

**Utilizing Personality Assessments to Identify Personal and Professional Development Needs
for Freshman Students Within the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences at
Tarleton State University**

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Introduction

The Soviet launching of Sputnik in 1957 forced the United States to launch into major education reform (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). A commission formed under the Reagan administration identified needed areas of improvement for the entire education system (Diorio, 2019; National Research Council 1988; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). The same need for enhancement is still relevant today as students in the U.S. rank 25th in the world in science related academic achievement (OECD, 2016). Students in agricultural education need access to quality instruction on all levels, including the university level (Rushton, Morgan, & Richard, 2007; McKenna, Parenti, 2017; Sacks, Halder, 2017). One of the primary goals of education is to help students grow and develop personally and professionally (Scales, Benson, Roehlkeparain, Sesma, & Dulmen, 2006). Personality assessments define strengths and weaknesses and, by definition, identify areas for potential personal and professional growth (Daniels, Sarcino, Fraley, Christian, & Pardo, 2018). This study utilized the Enneagram system of personality in conjunction with a unit of instruction on personality styles to assist students in First Year Seminar (FYS) courses to identify areas for personal and professional development while attending Tarleton State University.

Theoretical & Conceptual Framework

This study was framed through the lens of Human Capital Theory (HCT) and the Enneagram personality assessment. HCT establishes that skills, traits, and education levels can raise an individual's value towards a specific job or career field (Flair, 2019). These skills, traits, and education levels can also be raised to increase an individual's value in a specific case. This study was also framed through the conceptual framework of the Enneagram personality assessment framework (Sutton, 2012). The Enneagram personality assessment framework is a nine-type system that predicts behavior and characteristics based on psychological fears and motivations (Maise, 2007). The system recognizes that genetics (less dominantly) and natural development (more dominantly) both contribute to the formation of the basic motivation of the individual, which will influence their decision making and trait development.

Purpose and Objectives

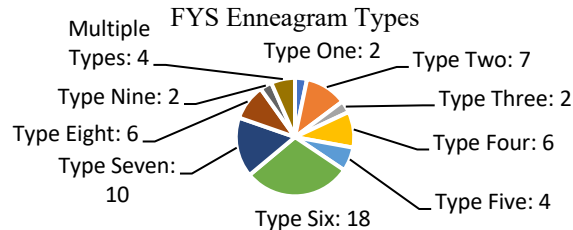
The purpose of this study was to describe the personality traits of current students in diverse majors (i.e. Agricultural Education, Agricultural Communications, leadership, etc.) within the college of agriculture at Tarleton State University Objectives included: 1) describe the personality traits of students enrolled in the FYS course; 2) describe the relationships that exist between the different degree areas represented in this course.

Methodology

This survey research focused on a census of students who were currently enrolled in the FYS course ($N=61$) within the college of agriculture. All participants were members of three sections of the FYS course taught by the same professor that attended class on certain day. All students that attended class completed a survey, and students not in class on that day were not included in this study. The survey consisted of nine segments that each contained 15 Likert scale questions with “1” representing “strongly disagree” and “5” representing “strongly agree.”. Each segment number corresponded to the Enneagram type of the same number. Each segment’s responses were added together for a total score on each segment. The segment with the highest score corresponded to that student’s Enneagram type. Data was collected in conjunction with a unit of instruction on personality types and assessments. Students were given a description of the study, a brief background presentation on the Enneagram system of personality and asked to complete an Enneagram questionnaire that was then graded by the researcher. Student demographic data (major area and gender) was then collected from the students’ academic records.

Results/Findings

The findings show that the most common personality type of the FYS class, determined by the mode, was type 6 ($n=18$; $\%=29.5$). The most common degree plan found within these FYS classes, also determined by calculating the mode, was agricultural education with the teacher certification option ($n=31$; $\%=50.8$). There were also four individuals whose type could not be determined because the scores on the personality assessment were tied between two types.



Conclusions

With such a large portion of this sample being represented by a single type, consideration should be taken into that type’s predominant characteristics: committed, security oriented, and anxious. It is important to note that these characteristics may also be shown because these students are still in their first year of post-secondary education. The high rate of Agricultural Education-Certification Option students was expected, as the professor is an Agricultural Education faculty member, but contributes to the use of this assessment in both pre-service and inservice school-based agricultural educators.

Recommendations

For more generalizable conclusions, this study should be replicated in different departments to lower the concentration of Agricultural Education-Certification Option students in the study. The study could also be conducted outside of colleges of Agriculture to find relationships that exist in other colleges.

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