Personality Characteristics of the Published and Nonpublished Occupational Therapist

(publish, research, professionalism)

Vivienne E. Radonsky

In this study an attempt was made to establish whether or not there is a publishing type among occupational therapists. A group of therapists, published and nonpublished, were given the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and then asked five additional questions. The results show that published therapists tended to be Extrovert-Intuitive-Thinking-Judging personality types. They also tended to be older, to have graduate training, and to specialize. Nonpublished therapists tended to be Introvert-Sensing-Feeling-Judging personality types. In applying these findings, students and therapists can develop an introspective view of their potential to publish.
For children to develop into functioning adults, they must receive various forms of basic nourishment from their environment. As Fiorentino suggested in her Single lecture (1), a growing profession is like a growing child, and as such, occupational therapy needs to find its basic nourishment and develop into adulthood.

The nourishment of a profession can take many forms, but essential to growth are research and publication. Conime states that "the foundation of any profession is formed on the triad of service, education and research." (2, p 81) Further, Etheridge and McSweeney indicated that knowledge acquired through research and disseminated through publication is vital to establish the basic literature so necessary for the acceptance of occupational therapy as a profession (3).

The profession has shown interest in developing its research and publication potentials. The requirements set in 1973 by the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) for the curriculum of an entry-level student include promoting, planning, implementing, and conducting research for the public's benefit and the profession's growth (4). In 1975, Johnson spoke about a commitment to action, including "practice, research, and graduate education." (5, pp 135-145) The interest therapists exhibit in publication and research is further shown in recent seminars and articles. Seminars have been conducted "in order to give impetus and substance to a national commitment to research in the profession." (6, p 509) At the 1977 AOTA Annual Conference in San Juan, the Commission on Education discussed research and its inherent problems such as the lack of funding and a lack of research consultants (7).

Many occupational therapists function in the academic and scientific culture where publication of research is fostered, rewarded, and recognized as necessary for establishing an identity and a usefulness. It is therefore essential that therapists join their colleagues in documenting their purpose through research and publication so as to be recognized as a viable professional within these settings.

As children cannot grow in a restricted environment, so occupational therapy cannot grow without sharing research through publication. Therefore, the question of how to encourage and support this activity must be addressed. If there are characteristics that differentiate the published from the nonpublished therapist, then an awareness of these characteristics can be useful in encouraging therapists to do research and publish, thereby nurturing the profession.

Method

Instrument. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), an easily administered and objectively scored test, has been used to study health-related professions such as nursing, medicine, pharmacy, counseling, and occupational therapy (8-11). The score, received by answering 166 forced-choice questions, reveals 8 possible personality types. It assumes that each individual has certain innate characteristics that determine a specific path an individual will follow. MBTI data suggest that, within a normally distributed population, certain types of individuals will be more oriented toward involvement in scholarly endeavors (12). One can hypothesize that there will also be a significant difference in personality types between the scholarly oriented (published) occupational therapist and the nonscholarly (unpublished) occupational therapist.

The preference types measured by the MBTI are defined as:

- **Extravert (E)**—oriented more to the outer world of people and things;
- **Introvert (I)**—oriented more to the inner world of concepts and ideas;
- **Sensing (S)**—prefers working with known facts and relies on solid experience;
- **Intuitive (N)**—prefers looking for relationships and possibilities;
- **Thinking (T)**—bases judgments on impersonal logic;
- **Feeling (F)**—bases judgments on personal values;
- **Judging (J)**—prefers coming to conclusions about what is perceived in a planned, orderly, decided manner;
- **Perceiving (P)**—prefers becoming aware of things and people in a flexible spontaneous manner (12).

Each preference has an individual scoring key and yields a raw

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Table 1
Distinguishing Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Publishing</th>
<th>Nonpublishing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>41.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Degree</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Progress-Not Published Yet</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year Graduated</td>
<td>54.8</td>
<td>60.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returned Questionnaire</td>
<td>19/50</td>
<td>43/50</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Preferences

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<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Publishing</th>
<th>Nonpublishing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EI</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SN</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TF</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JP</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>J</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Publishing</th>
<th>Nonpublishing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ENTJ</td>
<td></td>
<td>ISFJ</td>
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</table>

score that is converted to a continuous score. This continuous score shows the degree to which the individual exhibits the preference characteristic. The continuum scale is formed from matched pairs of preferences: extrovert—introvert (EI), sensing—intuitive (SN), thinking—feeling (TF), judging—perceiving (JP). The midpoint between the preference characteristic is 100. For example, if a subject scored E, converted to continuous (numerical) score of 98, the subject would be considered an extrovert, but not as having a strong preference for extroversion (i.e., not having a strong preference for being oriented to the outer world of people and things).

Therefore, the strength of the preferences is confined by its distance from the midpoint.

In addition to taking the MBTI, and to bring more data into the study, subjects were asked to respond to five questions:

1. Have you published in any professional publication since 1973?
2. What year/year(s) did you receive your degree(s) in occupational therapy?
3. From which school(s) did you receive your degree(s)?
4. In what area of occupational therapy practice are you now working?
5. Are you now or have you ever engaged in research that was not published?

Subjects. A list of 300 therapists was compiled from a random sample of the membership of the AOTA of which half were published authors (publishers). Publishers were defined as those therapists who had published in The American Journal of Occupational Therapy. From this list, 50 publishers and 50 nonpublishers were selected by geographical distribution for this study.

Procedure. One week after the subjects were notified that they had been chosen for this study, they were sent the MBTI and five questions. When they returned the MBTI forms, the results were separated into publishers and nonpublishers, and the raw scores converted to continuous scores to facilitate data processing. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences Program, with a fixed field format, was used to analyze the data. A t-test, several regression analyses, and a chi-square test were used to observe how variables related to each other and to type each group.

Results

Eighty of the 100 subjects returned the MBTI forms, of which 62 were
completed and usable. Of the 62, 19 were publishers and 43 were non-publishers. The results of the MBTI were analyzed in accordance with the subject’s preference scores.

Generally, the findings indicated that the 19 publishers tended to be extrovert, intuitive, thinking, and judging (ENTJ). The 43 nonpublishers, on the other hand, were introvert, sensing, feeling, and judging (ISFJ) personality types.

More specifically, on the EI continuum, although publishers exhibit extrovert preference and nonpublishers introvert preference, both scores lie close to the midpoint. The mean for publishers, 92.4, however, is farther from the midpoint—7.6, as opposed to 1.7 for nonpublishers—indicating a stronger extrovert preference. The means for the two groups were not significantly different.

On the SN continuum, the results revealed that the publishers perceive by way of the subconscious. The mean score for the publishers was 111.8; for the nonpublishers, 99.5. These means were found to be statistically different at a 10 percent level of significance. Therefore, the publishers had a stronger preference for being intuitive, 11.8 from midpoint, than the nonpublishers for being sensing, .5 from the midpoint.

Results on the TF continuum showed significantly different means at a 10 percent level of significance. The means, publishers, 96.7, nonpublishers, 107.4, indicate that the nonpublishers arrive at judgments by a subjective process, whereas the publishers made judgments impersonally and logically. In this, the nonpublisher revealed a stronger preference for being feeling, 7.4 from midpoint, than the publishers for being thinking, 3.3.

The JP continuum shows a mean for the publishers at 53.7, the nonpublishers at 42.1. The results on this preference revealed that, of the 62 subjects who answered the MBTI, the majority were of the judging type, preferring to come to conclusions about what is perceived in a planned, orderly, and decisive manner. The nonpublishers were farther from the midpoint than the publishers by 11.6 points.

The results of the MBTI and of the additional questions are summarized in Table 1. The publishers tended to be older, had graduated earlier, had graduate degrees, had more work in progress, and were intuitive, thinking, judging individuals. The nonpublishers were younger, had graduated later, had graduate degrees, had little work in progress, and were sensing, feeling, judging individuals.

To determine whether publishing therapists were in a particular specialty area or had graduated from schools in a particular region, a chi-square test of independence was performed. No significant relationship was found between publication record and region of school (see Table 2).

Using a conventional classification of specialty areas (see Table 3), publication and specialization were found to be independent of one another. However, when therapists were classified either specialized or nonspecialized (see Table 3), significant differences did appear, with the therapist in specialized areas being more involved in publishing at the .005 level of significance.

Discussion
The findings of this study show observable characteristics that distinguish the published from the nonpublished occupational therapist.

The MBTI results indicated a tendency for published therapists to be NTJ types. Although the EI continuum scores were not significant, it is important to observe the results and to consider further investigation. This study indicates that the publishers are not necessarily more extroverted than the nonpublishers.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specialty Section/Specialization</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Nonpublisher</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Disabilities</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Disabilities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensory Integration</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geriatrics</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Specialized</th>
<th>Not Specialized</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Specialized</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Specialized</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MBTI (13), this means the publishers are at ease within their environments, aware of possibilities, insightful, ingenious, inclined to experiment, are logical, executive types, decisive, critical, demanding of efficiency, and are organized. Nonpublishers tended to be an ISFJ, the complementary type.

In this study a dichotomy of personality types between the publishing and the nonpublishing occupational therapist was indicated. If students and therapists were evaluated and made aware of their own characteristics, those who were the publishing type could develop, shape or reinforce these qualities through the core curriculum and continuing education courses, respectively.

That all respondents were largely J (judging) contrasts with McCauley’s findings (8). She found that 14.65 percent of occupational therapy practitioners and 25.15 percent of occupational therapy students were perceptive (P) and not judging (J). Perhaps the profession should first identify which characteristic is more typical, and second, examine whether this characteristic is important to foster publication by occupational therapists.

From the additional questions, more discernable characteristics of the publishers and the nonpublishers emerged. Compared to nonpublishers, the publishing occupational therapist tends to be older, to have a graduate degree, to retain an ENTJ personality type, and to specialize. Further studies can emanate from these data, that is, students and therapists with what specific personality types should be encouraged to develop their publishing potential and how specifically can these types be developed?

Summary
This study supports several assumptions about publishing therapists: They hold a graduate degree, are older, have an ENTJ personality type, and specialize. Further studies can emanate from these data, that is, students and therapists with what specific personality types should be encouraged to develop their publishing potential and how specifically can these types be developed?

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