

Impact of college personality course on personality understanding

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Damien Murray, an associate professor of psychology at Tulane, and PhD candidate James Moran were part of a Tulane team that studied the link between students taking an introductory psychology course and their dispositional intelligence. Credit: Rusty Costanza

For college students studying psychology, taking an introduction to personality course can go a long way in their understanding of another person's behaviors and traits.

That was the finding of a Tulane University study that looked at the connection between the introductory personality course and a [student's](#) dispositional intelligence.

The study, published in *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Psychology*, a journal of the American Psychological Association, showed that students who took the class showed marked increases in dispositional intelligence from the beginning of the class to the end.

James Moran, a Ph.D. candidate in the Tulane Department of Psychology, said dispositional intelligence is basically an understanding of another person's [personality traits](#). Analyzing how well students acquire dispositional intelligence poses important implications for students in a variety of academic, social and professional settings, he said.

"Our findings suggest that taking an introduction to personality course significantly increases the students understanding of others' personalities," Moran said. "So, they are able to understand others' behaviors as they relate to their personality."

Moran served as the principal investigator on the research team, which also included Michael Hoerger and Damien Murray, both associate professors in the Department of Psychology and Ph.D. graduate Laura Perry.

Researchers surveyed 19 Tulane undergraduates who had completed Introduction to Psychology as a prerequisite. The students were assessed on their knowledge of personality psychology on the first day of class

and the last day of class in the 2019 [fall semester](#), using a [trait](#) induction subcomponent of dispositional intelligence. Students' scores of dispositional intelligence significantly increased from the first day of class to the last day of class. Results were separated further by individual personality factors and revealed that students significantly increased their understanding of openness and agreeableness.

"Education in personality [psychology](#) equips students to scientifically understand traits and behaviors among different personalities," Hoerger said.

Moran said the findings demonstrate that students gain knowledge in their understanding of core personality dispositions that vary across people, including behavioral indicators of traits, how different traits interact and how personality traits are expressed in behavior and interaction.

"Dispositional intelligence helps us understand people better and has been associated with academic and professional success among students. This knowledge for students will benefit them in their interpersonal and professional relationships," Moran said.

Based on the findings of this study, the authors suggest that students' [personality](#) education is vital for their academic journey and professional career. In addition, the authors said, understanding personalities will increase individual interactions with classmates and coworkers over time, which could minimize conflict in work settings and help [students](#) to be more adaptable and versatile in their careers.

More information: James B. Moran et al, Dispositional intelligence of the Five-Factor Model as a learning outcome in an undergraduate personality course, *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Psychology* (2022). [DOI: 10.1037/stl0000315](https://doi.org/10.1037/stl0000315)

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