (Geist & King, 2008, p. 45). Scientific research does not support this, and it also relates to the first neuromyth discussed, that people have left or right brain preferences that dictate our abilities to be *creative* or to engage in *purely logical* thought. It's interesting how perceived gender differences have influenced thinking on what constitutes learning and how it happens.

3. The notion that the brain can only develop during specific critical periods

There are optimal times for the development of some processes, but the idea that there is a "critical" period (one and only chance) for a person to develop a skill is a myth. One reason this myth is so pervasive in education circles is because of Piaget's theories of cognitive development, which suggest that children move through certain stages and must move through them *sequentially* (Piaget, 1954). There is science supporting, for example, the notion that younger children have an easier time learning multiple languages, but

> [t]he term *critical period* implies that the opportunity to learn is lost forever if the biological window is missed. It is a mistake to assume, for example, that if children miss a critical development window, they are therefore 'behind.' There seem to be almost no cognitive capacities that can be 'lost' at an early age…some aspects of complex processing suffer more than others from deprivation of early environmental input, but nevertheless learning is still possible. (Goswami, 2006, p. 45)

This also relates to the left-brain/right-brain neuromyth: the brain has an amazing level of adaptability and if a section is damaged at a young age, the brain will usually compensate by over achieving in a different section in what is known as brain plasticity.

4. The notion of "learning styles"

There is no credible evidence that learning styles exist. The claim at the center of learning styles theory is that: "[d]ifferent students have different modes of learning, and their learning could be improved by matching one's teaching with that preferred learning mode" (Riener & Willingham, 2010). The idea is that everyone is either a visual, auditory, or kinesthetic learner, but when this theory has been tested in experiments, researchers haven't produced findings that show an effect on learning:

> Students do have preferences about how they learn. Many students will

> report preferring to study visually and others through an auditory channel. However, when these tendencies are put to the test under controlled conditions, they make no difference—learning is equivalent whether students learn in the preferred mode or not. A favorite mode of presentation (e.g., visual, auditory, or kinesthetic) often reveals itself to be instead a preference for tasks for which one has high ability and at which one feels successful. (Worden, Hinton, and Fischer, 2011)

If the described learning styles exist, researchers would need to show that altering content to meet visual or auditory preferences improves learning, but that hasn't happened. "[A]t present, there is no adequate evidence base to justify incorporating learning styles assessments into general educational practice (McDaniel, Rohrer, & Bjork, 2008). Therefore, new teachers who are hoping to engage "visual" or "kenesthetic" learners uniquely should proceed with caution.

Writing and Personality Type

I've chosen to transition from neuromyth #4 (learning styles) to the use of the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) because while I find generalizations such as "visual learning" unhelpful with teaching writing, what I have found helpful is the study of *behavior* preferences taken at the individual level. These preferences are not necessarily learning preferences; we don't have any research on that particular connection as yet. The MBTI, however, isn't about learning; it is about how people *prefer* to function in a world based on a sixteen-part inventory.

One of the goals of this project is to explore current understandings of personality type and its effects on teaching and learning in the first-year composition course. The MBTI provides access to working with groups of students without saying that they "learn" more or less. Because an instructor is faced with the daunting task of working with an

amorphous group of 20+ students, the MBTI, on some level, can help provide an instructor with a way to interact with students without making assumptions about learning ability.

There is an existing body of scholarly work related to personality type and teaching composition. Jensen and DiTiberio began publishing some of the well known work that connects writing with the MBTI in the 1980s: “Personality and Individual Writing Processes” (1984) and *Personality and the Teaching of Composition* (1989). Much of the well-known work in this area is by Jensen and DiTiberio, and their work forms the basis for ideas and experiences represented in this chapter. As stated previously, the MBTI may not be directly related to learning, but there is a growing body of research explaining how personality type is related to writing processes and preferences. The most recent research in neuroscience, particularly the study of neuroscience and personality type, has provided observable evidence as well as a useful framework, helping instructors to better understand the learning processes of their students and themselves than we have gotten from neuromyths and previous understandings of learning and cognition.

Understanding the ways that we construct meaning is an important key to decoding our own thought processes. Every individual has his/her own method for constructing meaning; people can rest assured that their brain activity is unique. There are, however, observable patterns in cognitive processes that make us more like others in some ways, and less like others in some ways. Dario Nardi, a professor in the anthropology department (teaching social science and computing) at UCLA, has published some of the first scholarly texts dealing with personality and neuroscience. During a “Google Talks” conference in 2011, he argued compellingly that understanding personality type (specifically, the Myers-Briggs type indicator (MBTI)) has implications for learning, engagement, and motivation, among other things.

Nardi has monitored test subjects using scanners, allowing him to witness brain activity in near-real time. He notes that the delay between what occurs on screen and what is happening with the test subject is about the same amount of time as it takes for a person to make a decision and then take action on it: “You can tell, watching the brain activity, when something is about to happen” (Nardi, 2011). In fact, he has shown that he can often guess a person’s personality type just by looking at his/her brain activity: a person guided, for example, primarily by his/her intuition, is likely to have heavy activity in a certain section of the brain—an observable pattern that occurs in most others who are also guided primarily by their intuition.

Many people, however, are reluctant to be categorized into a specific type. Indeed, there’s a fair amount of scholarly work warning against the use of or reliance on personality tests, but overall, I remain unconvinced in part because detractors frequently give an inaccurate depiction of the Myers-Brigs Type Indicator itself, or refuse to consider the cognitive processes theorized by Carl Jung’s research. Detractors argue that the personality test is overly simple, and that individual preferences cannot be articulated by a mere four-letter assessment. The ingenuity of the type indicator, however, is that it provides a context and language for a learner based on *preferences*. The MBTI is not an assessment of skills, and it in no way measures abilities. Instead, it reveals individual preferences and patterns in observable behavior.

The MBTI self-assessment is based on four dichotomies, which are derived from Carl Jung’s theory of personality type, patterns that he observed in people who share common behaviors (Jung, 1921; 1962). Jung, a Swiss psychologist and the founder of analytical psychology, was a protégé of Sigmund Freud, and they worked together while Jung was developing some of his earliest theories of personality type.

His theories of personality type are based on eight cognitive processes or functions. Everyone uses these functions to varying degrees at any given moment.

Having Extraverted preferences, for example, does not make one extraverted all the time. The functions are separated into four binaries, forming a sequential list of preferences. But it would be wrong to assume that the sequential list of preferences is visible from the four-letter sequence itself. A person's personality type is determined by how the letters *interact*. Therefore, it would be wrong to assume that two people (off by one letter) have a similar order in functions. Take for example, two charts that represent the preferences of ESFP and ESFJ (*Team Technology*):

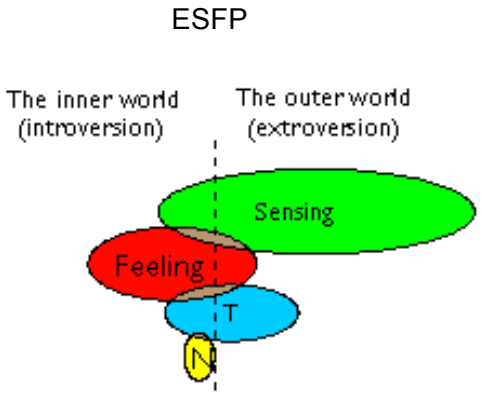

Figure 1. ESFP Personality Type. This figure illustrates the preferences of the ESFP personality type across both introversion and extraversion. Adapted from: http://www.teamtechnology.co.uk/myers-briggs/esfp.htm

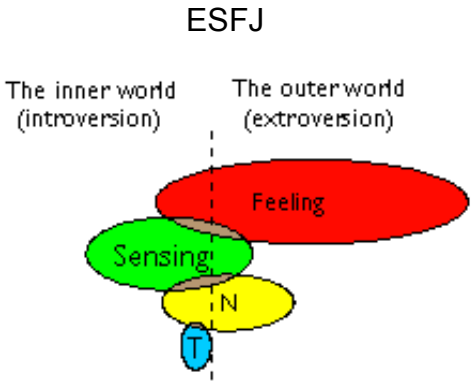

Figure 2. ESFJ Personality Type. This figure illustrates the preferences of the ESFJ personality type across both introversion and extraversion. Adapted from:

http://www.teamtechnology.co.uk/myers-briggs/esfj.htm

In this case, the difference in the fourth binary means that a person with ESFP preferences uses *extraverted* sensing as their primary function to gather information, whereas a person with ESFJ preferences uses *introverted* sensing as their auxiliary function for gathering information.

Katharine Briggs and Isabel Myers created the sixteen separate but related types Based on Jung's theories of cognition. They added the fourth binary based on correspondence with Jung. This chart gives a brief description of the four dichotomies and what they describe (DiTiberio and Jensen, 2007, p. 20):

Process	Preference
How you focus your Energy and attention	Extraversion (E) or Introversion (I)
How you gather Information	Sensing (S) or Intuition (N)
How you make decisions	Thinking (T) or Feeling (F)
How you approach The outer world	Judging (J) or Perceiving (P)

The first set, Introversion (I) and Extraversion (E), are based on how people get their energy, which can be manifested in a variety of ways. Those with Extraverted (E) preferences tend to focus or amplify their energy by being around others, while Introverts (I) will focus or amplify their energy by being alone. This does not mean that Extraverts always (or ever) enjoy being the life of the party, just as Introverts are not necessarily shy or withdrawn. Rather, it means that, in large social situations (parties, holiday shopping, etc.), extraverts tend to feel comfortable or feel energized (and may gravitate toward the center of a room without consciously realizing it), while introverts often experience a need to conserve their energy in a way that may make their introverted preferences even more pronounced. In terms of developing ideas both in the classroom

and outside of it, the preference for Extraversion may reveal itself by the tendency of students to think aloud, clarifying their points and correcting themselves while in the process of verbalizing their views. In writing, Extraverts often report that they develop their best ideas while in the act of composing. Those with Introverted (I) preferences, on the other hand, are more likely to internalize their thoughts and plans before either verbalizing them or putting ideas down on paper. Introverts often feel a need to be alone and recharge after spending lots of time around others (e.g., in a classroom), whereas Extraverts can find it draining to be alone.

The second set, intuition and sensing, represents how people gather information. Sensing (S) types tend to focus on tangible data, or what is known, and gravitate toward what actually exists. Intuitive (I) types, on the other hand, tend to focus on possibilities: "[f]or Sensing types, the visual, tangible, factual aspects of writing – accuracy, descriptive details, neatness, nice handwriting, fonts that are pleasing to the eye, good grammar – are indicators of good writing. Young sensing types may have trouble understanding why a neat essay with no errors does not always earn a good grade" (Jensen and DiTiberio, 2007, p. 23). Sensing types often need examples for clarification, and can become frustrated by directions that seem too vague or general. Intuitives, on the other hand, can have a tendency to overlook facts as long as their writing supports what they perceive as an original main idea. According to Jensen and DiTiberio, "For intuitives, good writing is often equated with originality … [they] find explicit instructions too restrictive" (Jensen and DiTiberio, 2007, p. 23).

The third binary, feeling and thinking, is based on how people prefer to make decisions. Thinking (T) types prefer objectivity while Feeling (F) types tend to focus on the individuals involved. DiTiberio and Jensen stress that they

> are not talking about thinking clearly versus being emotional. Both types have emotions and both think clearly. But when an important decision is

> being made, Thinking types establish a criterion, look at the pros and cons, or apply a philosophical principle. Feeling types may make the decision that is exactly right for the situation, but they may have difficulty finding the right words to explain their choice. They are more concerned with harmony, establishing and maintaining relationships with others, and following their heart, even if it conflicts with what their head says is right. (Jensen & DiTiberio, 2007, p. 24)

In writing, those with Thinking preferences may seem detached from their subject matter, or may fail to connect with their readers, while those with Feeling preferences are more likely to feel strongly about their work if they are emotionally invested (DiTiberio & Jensen 2007, p. 25). In a persuasive essay, for example, those with Feeling preferences are more likely to soften their explicit argument because they don't want to risk offending others. As a new teacher, I've seen this principle manifested in the classroom by students who would rather develop a thesis that is primarily an observation as opposed to an argument that necessitates debate. Those with Feeling preferences seemed more likely than those with Thinking preferences to write a thesis statement that aligned closely with individual interests and that was inoffensive to others. Those with Thinking preferences seemed more likely to be detached from their thesis statement, and were less likely than the Feeling types to acknowledge how their selected topic relates to others.

From my perspective, this is the most frequently misunderstood of the four binaries (although introversion and extraversion are also often misinterpreted), likely because of the connotations of thinking ("logical") vs feeling ("emotional"). According to Jung, ignoring the *rationality* of Feeling would be a mistake:

> our feelings—are not only reasonable, but are also as discriminating, logical, and consistent as thinking. Such a statement seems strange to a

> man of the thinking type, but we can understand this when we realize that in a person with a differentiated thinking function, the feeling function is always less developed, more primitive, and therefore contaminated with other functions—these being precisely the functions which are not rational, not logical, and not evaluating, namely, sensation and intuition. (Jung, 1933)

The fourth set, Judging (J) and Perceiving (P), deals with how we approach the outer world. Jensen and DiTiberio describe this fourth dimension of personality as that which "helps both Introverts and Extraverts to understand how they approach the world around them. Judging types like to take charge of the outer world in a planful and orderly way. Their purpose is to structure their lives to things get done. They like being decisive" (Jensen & DiTiberio, 2007, p. 25). This can be both a strength and a weakness, because those with strong judging preferences may be too quick to come to a conclusion without perceiving all the relevant data, even while they are the ones we tend to think of as "task oriented" or as "getting things done": "When they begin a writing task, Judging types are more likely to make a plan, whether on paper or in their minds, of how they will complete it" (Jensen & DiTiberio, 2007 p. 25). Perceiving types, however, "prefer to leave the world around them as unstructured as possible. They are inquisitive, curious, and spontaneous, and they like to take in as much information as possible before they make a decision" (Jensen & DiTiberio, 2007, p.25).

In my first year of teaching eight sections of first-year writing, I found that perceiving types were less common than judging types; my first semester, I counted 21 out of 96 students with perceiving preferences. These students seemed to have more trouble than the other students with meeting a deadline. Although this trend might be only my perception, the average final grade for the twenty-one students with perceiving preferences was about half of one letter grade lower than the class average. To be clear,

a student's final course grade and also his/her behavioral preferences are not a measure of his/her abilities. What I'm suggesting is that a new teacher could have a better understanding of students' behavior with an understanding of personality type, which could effect how teachers approach structural course issues such as deadlines.

In my experience, for example, those with perceiving preferences are more likely than those with judging preferences to change the topic of their paper even after they've completed several stages of work on the assignment. All students are susceptible to this, and it isn't necessarily a bad thing: perceivers, because of a preferred resistance to closure, have a knack for evaluating something from a variety of perspectives, so in a class based on revision that's designed to improve student writing, a teacher might take particular notice of their perceiving types because of the benefit they can offer the classroom: "Perceiving types … think more about how to cover all the possible angles on the topic … they usually only begin to write when they are very close to the deadline, sometimes even the night before" (DiTiberio & Jensen, 2007, p. 25). Because composition is a process-oriented class, the students in my courses were expected to include and describe their writing process from point A to point B (so the students included brainstorming, freewriting, peer reviews, and also numerous drafts along with their completed final drafts at the end of the semester). The focus on a long-term process made the course problematic or even hostile for those with both (P) and (J) preferences, because a firm deadline can discourage students from changing topics. To help counter this problem, I explained to students that they would have the entirety of the semester to revise their formal assignments, meaning that they would need to consider abandoning previous work.

Encouraging students to abandon their hard work, however, proved more difficult than I'd imagined. Some of my students with Judging preferences were more likely to develop a plan for their assignments far in advance, often on the first day a new

assignment was introduced. These students also seemed unlikely to deviate from their plan. I noticed this trend also occurred in those with strong Sensing preferences; these students often wrote thesis statements that were very similar to an example discussed during the first few class period when the new assignment was discussed. For example, when introducing the persuasive/position paper, I'd write a prompt on the board at the start of class and tell the students to develop an argument or counter-argument based on the prompt, and to work on it for 5-7 minutes: "Should violent TV shows be outlawed to discourage violent behavior?"; or "Should ECU no longer fund student athletics because they don't contribute to academic development?" were two such prompts. I became frustrated throughout the semester when I later reviewed students' drafts and discovered that some of them had developed prompts that were little more than regurgitations of the sample exercises. My interpretation, then, is that those students with strong Judging preferences preferred to begin developing their topics far in advance, and that those with strong sensing preferences prefer to follow examples as method of taking in information: and both the (S) and (J) types seemed more likely than those with (N) and (P) preferences to develop a topic that was aligned closely with an example given early on.

My preferences frequently clashed with students who selected topics and then became rigid about transforming their paper, or seemed unwilling to make structural changes to their paper, or to ask new questions about their chosen topic. This resistance to revision is not type specific, but my understanding of students' preferences helped with my goal to encourage the revision process. For example, some of my students with Perceiving preferences seemed more willing to approach differently an assignment that they'd previously turned in, so later in the semester I would ask these students to share with the class as a whole and to explain their revision process. Students of all preferences completed strong revisions, but a new teacher who is hoping to sniff out

some examples of strong revision so that the rest of the class has something to use as an example (especially one that was created “in-house”, so to speak) might be wise to look to their students with strong Perceiving preferences.

My Personality and Its Effects on the Classroom

To ground some of these abstract ideas with more concrete examples, I want to break down my initial understanding of the Myers-Briggs, and how I attempted to use the assessment in the composition classroom. The first time I took the myers-briggs assessment, I was enrolled in English 6625: Teaching Composition: Theory and Practice. My instructor explained that the MBTI could be a useful teaching tool and that it could help me better understand myself and the ways I relate to/with others. My assessment read: INTJ. The result and my subsequent research was surprising and illuminating; some consider me flaky and spontaneous; my wife refers to me as “the messy one”; I’m a large and lively person; self-motivated but sometimes unwilling to finish projects.

This may suggest that my perception of self is flawed, particularly on the J/P binary. My (J)Judging preference remained firmly at 1%, although it later became quite clear to me that I have natural Perceiving preferences. Even though the percentages are mostly unimportant, in this case it was an indication that my self-assessment was flawed, or that I oscillate heavily and frequently between this dichotomy. Careful self-assessment is needed to truly determine your own type. This view, that I oscillate between J and P preferences, seems supported by my direct experiences as an instructor: I was willing to shift an assignment’s due date, or its requirements, based on what I had gathered from the students. If I decided that I had insufficiently prepared the students, or if I had somehow misled them, I was willing to take in new information and retrace my steps. A typical INTJ would likely be less willing to accept such fluidity with assignment construction and assignment deadlines, but it was also my first year

teaching, so I felt that flexibility would be crucial. Regardless, the MBTI has helped me articulate the struggles I experienced teaching writing. And helped me further understand my own preferences as a writer and teacher.

Perhaps this explains why I match up so well with my friend and co-teacher Richard [pseudonym], an INTJ. Richard and I met during our English 6625: Teaching Composition: Theory and Practice course, where I suggested that a composition class taught by two instructors could offer benefits for the students: such as giving students access to two sets of instructor feedback; or providing students with a wider spectrum of ideas.One potential weakness that is common among both INTJ/P types is that they tend to have unreasonably high expectations of others. It has also been suggested that INTJs may work poorly together because they'd be unlikely to delegate or relinquish control, although as teachers, Richard and I were willing to share control of the classroom and the course work.

Because the results are based on self-assessment, it's impossible to know accurately 100% of the time. The assessment is based on the reader's ability to fully analyze the data and is dependent on the reader's ability to understand his/her own behavior. Also, stressors and personality disorders can render the results flawed. Richard, however, outwardly behaves as one might expect an INTJ type: he has a BS in BioChemistry (he's happy to tell the students how important writing skills are in the sciences), and he's skeptical (he relishes days that he can directly challenge the students' assumptions on a socio-political topic). He's bookish and deliberate in his speech, and he enjoys identifying with his personality type, telling his friends (and students): "I don't know how to read your emotions. Sorry if I offended you." In the classroom, his self-assessment presented itself in a variety of ways: Richard's demeanor would be soft spoken and generally monotone. Some students complained that Richard talked too quietly, while others complained that I sometimes talked too quickly. One

student wrote that: “You work well together, [Richard] is the serious one and Jeff is the funny one. It provides a good dynamic.” In short, the students related to Richard as the more scientific, academic, or *expected* instructor, whereas I had students in separate sections who referred to me as “the one who talks like Seth Rogen.” My point is that, even if two people have the same (or a very similar) personality type, such as Richard and I likely did, these preferences can manifest themselves in a variety of ways. The way we each identified as teachers was unique to us as individuals. Because of my outward behavior, the students likely would’ve been surprised to learn that Richard and I shared personality preferences, but that’s also because I introduced and implemented the MBTI poorly on my first attempts.

Applying the MBTI: First Attempts

When I first became intrigued by the MBTI, my initial goal was to use the personality assessment to divide the students into peer review groups. I’d done research on personality type and constructing effective groups. For example, Schullery and Schullery suggested that it’s a good idea to spread out those with Feeling preferences, because these students tend to promote functionality in groups; the research was based on a study about heterogeneous/homogeneous groups and their effects on students (Schullery & Schullery, 2006, p. 554).

The process I used to implement the MBTI could have been more effective. I did a poor job explaining the purposes and goals of the MBTI by only giving a quick overview of what the assessment would look like. I stressed that the results describe preferences, not abilities. Then I told the students to take the assessment at home and then to write a brief essay describing their thoughts and feelings on the results, questioning how this assessment reflected on them as writers. I thought I had done a decent job explaining the MBTI, taking only a few minutes to discuss its construction and

utility, and pointing out that I'd go into more detail on the subject later.

A week or so afterward, I'd read over their results and essays, and begun discussing the students' perceptions during class. Several people complained about their "score": *I think it was wrong, because I have better judgment than that*. In class, while I organized the students into peer review groups, a student asked: "Are you organizing us by our personality score?" I replied *yes*, since it was obvious that I was. At the time, I failed to note how the student's use of the word *score* was further evidence that the class viewed the results as those of a *test*. This seemed to bother several students, and contributed to the general idea that the MBTI was being used against them somehow, or that they were being evaluated based on perceived weaknesses and strengths (they may have been right). In any case, my misunderstanding of the MBTI manifested itself in the classroom: students rebelled against the idea of being "typed", and several of them declared the "test" unhelpful and purposeless which, needless to say, did not contribute to the environment of self-reflection and self-awareness that I'd been hoping for. Reading over their essays, I gathered that many of the students who had had negative reactions to the MBTI in general didn't do any research on it, or read a more thorough description of their type. They looked at the resulting chart and its percentages and interpreted it as an aptitude or intelligence test.

ESFP Example: Lisa (pseudonym)

Here are two descriptions of those with Extraversion, Sensing, Feeling, and Perceiving preferences:

> Each of the ESFP's preferences spells fun. These people are outgoing, socially gregarious, and interactive (Extraversion) and prefer to perceive the world very realistically, tangibly, and in the here and now (Sensing). These perceptions are all decided upon very subjectively, based upon the

> interpersonal impact each decision will have on others (Feeling). All of which is translated through a flexible, spontaneous, easygoing lifestyle (Perceiving). (Kroeger, Thuesen, & Rutledge, 2002, p. 358)

> Outgoing, accepting, friendly, enjoy everything and make things more fun for others by their enjoyment. Like action and making things happen. Know what's going on and join in eagerly. Find remembering facts easier than mastering theories. Are best in situations that need common sense and practical ability with people. (DiTiberio & Jensen, 2007, p. 217)

Tell me what you want me to write and I'll do it. This is something I heard in some form or another throughout the semester, but this particular student was very adamant about seeing examples of what she was expected to produce before writing anything. This student seemed to live very much in the here and now. At the time, she seemed a typical Extravert because she talked constantly. This put me in a difficult position, because the side chatter impacted my ability to think about what I was doing. I wanted to encourage interaction and participation, but she seemed to be distracting other students. I could sense during the very start of the course that there was a minor power struggle brewing and I would need to tread carefully.

It's worth noting that the ESFP type represents three of the four shadow functions of my preferences (INTP). There are different theories about shadow functions; some describe them as the mirror opposite of each dichotomy, but others interpret it somewhat differently (Myers & Myers, 1980). The main idea, however, is that under extreme stress, a negative (warped) form of the person's mirror personality becomes apparent. So in my case, the theory goes, my negative ESFJ preferences would make me more likely

> to become preoccupied with details, without any logical basis; become

> very sensitive to criticism; express intense negative emotions toward others; to interpret facts or events in a very subjective way. (INTP Personality Types, n.d.)

The shadow functions are worth mentioning because people have a difficult time analyzing their flaws, or understanding their underdeveloped functions. In many cases, as an observer, one can see another's flaws with vivid clarity, while being unable to recognize these same flaws in their own behavior. In other words, the "flaws" I saw in Lisa as a student may have been closely related to flaws I was unable to consider about myself as a teacher.

For example, anytime I told the class to "write about whatever you want for five minutes," Lisa was openly disdainful. She seemed to see no value in writing unless it was directly related to an assignment; at least, that's how I read her comments and her body language. Since I wanted to ensure that the open-ended writing was a useful process of discovery, most days I provided a prompt that related directly to the assignments. But I also felt that free writing could be an important discovery tool, so whenever true *free* writing was assigned, Lisa typically wrote that free writing is a waste of time and little else. In retrospect, I did a poor job showing the value that brainstorming can have; or the fluidity that can result from disabling one's internal editor. My experiences with Lisa coincide with Jensen and DiTiberio's experiences: "Getting started is usually the most difficult part of the ESFP's writing process, especially when teachers or bosses give vague instructions. They may have difficulty thinking of how their writing project will turn out, so they have little sense of how to begin" (Jensen and DiTiberio, 2007, p. 92). I am certainly guilty of giving vague instructions at times.

In her papers, Lisa wrote naturally in story-teller mode, relating things directly through her experiences. This is similar to what Tiberio and Jensen noticed among their SF students: "Subjective…focusing on the people" (Jensen and DiTiberio, 2007, p. 132):

"Natural optimism. Some view their prose as childlike and naïve. SFs ability to tell stories is their real strength" (Jensen and DiTiberio, 2007, p. 134). In one essay, for example, she wrote about tutoring children who spoke no English, and she crafted a nice reflection about her experiences and the effect it had on her. But I was always pushing her to make a more forceful argument in her writing: "where's your thesis statement?" When she received feedback on her writing, afterward I could tell that I'd hurt her feelings. About two months into the course, while I was answering another student's question, I asked her to move to an isolated seat; I didn't say why, and immediately continued answering the other student's question, but it was obvious that Lisa's side chatter was the issue. It was the only time I've asked a student to move as a disciplinary measure, and her behavior toward me cooled, but so did her talking. In any case, she ultimately re-approached many of her essays and completed some strong revisions, but I had difficulty throughout the semester with this student in particular. Much of these difficulties likely could've been avoided if I'd had a better understanding of my individual preferences. With the MBTI, I can articulate more effectively to my students that *I am not you.*

ENFP Example: Rachel (pseudonym)

Here are two descriptions of those with Extraversion, Intuitive, Feeling, and Perceiving preferences:

> They do not like classes that are too structured, that consist only of lectures, and that allow no room for their imagination. They may get caught up in the learning process and need strict deadlines to bring a project to completion…A motto that might describe the ENFP as a learner is "There's always another way or another answer." (Hirsh & Kummerow, 1989, p. 198-199)

> Warmly enthusiastic, high-spirited, ingenious, imaginative. Able to do almost anything that interests them. Often rely on their ability to improvise instead of preparing in advance. Can usually find compelling reasons for whatever they want. (Jensen & DiTiberio, 2007, p. 218)

Rachel was enrolled in my course during two semesters of composition, so I was able to see her patterns as a writer/student over several assignments. She didn't outwardly fit the mold of what most might consider extraverted, because she was usually quiet in class. She rarely asked questions in front of the other students, and behaved more like a typical introvert in that she would linger after class to ask questions or if she wanted me to read over something. Her personality type, however, seems to fit with the description. She seemed to have a natural awareness of her own subjectivity; she was very insightful in her analysis of people. As a writer, she wrote passionately about subjects that effected her age demographic (adderall abuse; bulimia, etc.), and she had little trouble connecting her personal experiences to the wider world. Typical of an ENFP though, she could write enthusiastically about a range of subjects, and she wrote in bursts of creativity. Jensen and DiTiberio describe an example of a student writing with NF preferences: "Not exploring an objective idea, she is exploring how events affect her. Her essay is both abstract and personal" (Jensen & DiTiberio, 2007, p.136). This matches with what I observed in her writing and behavior. I was delighted to read a paper she wrote during one semester about the moon, or more specifically, it was a history of beliefs that different cultures and people have had about the moon. It was unfocused, and it featured twelve pages of intriguing research about our planet's satellite (we had assigned six pages, maximum). Earlier in the semester, when describing her thoughts/feelings on her personality assessment, I remember Rachel reflected a good deal on how easily she was "distracted" when new or more interesting projects would

come up, as well as how much she saw her thinking process as one that preferred "wondering" to obsessive "focus." For Rachel, these were often cast as negative traits, like "procrastination." When she turned her moon paper in, she apologized for it being "unfinished" and late. This coincides with what DiTiberio and Jensen have noticed about ENFPs: "When they finish a draft, ENFPs often feel that they have not said enough." Rachel "succeeded" in my class partly because she was able to produce assignments without needing to see direct examples; her preference for Intuition contrasted with Lisa's need to see "facts", which, in this case, were credible "A grade" examples. Rachel relied very much on sudden bursts of creativity, and she enjoyed free writing exercises.

I think I could've been a more effective teacher, in both Lisa's and Rachel's cases, had I had a better understanding of sensing vs intuiting preferences. Because of my preference for intuition, Rachel's (ENFP) behavior and writing practices *looked* more like what I wanted to see from students. Throughout the course, I placed a lot of emphasis on the future, maintaining that "facts" are subject to change, and that current drafts are less important than the final drafts, because all writing is subject to change, *never finished, just handed in*. My insistent emphasis on the future clashed strongly with Lisa (ESFP) and her preference to focus on the current moment with clear and concise information. Authors Pearman and Albritton, writing in *I'm Not Crazy, I'm Just Not You*, put it clearly:

> A sense of the pragmatic versus a sense of the possible will always stymie interactions between Sensing and Intuitive types until they are cognizant of each other…Sensing types are often baffled at the language used by Intuitives and at their focus on the future, the theoretical, and the abstract. "How can a simple question generate so much stuff?" Sensing types often wonder. "Why can't they see more of this information, see its paradoxical meaning?" say Intuitives about Sensing types. (Pearman &

Albritton, 2010, p.145)

Analyzing my past experiences with a deeper understanding of personality type, I begin to see that students who have preferences similar to their writing instructors are more likely to do well. This has nothing to do with skill. It means, rather, that students and teachers who share preferences are more likely to produce work that demonstrates writing and thinking, etc. in a way that's *preferred* by both—this does not necessarily equate to more effective learning. Because the differences between sensing and intuition seem particularly important for a new writing teacher, and because the dichotomy proved particularly important in my personal experiences, the next section focuses on this dichotomy in more detail.

Focusing on Intuition vs Sensing… and Co-teaching

Intuition and Sensing are based on how people gather information. Sensing (S) types tend to focus on tangible data, or what is known, and gravitate toward what actually exists. Intuitive (N) types, on the other hand, tend to focus on possibilities. "For Sensing types, the visual, tangible, factual aspects of writing--accuracy, descriptive details, neatness, nice handwriting, fonts that are pleasing to the eye, good grammar—are indicators of good writing. Young sensing types may have trouble understanding why a neat essay with no errors does not always earn a good grade" (Jensen & DiTiberio, 2007, p. 23). Sensing types often need examples for clarification, and can become frustrated by directions that seem too vague or general. Intuitives can have a tendency to overlook facts so long as their writing supports what they perceive as an original main idea. "For intuitives, good writing is often equated with originality…[they] find explicit instructions too restrictive" (Jensen & DiTiberio, 2007, p. 23). In the case of sensing vs intuition Jensen & DiTiberio (2007, p. 42) provide the following chart:

Sensing: **Intuitive**

Observant Writers	Imaginative Writers
Want specific directions	Create their own directions
Start with facts	Start with original ideas
Say it simply and directly	Say it with subtlety or complexity
Report what they know	Report what they imagine
Give verifiable material	Give hypotheses and implications
Use what worked before	Try out new ways

For example, in the fall of 2010, I took a film studies course that was taught by two instructors. It was first time I'd had multiple instructors in a room since elementary school. And it was clear from the outset that the two instructors, a man and a woman, had taken a fair bit of time deciding which texts to select, and what contexts they might focus on. Their approach in terms of planning class sessions was similar to what Richard and I usually did as co-teachers, in that some of the goals for the day would be carefully outlined, but there was room left open for improvisation, discussion, or whatever else spontaneously occurred.

The goals in this team-taught course were different from the goals of the composition classes I taught. The course was about the American frontier in film and literature, focusing on aspects of frontier mythology, and other subsets such as captivity narratives, gender studies, and a wide variety of social, historical, and cultural context.

The frontier course did, however, involve a fair amount of writing; the students were assigned to complete bi-weekly analyses of the material that were neither transcriptions of class discussions, nor were they a rewording of key concepts. The bi-weekly analyses were supposed to represent an understanding of the material being researched/discussed without being a mere regurgitation. In this way, the analyses were largely free form, giving students the freedom to chose their points of emphasis and what arguments to make.

The course provided me, an Intuitive, with a lot of the opportunities I needed to create assignments that I found intriguing, and topics that I could pursue at whatever depth I saw necessary. Some of the sensing types in the course, however, found themselves a little lost because they weren't sure which instructor to focus on; or which teacher had the 'right answers'. In their assessment of the course, Froula and Shields noted, "some [students] struggled in navigating through such an open range of ideas. Also interesting is that some students were confused by the free-form lecture and discussion approach of two instructors of equal classroom status: Who was the 'real professor'? Why wasn't there one central voice of authority? 'I don't know who to listen to more,' wrote one student, 'It can get distracting when two really good professors are at the front.' 'There is just way too much to concentrate on with two people lecturing at the exact same time" (Froula & Shields, 2012).

These issues are nearly identical to what some students reported on anonymous feedback from my co-taught sections of composition. This is an area where I should've taken a more honest look at my individual preferences, partly because the majority of instructors have personality types that are very different from those of their students. In terms of team-teaching, I now suspect that working with an instructor who also has strong Intuiting preferences magnified our focus on ideas as opposed to facts. Jensen and DiTiberio, on collaboration, point out: "When two Intuitive types collaborate, their writing tends to be especially filled with ideas and theory and lacking in facts and details" (p. 205). Indeed, in my only experiences with a team-taught course (as both an instructor and a student) all four of the teachers were introverted-intuitives, and they all emphasized possibilities and questions over a rigid structure. In other words, while learning and asking questions was frequently emphasized, what the students were physically supposed to *produce* was less clearly defined because intuitives are less likely to prefer using a set structure or model.

Analyzing entries in my teaching journal, I noticed a recurring trend: I seemed particularly hostile toward the students who insisted on examples. I felt that the use of examples should be approached with caution, fearing that many students will only mimic the examples, and that they'd learn less. I assumed that this approach discouraged creativity and individual thought but failed to recognize the value in models. A student I previously discussed, Lisa (ESFP), noted: "I don't think we should have to write this paper until we get to see examples." This was frustrating, yet she had a valid point. She was being asked to complete an assignment that she was unclear about. My refusal to provide concrete examples was partly the result of a personality preference clash. I assumed that my students would prefer the freedom in creating their own assignments, because I would have preferred the freedom. Rachel (ENFP), on the other hand, thrived on the lack of structure. Yet the students who insisted on examples felt that I was withholding important information from them, or that I was "against" them. This conflict might have been alleviated had I better understood how my students' preferences are often different from own.

With my preference for Intuition compounded with my preference for Thinking, for example, I placed a much higher value on student writing that emphasized the big picture over details and "facts." For the reflective essay, for example, in which students were required to reflect on a past experience, I repeatedly reprimanded students who did not develop a thesis. I required students to relate what they'd learned from their past experiences to a broader issue. For me, supporting the main idea was always the most important thing, and I often failed to recognize the ways in which students with different preferences had developed their ideas. Isabel Myers and Peter Myers, writing in *Gift Differing: Understanding Personality Type*, provide an example of an INTP teacher who seems to have come across a situation similar to my experience with Lisa (ESFP):

> A psychology professor of this type [INTP] explained to an extraverted student, “This paper is perfectly correct, but you have put so much more stress on the facts than on the principle that it is obvious that you consider the facts the most important part. Therefore, your mark is a “B.” The student was far more indignant over the reason than over the grade. “But of course the facts are the most important part,” she said. (Myers & Myers, 1995, p. 91)

In this example, I can relate to both the student’s frustration and the teacher’s point of emphasis. As a teacher, my view is that a paper with perfect grammar, structure, and citations has less value if it doesn’t contain an explicit understanding of a larger main idea. Because of this, I was often willing to overlook citation mistakes and a lack of supporting sources. So in this way, Intuitive types (and also Thinking types) were more likely to succeed in my course.

Moving Toward Motivation

The MBTI created a language that helped me to communicate with students more effectively. After I better understood my preferences against their preferences, I had a very successful experience using an example of a writer’s memo. I told students they could copy the format exactly if they wanted, and some of them did. This worried me a great deal, but I discovered that many students thrived while copying. For example, students did excellent work while copying the format of this writer’s memo; they used examples from their own writing and described their own revision practices, and they seemed more comfortable doing this after seeing examples of what another student writer had done.

The MBTI has helped me to better understand the ways in which my students *are not me*. By using the MBTI and going into detail about my type, I could’ve explained my

own natural way of doing things, and articulated the different ways that other preferences have equal value. The MBTI has helped me to think differently about what I do and don't do in class. It has also helped me to understand why I value some aspects of writing over others, and why my conclusions and judgments are often incomplete.

Using the MBTI has also helped me to rethink what it means to "motivate" or "engage" students. A student with ESTJ preferences, for example, would likely describe a "motivated" student much differently than an INFJ student would. I had misunderstandings of what motivation looked like and where it comes from. Understanding my personality type has helped me to rethink what I value most in the compositions classroom, and has also helped me to rethink how I approach "motivation."

Chapter 3 Motivation: Why are people motivated to learn?

What is motivation and how does it happen? Motivation has been defined in a variety of ways: through incentives, instinct, arousal, and humanistic theories, to name a few. The definition shifts depending on the circumstances and contexts. An evolutionary biologist might consider it a simple question, maybe even a *stupid* question. *Motivation happens out of necessity. People are motivated out of need, when survival is at stake.*

But if you asked teachers what they think motivation is, you're likely to hear stories like those from the movies and TV shows I explored in the Introduction to this thesis. Teachers in these representations often "motivate" students to mimic behavior that aligns more closely with their own preferences. *In Dead Poets Society* (Weir, 1989), John Keating (Robin Williams) encourages students to tear out a page from their textbook and to stand on their desks. Keating is often shown emphasizing extraversion and outwardly observable behavior by also doing celebrity impersonations and dramatic readings. While this masks whether or not learning takes place, it also masks some of the realities of motivation and how it relates to learning.

I found using such motivational methods in my classes to be particularly troublesome, and so I read research on motivation to learn, hoping I could find methods that aligned more closely with what I was experiencing in the classroom. In terms of understanding what motivation means in the context of education, Snowman, McCown, & Biehler offer a reasonable definition: "In practical terms, motivation is simply the willingness of a person to expend a certain amount of effort to achieve a particular goal under a particular set of circumstances" (Snowman, et al., 2012, p. 367). I have found it difficult to measure someone's willingness to achieve a goal, but researchers have

attempted it. More specifically, in terms of understanding the motivation to learn in a first year writing course, the question I'm focusing on is: *What might be useful for an inexperienced instructor to understand about motivation?* My goal is to unpack myths about motivation in an attempt to better understand the role of the instructor in motivating students to learn. In this chapter, I argue that teachers cannot directly motivate students to achieve goals. There is a host of variables outside the teacher's control that influence motivation. Likewise, representations of teachers as master motivators in films like *Stand and Deliver* (Menendez, 1988) and *Dead Poet's Society* (Weir, 1989) reflect mythic notions of what it means to be an effective instructor, myths that rarely correspond to real life. I would argue, however, that Instructors *can* assist with empowering students, and they can avoid de-motivating students by clarifying course goals and developing appropriate challenges. I also point out ways that the MBTI can help new writing teachers rethink how they approach "motivation."

Why Not Motivation?

It's common for new teachers to assume that they are the primary sources of student motivation. In past courses, I've blamed my level of motivation on the teacher's ability/inability to teach well; I'd wager that other students have done the same. These ideas about teachers as master motivators are pervasive: they're seen in films about teaching in a formal classroom setting, but they're also apparent in apprentice archetypes from Yoda to Dumbledore.

There is a wide body of research involving motivation, and a great deal of it exists within the context of academia, centered on learning and teaching practices; some of it seems based on the flawed assumption that teachers can motivate students to learn. But there is also a great deal of research located outside the classroom, and it's commonly based on this question: *How do I motivate my employees to work harder?* In

the classroom, many teachers assume that motivating is a part of their job, but there is a wide body of behavioral and psychological research that challenges the view that effective teachers must also be (or even can be) effective motivators.

James W. Marcum, a retired professor from Oklahoma Baptist University, is a former academic turned businessman; his research interests include motivation and engagement in both the classroom and in the work force. In his article, “Out with Motivation, In with Engagement” (2000), he arrives at a list of problems he sees with motivation, as opposed to engagement, as a leader:

> --It seeks to cause or stimulate action, assuming there was none prior to the initiative.
>
> --It is, consequently, incidental, not continuous. Therefore, it must be reinitiated as often as action is desired.
>
> --It is founded on a paternalistic assumption that a protagonist of greater status, experience, intellect, or responsibility is seeking to motivate a second party, presumably of lesser status.
>
> --The relationship between the two parties is unequal, that of parent-child, supervisor-worker, or teacher-student.
>
> --It can be critiqued as too narrow, piecemeal, and mechanistic in its assumptions (it is here that the legacy from behaviorism is most apparent)
>
> --It relies too heavily on rewards to achieve objectives. (Marcum, 2000, p. 58).

His argument boils down to replacing motivation in learning with terms of engagement. While engagement is an imperfect framework (more on this later), the notion that terms of engagement and its surrounding research can be more useful (and less troublesome) for first time teachers is the basic arc that connects this chapter to the next. To

understand how Marcum arrived at these conclusions, my goal is to unpack the literature on motivation in an effort to debunk motivational learning myths.

Motivation Myths

Motivation means getting someone to move. Motivation theorists attempt to understand what is at the root of behavior—what causes a person to *move*. The formal study of motivation in education is rooted in *drive theory*, developed by Clark Hull (Hull, 1940; Hull, 1943). His drive reduction theory postulated that reducing biological needs like thirst and hunger coupled with a psychological need for satisfaction, creates a drive for need reduction. Basically, he was arguing that drive is essential: the student must *want* to learn before learning can take place. In his initial studies, Hull used mostly animals to experiment, but his research was quickly followed up by more studies involving human subjects, and by the 1960s his theory of learning had become one of the most dominant in education, taking the form of *reinforcement theory***,** which leads us to motivation myth #1:

1. The idea that teachers can directly motivate their students. Teachers cannot directly motivate students; it isn't their place to do so, because motivation is rooted in an individual's internal functions. Snowman, McCown, and Biehle explain why direct motivation is misunderstood:

> The…misconception is that one person can directly motivate another. This view is inaccurate because motivation comes from within a person. What you *can* do, with the help of the various motivation theories discussed in this chapter, is create the circumstances that *influence* students to do what you want them to do" (Snowman, et al., 2012, p. 367).

I understand that this viewpoint might seem problematic for some, because most people

have been influenced or encouraged by their instructors, and I'm no exception. My argument, however, is that regardless of the impact teachers can undoubtedly have, framing the teacher-student dynamic in terms of direct motivation is problematic. *Reinforcement theory* in particular is inadequate because it frames motivation exclusively as observable behavior, avoiding things like an individual's beliefs, expectations, and emotions. Teachers can't directly motivate students because they don't have control or access to a student's beliefs, expectations, or emotions. Reinforcement theories of learning rely on rewards and/or punishments, which have been proven to effect learning negatively, rather than enhance it. As Marcum points out, it's quite paternalistic to view teachers as direct motivators (Marcum, 2000); and in my experiences, some students are happy to assign instructors in these parent roles. "Regularly attend class and follow the rules" can easily equate to parental standbys: "brush your teeth, make your bed," and many students over time will anticipate parental punishments from their instructors.

The view that people cannot directly motivate others is expressed in fields outside education: From a managerial perspective, Levinson argues in "Asinine Attitudes Toward Motivation" that terms of motivation lead to the false assumption that those in power can manipulate those without power into producing the desired results (Levinson, 1973). Likewise, reinforcement theories of learning boil down to shaping a person, or behavior modification. While other theories have become popular since, the pervasiveness of reinforcement is still seen throughout the disciplines. Research on motivation in learning shifted in the 1960s to *cognitive* motivation, theories that emphasized personal beliefs and expectations, which leads to motivation myth #2.

2. The notion that external (extrinsic) rewards such as grades can motivate students to learn. Some say that the grade is the primary motivation, but the idea is inherently

flawed for most students. Research conducted after the acceptance of reinforcement theory supports this. While Clark Hull observed behavior and then took note of what happened, the next wave of motivation research focused on psychological (cognitive) factors directly. For example, Atkinson's expectancy x value theory (1964), which makes the following point: putting maximum effort toward reaching a goal requires more than positive expectations; it requires that the person sees value in the task (Atkinson, 1964). Discoveries such as those made by Atkinson helped pave the way for a focus on students' internal (intrinsic) perceptions, and made researchers rethink the reward-based view of motivation popularized by *reinforcement theory*. In terms of teaching writing, grades are one way that instructors indicate value, but grades are very problematic.

Extrinsic motivators such as grades rarely motivate, and if they do, the results are short term. Research suggests that rewards kill interest and motivation. Rewards signal that the task itself is not worth doing, and can discourage risk-taking. Research on the use of rewards to control student behavior suggests that rewards should be used thoughtfully and sparingly (Kohn, 1993). Kohn argues that rewards kill interest because of their very nature; if a student needs to be rewarded for completing a task, then that student is aware on some level that the task was not worth completing because of its value alone (Kohn, 1993). The MBTI provides a language, for example, that helps with articulating internal motivations, lines of reasoning that are unaffected by external motivators such as grades. In *Life Types*, Hirsh and Kummerow provide an example of an INTP student:

> When INTPs view a test, teachers, or subjects as irrelevant, they may respond as follows: "I know what I need to know about this topic; I may even know more than my teachers. The teacher made this test, and this test if dumb. Therefore, my teacher is dumb, and I will not do the test." (Hirsh & Kummerow, 1989 p. 236)

The student in this example couldn't be motivated by grades in this case. External rewards were ineffective. Under different circumstances, the student might've chosen to adapt to the instructor's requirements and preferences, but in this instance the student was *motivated* to follow his own line of reasoning. Perhaps the student disliked the sense of manipulation. Likewise, Bain argues that manipulation by an external reward *negatively* effects motivation: "if they [students] think they are being manipulated by the external reward, if they lose what the psychologists have called their sense of the "locus of causality" of their behavior" (Bain, 2004, p. 33). He's referring to work by DeCharms and Shea, which argues that the social aspects of behavior, such as verbal reinforcement are more likely to positively influence learners because the learner will feel less controlled by the instructor (DeCharms & Shea, 1976). In other words, strong learners, in most cases, are influenced by factors beyond immediate rewards like grades: "The key seems to be how the subject views the reward" (Bain, 2004, p. 33).

3. The notion that teachers can assume what drives students based on their own experiences. John Bean writes in *Engaging Ideas*, "The majority of today's students have personality types…very different from those of their professors" (Bean, p. 40, 2001). Teachers should not assume that they understand the motives behind their students' behavior. Indeed, students and instructors often have markedly different ideas about classroom goals, which can have a profound impact on how we go about learning.
In the book *Motivation to Learn* (1998), Deborah Stipek writes, while discussing the history of motivation research,

> That children often have different goals than the teacher was illustrated in research by Wentzel (1989, 1991) in which she asked high school students how often they tried to achieve a set of twelve goals while they were in class. "Making or keeping friends" ranked the highest for students

> with average GPAs and second highest (after "having fun") for the lowest achieving students. Only the highest achieving students ranked "learning" above friends as a frequent goal in school." (Stipek, 1998, p. 13)

This example illustrates a difference in individual preference, but I think it would be wrong to assume that students who are highly interested in keeping friends are not also highly interested in learning. This example, however, helps to illustrate how people *value* some types of learning (and representations of it) more than others. The MBTI has provided me with a language to approach and then discuss these *individual* values, which can often go uncommented on. Hirsh and Kummerow describe the learning preferences of an ESFJ student:

> Learning tends to be a personal experience for ESFJs…[they] often enjoy studies about people and their well-being, and are usually less interested in theoretical and abstract subject matters…[they] would rather directly experience a given topic or subject before they read about it." (Hirsh & Kummerow, 1989, p. 163)

Teachers shouldn't assume that they understand what motivates their students to participate, put forth their best effort, or to revise extensively. Personality type helps illustrate how complex personal motives can be. Research on the motivation to learn has helped categorize different definitions of motivation: In a study of 5th and 6th grade students, Meece and Holt measured students' desire to achieve goals in three categories: task-mastery scale, ego-social scale, and the work-avoidant scale (Meece & Holt, 1993). Basically, they defined students' reasons for completing tasks in different ways, hoping to make distinctions about what drives student behavior. The superior approach to learning in this study was the task-mastery drive, what educators should seek from students. What's interesting about Meece and Holt's study is that it helps to illustrate how difficult it is to categorize motivating factors, because of how frequently

and tightly they overlap. They note that ego-driven behavior, such as the desire to not look stupid in front of peers, can positively impact students even if they do not desire to "master" a given task for its own sake; and also that students driven by the task-mastery drive didn't always perform better in teacher evaluations than those who are driven by other factors (Meece & Holt, 1993, p. 588).

This study helps to explain the difficulty in measuring motivation: to me, it seems that creating a category like "task-mastery drive" is a very teacher-centered way to approach a student-centered issue. In other words, "task-mastery" seems to frame motivation in terms of students' desire to join the elusive "master" club, undoubtedly a level that teachers qualify for. What the framework seems to ignore is that rewards deemed positive by an instructor (good grades and a club membership) may be perceived as undesirable from a student's point of view, or that of his/her peers. Bain summarizes the results of pedagogical motivation research:

> If students study only because they want to get a good grade or be the best in the class, they do not achieve as much as they do when they learn because they are interested. They will not solve problems as effectively, they will not analyze well, they will not synthesize with the same mental skill, they will not reason as logically, nor will they ordinarily even take on the same kinds of challenges. They will usually opt for easier problems while those who work from intrinsic motivations will pick more ambitious tasks. (Bain, 2004, p. 33-34)

It would be wrong to assume that a student is not intrinsically interested in writing because that student exhibits dissimilar preferences, or because that student expresses entirely different values and behaviors when approaching writing. Students can be both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated while accomplishing goals. Regardless of the sources of motivation, learning is still possible. Which helps transition to the next myth:

4.) That teachers can observe "motivation," or even recognize it if they do. A student's source of motivation might be wholly unobservable to the teacher, unobservable both in the writing itself and also unobservable in the student's behavior. Snowman, et al., put forth their argument about motivation:

> One misconception is that some students are unmotivated. Strictly speaking, that is not an accurate statement. As long as a student chooses goals and expends a certain amount of effort to achieve them, she is, by definition, motivated. What teachers really mean is that students are not motivated to behave in the way teachers would like them to behave. In other words, their motivation is negatively, rather than positively, oriented. (Snowman, et al., 2012, p. 367)

Students are motivated, but teachers shouldn't misinterpret different preferences as a lack of motivation. A silent student in the back of the classroom, quietly absorbing the discussion, notes, etc., may be much more motivated than an outspoken student who sits in the front of the classroom. It can be easy for a teacher to be fooled—which is a part of what makes motivation so problematic.

Seeking to Influence: Thoughts and Feelings

Looking back at my teaching journal, I seemed convinced that my students were unmotivated, but on closer analysis, I think that some of them were quite motivated, just in a way I disliked, or didn't know how to interact with, or didn't understand at the time because I had allowed my thinking about "motivation" to be colored by pop cultural/simplistic assumptions and motifs. When I attempted to manipulate my students by returning their first essays with poor grades, many of the students were *motivated* to express their anger. Some noted that expectations had been inadequately explained. What's also interesting about my reflections is that I don't seem to acknowledge how

motivation is assumed to be *positive*: Bad grades can't make learning happen. Bad grades can motivate students to be angry, or it can motivate them to study more, but neither equates with learning. This helps to illustrate why motivation can be so problematic. Perhaps new writing teachers should instead ask: "How can I *influence* the learning space?"

Motivation and the MBTI

Motivation seems more useful when discussed in terms of *influence*. Influence, can be more useful for new writing teachers because its use goes beyond the direct. Teachers can *influence* the learning environment. They can't "motivate" it. Grades don't motivate students to learn. They can only influence behavior. Along these lines, understanding the MBTI has helped me to rethink what it means to "motivate" or "engage" students. Part of the problem with motivation in terms of teaching writing is that many of the assumptions (and much of the research) associated with it are based on the idea that students aren't already motivated to learn. The MBTI opens a communicable language that students and teachers can use to explain what drives them. The type indicator makes no assumptions about ability, or sources of motivation. It has increased the awareness of my personal *preferences,* illuminating what I value most as a writer and in teaching composition.

For example, I assumed that students would be motivated to approach their assignments and topics in the same way I might. Because of my preference for Thinking over Feeling, I'm more inclined to value student writing that is impersonal, that is considered rationally sound above all. This preference caused me to ignore some of the values that strong Feeling brings to writing. I was particularly combative with student writers who attached their personal values to their core argument; I continually wanted these students to depersonalize their thesis statements. The way I crafted writing

assignments reflected this as well; it was clear that I valued impersonal analysis over personal values. I considered students who strongly incorporated their own belief systems into their writing to be less motivated to learn than those who did not. In the case of Lisa (ESFP), a student I discussed previously in the chapter on personality type, I could've benefited from understanding more about the Thinking/Feeling binary. Hirsh and Kummerow (1989) quote a testimonial explaining the learning habits of an ESFP student:

> Overall, the teacher makes the difference. In school, I never felt dumb, I preferred the teachers who cared and 'checked out' of the classes where teachers didn't care. In my sophomore year, my geometry teacher would give me extra help but would make me feel bad when I didn't understand theorem logic. By the end of the year, I had given up on the subject because of her cold indifference. (Hirsh & Kummerow, 1989, p.150)

The main idea from this example is <u>not</u> a moral: *Be nice to your students (or feelers), because they're sensitive*—that would be a misinterpretation of the Feeling preference. The example, however, helps to illustrate the different values of Thinkers and Feelers. Prolonged emphasis on impersonal logic is to value some ways of writing over others, and it can prevent students from building on top of their strengths. In the case of Rachel (ENFP), I greatly valued her way of writing over Lisa's approach (ESFP).

Activities that offer immediate (observable) action might benefit a student such as Lisa in particular. Opening lines of communication from student to student, in ways such as peer review and the sharing of ideas is a positive way to encourage the use of students' Feeling sides. The activities and values I preferred in class reveal a weakness in the way I judged writers and also in the way I approached the course itself. I operated under an assumption: if students closely align their papers with personally held beliefs that are rooted in Feeling, then it was my job to motivate them to look at something

impersonally (more like a Thinker would, more like I prefer to). By providing examples and going into detail about the difference between Thinking and Feeling, I could've better encouraged students to build on their strengths. Isabel Myers and Peter Myers (1995) help explain why those with Thinking preferences are not more "rational" or "logical" than those with Feeling preferences, pointing out why both types are equally motivated to think logically:

> [I]t should never be assumed that thinkers have a monopoly on all worthwhile mental activity. They do not even have a monopoly on thinking. Just as thinkers may attain, on occasion, a very supplementary development of feeling that does not interfere with their thinking judgments, so too the feeling types may sometimes enlist their thinking to find the logical reasons needed to win a thinker's acceptance of a conclusion they have already achieved by way of feeling. …[T]hinking is not always first-class thinking. Its product is no better than the facts it started with (and they were acquired by perception of unknown quality) and no better than the logic employed…Thinkers often contradict each other, each one claiming, "this is truth." The feeling type need only say, "This is valuable to me. (Myers & Myers, 1995, p.66-67)

By explaining in detail--with examples--what motivated me to value some aspects of writing more than others, I likely could've avoided some of my conflicts, and I likely would've better understood how various students will demonstrate strengths in areas outside my preferred way of writing, reading, and thinking. This has also been the case in the way I approach "engagement."

Motivation to Engagement

In my experience teaching student writing, the way I approached the course in terms of motivation became problematic when it come to observable things such as grades. It also became problematic when I designed writing assignments and tried to find ways to engage the students. I found that although I could not directly motivate them, I could provide assignments and activities that influence the classroom environment, effectively engaging the students. My question, *How do I motivate my students to learn?* evolved into: *What can I do to get my students engaged?*

Chapter 4:

Engagement in Learning—Where We Learn

I argued in the previous chapter that new teachers are more likely than experienced teachers to misunderstand concepts of motivation. My argument in this chapter is that new teachers can develop a better grasp on both motivation and engagement by analyzing what makes them separate but closely related. Engagement has its shortcomings, but I've found it preferable to "motivation" in the teaching of first year writing. Ultimately, I argue that the MBTI may provide a useful way to engage students more intellectually and reflectively.

Being engaged is not the same thing as being motivated. Researchers have difficulty mentioning one without the other because they seem linked. A student who is motivated to learn will not necessarily learn more effectively or deeply than one who is not—and the same can be said for engagement. I consider learning, motivation, and engagement to be separate but related concepts. A deeply engaged student is not necessarily learning more than a student who is not, but in a composition classroom, it seems as though an engaged student is more likely to participate actively and to accept challenges through writing and thinking, and that this participation is a precondition to learning effective strategies for writing and revising text.

The goal of this chapter is to illustrate understandings of engagement through research and examples, and then to consider the possible implications for a first year writing course. Sequentially, this chapter is included directly after the chapter on motivation because the two concepts are so closely linked. In opposing forums it has

been argued that each is a prerequisite for the other. Compared to motivation, however, *engagement* seems less abstract because it has been viewed as an observable form of one who is "motivated," and it assumes a positive motivation is at work. Researchers, nonetheless, have had trouble developing a universally accepted definition of student engagement.

Defining Engagement: Research and Implications for Writing

George Kuh defines student engagement as follows: "[it] represents the time and effort students devote to activities that are empirically linked to desired outcomes of college *and* what institutions do to induce students to participate in these activities" (Kuh, 2009, p. 6). To this end, the *National Survey of Student Engagement* has been measuring and defining student engagement on a variety of levels for nearly fifteen years. It attempts to measure how students spend their time, how they operate, and how well they are reaching their goals. The 2008 edition of the survey, for example, offers statistics and case studies on student engagement, using the results of statistics to report "positive" indicators such as: "Writing more in college is positively related to active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction, and deep learning," and also "negative" indicators: "One out of five first-year students and seniors reported that they frequently came to class without completing readings or assignments" (*National Survey of Student Engagement*, 2008, p. 11). The survey is useful because it details the recent topics, trends, and research on student engagement and how these demographics measure against learning outcomes. It displays how broadly engagement is discussed and defined, comparing groups such as: high school learners, first-year learners, and distance-learning students. The report goes on to analyze how the amount of *writing* completed by each group corresponds with the amount of deep learning (*National Survey of Student Engagement*, 2008).

One reason that *writing* is closely related to engagement is that it can involve deep concentration, one of the factors often associated with "engagement." While enrolled in a course about teaching writing, I was assigned to observe composition classrooms and to ask questions about what I was seeing. Two questions my instructor suggested we consider were: *What is Engagement? What does it look like?* So I attended a few classes taught by both tenured faculty and graduate students, and took notes on what I was seeing—or thought I was seeing. Concerning engagement, in one class I wrote:

> A student steps in to partially answer a question aimed toward the teacher….Students sharing their topics; engaging, commenting on each other's and laughing. Taking turns. A good bit of head scratching and idle movement during the reading, some not paying attention…When the textbook comes into play, lots of students won't look up from it. (journal; 3/22/11)

In this example, it seems clear that I'm defining engagement as something that can be observed, as physical activity. The students who talk *seem* more engaged in the material than the silent students. Levels of it ebb and flow throughout the class period, as students seem more involved during particular classroom activities and less involved during others. All instructors (and students) enter a classroom with their own ideas about what engagement and learning look like. I assumed that the students who participated were engaged without reflecting on my own experiences in the classroom. It may be inferred that I overlooked my preferences and previous experiences as a *student* to allow myself, as a new teacher, to interpret the physical classroom (the learning space) as something *new*. The ways that students and teachers engage and interact with the classroom has been studied by recent scholars, such as Brown and Renshaw, with the goal to provide:

> a way of viewing student participation in the class-room as a dynamic process constituted through the interaction of past experience, ongoing involvement, and yet-to-be-accomplished goals …provide insights into the contested nature of the time–space relationships in the classroom, the hybridization of time–space contexts, and the ways students enter into past, present, and future time–space contexts during collaborative work in the classroom. (Brown & Renshaw, 2006, p. 247)

Brown and Renshaw describe interactions with the classroom by building upon Bahktin's writings of *chronotopes*. For Bahktin, chronotopes are "forms of the most immediate reality, [capturing] the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships" (Bahktin, 1981). Whereas Bahktin used his concept of the chronotope to help explain the motivations of protagonists in literature, Brown and Renshaw use its to help explain student engagement in a classroom setting. What this means in less technical terms is that rhetoric and composition scholars use philosophical models to better analyze and describe ways that students connect with other students and with the physical classroom. Norgaard, for example, offers an explanation for why teachers adopt what he calls "the fiction of the fresh classroom":

> We forget because we can. We forget because classrooms remember for us. Preoccupied as we are about what to so say in our classrooms, or what we might say about reinventing classrooms, we would do well to listen to what classrooms whisper in our ear…our teaching cannot escape from becoming a genred activity, (i.e., an activity that has become typified over time as it is enacted and reenacted in a recurrent situation)...the immediate, ostensibly fresh classroom that we enter is built on the residue or traces of prior classrooms. (Norgaard, 2004, p. 155)

Comparing these abstractions with my own experiences, I see where my views on engagement effect the way I approached the classroom itself and the material I choose to teach and emphasize. Past experiences impact my views on learning, but past experiences can be forgotten or misinterpreted. Despite my own preference for introversion, for example, I initially assumed that the students who participated vocally and physically were also "engaged" in learning. Also, I assumed that certain students were disengaged, when it seemed as though they weren't "paying attention," in a way that fit my memories of proper engaging behavior, even when these memories worked I direct opposition to my own "most engaged" moments in a classroom, moments which involve quiet and reflection.

Because there are no quick fixes in learning, new teachers often misinterpret engagement. Even if a student is fully engaged, engagement does not equal learning. In my classroom observation, I viewed student engagement as something I could visualize. When the instructor asked questions, I assumed that the students who talked and asked questions were engaged, and I assumed that the students who refused to look up from their books to be disengaged. New teachers are likely to misinterpret student engagement. Like those offered in the previous two chapters, the following arguments are rooted in the idea that *students are individuals,* who are likely to have vastly different value systems than their instructors, regardless of gender, ability, or observable behavior, and that their preferences (values) can be easily misunderstood when they come in contrast with those of the professor.

Myths about Engagement:

1.) Teachers have to be present for engagement to occur. This seems predicated on the idea that students have no desire to learn outside the classroom. A lot of teachers argue, *Students aren't interested my course*, be it composition, mathematics, or geology.

I'm unable to disprove this argument—certainly, first year students are required to take courses in subjects they feel ambivalent about. This doesn't mean, however, that students aren't engaged in learning outside the classroom, or that they're intrinsically ambivalent toward a subject. Even if a student resists, learning is still possible. A teacher doesn't have to be physically present. Most teachers won't engage students as John Keating (Robin Williams) did with celebrity impersonations and theatrical demonstrations. Engagement can happen on large scales: in a two-hour trance while writing the final paper. It can happen during a three-minute quick write when a student tunes out their inner editor. Engagement can be observable and obvious but it can also be overlooked.

2.) Electronics have made students less engaged. This myth has many variations: *Students have gotten lazier*. *They're always plugged into something else*. *Sugar leads to a lack of attention and focus*…It would be unhelpful for a new writing teacher to blame outside forces on the amount of interest a student shows in the course. Engagement levels are effected by factors unseen and outside an instructor's control. People have a way of making generalizations and assumptions about the way a different generation does things, assuming that a new way of doing something is inferior than the previous method. I argue that a student who lived five hundred years ago is as likely to *engage* with a course about rhetorical concepts than a student who was born eighteen years ago.

Additionally, The national survey on student engagement has measured a variety of ways that technology and digital media have increased students' sense of engagement, observing how online courses have measured increased student interaction, and showing that online learning spaces have increased the effects of deep learning (*National Survey of Student Engagement*, 2008). Students spend more time writing while enrolled in an online course, for example. And students have access to a

wider body of textual resources than ever. This demonstrates a change in some areas of education, but it doesn't prove that students "engage" or learn differently than in past generations. It merely reveals judgments about one way of doing something over another. Which leads to the next myth on engaging learn.

3.) That teachers can observe "engagement," or even recognize it if they do. Talking does not mean someone is engaged, just as students who take an online writing-intensive course are not necessarily *learning* more because they are *writing* more. Writing isn't proof of learning, just as talking isn't proof of learning. A student can talk or write with the teacher incessantly, but it won't necessarily equate with learning (*National Survey of Student Engagement*, 2008).

Teachers shouldn't assume that they know what engagement means for another student. A teacher can, however, discuss his/her experiences with engagement and volunteer reasons why positive interest occurs in his/her own life. Whereas teachers should not assume that they can observe others *displaying* engagement (incessant talking, beard stroking), neuroscientists have reported seeing a form of "flow" using fMRI technology (Nardi, 2011). When Nardi, author of *Neuroscience of Personality*, observes people in the state of flow, he observes brains in a "blue" state. He can then see when the sudden drop off in brain activity occurs, when the subject has given up on a task or stopped doing the activity that leads brain activity into a "blue" state (Nardi, 2011). This, however, leads to the next myth, which is that teachers can somehow push students into the state of flow.

4.) People can make flow happen, or Teachers can put students in the state of flow. Csikszentmihalyi, creator of *flow theory,* argues that asking "how much" flow one

can get is asking the wrong question. Developed in the late 1980s/early 1990s, *flow theory* is described as follows:

> The optimal state of inner experience is one in which there is order in consciousness. This happens when psychic energy—or attention—is invested in realistic goals, and when skills match the opportunities for action. The pursuit of a goal brings order in awareness because a person must concentrate attention on the task at hand and momentarily forget everything else…"Flow" is the way people describe their state of mind when consciousness is harmoniously ordered, and they want to pursue whatever they are doing for its own sake. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 6)

Ideas about flow are crucial to furthering the understanding of learning, and flow theory has been applied to a variety of concepts: game theory, athletes hoping to gain an upper hand, or chess players hoping to increase their state of awareness. In meditation, this state of flow manifests itself in a variety of ways. Someone deep in meditation can lose bodily sensations such as hunger, thirst, or desire, abstaining from food for days or even weeks. But these are *optimal* levels of awareness, not realistically achievable on a daily class session basis.

If teachers could somehow get students on that level of involvement or concentration, it seems that teaching would be much easier. The state of flow is a goal worth aspiring to, and an idea worth unpacking, but hoping for such optimal conditions throughout every class period or writing session is unrealistic. Flow can occur when we've accomplished a task, or won a hand at poker. It can happen while playing an instrument, or whenever the brain is functioning highly in a state of equilibrium (Nardi, 2011). But again, approaching flow or engagement in this manner is to approach from the wrong angle. When questioned whether educators and students should be asking how to get "more" flow, Czikszentmihalyi responded,

> I would say not so much "more" but "what kind." I think it is quality rather than quantity because it's possible to get Flow from activities which are dead ends, addictive, or which are counterproductive from a social point of view. I think people do get Flow from gambling, violent sports, going to war, or cheating people. Flow is more like a source of energy that can be used for pursuing both positive and negative ends. It's more a question of how can one get Flow from activities that will do you good in the long run. That's why I am so interested in Flow in education. (Czikszentmihalyi, 1999, p. 162)

Luckily, students can be engaged without entering the flow state. An essential element in keeping students engaged is helping students self-analyze or self-reflect in order to make learning more meaningful. My argument and that of current research is that teachers cannot get a student in a state of flow. Students can, however, learn to recognize the patterns and habits that contribute to positive engagement and thereby, develop habits and patterns of mind that contribute to student engagement.

The MBTI and student engagement

In my teaching journal, I described several students who seemed to me at the time particularly *disengaged*. My journal entries repeatedly expressed displeasure toward students who did not seem to approach their work with enthusiasm. Students who appeared merely to *regurgitate* information from classroom discussions or examples upset me. I asked: *Why aren't these students engaged*? *Why can't they develop an intrinsic interest in their paper topics? What am I doing wrong?* I wanted students to write *more* than was necessary in their drafts, and then clarify their main points in revisions. Many students, however, had difficulty writing more than a few

paragraphs in which they transcribed only surface-level material that was discussed in class.

For example, there was one student in particular whom I clashed with on numerous assignments. This student, George, had ESFJ preferences, and both his writing and demeanor indicated that he was bored with his course work. He struggled with the course's second graded assignment. The second assignment that semester was a mini-portfolio, in which the students were expected to write a collection of brief critical responses to a nonfiction book, *Picking Cotton* (Thompson, Cotton, & Torneo, 2009). The book describes the wrongful conviction of an accused rapist who is ultimately exonerated by DNA evidence. The narrative tells the story from two points of view: Jennifer Thompson (the victim) and Ronald Cotton (the wrongfully accused attacker). The rape victim, Jennifer Woodson, describes her ordeal, from the attack, to later identifying the perpetrator, and then learning that she'd selected an innocent man. From Ronald Cotton's perspective, the narrative begins with his legal issues, Thompson's wrongful accusation and conviction, and continues with his experiences in prison, where Cotton meets Thompson's actual attacker, starting the process of Cotton's eventual release. The book then describes how Cotton ultimately forgave Woodson and how the pair became friends.

George (ESFJ) had difficulty responding to *Picking Cotton*. In his critical responses, he wrote less than the required amount, and his "critical responses" were mostly summaries. I gave him feedback on these responses, telling him that he needed a thesis statement and that he needed to develop a claim and support it. The student replied that *Picking Cotton* did not relate to him, and that he could think of no claims to make about the text. He also said that because he'd done poorly on the first assignment, the reflection essay, he didn't want to write anything that was "wrong" about *Picking Cotton*. Therefore, he stuck with the "facts" he knew about the book: wrongful conviction

statistics, quotes from Thompson about forgiveness, and summaries of events. To me, this meant the student wasn't engaged in the subject matter. I told him to "just write more" but the student could think of nothing to write.

If I'd had a better understanding of the MBTI, I think I may have approached this particular student differently. I suspect that some of his struggles with the critical responses were rooted in the first assignment, the reflection essay. In that assignment, I had criticized his reflection, arguing that it had been too personal, that it missed the "big picture." The feedback he'd received was similar to the feedback that many students had received about their reflection essays: *How does this assignment relate to the outside world? What is the thesis statement, and why is it important?* I wanted his personal reflection to be somehow less personal. I wanted him to consider his ideas in a broader scope. Now that the student was being asked to write about *Picking Cotton*, he did not want to face criticism about inserting his personal perspective into his critical response. In this case, while I was providing feedback that said, "*Write lots of material, cut the excess stuff, and clarify your thesis*," this student was responding by writing *less* and also refusing to write about anything that impacted him personally.

If I had been more comfortable with the MBTI, I could've used the language of the middle two functions (sensing/intuiting and feeling/thinking) to engage George (ESFJ) more effectively in his work. I could've explained how my preference for thinking effected the way I evaluated his work. In this instance, I had expressed to George that his individual interpretations had less value than objective analysis. By engaging in a conversation about thinking vs. feeling preferences, perhaps he and I could've landed on common ground, or at least we would both have had a better understanding of why we were disagreeing about the direction his paper should take. I could've provided a writing sample illustrating how personal experiences are indeed relevant in a broad scope and in objective analysis. *Picking Cotton* is an example because it makes political arguments

about America's judicial system while using firsthand accounts of a mistreated man. The narrative emphasized personal experiences while also including facts, figures, and objective analysis.

In George's case, with his preference for sensing, I could've responded by saying that he was relying too heavily on these "facts" associated with the book, and had failed to consider what the book was arguing in a wider context. I could've explained that while a critical response does indeed need supporting facts, I was also expecting him to use his personal feelings to connect his writing to a broader context – and why that matters.

Is Engagement Useful?

Inexperienced teachers often misunderstand their students and classrooms, which leads to counterproductive teaching strategies. So instead of asking "How do I engage my students?" we might instead ask, "How do I promote brain activity?" Perhaps engagement should be primarily viewed as the *result* of effective teaching, as opposed to the primary *goal* of effective teaching. Instead of aspiring to reach flow, get in a zone, or reach a level of engagement in the classroom, I think that teachers would be better off using engagement as a language tool. We can ask students to consider what they find engaging, and analyze together how they reach points of engagement and/or flow. With practice, writers can understand what processes contribute to positive learning by understanding their individual preferences. Engaging student writers isn't the same as teaching them to write more effectively, but it's a useful step in the ongoing process. My experiences with the students in my first year has suggested that more careful attention to the MBTI can help me and my students to unpack some of our shared myths concerning cognition, motivation, and engagement in ways that may promote more effective learning; further study is needed, however, to see if this theory occurs in practice.

Chapter 5

Conclusion: “How Do I Reach These Keeeds?”

The title of this thesis comes from a “South Park” episode that satirizes *Stand and Deliver*, *Dangerous Minds*, and other similar films. In this episode (season 5, episode 12), Eric Cartman teaches struggling inner-city students how to cheat on their exams. Cartman, assuming the role of a hero, alters his appearance, accent, and demeanor, so that he resembles teacher Jaime Escalante (Edward James Olmos). At every point of student resistance, he utters the line to himself: *How do I reach these keeeds?* The satirical episode ultimately challenges us to reconsider why we think some hero has to “reach” some kids. That’s not what learning is, as this thesis has hoped to make more apparent.

Addressing engagement and motivation as separate but related concepts has helped me to clarify my understanding of the usefulness of both, especially in terms of helping a new teacher avoid pitfalls. One mistake I made as a new teacher, for example, was to assume that a motivated or engaged student would write and behave in a way that resembled my own preferences for motivation and engagement. I found motivation to be problematic because of the assumptions and connotations associated with it. The idea that teachers are primarily in control of motivating students threatens to interfere with the true challenges of teaching writing. Writing skills cannot be transferred, but they can be facilitated, encouraged, evaluated, and then rewritten. Coaching a writing course

is difficult because of the false sense of control it brings. Teachers have little direct control over students. They do, however, have a more direct form of control over the environment, the assignments, and the structure. Students maintain much of the essential control but teachers draw the plays in creating assignments. Teachers coach from the sidelines and call time out when the student needs feedback. A good coach reminds players that players have primary control—spectators, coaches, and cheerleaders do not.

To that end, a good coach would encourage players to evaluate their preferences individually before they consider where they fit as part of a unit. I think that the MBTI can help new teachers reflect on who they are, how they prefer to take in information, and how they make decisions based on that information. This process of self-awareness can help a new writing teacher to consider his/her own preferences and expectations, and to put his/her teaching practices, assignments, feedback styles, etc., under closer scrutiny.

When we think in terms of motivation and engagement, we're overlooking the realities of the classroom by trying to make students learn in a way that aligns closely with our own preferences. Research shows that that goal is not necessarily reachable. The MBTI, however, helps teachers by providing a language for how they might achieve their goals.

I've argued that the MBTI is one possible framework that teachers can use to encourage student writers to questions themselves more effectively as writers. The MBTI gives new teachers a framework and set of definitions to explain preferences and help set writing goals. And the MBTI can do this without making assumptions about gender, race, intelligence, writing ability, or whatever else that first-year writing teachers might consciously or sub-consciously use to classify students.

Beyond enhancing self-reflection as an instructor, feedback provider, assignment developer, thinker, etc., the MBTI can provide a framework for new teachers to engage

students on an individual basis. This is important to me because I can have trouble understanding people in general, so psychological type theory helps me to find a language that opens lines of communication even as I struggle to understand students' perceptions and reactions to what happens in the day-to-day classroom.

It is difficult, however, to fully understand all sixteen types, and likely impossible to remember the types of 20+ students without reference. But by understanding the middle two functions in particular (intuition/sensing and feeling/thinking) and self-evaluating before the course even begins, I've developed a better idea of how I'll use the personality matrix in the future.

Advice for New Teachers

As a new teacher, there are a few things I wish I had understood about the MBTI that may have made my experiences more successful. By understanding my own preferences, I could've been more prepared to communicate with student writers who are not me. If I were asked to share the most relevant aspects of MBTI with new writing teachers, I'd start with the following:

1. Students resist being "scored." In my experiences, many students took the assessment and viewed it as a *test*. Partly, this occurred because the results show percentages, which can easily be misinterpreted as a "score." But we also exist in a moment when incoming first-year students have been inundated with high-stakes testing in K-12 schools; naturally, they would see any sort of short-answer question-set as yet another test. By emphasizing that the MBTI is not an aptitude test, however, teachers can avoid student resistance.

Another element that led to resistance (again, based on my experiences) is that I did not discuss my own preferences/assessment with the students. This increased a

sense of distrust, making it seem as though the assessment was something I was doing *to* them and not doing *with* them. This could've been avoided had I shown my own results on the overhead and talked about it, explaining aspects of the assessment such as "judgment" in detail by indicating that the MBTI does not measure my ability to judge right/wrong, etc.

2. Student self-awareness may assist with the transfer of ideas. The MBTI assessment can help students become more aware of their behaviors and preferences. By encouraging self-reflection throughout the course, students will ask questions about themselves: Where do I get my energy? Do I tend to emphasize details, or do I place more importance on the general idea? Do I need a firm deadline in order to produce my best work? Does my thesis statement lack objectivity? Have I attempted to connect with my intended audience by adequately emphasizing a human element?

None of these questions can be fully answered without some level of self-awareness (or writer awareness). When students compose their writer's memo, in which they'll be expected to explain their writing processes and revisions, the language of the MBTI (intuition, sensing, etc.) may help students understand and express how they got from point A to point B in a writing assignment. By becoming cognizant of patterns in their own behavior, students can take responsibility over their writing habits.

3. Don't get caught up on introversion and extraversion. This binary is probably the most commonly used in everyday conversation, and it's probably the most observable of the four functions, which can make its importance overvalued. Teachers should remember, however, that outward behaviors can mask whether or not learning is taking place. Research suggests again and again that teachers shouldn't assume that a talkative student is engaged or learning. And teachers shouldn't assume that an introvert is silently soaking up everything in the classroom, quietly learning all there is to be learned.

Teachers can, however, take this binary into account when planning a week of classes, ensuring that there are a variety of activities that appeal to both introverted and extraverted types. Assigning an inordinate amount of group work, or requiring students to participate in daily debates, for example, may cause introverts to resent the course or teacher. But teachers should also give students opportunities to communicate, to share questions and drafts with each other, and brainstorm out loud.

4. The intuition/sensing binary is very important. I explained this in detail in Chapter Two, but this binary really helped me to interpret some of what happened throughout my first two semesters as a teacher. I found that an over-reliance on my intuiting preferences caused friction and interfered with student learning. My intuiting preferences manifested in ways such as emphasizing the "creative" over the "practical," , focusing excessively on the big picture (the abstract) rather than methods for helping students to get to that picture, being subtle in explanations and assignment descriptions and assuming students would rather find their own way than be shown explicitly, or even asking students to create their own directions. While there is certainly a place for encouraging creativity and challenging students to view the "big picture" in their assignments, I sometimes valued certain types of writing over others without realizing it, and I didn't respond effectively when students challenged my preferences, assuming that their resistance was their desire not to engage, not to learn, rather than to find a way into the assignment or project.

In my courses, those with sensing preferences outnumbered those with intuiting preferences, which clashed with my preferences, particularly when it came to model sharing. My outward distaste at having students build off examples negatively impacted the course. When I articulated my distaste for model sharing using the language of the MBTI, explaining my fear of stymieing creativity and discovery, students reacted more positively. When I showed them an example of a writer's memo, the students understood

that I did not want them merely to copy it. They were appreciative of my explanation and many of them did excellent "creative" work while building from a model.

5. The thinking/feeling binary is also very important. This binary is perhaps the most difficult to observe and so its influence can go undetected, but in my experiences, along with the sensing/intuiting binary, it is the most important for a new teacher to consider. I overlooked this binary in the way I created writing assignments. Going over my teaching journal, I see again and again how most of my core writing assignments were essentially the same; the rubrics I provided and the feedback I gave strongly emphasized emotional distance over personalization. In an assignment, if a student expressed personal attachment to an argument, I became immediately critical. I failed to see how this criticism contrasted with what I was telling students I wanted: I wanted them to feel engaged, to be passionate about what they were writing, to write more than the bare minimum. The way I constructed my assignments, as well as the type of feedback I chose to give, sent the opposite message: I was telling students that I wanted them to distance themselves from their writing. For example, consider this thesis: I've included a lot of facts, statistics, and research data on cognition, motivation, and learning, but the majority of this project is a reflection on my own first year teaching, my own passions and prejudices and how I've learned to rethink them. In playing "the teacher," I was often denying students a key moment of intellectual engagement, one that I am certainly not denying myself in this thesis.

Teachers may be able to avoid this disconnect if they develop writing assignments that allow students to use both feeling and thinking preferences, and if they remember to value both during the writing process. Consider an analytical essay. I assigned the class to respond to a news article, and asked the students to demonstrate an understanding of the article's issues from multiple perspectives using information from outside sources. I required that they ultimately include an explicit thesis statement,

while emphasizing that they needed to demonstrate an understanding of the core issues from more than one point of view. The assignment proved difficult, with students asking repeatedly: *Are we supposed to respond to this using our own point of view? Is our perspective allowed, or will we be penalized?*

I responded by saying that they could argue whatever they want as long as they could back it up. In my journal, however, it's clear that I valued student writing that relied more heavily on emotional distance. I could've appealed to students with both thinking and feeling preferences more effectively had I taken time to emphasize both while *creating* the assignment *and* when I gave feedback on their writing. In my assignment description I could've asked questions that appealed to those with feeling preferences: *Who will be affected by these issues? How does this reflect on your values? How might you motivate someone to share your point of view?*

When left unexpressed, I found myself in a perpetual struggle to get students to write more like me. This caused me to effectively sideline many students, while at the same time over-praising the abilities of those who distanced themselves from their topics or lines of reasoning.

Closing Remarks

For any new teacher, I'd suggest looking closely at their preferences for the middle two binaries. In the future, I'll be much clearer with my students about what I tend to value and explain why the over-reliance on any function is detrimental to effective writing. By emphasizing the middle two binaries, I can encourage students to open lines of dialogue, to question what they value in writing, to consider areas of improvement in future drafts, and to question me when it appears that I am being too rigid in my preferences.

I would enjoy analyzing future research that explores how self-awareness can be used to enhance the curiosity of writers and thinkers *who are not me*. Personality type is just one way of approaching these concepts. I would love to read more research based around students' experiences with the MBTI, self-exploration, and how a deeper understanding of their peers' preferences impacted them as writers. There's so little time in a sixteen-week course, it would likely take deft maneuvers for an instructor to make immediate results readily apparent (and directly traceable to the MBTI). My hope, though, is that the true value would be long term, making the usefulness of the MBTI more difficult to measure.

My argument is that new teachers, despite good intentions, are more likely to misstep if they rely only on mythic representations of how learning works. But learning (and teaching, perhaps) is a lifelong process for which there are no quick fix solutions. Pointing out, for example, ways in which gender biases and assumptions are manifested in the classroom isn't the same as making a pedagogical shift. In my own case, cutting to the root of my biases and assumptions has been difficult as a new teacher, but by continuing to ask questions about my behavior and preferences, I think I can be a more effective teacher in the future. Particular ways in which I'm looking to make progress are in the explanation/construction of course goals and in the design of my writing assignments (implementing goals and outcomes). By consciously building the classroom in ways that influence students of all types, I can better prepare to engage a wider spectrum of students without viewing the class as an amorphous group. Hopefully, then, I'll have a better chance of assessing papers written by pre-motivated students. In the end, it's not about "reaching these keeeds"; it's about creating a classroom space where students and teachers can reach each other, can learn together, and can find ways to turn their engagement with the world into life-long learning.

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