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Enhancing Self-Awareness and Interpersonal Communication: A Study of the Enneagram
System and College Students within Career Development Contexts

by

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HONORS THESIS

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Abstract

By combining a theoretical framework and existing research to the results of an original study, the Enneagram system and its impact on the self-awareness and self-perceived interpersonal communication among college students is analyzed. Conducted within the context of a Communication Studies Senior Capstone class focused on curriculum for career development, the study examines the Enneagram Assessment experience of 18 students at St. Mary's University, San Antonio, Texas. The effectiveness of the assigned Enneagram Assessment was evaluated through the students' feedback, specifically in regards to their self-perceptions and understanding of their own communication styles. Results revealed that most students found the Enneagram to accurately reflect their personalities, increased their self-awareness of personality and communication styles, though an immediate change in communication patterns was not recognized. This research suggests that embracing self-assessment tools like the Enneagram into educational and workplace environments may deepen self-awareness and improve soft skills, thus promoting effective interpersonal communication and personal growth. The study also highlights the need for further research to examine long-term impacts and comparative effectiveness with other self-assessment tools.

Key words: interpersonal communication, communication, self-awareness, Enneagram, reflection, personality assessment

Glossary

The Enneagram Personality Assessment: This assessment divides individuals into one of nine Types, each representing their preferred way of interacting with the world. Figure 1 displays these types in a circular arrangement, demonstrating how the system works. A notable aspect is its ability to reflect shifts in personal characteristics during stressful situations, as each type is connected to another through arrows. Under stress, individuals may take on negative traits associated with the connected type, while in relaxed or secure conditions, they tend to display positive traits from the opposite type (Sutton, 2013).

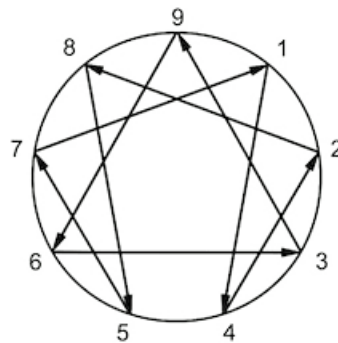


Figure 1. The Enneagram

Self-awareness: In the realm of philosophy, self-awareness pertains to the firsthand awareness of one's own personality and individuality. It extends beyond the consciousness of one's body and surroundings, focusing on an individual's personal comprehension of their own character, emotions, intentions, and wants (Jabr, 2012).

Effective communication skills: Entails the exchange of ideas, reflections, viewpoints, information, and facts, ensuring that the message is conveyed and comprehended with precision

and intent. Proficient communication results in satisfaction for both the sender and the recipient (Coursera, 2023).

Introduction

For centuries, people of all walks of life, from monks to psychologists, have sought to provide guidance on how to approach the inescapable relationship we have with ourselves. We embark on journeys, whether it be valiantly joining a school club or spontaneously traveling across the world, with hopes of discovering who we are. Due to our continuous fluctuations in thoughts, emotions, and beliefs, a static identity isn't inherent to anybody. Nonetheless, failing to engage in introspection and self-reflection could lead to a repetitive cycle of unwise decisions (de Botton, 2019). Therefore, while we may never truly find the definitive answer to who we are, there are endless opportunities to grow self-understanding. As our minds and environments are constantly changing, the continuous pursuit of self-knowledge can be beneficial for maintaining healthy relationships with both ourselves and others (Mackenzie, 2018).

While one may certainly have the opportunity to learn introspectively by, say, spending time in a new country, there are also many accessible tools that have been designed to provide people with deep self-reflections and guidance for the varying circumstances and relationships they may face in life. The Enneagram of Personality is one of these tools, and it is a representation of the human psyche that is primarily presented and understood as a classification of nine interlinked personality types. The 9 different Types described in the Enneagram personality test are: “Type 1 reformer, Type 2 helper, Type 3 achiever, Type 4 artist, Type 5 thinker, Type 6 loyalist, Type 7 optimist, Type 8 leader, and Type 9 mediator” (Lee, 2015). While the exact origins of the Enneagram are still disputed, all existing evidence suggests that it has a

rich and intricate history that extends across various cultures and geographical regions. Its foundation can be traced back to a multitude of mathematical, philosophical, and spiritual traditions. Researchers point to a range of roots, from Sufi tradition to classical Greece mathematics, to Christian mysticism. While the Enneagram's original framework remains mysterious, it represents the complexity and ancient wisdom of the collective minds that produced it (Cloete, 2023).

As far as scientific validation goes, the effects of the Enneagram are often difficult to empirically prove. Thus, while the extensive model lacks the scientific validation associated with other personality assessments, the goal of the Enneagram is not so much to provide a psychoanalysis but rather to provoke self-awareness and mutual understanding through reflection. *The Influence of Enneagram Type on Communicative Competence*, a journal article by Claudio Garibaldi and Flora Sisti, explains that the Enneagram achieves this through pinpointing and describing recurring emotional, cognitive, and behavioral patterns that emerge during childhood as responses to the environment. These habitual patterns solidify over time, essentially becoming a mold that shapes an individual's growth, resulting in an impact that stays with an individual and extends across their many realms (Garibaldi, 2018).

In this study, the Enneagram and its applications within higher education curriculum will be investigated, specifically whether the incorporation of the Enneagram Assessment in a career-based course enhances the students' self-perceived understanding of themselves and how they communicate, and whether the assessment has potential to benefit their overall experience in university environments. Research about this relationship will consist of examinations of the relevant communication theories, presentations of previous studies that have used the Enneagram Assessment as a reflective tool, and applications of these findings to higher education. The

results of this research is mirrored in the results of this study, thus encouraging further investigations of the concept, as well as implementations of the Enneagram assessment into the varying spheres of life.

Theoretical Framework: The Self-Perception Theory

Knowing yourself and your connections with others go hand in hand. When you're aware of your feelings, thoughts, and who you are, it improves the way you speak with and understand others. Self-awareness can be considered a foundation for good communication – when you're sure of what you're feeling, you can express yourself clearly and understand what others are saying too. Being in touch with your own emotions also fosters empathy by allowing us to relate our experiences to the feelings of others, putting our skills of active listening and sensitive responses to use. In this close partnership, knowing ourselves better helps us to speak more honestly with others, and when we communicate well, we also learn more about ourselves. This is why many communication theories stress the value of connecting with others and show how self-awareness helps us improve these skills.

Self-Perception Theory

The Self-Perception theory was first introduced by social psychologist Daryl Bem in 1967. Bem's theory evolved as a response to the prevalent notion at the time that people's attitudes and feelings strongly determined their behavior. Bem proposed that the relationship between behavior and attitudes could also work the other way around – people could learn about their own attitudes and feelings by observing their behavior.

Bem's research challenges the dominant theory of cognitive dissonance, which suggests that people adjust their attitudes to match their behavior in order to reduce discomfort. Bem's

Self-Perception theory, however, posits that people don't necessarily *change* their attitudes, but rather *interpret* their attitudes by basing it off of their own behavioral observations. Thus, to the extent that internal cues are weak, ambiguous, or uninterpretable, an individual is functionally in the same position as an outside observer - someone who must rely on those same external cues to infer the individual's inner states. In other words, we can figure out how we feel or what we think by first looking at our actions (Bem, 1972).

In *Exploring Bem's Self-Perception Theory in an Educational Context*, Laila Mohebi and Fatima Bailey apply this theory to educational settings, comparing the self-perception and cognitive dissonance to the way students and teachers interact, and concluding that "Bem's theory supports the notion that self-perception is malleable to such an extent that well-trained teachers can cause a positive change in the students' self-perception as a mediator to positive attitudes and desired behaviors" (Mohebi, 2020). A key takeaway from their research was that "external experiences and self-perception are the sources for building self-efficacy." (Mohebi, 2020).

Enneagram Typology and Self-Awareness

A critical review called *The Enneagram: A Systematic Review of the Literature and Directions for Future Research* provides a simple overview of the Enneagram system and typology. Simply put, the Enneagram assessment divides personalities into nine "Types," each of which are explained with statements about the individual's core need and an underlying core fear. These descriptions have been created based on the unique aspects of each person's life. Each type can be distilled into concepts of "growth," "passion," and "stress." The review explains that the Enneagram is less so about changing yourself, but rather about understanding

why you feel the way you do, even when you don't realize it (Hook, 2021). It's about understanding your attitudes and feelings based on your actions, as described in the Self-Perception theory.

The Enneagram's effect on self-awareness has been analyzed in various settings. One study, *Using the Enneagram to Facilitate the Supervision Relationship: A Qualitative Study*, was carried out to understand in an educational setting, how the Enneagram can influence the relationship of a doctoral student supervisor and three counseling supervisees who were training at a master level. The study aimed to look into how the Enneagram was used and how it affected their supervisory relationship through journal entries and weekly one-on-one meetings. The idea of knowing oneself became clear from the initial journal entries of the first session. In these entries, the supervisees talked about what they were good at and what difficulties they faced based on their personality type. As the supervision continued over the next weeks, supervisees got even more detailed and straightforward about their understanding of themselves. Overall, there was a definite theme of self-awareness that the Enneagram brought forth in the responses of these individuals (Perryman et al., 2020).

Positive reflections of the Enneagram have also been recorded in larger group administrations. A different study by David Weafer, *Leadership, Emotional Intelligence, and the Enneagram: A Study of the Effects of Enneagram Training on College Student Leaders*, used the Enneagram as part of leadership training for sixteen college students. He emphasizes the role that self-awareness plays when developing empathy for others and highlights the Enneagram as a tool that has statistically been proven to increase reported self-awareness, thus a key way for individuals to develop their levels of emotional intelligence. Weafer's study examines how Enneagram training affects the perceived empathy and self-awareness of college student leaders.

The emotional intelligence of the student leaders were assessed before and after Enneagram training, complemented by journal prompts and interviews for deeper insights. Weafer found that while quantitative data shows no statistical link between the Enneagram and self-awareness, qualitative data reveals numerous positive impacts. Participants reported improved self-understanding and increased empathetic concern, aligning with self-awareness and empathy elements from existing literature (Weafer, 2021).

Both studies show that the Enneagram can serve as a tool to promote self-awareness. It may be important to note that these studies incorporated training, workshops, journal entries, and/or one-on-one discussions to ensure participants deeply understood the Enneagram and their own personality types within the curriculum or training program. This thorough engagement appears crucial for fully understanding the model and integrating its relevance into participants' daily thinking. As a result, these studies affirm that the Enneagram can make personal introspection possible, especially when individuals possess a strong grasp of the Enneagram model itself (Riso, 2003).

The Interplay between Enneagram Awareness and Communication

Since increased self-awareness is a key aspect of productive communication skills, it is relevant to examine how individuals' understanding of their Enneagram Types influences their communication and interaction with others. In *Studying Communication Competence Level and the Enneagram Type*, researcher Serena Brown firstly seeks to explain communication competence, and secondly explains the Enneagram through scientific research. The goal of the research is to present that the two concepts may have a relationship. Brown includes the 10 interpersonal skills that are consistent with communication competence. These skills were:

“self-disclosure, empathy, social relaxation, assertiveness, interaction management, altercentrism, expressiveness, supportiveness, immediacy, and environmental control (Goldman, 2019, p. 78).” Brown states that although communication competence is not defined, the stated skills assist researchers and individuals to understand what it could be represented as, and that it is not only possible, but beneficial, for an individual to advance each skill (Brown, 2023).

After she explains the Enneagram typology, Brown concludes that the Enneagram has left a profound impact on numerous individuals, shaping their outlooks and perspectives.

Concentrating on a particular Enneagram Type enables individuals to impartially observe the sentiments and conduct of others. This practice also determines interpersonal connections, influencing how participants offer assistance and empathy to their counterparts (Lee, 2015). She states, “Each type consists of different communication style elements and there is a possibility a specific type can exhibit communication competence. Communication competence is a skill that can be learned. It consists of behavioral and cognitive factors, and the Enneagram can describe behavioral and cognitive aspects of a personality type. Due to the connection between the behavioral and cognitive aspects of each variable, it is possible that the Enneagram and communication competence have a relationship together” (Brown, 2023).

Conducted as a separate investigation, a study titled *Enhancing Educational Leadership: Exploring the Enneagram's Impact on Interpersonal Relationships*, employed in-depth interviews involving educational leaders. This study aimed to delve into three pivotal themes shaped by Enneagram comprehension: the interplay between self-awareness and leadership approach, the appreciation and acknowledgement of individual diversities, and the interconnection between conflict resolution and the unity of teams (Kilag et al., 2023).

What they found was that the Enneagram framework significantly enhanced self-awareness among the educational leaders (self-awareness being a key aspect of empathy, and thus a way to improve communication competence, as stated in the previous section). When leaders understand their Enneagram Type, they get to know their strengths, weaknesses, how they talk to others, and how they make decisions. This self-awareness helps them change how they lead, so they can connect better with their team and give support. This makes their communication work better. The Enneagram proved to be helpful for solving conflicts, as it gives a way to see what's really causing problems in conflicts. When it came to self-reflections, “the participants also acknowledged that their Enneagram Type influenced their communication style. They recognized that different Enneagram Types may have distinct conversational preferences and needs. By understanding their own communication style and being aware of the preferences of others, participants were able to adapt their approach to foster better understanding and collaboration” (Kilag et al., 2023). Given that effective communication plays an important role in cultivating understanding, collaboration, and personal growth, its significance is especially amplified within the context of higher education, where the exchange of knowledge, ideas, and perspectives is essential to the learning process.

Educational Context and Student Communication

Beyond the everyday coursework and curricula, the facet of interpersonal communication plays a large role in shaping students' educational experiences. The authors of *Investigation and Interpersonal Relationship of College Students with Intelligent Big Data* described this as, “The interpersonal relationship of college students is closely related to the personality health of

college students, the formation of self-consciousness, the development of health psychology, and the social adaptability of college students” (Zheng et al., 2022).

Particularly within the college environment, students encounter new situations that push them to interact with their peers, mentors, professors, and even themselves, in entirely unfamiliar ways. Interactions where the students are able to practice active listening, empathy, and effective conveyment of ideas/feelings can positively affect their sense of belonging, self-esteem, and motivation to learn. On the contrary, ineffective communication may lead the student to feel misunderstood and/or apathetic towards their academic learnings. Evidently, the development of college students' selves is intricately intertwined with interpersonal connections, which hold a deep impact on various aspects of their college experience (Zheng et al., 2022).

While interpersonal communication is a pervasive element within the university setting itself, Bernd Schulz focuses on the value of these skills specifically for students making the shift from the educational environment to the professional world. In *The Importance of Soft Skills: Education Beyond Academic Knowledge*, Schulz states that for numerous years, both employers and educators have consistently expressed concerns regarding the deficiency of “soft skills” among graduates emerging from higher education institutions. Of particular note is the frequently overlooked area of communication skills. While “soft skills” range depending on the context, Schulz uses the term to define two categories of personal traits and interpersonal skills (Schulz, 2008). He argues that while some aspects of communication may seem irrelevant or annoying to partake in, such as “Small Talk”, having developed and practiced these skills can be a determining factor of whether or not a job interview landed you the position.

Schulz puts it plainly, “Any educator’s dream is that graduates, especially from tertiary education institutions, should not only be experts in a certain field but mature personalities with a

well balanced, rounded off education. However, this characteristic is reflected in soft skills, not in hard skills” (Schulz, 2008). For that reason, it’s becoming increasingly necessary that graduates are prepared for the workforce by developing interpersonal skills and strong senses of self-awareness.

Method

Participants

The current study collected data from a Senior Capstone class required for seniors majoring in Communication Studies and/or English Communication Arts, and is taught by Katherine Lehman-Meyer at St. Mary’s University in San Antonio, Texas. As stated on its syllabus, the course focuses on three areas of career development: (1) life-planning, an exploration of talents, skills, education, and career interests; (2) intensive careers research, study and practice of procedures used in career search, including (3) résumés, interviews, letters of application. The Enneagram Assessment and reflections were assigned in support of the first learning outcome. This class has a sample size of 18 students out of the 3,500+ students at St. Mary’s University. Out of the 18 students, all seniors, enrolled in this course, 14 participated in the pre-assessment survey and 11 participated in the post-assessment survey.

Protection of Human Rights

The materials of this study were part of an assignment within the curriculum of the course. The Internal Research Board approval was requested but wasn’t necessary since this was a review of a specific curriculum enhancement. Each student was given the option whether or not to participate or to withhold their results, the first question of both surveys asked students to select

whether or not they gave permission for their responses to be recorded and used for this specific study. Each person's choice is recognized and respected accordingly.

Materials

To begin the class, the professor included an introductory video on the Enneagram's history and typology as an educational resource. This video gave an overview of the historical development of the Enneagram personality assessment system and its typological framework (Howe, 2020). Presenting this video ensured each student would have a foundational and uniform understanding of the Enneagram assessment. A pre-assessment survey was administered to students as a way of discerning their initial understandings before their exposure to the Enneagram. This survey was specifically designed to collect baseline data on participants' personality characteristics, preferences, and self-identification. The Enneagram assessment used for this study was the Cloverleaf Enneagram Assessment. This Enneagram assessment was selected because of its high ratings and reviews, and it also provided free access to the tool so that every student was taking an identical Enneagram assessment. Finally, a post-assessment survey was also used and administered to the students to measure what, if any, impacts the Enneagram Assessment had on the students' self-perception.

Data Collection Process

This study was conducted over a span of two class periods, and for that reason the procedure will be separated and described as Class One and Class Two. The main objective of Class One was to introduce the students to the Enneagram personality assessment system. The following steps outline the procedure for Class One:

- (1) *Introduction to the Enneagram:* At the beginning of Class One, students were presented with a video that gave a general introduction to the Enneagram, including its history, theoretical foundations, and the nine unique personality types it describes.
- (2) *Pre-Assessment Survey:* For the next step, students were asked to complete a pre-assessment survey. This survey serves as a baseline measure of their perceived relationship between personality and communication.
- (3) *Enneagram Assessment:* Students were then instructed to take the Enneagram assessment, a standardized instrument designed to identify their primary Enneagram Type. This assessment was administered in accordance with established guidelines for accuracy and reliability. They used their own technical devices such as a laptop or cellular phone.
- (4) *Discussion on Results:* After completing the Enneagram assessment, a brief discussion was held. Facilitated by the class instructor, during this session students had the opportunity to share and reflect upon their Enneagram Type results. Sharing was optional.

Class Two, which took place six days after Class One, was designed to assess any potential changes in students' self-perceptions and understanding of their Enneagram Types. The procedures for Class Two were as follows:

(1) *Reflection Time*: In the days between Class One (Thursday) and Class Two (Tuesday), the reflection upon this Enneagram experience and exploration of their personal Enneagram Types was encouraged to the students.

(2) *Post-Assessment Survey*: Upon reconvening in Class Two, students were asked to fill out a post-assessment survey that complimented the first. The purpose of the post-assessment survey was to measure any new insights of the students' self-perceived personality traits and communication styles.

Data Analysis Plan

The surveys were constructed using Qualtrics, using a Likert scale. This tool provides summary reports once all responses have been submitted, and it is through these reports that the responses are able to be measured. The data was then replicated through Google Spreadsheets in order to make more visually aesthetic and presentable graphs. Through these summaries, we can gather an understanding of how people perceive and respond to the Enneagram assessments before and after their exposure to the educational intervention.

Results

A majority of the students were unfamiliar with the Enneagram personality system prior to the first course day introduction (Figure 2), and almost none of them had taken it before (Figure 3). A majority of the students agreed that their personality affects the way they communicate with others a lot, while others responded even more enthusiastically: that it influences it a great deal (Figure 4).

As for understanding personality, all students responded that this is either very important or extremely important for building relationships with others (Figure 5). The anticipated insight to be gained by taking the Enneagram assessment varied, with two students leaning towards neutral or likely not, while all others said probably or definitely (Figure 6). And the last question asked them to specify expectations, resulting in a range of responses (Figure 7).

Figure 2. Have you heard of the Enneagram Personality Typing System before today?

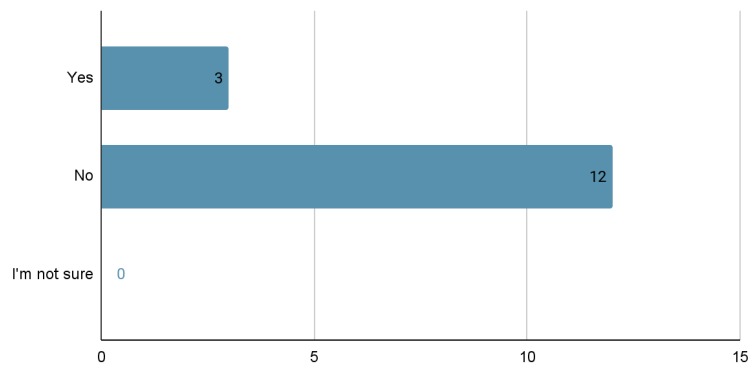


Figure 3. Have you taken the Enneagram personality assessment before?

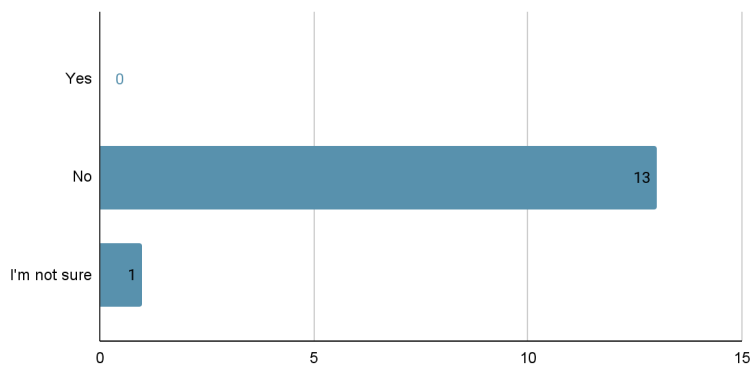


Figure 4. In your opinion, how much do you think your personality influences the way you communicate with others?

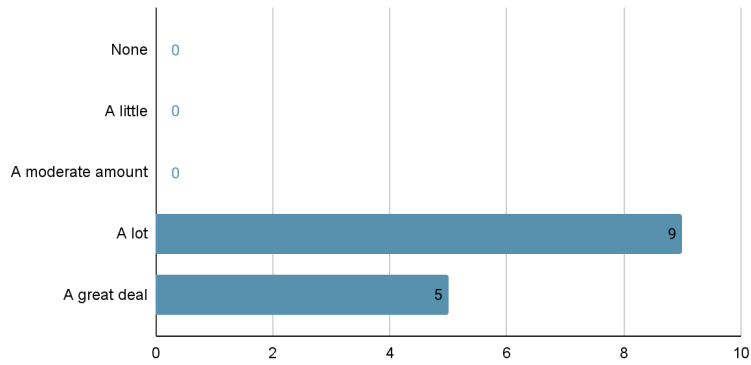


Figure 5. How important do you believe understanding your personality is for building better relationships with others?

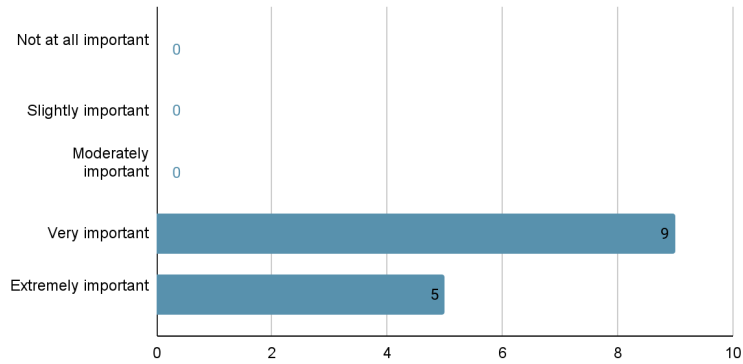


Figure 6. Do you anticipate that gaining insight into your Enneagram type will help you better understand your strengths

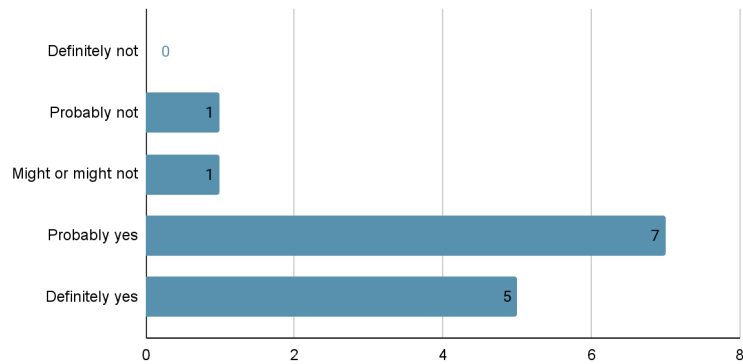


Figure 7. Do you have any specific expectations about how your Enneagram type result might affect your communication style?

I have none
I don't have specific expectations coming out of this. I am curious to see what I will find out.
It might tell me that my style is different from others in the way that I communicate, and it might change my perspective of how I see things.
No
No
It might help me better understand my strengths and how I can better communicate with others.
I believe I may be a bit more mindful of how I communicate for a while.
I expect it will give me broad ideas of my personality type and thus give further insight into my specific way of communicating.
I think I might get something to do with overthinking hindering possible relationships.

The post-assessment survey revealed how students reacted to the Enneagram, especially as it focused on their understanding of their own personality and communication. Most students affirmed that their Enneagram results very accurately reflected their personalities (Figure 8), with a majority also stating that the Enneagram revealed aspects they were not yet aware of (Figure 9). Many students either stated that understanding their self-awareness helped them understand their strengths and weaknesses better, while others stated that it confirmed what they already knew about themselves (Figure 10). Almost all students said this assessment led them to reflect on their behaviors and thought patterns more (Figure 11).

When it came to interpersonal communication changes, more students reported that they hadn't noticed any since learning about their Enneagram Types (Figure 12), but several had provided descriptions of these changes, such as "I've become more self aware of my habits I need to fix" and "I am more aware of my own way of speaking to people" (Figure 13). Most students found it easier to understand and communicate with others after knowing their Enneagram Types (Figure 14), and almost all students believed that their knowledge of the Enneagram positively affected their self-awareness and interpersonal communication skills (Figure 15). All of the students agreed that this kind of self-assessment is helpful in a career development course (Figure 16).

Figure 8. After receiving your Enneagram test results, how accurately did you feel they reflected your personality?

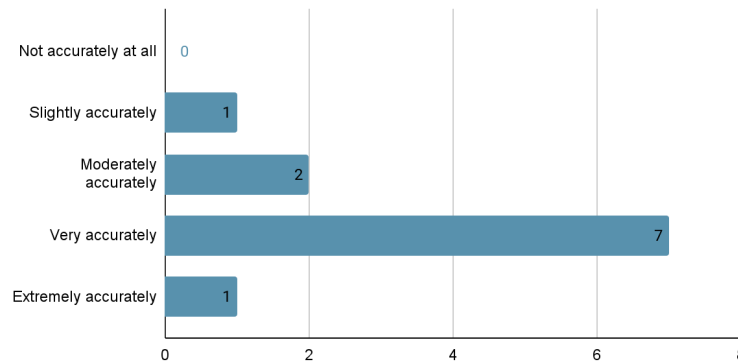


Figure 9. Did your Enneagram test results reveal aspects of your personality that you were not aware of before?

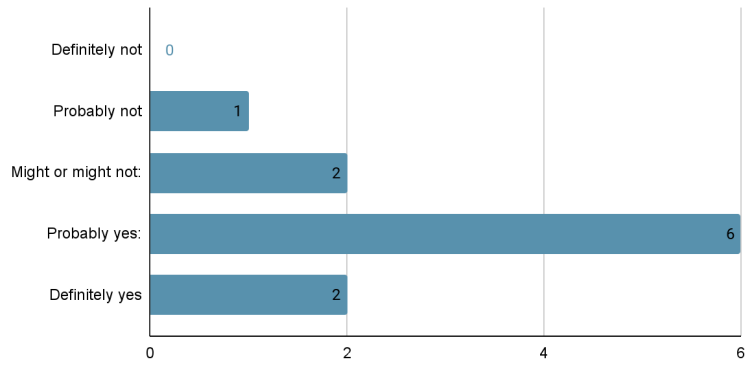


Figure 10. How has understanding your Enneagram type influenced your self-awareness? Select the answer you feel

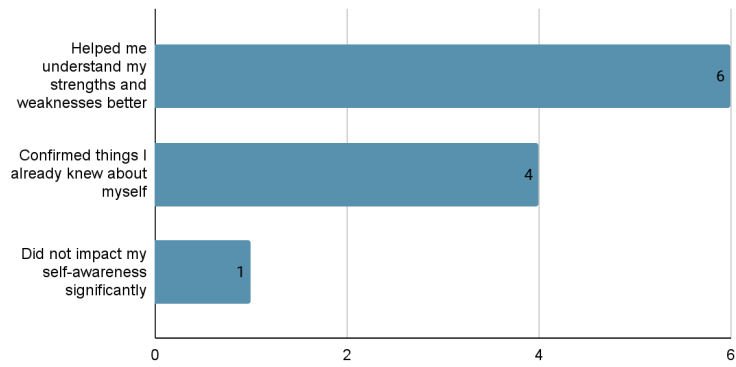


Figure 11. Did learning about your Enneagram type lead you to reflect on your behaviors and thought patterns more?

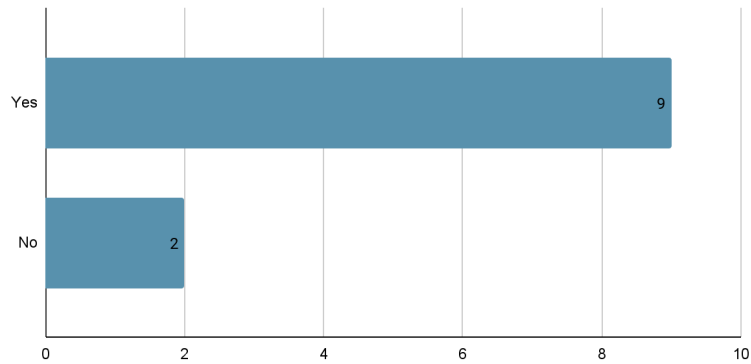


Figure 12. Have you noticed any changes in how you communicate with others since learning about your Enneagram

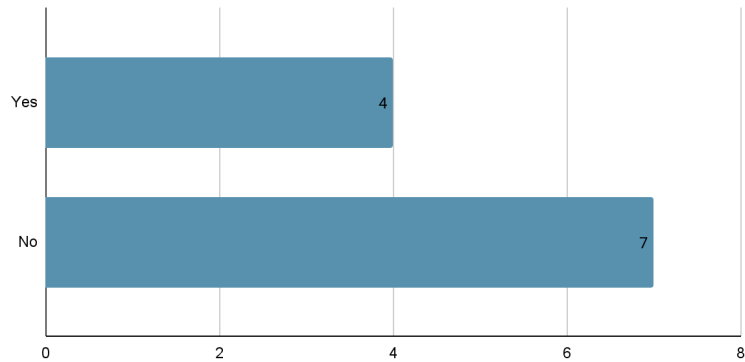


Figure 13. If you answered yes to noticing changes in your communication patterns since learning about your Enneagram Type, how would you describe those changes?

I've become more isolated in how I interact with others. By that I mean that I am reserved when it comes to interaction except when others willingly invite me to an interaction with them
I am more aware of my own way of speaking to people
I've become more self aware of habits I need to fix
N/A

Figure 14. Have you found it easier to understand and communicate with others after knowing their Enneagram types?

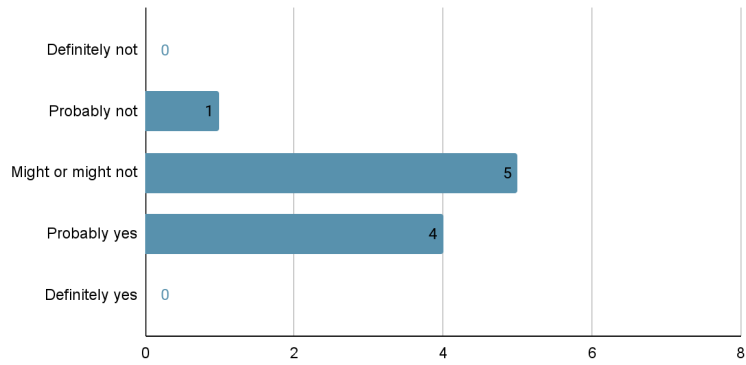


Figure 15. Do you believe that your knowledge of the Enneagram has positively affected your self-awareness and interpersonal

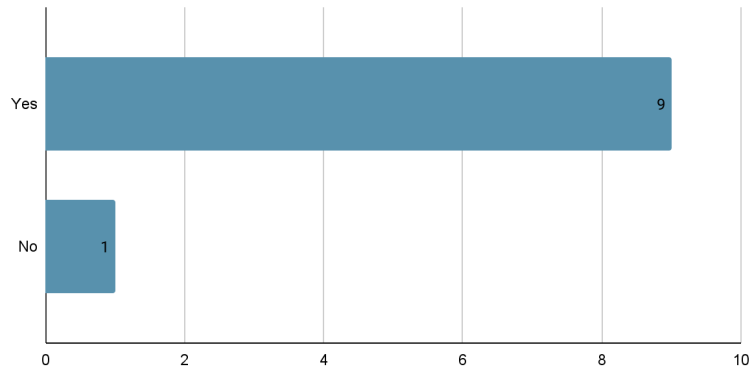


Figure 16. Is doing this kind of self-survey helpful in a career development course?

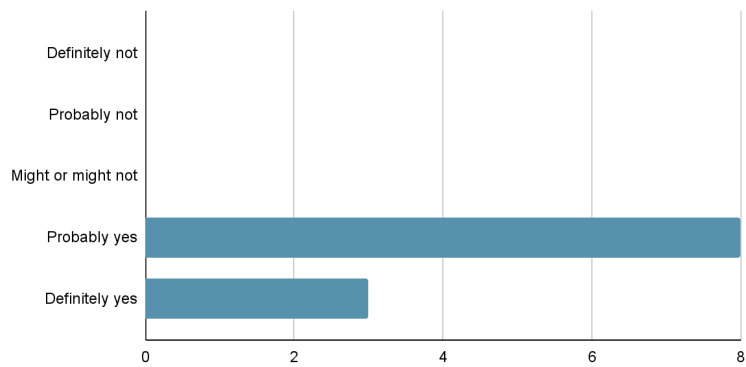


Figure 17. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience with the Enneagram test and its impact on your self-awareness and interpersonal communication?

N/A
Nope! This was a very cool exercise!
No
Completing the Enneagram essentially hammered in some facts I already knew about myself

Discussion

These results give several descriptions of how the students embraced the Enneagram personality system assessment as a learning tool and its impact on their self-awareness and communication styles. Prior to taking the assessment, most students were unfamiliar and hadn't taken it. However, a considerable majority agreed that their personality greatly influences their communication with others, underlining the recognized impact of understanding one's own personality in interpersonal interactions. Understanding personality was unanimously considered either very important or extremely important, thus emphasizing the role of self-awareness for cultivating deep connections with others. The anticipated insights of the Enneagram assessment differed among students, with most (85.71%) expressing a positive and open-minded attitude towards potential benefits (Figure 6). This included expectations of widened understanding of their personality types and how it relates to their communication style.

The post-assessment survey revealed that most students felt that their Enneagram results accurately reflected their personalities – many revealing that they had learned new aspects of themselves from it. This suggests that the Enneagram evaluation could serve as an important curriculum device for improving mindfulness. Additionally, the assessment asked students to reflect on their behaviors and thought patterns. Even though most students reported no noticeable changes in their interpersonal communication, those who did provided insightful descriptions,

such as increased self-awareness of habits and improved awareness of their communication styles.

A majority of the students found it easier to understand and communicate with others after learning their Enneagram Types, strengthening the belief that self-awareness can enhance interpersonal skills. And since nearly all students believed that their knowledge of their Enneagram Type had a positive effect on their self-awareness and interpersonal communication skills, it makes sense why all students affirmed this tool to be appropriate for a class focused on career development. Thus, the findings are evidence that incorporating self-assessment tools like the Enneagram into such courses is perceived as beneficial, enhancing students' self-awareness, communication skills, and appreciation of their own personalities.

Implications

Given its success in the setting of a college Communication Studies course, educational institutions could consider integrating self-assessment tools, such as the Enneagram, into their curriculum. Previous research supports this concept. It especially makes sense to do this within the Communication Studies curriculum since students have studied many facets of communication already. This research proposes that students find value in such assessments, which can provide them with deeper self-awareness – the foundation for improved interpersonal communication and developed soft skills. The same could be said for workplace environments; organizations could incorporate similar assessments into their training and development programs. Like students, employees who understand their own communication tendencies and those of their colleagues may be better equipped to work together more efficiently and effectively.

This doesn't just mean assigning the Enneagram as a task without required thought. The lesson plan that was studied incorporated a discussion and shared reflections, while other studies recorded Enneagram-related contemplations for weeks (Perryman et al., 2020). Therefore, any organization could benefit from offering workshops, courses, and training that not only help members to enhance their strengths and recognize habitual thinking, but also help them better understand their colleagues' diverse perspectives and inclinations. It is also worth mentioning that while in-depth exercises incorporating the Enneagram results were not continued throughout the semester, students seemed to still find value in the tool. This suggests that the Enneagram is not necessarily an activity that would consume much time in a curriculum in order to still be considered effective.

Outside of organizations, any individual seeking personal growth and self-awareness may be recommended to try personality assessments like the Enneagram. As this study and prior research shows, understanding how one's personality influences communication and relationship can help one improve their self-awareness, empathy, and emotional intelligence. Because of that, this tool may be especially encouraged to individuals seeking to better manage stress, anxiety, and other mental health issues.

Recommendations

This research calls for further investigation into the effectiveness of personality assessments. One recommendation is for future studies to explore the cultural and contextual factors of the Enneagram results, such as whether there are commonalities of personality types amongst a certain gender or how one's ethnicity might influence their Enneagram Type. They could also study the long-term impact of such assessments, including how they influence career choices,

leadership styles, relationships, etc. – especially when speculating the dynamics of personality. One other recommendation is to conduct comparative studies that assess the effectiveness of other self-assessment tools. While this research focused on the Enneagram, it could be worth comparing its effectiveness against the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), the StrengthsQuest, or the Big Five personality traits, especially when seeking to best improve self-awareness, communication, and relationships.

Limitations

This study was conducted with a relatively small sample size of 18 students from a specific Senior Capstone class at St. Mary's University. This sample size is limited, and may not fully represent the diverse range of students found in larger populations, even though the University is a Hispanic Serving Institution which is reflected in the composite of the studied class. Further, the study did not specifically address the diversity of the sample in terms of gender, ethnicity, or other demographic information, thus impacting the generalizability of the findings to other populations. This data was also collected within the context of a Senior Capstone class focused on career development in Communication Studies, making it difficult to apply the results to students in other academic disciplines or to students outside of educational settings.

The Enneagram assessment was introduced and administered as a course assignment, taking up a total of only two class periods. Consequently, the results may not capture long-term changes in self-perception and communication. The surveys asked students to reflect upon this assignment, which in itself could introduce bias into their responses. In other words, the students may have answered questions differently, or provided answers they believe are desirable or

expected, due to their awareness of being part of not only schoolwork, but also a research project. Students were not graded on their reflections or assessment of the tool.

Conclusion

Through the use of the Enneagram personality assessment, the relationship between self-awareness, personality assessment, and effective communication in higher education was analyzed. The results, both from existing studies as well as this one, suggest that the Enneagram can promote self-awareness and better communication skills, making it a valuable tool for educational institutions. Therefore, integration of self-assessment tools in educational and workplace settings is recommended, as well as further research. This study's limitations, however, such as a small sample size and potential biases, should be considered. Overall, this research reveals the potential benefits of using personality assessments to strengthen self-awareness and communication, implicating personal growth and professional success. While the assessment may not provide all of the answers to our reflective questions, it can serve as a stepping stone on our paths towards greater self-understanding.

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