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The psychological type profile of young adult members of the Student Christian Movement  
compared with church congregations

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**Abstract**

The Student Christian Movement positions itself among students as exploring the Christian faith in ways that are progressive, inclusive and radical. Drawing on psychological type theory and temperament theory, together with data provided by 129 female and 68 male young adults associated within the movement, this study illustrates how the profiles of these young men and women differ from the profiles of the men and women found in church congregations. The three main differences between the two groups concern the higher proportion of intuitive types, the higher proportion of the NT Promethean temperament, and the lower proportion of the SJ Epimethean temperament among young adults associated with the Student Christian Movement. It is argued that these differences may lead to difficulties for some of these young adults integrating into established congregations.

*Keywords:* psychological type, psychological temperament, congregation studies, students

## **Introduction**

The aim of the present study is to explore the psychological type profile of young adult members of the Student Christian Movement in order both to identify the distinctive strengths of those attracted to this movement and to speculate about the capacity of regular church congregations to integrate within their membership students whose Christian faith has been nurtured during their university years within this movement. In order to establish the intellectual context for this new study, the following issues will be explored: introducing psychological type theory; the contribution of psychological type theory to clergy studies; the contribution of psychological type theory to congregation studies; and the distinctive role of the Student Christian Movement.

### **Introducing psychological type theory**

Psychological type theory has begun to occupy a more visible place within the empirical psychology of religion and empirical theology, as evidenced by special issues of journals dedicated to theoretical and empirical studies connecting psychological type theory, religion and spirituality (Village, 2011; Lewis, 2012, 2015, 2021a, 2021b, 2022). Psychological type theory originated with the work of Jung (1971) and has subsequently been operationalised, developed, and modified by instruments like the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Myers & McCaulley, 1985), the Keirsey Temperament Sorter (Keirsey & Bates, 1978), and the Francis Psychological Type Scales (Francis, 2005; Francis, Laycock, & Brewster, 2017).

Psychological type theory distinguishes between two core mental processes and suggests that each of these two processes can be expressed in two contrasting ways. The perceiving process is concerned with gathering information and is expressed through two contrasting functions: sensing and intuition. Sensing types focus on facts and details. Intuitive types focus on associations and theories. The judging process is concerned with evaluating information and is expressed through two contrasting functions: thinking and feeling.

Thinking types are motivated by logic and objectivity. Feeling types are motivated by values and subjectivity.

Psychological type theory also distinguishes between two orientations of psychological energy (introversion and extraversion) and two attitudes toward the external world (judging and perceiving). Introverts are energised by the inner world and drained by too much interaction with others. Extraverts are energised by engagement with others and drained by too much isolation. Judging types employ their preferred judging function (thinking or feeling) in the external world and are seen by others as organised and structured. Perceiving types employ their preferred perceiving function (sensing or intuition) in the external world and are seen by others as flexible and spontaneous. Judging types do their best work when they have time to prepare, and they struggle under pressure. Perceiving types often do their best work close to the deadline, and they struggle to organise things well in advance.

The building blocks of psychological type theory were adapted by Keirsey and Bates (1978) to propose temperament theory. Their temperament theory privileged the perceiving functions and proposed a method for linking two distinctive temperaments within each perceiving function. According to this method, the sensing function was differentiated according to the orientation in which it was expressed: introverted sensing (SP) was styled the Dionysian temperament, characterising people who want to be involved, and wish to engage in new things; extraverted sensing (SJ) was styled the Epimethean temperament, characterising people who long to be dutiful, and who wish to make practical contributions to the groups to which they belong. The intuitive function was differentiated according to the judging function with which it was paired: intuition paired with feeling (NF) was styled the Apollonian temperament, characterising people who wish for authenticity and self-actualisation, and who are idealistic and empathetic; intuition paired with thinking (NT) was

styled the Promethean temperament, characterising people who wish to understand and to shape their world, and who prize personal competence.

### **Psychological type theory and clergy studies**

Psychological type theory was introduced to clergy studies by a few pioneering, but small scale, surveys reported by Greenfield (1969) among 319 Jewish rabbis, Cabral (1984) among 150 professed Roman Catholic sisters, Harbaugh (1984) among 60 Lutheran seminarians, and Holsworth (1984) among 146 Catholic seminarians. Macdaid, McCaulley, and Kainz (1986), in their classic *Atlas of Type Tables*, offered larger and more persuasive studies among clergy. Among their type tables, of most significance were the profiles of 1,554 Protestant ministers and the profile of 1,298 Catholic priests. Comparison of these two type tables generated insight into what these two groups shared in common and into ways in which they differed. These two different groups of clergy shared in common a strong preference for feeling over thinking: feeling was preferred by 77% of Protestant ministers and by 80% of Catholic priests. They also shared in common a clear preference for judging over perceiving: judging was preferred by 68% of Protestant ministers and 71% of Catholic priests. On the other hand, significant differences emerged between Protestant ministers and Catholic priests in terms of the orientations: Protestant ministers were more likely to be extraverts compared with Catholic priests (57%, compared with 48%). Significant differences also emerged in terms of the perceiving process: Protestant ministers were more likely to prefer intuition compared with Catholic priests (62% compared with 46%). Differences in psychological type preference between Catholic priests and Protestant ministers were also reflected in differences in temperaments. The clearest difference emerged in the SJ Epimethean temperament: 46% of Catholic priests compared with 32% of Protestant ministers.

Working in the tradition established by Macdaid, McCaulley, and Kainz (1986), a growing body of research has begun to create an atlas of type tables of clergy and lay church

leaders serving in the UK, including Apostolic network leaders, Baptist ministers, Church in Wales clergy, Church of England clergy, Church of England licensed lay leaders, Roman Catholic priests, and Salvation Army officers (for review see Francis, Haley, & McKenna, 2023). These data confirm a number of significant differences among clergy both between and within denominational groups.

### **Psychological type theory and congregation studies**

Psychological type theory was introduced to congregation studies by a few pioneering, but small scale, surveys reported by Rehak (1998), Delis-Bulhoes (1990), Ross (1993, 1995), Craig, Francis, Bailey, and Robbins (2003), Francis, Robbins, Williams, and Williams (2007), and Francis, Duncan, Craig, and Luffman (2004). Francis, Robbins, and Craig (2011) built on these early studies to report on data gathered from 140 Anglican congregations in England and Wales, comprising participation by 2,135 women and 1,169 men. Two main findings from this study were: strong preferences for sensing among both women (81%) and men (78%), strong preferences for judging among both women (85%) and men (86%), and strong preferences for the SJ Epimethean temperament among both women (73%) and men (71%). Considering men and women together, these Anglican congregations were also characterised by clear preferences for introversion and for feeling, with the most prevalent type being ISFJ. On the basis of these data, Francis, Robbins, and Craig (2011) hypothesised that these congregations would provide a comfortable environment for recruiting further ISFJ members, but may find it more difficult to attract and to retain extraverts, intuitive types, thinking types, and perceiving types.

In the spirit of replication Robbins and Francis (2011) drew on data gathered by the Australian National Church Life Survey to test whether the congregational psychological type and temperament profile generated by Anglican congregations in England and Wales was similar among congregations from a variety of denominations within another culture.

Drawing on data provided by 936 female churchgoers and by 591 male churchgoers, this new study reported close similarities with the original Anglican study.

In order to test the thesis that church congregations tend to model the psychological preference of an ISFJ culture and hence become less accessible for the opposite preference, Francis and Robbins (2012) invited participants in 72 Church of England congregations to complete a measure of psychological type preferences alongside a measure of satisfaction with the congregation that they were attending. Data provided by 1,867 churchgoers supported their hypothesis. The highest score of congregational satisfaction was reported by ISFJs and the lowest by ENTPs.

### **Research problem**

Against this background, the aim of the present paper is to focus attention on a specific group of students, namely those attracted to participation within the Student Christian Movement.

This movement may be thought to attract students with an inclusive theological outlook. The research hypothesis is that the psychological type and temperament profile of these young adults may be at variance with the psychological type and temperament profile of church congregations, with implications for their integration within such congregations. Specifically, this study draws on the hypothesis formulated by Ross (1992) and tested in various ways by Francis and Ross (1997), Francis, Village, Robbins, and Ineson (2007), Francis, Robbins, and Cargas (2012), Francis, Littler, and Robbins (2012), and Ross and Francis (2015), that the perceiving process is fundamental to individual differences in religious preference.

According to this hypothesis we would expect higher proportions of intuitive types among young adult members of the Student Christian Movement. First, however, we need to look more closely at what is known about the Student Christian Movement.

### **Introducing the Student Christian Movement**

The Student Christian Movement has had a long and somewhat tumultuous history. Formed in 1889, its origins in the 1890s were rooted in Protestantism and aligned with the Keswick Convention (Gray, 1932; Pollock, 1964). Bruce (1982) has documented how by the time of the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference in 1910 (Stanley, 2009) the Student Christian Movement had transitioned into a movement with a more inclusive and ecumenical frame. McCaughey (1958) charted the movement's flourishing years between 1930 and 1950. The mid-1960s saw a change of direction as the Student Christian Movement aligned with a period of radical student protest (Hoefflerle, 2013). This was seen by some as a concession to secularisation and by others as a valid theological attempt to reposition the Christian voice in a secular age (Brewitt-Taylor, 2015). The change in direction, however, resulted in a severe decline in membership and the withdrawal of wider financial support, leading to what Preston (1986) described as 'The collapse of the SCM' (see also Carmichael, 1987). This collapse, however, was far from being total and the work of the Student Christian Movement continued, albeit in a slimmed down manner' (Boyd, 2007).

Today the national website for the Student Christian Movement ([www.movement.org.uk](http://www.movement.org.uk)) introduces itself as 'Progressive, student-led faith in action'. The word 'movement' is important: the SCM is actively engaged with social issues and committed to pioneering change. The word 'programme' is also important: the SCM positions itself as:

a vibrant community of students who are passionate about exploring the Christian faith, promoting radical inclusivity and speaking out on issues of social justice.

The SCM is a place where social action meets prayerful devotion. It is a generous community that offers a radical voice for equality and justice, and a safe home for progressive Christian students:

For some SCM is a place to ask hard questions and be challenged by others who are wrestling with faith and ethics. For others, it is a safe Christian space to express and settle in their queer identity.

Current issues on the SCM agenda, alongside LGBTQ+ inclusivity, include the refugee crisis, the arms trade, food injustice, climate change, and reconciliation.

## **Method**

### **Procedure**

The Student Discipleship Survey was deployed by the Student Christian Movement in a variety of settings during 2017 in meetings and events. Participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality and informed that the findings would be published in a variety of ways. Participation was voluntary. A total of 267 surveys were submitted, among which 197 were from young adults under the age of thirty who had completed fully the measure of psychological type required for the present analysis.

### **Participants**

The 197 participants under the age of thirty comprised 129 females and 68 males of whom: 42 were aged 18-19, 66 aged 20-21, 44 aged 22-23, 27 aged 24-25, and 18 aged 26-29; 65% were engaged in undergraduate programmes, 24% postgraduate programmes, and 11% not currently in a university programme; 75% were weekly churchgoers, with a further 18% attending at least once a month. The three most strongly represented denominations were Anglican (35%), Methodist (19%), and Roman Catholic (12%); 75% were white British, with a further 11% classifying themselves as white Irish or white other.

### **Measure**

*Psychological type* was assessed by the Francis Psychological Type Scales (FPTS: Francis, 2005; Francis, Laycock, & Brewster, 2017). This is a 40-item instrument comprising four sets of 10 forced-choice items relating to each of the four components of psychological type: the

two orientations (extraversion and introversion), the two perceiving functions (sensing and intuition), the two judging functions (thinking and feeling), and the two attitudes toward the outer world (judging and perceiving). Participants were asked for each pair of characteristics to check 'the box next to that characteristic which is closer to the real you, even if you feel both characteristics apply to you. Tick the characteristic that reflects the real you, even if other people see you differently'. Francis, Wulff, and Robbins (2008) reported the following indices of internal consistency reliability for the four scales proposed by the instrument: E/I,  $\alpha = .85$ ; S/N,  $\alpha = .76$ ; T/F,  $\alpha = .72$ ; J/P,  $\alpha = .79$ .

### **Data analysis**

Within the scientific literature concerned with analysing and presenting psychological type data, the distinctive type tables provide information about the 16 complete types, about the four dichotomous preferences, about the six sets of pairs and temperaments, about the dominant types, and about the introverted and extraverted Jungian types. Commentary on this table will, however, be restricted to those aspects of the data strictly relevant to the research question. In the context of type tables the statistical significance of the difference between two groups is established by means of the selection ratio index ( $I$ ), an extension of chi-square (McCaulley, 1985). In tables 1 and 2 the data are displayed for the participants in the current survey and these data are compared with the profile for Anglican churchgoers published by Francis, Robbins, and Craig (2011).

### **Results**

- insert table 1 about here -

Table 1 presents the type distribution for the 129 female members of the Student Christian Movement. In terms of the dichotomous preferences, these data demonstrate preferences for introversion (66%) over extraversion (34%), for sensing (65%) over intuition (35%), for feeling (60%) over thinking (40%), and for judging (86%) over perceiving (14%). In terms of

dominant types the most prevalent preference was for dominant sensing (46%), followed by dominant intuition (22%), dominant feeling (18%), and dominant thinking (15%). In terms of temperament, the most prevalent was the SJ Epimethean temperament (61%), followed by the NF Apollonian temperament (23%), the NT Promethean temperament (12%), and the SP Dionysian temperament (4%). In terms of the 16 complete types, the most prevalent was ISFJ (26%), followed by ISTJ (16%).

Table 1 also compares the profile of the 129 female members of the Student Christian Movement with the profile of 2,135 female Anglican churchgoers reported by Francis, Robbins, and Craig (2011). These data demonstrate that, compared with female churchgoers, female members of the Student Christian Movement are more introverted (66% compared with 49%), more likely to prefer intuition (35% compared with 19%), and more likely to prefer thinking (40% compared with 30%). In terms of dominant type preferences, among the female members of the Student Christian Movement there were more dominant intuitive types (22% compared with 10%) and fewer dominant feeling types (18% compared with 35%). In terms of temperament, among the female members of the Student Christian Movement, there were fewer SJ Epimethean temperament (61% compared with 73%), more NT Promethean temperament (12% compared with 6%), and more NF Apollonian temperament (23% compared with 13%). In terms of the 16 complete types, among female members of the Student Christian Movement there were more INTJs (9% compared with 3%) and fewer ESFJs (9% compared with 25%).

- insert table 2 about here -

Table 2 presents the type distribution for the 68 male members of the Student Christian Movement. In terms of the dichotomous preferences, these data demonstrate preferences for introversion (65%) over extraversion (35%), for thinking (59%) over feeling (41%), and for judging (81%) over perceiving (19%), with a close balance between sensing

(52%) and intuition (49%). In terms of dominant type, the most prevalent preferences were for dominant sensing (32%) and dominant intuition (31%), followed by dominant feeling (19%) and dominant thinking (18%). In terms of temperament, the most prevalent was the SJ Epimethean temperament (43%), followed by the NF Apollonian temperament (25%), the NT Promethean temperament (23%), and the SP Dionysian temperament (9%). In terms of the 16 complete types, the most prevalent was ISTJ (22%), followed by INTJ (18%).

Table 2 also compares the profile of the 68 male members of the Student Christian Movement with the profile of 1,169 male Anglican churchgoers reported by Francis, Robbins, and Craig (2011). These data demonstrate that, compared with male churchgoers, male members of the Student Christian Movement are more likely to prefer intuition (49% compared with 22%). In terms of dominant type preferences, among the male members of the Student Christian Movement there were more dominant intuitive types (31% compared with 13%) and fewer dominant sensing types (32% compared with 49%). In terms of temperament, among male members of the Student Christian Movement there were fewer SJ Epimethean temperament (43% compared with 71%), more NF Apollonian temperament (25% compared with 10%), and more NT Promethean temperament (24% compared with 13%). In terms of the 16 complete types, among male members of the Student Christian Movement there were more INTJs (18% compared with 6%) and more ENFJs (9% compared with 3%).

### **Discussion and conclusion**

This study set out to establish the psychological type profile of young adult members of the Student Christian Movement and to test the extent to which the psychological type and temperament profile of these young adults may be at variance with the psychological type and temperament profile of church congregations. Drawing on the theory formulated by Ross (1992) that the perceiving process is fundamental to individual differences in religious

preference, we hypothesised that we would expect higher proportions of intuitive types among young adult members of the Student Christian Movement. A consequence of higher proportions of intuitive types is reflected in a change of distribution among the four temperaments.

These aims were met by comparing new data provided by 129 female and 68 male young adult members of the Student Christian Movement under the age of thirty with data on 2,135 female and 1,169 male members of Anglican congregations published by Francis, Robbins, and Craig (2011). Three main conclusions emerge from these analyses.

The first main conclusion is that among young adult members of the Student Christian Movement there is a significantly higher proportion of intuitive types than found in church congregations: 35% compared with 19% among females, and 49% compared with 22% among males. In their study styled 'not fitting in and getting out', Francis and Robbins (2012) found that intuitive types may become dissatisfied with congregations heavily shaped by sensing types. The settled patterns and straightforward teaching that nourishes sensing types may fail to satisfy the faith of intuitive types who are more open to quest orientation within their religious worldview (see further Francis & Lankshear, 2021a).

The second main conclusion is that among young adult members of the Student Christian Movement there is a significantly lower proportion of the SJ Epimethean temperament than found in church congregations: 61% compared with 73% among females and 43% compared with 71% among males. It is the predominance of the SJ temperament within church congregations that serves as the guardian to tradition and that resists change and development. After thriving within a religious community like the Student Christian Movement that consciously promotes a safe space within which to challenge traditional teaching, to promote radical inclusivity, and to nurture progressive Christian faith, young adults may be surprised by and wary of congregations that can be fearful of such innovation.

The third main conclusion is that among young adult members of the Student Christian Movement there is a higher proportion of the NT Promethean temperament than found in church congregations: 12% compared with 6% among females, and 24% compared with 13% among males. Generally, in church congregations thinking types are in short supply. This is the case for two reasons. Generally, in church congregations there are two women for every one man (Francis & Lankshear, 2021b) and in the population as a whole 70% of women prefer feeling (Kendall, 1998). Generally, the men who attend church are more likely to prefer feeling than men in the general population (Francis, Robbins, & Craig, 2011). The low profile of thinking types within congregations tends to mean that the preferred mode of making decisions and managing conflict is informed by the feeling quest for peace and harmony. In this context the God of mercy is prioritised above the God of justice. It is the predominance of this feeling environment that may become challenging for young adults shaped by the Promethean temperament.

Taken together these three conclusions suggest that young adults nurtured within the radical and progressive environment of the Student Christian Movement may experience difficulties in integrating into conventional church congregations. However, this in turn is an experience that they may have in common with many Anglican clergy who share with this group of young adults a higher preference for intuition and a lower preference for the SJ Epimethean temperament (Francis, Craig, Whinney, Tilley, & Slater, 2007). Against this background, it may be helpful for the Student Christian Movement to prepare their young adult members for this challenging experience by introducing them to psychological type theory and to the literature that documents and explains the underlying psychological dynamics at work in the situation.

The limitations with the present study include the relatively small number of participants and the sampling of meetings and events during which the Student Discipleship

Survey was deployed. The findings are nonetheless intriguing and indicate the value of a more extensive replication study among young adult members of the Student Christian Movement.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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**Data availability**

Data are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

**Ethical approval**

Ethical approval was given for this analysis by the Research Ethics Committee of the St Mary's Centre (code: SMC16ECC012).

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Table 1

*Type distribution for female members of the Student Christian Movement, compared with female Anglican churchgoers*

The Sixteen Complete Types				Dichotomous Preferences			
ISTJ <i>n</i> = 21 (16.3%) <i>I</i> = 1.32 +++++	ISFJ <i>n</i> = 33 (25.6%) <i>I</i> = 1.04 +++++	INFJ <i>n</i> = 13 (10.1%) <i>I</i> = 2.90*** +++++	INTJ <i>n</i> = 10 (7.8%) <i>I</i> = 3.06*** +++++	E <i>n</i> = 44 (34.1%) <i>I</i> = 0.67***	I <i>n</i> = 85 (65.9%) <i>I</i> = 1.33***	S <i>n</i> = 84 (65.1%) <i>I</i> = 0.80***	N <i>n</i> = 45 (34.9%) <i>I</i> = 1.86***
ISTP <i>n</i> = 0 (0.0%) <i>I</i> = 0.00	ISFP <i>n</i> = 0 (0.0%) <i>I</i> = 0.00	INFP <i>n</i> = 6 (4.7%) <i>I</i> = 2.54* +++++	INTP <i>n</i> = 2 (1.6%) <i>I</i> = 2.36 ++	T <i>n</i> = 52 (40.3%) <i>I</i> = 1.34**	F <i>n</i> = 77 (59.7%) <i>I</i> = 0.85**	J <i>n</i> = 111 (86.0%) <i>I</i> = 1.01	P <i>n</i> = 18 (14.0%) <i>I</i> = 0.96
ESTP <i>n</i> = 1 (0.8%) <i>I</i> = 2.76 +	ESFP <i>n</i> = 4 (3.1%) <i>I</i> = 0.72 +++	ENFP <i>n</i> = 4 (3.1%) <i>I</i> = 1.07 +++	ENTP <i>n</i> = 1 (0.8%) <i>I</i> = 1.18 +	<b>Pairs and Temperaments</b>			
ESTJ <i>n</i> = 14 (10.9%) <i>I</i> = 1.01 +++++	ESFJ <i>n</i> = 11 (8.5%) <i>I</i> = 0.34*** +++++	ENFJ <i>n</i> = 6 (4.7%) <i>I</i> = 1.01 +++++	ENTJ <i>n</i> = 3 (2.3%) <i>I</i> = 1.10 ++	IJ <i>n</i> = 77 (59.7%) <i>I</i> = 1.39***	IP <i>n</i> = 8 (6.2%) <i>I</i> = 0.97	EP <i>n</i> = 10 (7.8%) <i>I</i> = 0.95	EJ <i>n</i> = 34 (26.4%) <i>I</i> = 0.62***
EN-P <i>n</i> = 5 (3.9%) <i>I</i> = 0.84	IN-J <i>n</i> = 23 (17.8%) <i>I</i> = 2.97***	ST <i>n</i> = 36 (27.9%) <i>I</i> = 1.16	SF <i>n</i> = 48 (37.2%) <i>I</i> = 0.65***	NT <i>n</i> = 16 (12.4%) <i>I</i> = 2.08**	SJ <i>n</i> = 79 (61.2%) <i>I</i> = 0.84**	SP <i>n</i> = 5 (3.9%) <i>I</i> = 0.46	NP <i>n</i> = 13 (10.1%) <i>I</i> = 1.57
		FP <i>n</i> = 14 (10.9%) <i>I</i> = 0.89	FJ <i>n</i> = 63 (48.8%) <i>I</i> = 0.85*	TJ <i>n</i> = 48 (37.2%) <i>I</i> = 1.34*	TP <i>n</i> = 4 (3.1%) <i>I</i> = 1.30	ET <i>n</i> = 19 (14.7%) <i>I</i> = 1.07	EF <i>n</i> = 25 (19.4%) <i>I</i> = 0.53***
		IN <i>n</i> = 31 (24.0%) <i>I</i> = 2.83***	EN <i>n</i> = 14 (10.9%) <i>I</i> = 1.06	IS <i>n</i> = 54 (41.9%) <i>I</i> = 1.02	ES <i>n</i> = 30 (23.3%) <i>I</i> = 0.58***	IF <i>n</i> = 52 (40.3%) <i>I</i> = 1.22	IT <i>n</i> = 33 (25.6%) <i>I</i> = 1.57***

  

Jungian Types (E)			Jungian Types (I)			Dominant Types					
<i>n</i>	%	<i>Index</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>Index</i>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>Index</i>			
E-TJ	17	13.2	1.03	I-TP	2	1.6	1.07	Dt.T	19	14.7	1.03
E-FJ	17	13.2	0.45***	I-FP	6	4.7	0.94	Dt.F	23	17.8	0.52***
ES-P	5	3.9	0.84	IS-J	54	41.9	1.13	Dt.S	59	45.7	1.10
EN-P	5	3.9	1.09	IN-J	23	17.8	2.97***	Dt.N	28	21.7	2.27***

Note: *N* = 129 (NB: + = 1% of *N*)  
 \**p* < .05, \*\**p* < .01, \*\*\**p* < .001

