

Personality Type and Online Versus In-Class Course Satisfaction

A study of student personality types showed surprising preferences for the medium of instruction

By **Richard Daughenbaugh, Lynda Daughenbaugh, Daniel Surry, and Mohammed Islam**

Our study sought to determine if different personality types express more or less satisfaction with courses delivered online versus those delivered in the classroom. Evaluation of personality type and course satisfaction data indicated that certain personality types preferred online rather than in-class courses. More extroverted students and those who were more sensitive than intuitive preferred the way the information was presented, and the way they were evaluated, in online courses.

The Study

The participants in this study were 146 college students taking online and in-class introductory computer courses in the College of Education at the University of South Alabama. Sixty-eight students (46.6 percent) were undergraduate students, while the other 78 (53.4 percent) were graduate students. Twenty-seven (18.5 percent) of the students were enrolled in online courses; 119 (81.5 percent) were enrolled in an in-classroom course. Students were given two online questionnaires. The first was a Web-based version of the 70-question Kiersey Temperament Sorter (KTS) instrument (similar to the Myers-Briggs Temperament Indicator) for the investigation of personality. The instrument rates subjects on four variables:

- extroversion or introversion (E or I)
- intuition or sensing (N or S)
- thinking or feeling (T or F)
- judging or perception (J or P)

Because there are two possibilities for



each of the four variables, there are 16 possible results from the test, each with its own unique set of personality traits: ESTJ, ISTJ, ESFJ, ISFJ, ESTP, ISTP, ESFP, ISFP, ENFJ, INFJ, ENFP, INFP, ENTJ, INTJ, ENTP, and INTP.

The second questionnaire was a course satisfaction instrument (CSI) that we developed, which measured student satisfaction with various aspects of the course such as interaction, feedback, amount of information, and assessment procedures. The CSI was accessed by the students on the World Wide Web, and responses to the form were sent to us by anonymous e-mail.

We postulated that students whose tests indicated predominantly introverted, intuitive, thinking, and perceiving personalities would express greater

preference for online courses than the extroverted, sensing, feeling, and judging personalities. A variety of descriptive statistics — frequency counts, graphs, and mean, mode, and median — and inferential statistics — correlation and one- and two-way ANOVAs (analyses of variance) — were used to analyze the data.

Observations

We used items on the CSI to compare 10 different course-satisfaction factors with the 4 groupings of parameters from the KTS instrument. The course-satisfaction factors included interaction with the instructors, interaction with other students, amount of information presented in the course, and others. Only two groupings, the extrovert/introvert

and the sensing/intuitive, showed significant differences.

Completely opposite from what we had hypothesized, the data indicated that students rated as extroverts, rather than introverts, showed a stronger preference for the ways in which information is presented in online courses. The extroverts liked the involvement of the chat rooms, threaded discussion, and e-mail correspondences of the online courses. The introverts, by contrast, had little participation in chatting or threaded discussions, though they did participate in e-mail more than any of the other participatory activities.

We found that the intuitive, rather than the sensitive, personalities preferred the online course environment to more traditional, in-class situations. There was also a statistically significant difference between the preferences of the judging group and the perception group for the amount of student interaction in the course. The perception group expressed stronger preferences for

the amount of student interaction than the judging group. The thinking and feeling groups showed no significant differences for the 10 course-satisfaction factors.

In addition to researching course satisfaction based on personality type, we compared the responses of students who were taking online courses and students who were taking in-class courses on each of the course-satisfaction factors. We found that in-class students expressed much stronger satisfaction with the in-class environment than did students who were in the online courses. This may be due in part to our sample, which overrepresents in-class students compared to students in online classes.

Based on our research, we offer three recommendations. First, faculty teaching online classes should, at a minimum, be aware of the differences in personality type and try to address their different learning styles. Second, online faculty should provide means to increase student interaction in online courses. These

could include group projects or assignments, "students only" discussion areas, or face-to-face interactions when possible. Our third recommendation is simply that more research should be done in this area. Temperament variables play an important role in course preference, and more research could lead to a greater understanding of why certain students prefer online or in-class courses.

The full study is available online at <http://www.southalabama.edu/coe/bset/daughenbaugh/>. *e*

Richard Daughenbaugh (rdaughen@usouthal.edu) is Professor, Daniel Surry (dsurry@usouthal.edu) is Associate Professor and Program Coordinator for the M.S. Degree in Instructional Design, and Mohammed Islam (mislam@usouthal.edu) is Instructor in the Behavioral Studies and Educational Technology Department at the University of South Alabama. Lynda Daughenbaugh (lfrederi@usouthal.edu) is Associate Professor in the Curriculum and Instruction Department at the University of South Alabama.