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Teaching Strategies for Personality Assessment at the Undergraduate Level

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ABSTRACT

Personality assessment is a crucial component of clinical practice, and the training and proficiency criteria to develop competence are complex and multifaceted. Like many advanced topics, the field of personality assessment would benefit from early exposure in undergraduate classroom settings. This research evaluates how an undergraduate personality course can be enhanced through 2 enrichment activities (self-assessments and a personality project). Students completed several self-assessments of their personality and wrote a comprehensive and integrative personality assessment about themselves. Results demonstrated that these activities increased interest in personality assessment, deepened understanding of course material, and promoted student growth and self-exploration. We discuss the benefits of these enrichment activities for the student, instructor, and field of personality science.

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Personality assessment is a crucial component of clinical practice, serving a variety of functions in health care and organizational settings (Weiner & Greene, 2008). For the patient, a comprehensive assessment can enhance care by identifying strengths and weaknesses (Maurish, 2013; Meyer et al., 2001; Roche, Pincus, Conroy, Hyde, & Ram, 2014; Sellbom, Marion, & Bagby, 2013). For the clinician, these assessments can facilitate the selection of evidence-based treatment options to improve patient outcomes (Fisher, 2015; Newman, Castonguay, Jacobson, & Moore, 2015). Additionally, developing competency in personality assessment can create unique prospects for the clinician in consulting (e.g., business, outpatient centers, hospitals); diversified income streams through an assessment practice, which can often be billed at a higher rate than psychotherapy; job enrichment; and opportunities to see a wider breadth of patients than could be possible if engaging in psychotherapy alone (Krishnamurthy, Acklin, Engelman, & Erard, 2013).

For clinicians and their patients to benefit from personality assessments, the clinicians must be competent. Newly formed proficiency criteria for personality assessment emphasize knowledge in the psychometric properties of test instruments, command of the psychological theory and rationales underlying test construction, skill in administration and interpretation of common instruments, integration from multiple data sources, and effective communication of findings, along with several other aspects beyond the scope of this article (American Psychological Association, 2015). Thus, attaining proficiency in personality assessment is as challenging as it is valuable.

Despite the many benefits outlined for conducting personality assessment, training in personality assessment has been on a multidecade decline (Belter & Piotrowski, 2001).

This decline could be due to several reasons, including low reimbursement rates, lack of awareness of psychological assessment as an option, and balancing the perceived benefits against the amount of time required to complete an assessment. One of the ways to combat this decline is through early exposure to personality assessment in undergraduate courses. If students can develop a passion for personality assessment early, it might promote an appetite for advanced practicum on personality assessment during graduate training and internship. This, in turn, would develop students more adept and interested in integrating personality assessment into their careers. Enrichment (i.e., exposing students early to complex topics, priming the learning process for later on) is a widely recognized technique in educational instruction (Renzulli, 1977), which could be particularly useful in developing the complex yet crucial competencies in personality assessment. In particular, the enrichment triad model suggests developing curriculum that (a) exposes students to a variety of advanced topics, (b) encourages higher level thinking, and (c) engages students with the material like a practicing professional (Renzulli & Reis, 1985). More recently, Marzano (2000) developed a new taxonomy of educational objectives that continues to stress the importance of higher level thinking (e.g., analysis, synthesis), but also recognizes students' contribution to advanced learning through their initial interest, emotional engagement with the material, and ability to monitor their growth. In this article, we describe an approach to enhancing the typical curriculum of an undergraduate course in personality through the addition of personality assessment activities. We designed our enrichment activities with these frameworks in mind.

Adding personality assessment to an undergraduate personality course

The course was designed to promote a deeper knowledge of personality and its assessment and to be a vehicle for self-exploration. To meet these objectives, the typical course curriculum was enhanced using self-assessments employing common personality assessments and a comprehensive personality project. Each is reviewed presently along with its relevance to personality assessment proficiency and self-exploration.

Self-assessment

Before a lecture on a given personality construct, students were asked to complete a self-report measure that is commonly used to capture a particular personality construct (e.g., the Five-Factor Inventory [McCrae & Costa, 2004] to capture aspects of the Five-factor model of personality; see procedure section later for complete list). The measures were scored and returned to students in advance of the lecture. After they were introduced to the personality construct, the students were informed about the assessment measure they completed, including evidence of its psychometric validity, available normative samples, and potential limitations. Students were then taken through how to interpret their own score on the measure, typically reported as a *Z* score or scores compared to a normative sample.

The self-assessment activity is consistent with several proficiency goals. Specifically, students take an active learning approach to the fundamentals of test psychometrics by completing the self-assessments and engaging in a discussion about the properties (e.g., structure, reliability, validity) of the instrument. Students also benefit from observing how personality theories become operationalized through self-report instruments, highlighting the link between psychological theory and test construction. Finally, students practice interpreting their scores from the instruments. This has educational benefit not just for the specific tests they learn to interpret, but more important for developing an overarching framework for test interpretation that can carry over into other tests they might learn later in their career.

The self-assessment activity also fosters self-exploration in several ways. First, students can reflect on how they relate to the construct in a personal way, and then examine their score to see if their expectation held true. It also challenges them to evaluate how they relate to themselves and their world, and how their similarities and differences to others shape who they are and what they might become.

Personality project

The personality project is a comprehensive report that the students author about themselves. Students are asked to provide a comprehensive snapshot of who they are at this moment in their lives and how they might change over the next several years, by integrating various sources of data, including a self-written psychological life history, self-assessment data, reflections on personality theories they have

found influential, and identification of themes they notice throughout their report. The information is organized like an assessment report, starting with history and then organizing test data by psychological domain (self, emotions, interpersonal, etc.). A written report of this nature is complex for an introductory undergraduate-level course. Thus, to facilitate this project, the students are provided with several scaffolding materials. They are given a lecture on principles of assessment report writing, and a detailed guideline on how aspects of the report should be written. They are also provided with an example paper with some sections that serve as a template (e.g., reporting levels of neuroticism) and other sections that are expected to be more original (e.g., how does neuroticism score correspond with life history data and other measures of affective experiences). Weekly office hours are dedicated to assisting students who need help with interpretation and integration of testing data. At the very least, this project is a useful way to help students solidify their understanding of the course material.

The personality project activity is consistent with many proficiency goals. Students must acquire an ability to interpret the self-assessment data, which provides another opportunity to refine this skill. Students practice integrating data across sources (e.g., life history with the score of an instrument, two assessment instrument scores with each other) and content domains (e.g., self, emotions, and cognition) that emphasize writing a report that describes the person and not the test. This project also exposes them to the structure and language of assessment reports using an active learning style that is self-relevant and thus more powerful.

This project requires students to engage in self-exploration and integration of their past, present, and future. Undertaking this process could be especially important, as college is often a transitional period in which students develop their own identity, separate from their families, begin their lives as adults, and explore career opportunities (Kenny & Rice, 1995). This project fosters personal growth by challenging the students to reflect carefully on their personality, and the process of integrating data can often reveal something about themselves that was not apparent when data were reflected on separately. This project can also serve as a sort of time capsule for students to review in the future. They might enjoy observing how their personality, goals, and ambitions might have changed during the crucial developmental period of emerging adulthood.

Typical course curriculum

In addition to the self-assessments and personality project, there were two other aspects of the course curriculum worth noting. First, students were given three exams throughout the semester (50-item, multiple-choice exams). Second, students completed 11 in-class thought exercises given periodically throughout the semester. These were 11 written reflections completed in class (graded on completion) as a marker of attendance and to promote self-reflection from the content taught that day. Examples include a 5-min “free association” writing task during a lecture on Freud and choosing five words to describe themselves during a lecture on personality traits.

This study

This study evaluated the effectiveness of adding the self-assessment and personality project activities to an introductory course on personality. We hypothesized that such additions will do the following:

1. Increase interest in personality assessment among undergraduate students.
2. Demonstrate a unique ability to engage students in learning personality theories and promoting self-exploration.
3. Enhance self-exploration in domains consistent with the course content and self-assessment topics.

For each of these hypotheses, we further expected some specificity in the findings that would suggest students are benefitting uniquely from the enrichment activities (as opposed to a generalized view that the course was helpful). For instance, Hypothesis 1 examined increased interest in personality assessment, psychological theories, and psychology in general, with our expectation that the enrichment activities would enhance interest in personality assessment and theory more than psychology generally. Hypothesis 2 evaluated whether the enrichment activities were rated more highly than traditional course curriculum (exams, in-class thought exercises), which would demonstrate the importance of these enrichment activities specifically. Hypothesis 3 evaluated whether the students gained a better understanding of topics central to course material (self and interpersonal functioning), compared to less central topics. This would highlight the specificity with which students identified themselves growing, as opposed to a general view that the class helped them to grow.

Method

Participants

Sixty-five (of 101) students enrolled in an introduction to personality psychology course agreed to participate (details of consent are described later). Students were eligible to take this course after completing an introduction to psychology course, and the majority of this sample (57%) was majoring in psychology. They were compensated \$5 in exchange for allowing their course performance and assessment data to be used for research purposes. In addition, they completed a brief survey about course effectiveness, and other measures beyond the scope of this article. The sample was 79% female and were between the ages of 18 and 23 ($M = 20.52$, $SD = 1.06$). Students were 66% White, 12% Asian, 12% multiracial, 6% African American, 2% Hispanic or Latino, and 2% another race or ethnicity.

Measures

Interest

During the final 3 weeks of the course, students completed three questions gauging their initial interest (e.g., “At the beginning of the course, how interested were you in ...”) in the field of psychology, personality theories, and personality assessment (see Appendix). Ratings were answered on a 1 to 5 rating scale (*not at all interested, very little interest, somewhat interested, very interested, extremely interested*). Three questions addressed

their changing interest as a result of the course (e.g., “How did taking this course change your interests in the ...”) in the field of psychology, personality theories, and personality assessment. Ratings were answered on a -3 to 3 rating scale (*extremely disinterested, much less interested, somewhat less interested, did not change my interest, somewhat more interested, much more interested, extremely interested*).

Effectiveness of course activities

Students rated how well an activity “helped me to understand psychological theories” and “helped me to better understand myself and my personality.” Both were rated on a 1 to 5 rating scale (*strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree*). The four activities included the self-assessments, the project paper, in-class thought exercises, and exams. So that the students could effectively rate each of these four activities, examples of these activities were given to prime their memory. Specifically, lists of the self-assessments, a description of the core aspects of the project paper, and examples of in-class thought exercises were given alongside the 1 to 5 rating scale.

Topics of self-exploration

Students answered, “As a result of this course, I have a better understanding of my ...” across various topics on a 1 to 5 rating scale (*strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree*). The specific topics were myself in social relationships, my identity, increased interest in growing as a person, myself in romantic relationships, who I am as a person, how I have grown as a person, my family, myself in relation to my culture, my physical abilities, and my artistic abilities. The former topics were more central to the course topics and curriculum, and the latter topics were less emphasized due to being relatively tangential to the topic of personality.

Procedure

As part of the existing course protocol, students completed self-assessments throughout the semester using an online website, and their responses were scored and returned to them. Although beyond the scope of this article, the specific self-assessments included psychological defenses (Defensive Style Questionnaire; Andrews, Singh, & Bond, 1993), personality organization (Inventory of Personality Organization; Lenzenweger, Clarkin, Kernberg, & Foelsch, 2001), Erikson’s ego strengths (Psychosocial Inventory of Ego Strengths; Markstrom, Sabino, Turner, & Berman, 1997), attachment style (Experiences in Close Relationships–Short Form; Wei, Russell, Mallinckrodt, & Vogel, 2007), the Five-factor model of personality traits (NEO–Five Factor Inventory; McCrae & Costa, 2004), cognitive attribution styles (Strategy and Attribution Questionnaire; Nurmi, Salmela-Aro, & Haavisto, 1995), interpersonal styles (Interpersonal Sensitivities Circumplex; Hopwood et al., 2011; Circumplex Scales of Interpersonal Values; Locke, 2000; Inventory of Interpersonal Strengths–32; Hatcher & Rogers, 2012), an abbreviated psychological life history (McAdams, 1995); and a week-long online diary study recording 42 or more social interactions throughout a week. Toward the end of the semester, students completed the personality project paper and submitted an electronic copy to the instructor.

During the final 2 weeks of the semester, students were given the opportunity to participate in this study. Because the first author was in a dual-role position (researcher, educator), he removed himself from the recruiting, data collection, and compensation tasks. The second author (a past teaching assistant for the course) presented the students with the opportunity to participate in this study while the first author (instructor) was not present. During this consenting procedure, students were informed multiple times that the instructor would not know who was in the study and would not have access to their responses until after final grades were submitted. The students were made aware that their participation had no bearing on class performance, and they could be compensated in full even if (a) they chose to opt out of sharing their class activity data, and (b) they did not complete a single item on the survey. Students were informed of potential risks (mainly that some questions might cause personal discomfort) and were given access to mental health resources in case they experienced distress. Students were given the second author's email address for any concerns regarding the study. After consenting to be in the study, participants were compensated by the second author.

Analysis

Data on interest, course activity effectiveness, and topics of self-exploration were evaluated first concerning whether they differed significantly from a neutral response (one-sample *t* test evaluating statistical difference from neutral response). Within these domains, data were evaluated for relative difference in means (computed by calculating a deviation score and evaluating statistical difference from zero using one-sample *t* test). Such a procedure is not ideal, but was necessary given that the structure of the course did not allow for a comparison group without the added course activities. As such, the results should be considered preliminary.

Results

Interest

We hypothesized that student interest in personality assessment would increase as a result of this course structure. Students who completed the feedback survey indicated, on average, an initial interest in psychology in the very interested to extremely interested range, which was statistically different from the middle "somewhat interested" response (Table 1). Initial interest in personality theory and assessment were in the somewhat interested to very interested ranges, also significantly different from the middle response, but lower than the students' interest in psychology. As a result of completing the course, students on average expressed being somewhat more interested in the topics of psychology, personality theory, and personality assessment, with no significant difference among these topics.

Course activities

We hypothesized that the self-assessments and personality project would demonstrate a unique ability to engage students

Table 1. Course initial interest and change in interest topics.

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>
Initial interest				
Psychology	4.26 ^a	0.71	14.261	<.001
Personality theory	3.43 ^b	0.79	4.396	<.001
Personality assessment	3.60 ^b	0.95	5.099	<.001
Change in interest				
Psychology	1.06 ^a	1.06	8.083	<.001
Personality theory	0.89 ^a	1.12	6.425	<.001
Personality assessment	1.09 ^a	1.22	7.211	<.001

Note. *N* = 65. Initial interest rated on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all interested*) to 5 (*very interested*). *T* = One-sample *t* test significantly different from *somewhat interested* (3) response. Change in interest was rated on a -3 (*extremely disinterested*) to 3 (*extremely interested*) point scale. *T* = One-sample *t* test significantly different from *neutral* (0) response. Different superscripts denote significant difference in means. Mean comparisons compared for initial interest and change in interest separately. Mean comparisons conducted by creating deviation scores among the variables and evaluating their statistical difference from 0 using a one-sample *t* test.

in learning personality theories and promoting self-exploration. Students reported that self-assessments helped them understand psychological theories, significantly different from the neutral response, and on par with how much students believed exams engaged them in understanding psychological theories (Table 2). Although significantly different from neutral, the personality project was less strongly endorsed by students to help them understand psychological theories, and was comparable to the in-class thought exercises.

Regarding self-exploration, students endorsed self-assessments as the most effective, followed by the personality project, and then the in-class thought exercises (Table 2). Exams were not rated as significantly enhancing self-understanding.

Self-exploration topics

We hypothesized that self-exploration would be noticed most in the domains consistent with course content and self-assessment topics. As a personality course, the self-assessments and course instruction highlighted self and interpersonal theories, consistent with contemporary definitions of personality and its dysfunction (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). As such, we expected self and interpersonal topics to be more strongly endorsed than other topics.

Table 2. Effectiveness of course activities.

Topic	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>
Understanding psychological theories				
Self-assessments	3.83 ^a	0.78	8.57	<.001
Project paper	3.58 ^b	0.92	5.14	<.001
In-class thought exercises	3.57 ^b	0.77	5.96	<.001
Exams	3.89 ^a	0.71	10.14	<.001
Understanding self				
Self-assessments	4.31 ^a	0.64	16.59	<.001
Project paper	4.03 ^b	0.85	9.81	<.001
In-class thought exercises	3.69 ^c	0.83	6.74	<.001
Exams	3.11 ^d	0.95	0.91	.366

Note. *N* = 65. Rated on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). *T* = one-sample *t* test significantly different from *neutral* (3) response. Different superscripts denote significant difference in means. Mean differences evaluated in the domains of understanding psychological theories and understanding the self separately.

Table 3. Topics of self-exploration.

Topic	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>P</i>
Myself in social relationships	4.18 ^a	0.66	14.50	<.001
My identity	4.12 ^a	0.60	15.10	<.001
Increased interest in growing as a person	4.06 ^{ab}	0.73	11.79	<.001
Myself in romantic relationships	4.00 ^{ab}	0.77	10.46	<.001
Who I am as a person	3.94 ^b	0.70	10.74	<.001
Grown as a person	3.68 ^c	0.94	5.82	<.001
My family	3.57 ^c	0.94	4.91	<.001
Myself in relation to my culture	3.32 ^d	0.95	2.73	.008
My physical abilities	2.69 ^e	1.10	-2.25	.028
My artistic abilities	2.63 ^e	1.13	-2.64	.010

Note. *N* = 65. Rated on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). *T* = one-sample *t* test significantly different from *neutral* (3) response. Different superscripts denote significant difference in means.

All topics were significant; however, two topics (artistic and physical abilities) were in the negative direction (Table 3). This is consistent with expectations, as the course did not focus on artistic and physical abilities. Consistent with expectations, topics that related to interpersonal functioning (e.g., social relationships, romantic relationships) and self-functioning (e.g., my identity, who I am as a person) were more highly endorsed compared to other topics (e.g., family, culture), which occupied a weaker focus in the course and in the self-assessments. Interestingly, the course as a whole not only supported growth as a person, but also supported increased interest in growing as a person.

Discussion

The results provided preliminary evidence that adding personality assessment activities to an undergraduate personality course increases interest in personality assessment (although this effect on student interest was not limited to personality assessment), deepens understanding of personality theories, and catalyzes self-exploration. Specifically, self-assessments were well liked by the students and appeared effective at these aims. The personality project appeared strong in enhancing self-understanding, but performed less well on ratings of understanding psychological theories. It might be that student self-report is not the optimal way to gauge the benefit of this early exposure to advanced report writing. It could also be that the personality project is too ambitious, and the complexity might be obfuscating some of the benefits of the activity. At present, although tentative due to limitations in the study design, it seems that enhancing the personality course with a focus on personality assessment is experienced as beneficial and worthwhile.

Enrichment activity benefits

Several stakeholders benefit from enriching a personality course with personality assessment. First and foremost, the students benefit in several ways (see Table 4). Students could benefit in the present from an opportunity for personal reflection and growth, and they could benefit in the future from a comprehensive time capsule of their psychological identity. Students are exposed to higher learning skills such as data integration, synthesizing data and theories, and communicating their findings through writing. They also gain exposure to how professionals

Table 4. Summary of benefits of enrichment activities.

Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal reflection • Time capsule of their psychological identity • Higher level learning skills • Writing ability • More self-relevant research participation
Field of assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness of personality assessment as a field and specialty • Encourage interest in personality assessment • Early modeling of data–theory integration • Tethering proficiency criteria to student learning
Teacher
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More engaged students • Invigorating and well-informed discussions • Knowing students at a deeper level • Lecture feedback • Research opportunities

think about personality assessment. Finally, many undergraduate students participate in research projects with minimal feedback regarding how they performed and no opportunities to engage in a higher level discussion of what was researched. In contrast, courses such as this give students the opportunity to actively engage in the research in which they participated.

The field of personality assessment also benefits from this course structure in several ways. For instance, our research suggests the course can encourage interest in personality assessment, and it also increases awareness of it as a specialty and field, which might in turn promote students' interest in the field as they transition into graduate school. Furthermore, it gives students a chance to experience the benefits of assessment firsthand, which might make them more interested in advocating for the use of personality assessments. The early exposure also encourages and models the data–theory integration of testing information, which is a crucial component of personality assessment competence. Moreover, the course structure models and reinforces many of the proficiency criteria identified in competent personality assessment.

The course instructor also benefits from these enrichment activities. First, students might be more engaged in the material because it is self-relevant. It can also elevate course discussions because the students have experienced firsthand how these personality assessment tools are used. The personality project also allows the instructor to see the students in a deeper way, which can make the teaching experience more powerful and rewarding. The personality project also gives the instructor some insight into which theories are experienced as more or less useful by students and how they understand the theories' applications to their lives. This information can be used by the instructor to modify course lectures accordingly to ensure students are learning the accurate and meaningful components of personality theories. Finally, implementing a course design such as this allows the instructor to collect data for research purposes, while ensuring that the students are gaining something valuable as well.

Why a personality course?

Personality psychology is an ideal course for this type of enrichment because the enrichment activities themselves address

some of the limitations in teaching personality psychology. Specifically, Laura King, former editor of the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* and multidecade instructor of personality psychology, identified several areas of weakness in teaching personality psychology (King, 2013). These include an overemphasis on classic theorists at the expense of focusing on contemporary research topics, controversies, and research methods in personality science. Such an emphasis promotes confusion about what personality psychologists do currently in the field, and contributes to personality psychology having limited visibility as a focal domain in psychology.

The enrichment activities used in the undergraduate course described in this article address these weaknesses by demonstrating that personality theories can be operationalized and grounded with empirical support. It further highlights the field of personality science as contemporary and ever evolving, psychometrically sophisticated, methodologically diverse, and useful in predicting important life outcomes. It could also provide a foundational experience to encourage student interest in integrating personality assessment into their careers.

Practical considerations for implementation

To assist interested instructors, the full details of the course curriculum, scoring programs, and project instructions are available from the first author upon request. However, those versed in personality assessment might prefer to create a battery of measures and integrative papers on their own. Instructors are cautioned against using tests where teaching about the instrument might undermine its validity (e.g., especially performance-based tests), or test security. Instructors are encouraged to use basic measures of personality and refrain from clinical measures or measures indicating pathology. This is because many students will not evince clinically elevated scales (making the interpretation more tenuous and difficult), and students that do might require careful follow up, placing a burden of responsibility on the instructor that should be weighed carefully. Even using normal personality measures, it is possible the instructor will be at an increased likelihood to notice and identify student problems requiring assistance and appropriate referrals. Instructors should weigh this possibility against their current training and comfortableness when deciding to implement this course structure.

Because this course design asks students to provide private information about themselves, students should be informed of this requirement at the start of the course (e.g., via syllabus, in-class discussion). It is also wise to include mental health resources (e.g., websites, telephone numbers for local clinics) on the syllabus for students who could become distressed. Instructors should keep any testing data private. We accomplished this by having students complete online surveys that were scored into a Microsoft Excel file and then emailed to students individually (i.e., there was no group access to student test scores, and the only person authorized to score and return the testing data was the instructor). An alternative might be to have the students score their own surveys, or complete all surveys at once, which would reduce the burden on the instructor. The project paper continues to be refined over time, with some of the main

changes being simplification, examples on test data integration, and feedback during office hours.

The structure of this course might also be fitting at the graduate level. In particular, some of the concerns about test security (e.g., showing several hundred undergraduates how common assessment instruments work) can be alleviated if teaching to graduate students, allowing for the course to include common tests used in practice. It might be optimal at the beginning stages of graduate training to help the students experience a testing environment firsthand and to personally connect with the tests administered. The discussion of test psychometrics and validity was advanced for undergraduates, but might be ideally positioned developmentally for new graduate students. Furthermore, graduate students might be more competent in integrating the testing data into a comprehensive report. For those already teaching a graduate personality assessment course, such an addition to the course structure might be welcomed by the graduate students.

Limitations and future directions

There are several limitations to this project that should be addressed in future research. The most significant limitation is that there was no comparison group. Without one, we cannot conclude definitively that the enrichment activities enhanced learning over and above what a standard personality course would have done. Future research would need to implement these enrichment activities with a control classroom (e.g., a different course section), which could be difficult to accomplish. Also, this study used a small sample recruited from a single course, which might limit the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, 65% of the class chose to participate, and the reason why some students chose not to participate is unknown. It is possible those who did not participate would not have rated the enrichment activities as effective. Changes in student interest and growth in understanding were evaluated retrospectively and therefore we cannot definitively conclude that change occurred, only that the perception of the students are that they changed in those ways. Future studies should implement a pre-post design with objective and subjective markers to address student change with greater precision.

Throughout the course, students were made aware that the purpose of the self-assessments and project paper was to enhance their interest in personality assessment and promote student growth. This demand characteristic might have influenced the participants to rate the course as succeeding in those ways to conform to the “good participant” role. Given the structure of the course, this demand characteristic is unavoidable. However, finding mixed support for the project paper might indicate that students were able to discern and report which aspects of the course were more or less helpful.

Regarding the project paper, students did not benefit as much as hypothesized, and this might reflect a complexity in the assignment or an indication that the project is too advanced for an introductory course. However, most students did well on the project and were able to incorporate some advanced skills in test data integration. Thus, it seems to be an effective enrichment activity, perhaps requiring

further simplification and refinement. In future research, we hope to follow up with students in a few years to determine what effect (if any) the course had on their interests in psychology and personality assessment specifically. In particular, we might expect that the increased interest in personality assessment could result in higher likelihood of enrollment in clinical psychology doctoral programs that emphasize this training.

In summary, the self-assessments and personality project are useful additions to an undergraduate personality psychology course curriculum. The students, instructor, and the field of personality more broadly all benefit from these enrichment activities. Those in academic settings have a platform to showcase the many personal, scientific, and professional benefits of personality assessment, and using these enrichment activities provides a small step toward invigorating interest in the field for current and future generations.

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Appendix: Introduction to personality psychology feedback form

Please tell us your impression of the personality course (PSYCH 238).

- At the beginning of the course, how interested were you in THE FIELD OF PSYCHOLOGY?
 - Not at all interested
 - Very little interest
 - Somewhat interested
 - Very interested
 - Extremely interested
- At the beginning of the course, how interested were you in PERSONALITY THEORIES?
 - Not at all interested
 - Very little interest
 - Somewhat interested
 - Very interested
 - Extremely interested
- At the beginning of the course, how interested were you in PERSONALITY ASSESSMENT?
 - Not at all interested
 - Very little interest
 - Somewhat interested
 - Very interested
 - Extremely interested

4. How did taking this course change your interests in THE FIELD OF PSYCHOLOGY?
 - -3; Extremely disinterested
 - -2; Much less interested
 - -1; Somewhat less interested
 - 0; Did not change my interest
 - 1; Somewhat more interested
 - 2; Much more interested
 - 3; Extremely interested
5. How did taking this course change your interests in PERSONALITY THEORIES?
 - -3; Extremely disinterested
 - -2; Much less interested
 - -1; Somewhat less interested
 - 0; Did not change my interest
 - 1; Somewhat more interested
 - 2; Much more interested
 - 3; Extremely interested
6. How did taking this course change your interests in PERSONALITY ASSESSMENT?
 - -3; Extremely disinterested
 - -2; Much less interested
 - -1; Somewhat less interested
 - 0; Did not change my interest
 - 1; Somewhat more interested
 - 2; Much more interested
 - 3; Extremely interested
11. As a result of this course, I have a better understanding of: MYSELF IN RELATION TO MY CULTURE
 - Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
12. As a result of this course, I have a better understanding of: MY ARTISTIC ABILITIES
 - Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
13. As a result of this course, I have a better understanding of: WHO I AM AS A PERSON
 - Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
14. As a result of this course, I have a better understanding of: MY PHYSICAL ABILITIES
 - Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree

Please tell us how much you agree with the following statements.

7. As a result of this course, I have a better understanding of: MY IDENTITY
 - Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
8. As a result of this course, I have a better understanding of: MY FAMILY
 - Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
9. As a result of this course, I have a better understanding of: MYSELF IN SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS
 - Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
10. As a result of this course, I have a better understanding of: MYSELF IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS
 - Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
15. As a result of this course, I have grown as a person.
 - Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
16. As a result of this course, I have increased interest in growing as a person.
 - Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree

The next series of questions will ask you to reflect on the main features of the class separately. These are divided into:

- The self-assessments
- The project paper
- The in-class exercises
- The exams

Please answer the following questions thinking about the SELF-ASSESSMENTS you completed throughout the semester (examples listed below).

- Psychological defenses
- Personality organization
- Ego strength
- Attachment style
- Five-factor model
- Cognitive styles

- Life history
 - Interpersonal styles
 - Week long diary
17. The self-assessments helped me better understand PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES.
 - Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
 18. The self-assessments helped me better understand MYSELF AND MY PERSONALITY.
 - Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
 19. What (if anything) did you find useful about the assessments? (text response)
 20. What suggestions do you have to make the self-assessments more useful in this course? (text response)

Please answer the following questions thinking about the PERSONALITY PROJECT you completed (central parts listed below as a reminder).

- Life history
 - Interpreting assessment data in areas of self-image, interpersonal, mood, cognitive, and coping style.
 - Discussing influential theorists.
 - Summary of personality and look into the future.
 - Bonus questions.
21. The personality project helped me better understand PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES.
 - Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
 22. The personality project helped me better understand MYSELF AND MY PERSONALITY.
 - Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
 23. What (if anything) did you find useful about the personality project? (text response)
 24. What suggestions do you have to make the personality project more useful in this course? (text response)

Please answer the following questions thinking about the IN-CLASS EXERCISES you completed throughout the semester (examples listed below).

- Free associations
 - Listing your traits, and deciding which were cardinal, central, etc.
 - Describing your personal philosophy
 - Deciding whether you would want to know when you would die
 - Classifying personality dysfunction of yourself and family
 - Writing your reactions to video examples of people with personality disorders
25. The in-class exercises helped me better understand PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES.
 - Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
 26. The in-class exercises helped me better understand MYSELF AND MY PERSONALITY.
 - Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
 27. What (if anything) did you find useful about the in-class exercises? (text response)
 28. What suggestions do you have to make the in-class exercises more useful in this course? (text response)
- Please answer the following questions thinking about the EXAMS you completed throughout the semester.
29. The exams helped me better understand PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES.
 - Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
 30. The exams helped me better understand MYSELF AND MY PERSONALITY.
 - Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
 31. What (if anything) did you find useful about the exams? (text response)
 32. What suggestions do you have to make the exams more useful in this course? (text response)