INCREASING COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVENESS PER PERSONALITY

TYPES IN AN EFFORT TO ENHANCE STUDENT RETENTION

Melissa G. Barnett

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Elizabeth Goering, Ph.D., Chair

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Ronald M. Sandwina, Ph.D.

Master's Thesis Committee

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Kim White-Mills, Ph.D.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my children, Kyle and Maria, who have been my

support and encouragement, my motivation, and my reason for wanting to succeed.

May you be inspired to commit yourselves to becoming life long learners.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Introduction

Student retention is a problem that continues to plaque higher education institutions whose ultimate goal is to graduate students. The reported national student retention average in 2006 was between 58 and 71.6 percent, depending on to which statistics you refer. The importance for the academic community is that "the loss of students returning to campus for another year usually results in greater financial loss and a lower graduation rate for the institution, and might also affect the way that stakeholders, legislators, parents, and students view the institution" (Lau, 2003).

In order to combat low student retention rates, many have initiated a variety of programs and strategic measures to increase students' likelihood to complete their education. These initiatives can be found in the form of committees designated to conduct research and subsequently implement programs, colleges hiring outside consultants to assist with retention strategies, and the implementation of "student success" courses into the existing curriculum. Additional measures at the campus level may include: retention merit initiatives, student satisfaction and instructor surveys, and re-entry campaigns to target withdrawn students.

According to Tinto (2002), "Most institutions, in my view, have not taken student retention seriously. They have done little to change the way they organize their activities, done little to alter the student experience, and therefore done little to address the deeper roots of student attrition". The author faults the institutions that attempt to combat the issue by simply adding a course that is "marginal to the academic life of the institution". While he does not directly address using personality or learning styles as a tool to combat

student attrition, he states that, "Institutions that are successful in building settings that educate their students, all students, not just some, are institutions that are successful in retaining their students".

This research will provide an in depth look at existing personality type and retention data, an examination of communication incidents as reported by both "graduates" and "withdrawn" students, and recommendations for implementing personality-based communication techniques in the classroom in an effort to enhance overall student satisfaction. Considering the explosive growth of web-based distance education courses and program offerings, additional considerations will be made to address the online learning environment and its unique communicative needs. It is my assertion that both student retention and overall satisfaction can be enhanced with knowledge of existing personality and learning types of both students and teachers and a modification of the communication processes to fit students' varying styles and communicative needs.

By conducting a very basic level of research on personality types, one can find an abundance of information, each assessment claiming to be more effective than the others. Several textbooks, websites, and employer profiling systems guide users to various paper or web based tests which solicit descriptors of one's own behavior, characteristics, and tendencies. First published in 1962, one widely recognized psychometric questionnaire used frequently in career counseling is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. Respondents are asked to answer 93 forced-choice questions based on their preference of two words or short statements. The results are given in the form of a four letter abbreviation, each letter

representing one of their four type preferences based on four dichotomies. The four

dichotomies are Extraversion vs. Introversion, Sensing vs. Intuition, Thinking vs.

Feeling, and Judging vs. Perceiving. "The MBTI suggests general areas of life, or careers,

in which persons are most apt to be interested, motivated, and successful" (Van, 1992, p.

20). As described by John (1990), "The five-factor model is a descriptive framework

within which all the important individual differences in personality are subsumed under

five global traits" (as quoted in Wolfe & Johnson, 1995, p. 178). The Five Factor Model

identifies the "Big Five" personality traits of its respondents and presents them as

percentile scores. Measures are comprised of either self-descriptive sentences or

adjectives. The Big Five factors are as follows: Openness, Conscientiousness,

Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. "A personality taxonomy such as the "16-

factor model developed by Cattell (1965), posits that there are 16 primary personality

factors" (Lidy & Kahn, 2006, p. 124). Through extensive research on the subject, and self

assessing with a variety of these tests, the model I have chosen to highlight here is the

DiSC personality assessment.

The tool measures personality types based on a word association that offers a

number of descriptors and asks participants to select the one that is "most like" and "least

like" them. The in-depth profile then provides a bar graph measure of each of the four

dimensions and a "classical pattern" to the participants. The four dimensions of the

assessment are as follows: D (Dominant), i (Influencer), S (Steadiness),

C (Conscientiousness).

Persons with high "D" behavioral tendencies value taking authority, causing action, and making quick results-driven decisions. They are motivated by power, direct answers, and individual accomplishments. Their basic fears are loss of control and under pressure they may show a lack of concern for others. Persons with high "i" behavioral tendencies value entertaining others, being motivational and optimistic, and participating in a group. They are motivated by popularity, helping others, and freedom from control and detail. They fear social rejection and under pressure may become disorganized. Persons with high "S" behavioral tendencies value patience, stability, security, and being loyal. They are motivated by routine, minimal conflict, and identification with a group. They fear change and under pressure may become overly willing to give. Persons with high "C" behavioral tendencies value thinking analytically, using systematic approaches, being diplomatic, and adhering to personal standards. They are motivated by clearly defined expectations and standards of quality and accuracy. They fear criticism of their work and under pressure can become overly critical of self and others. From these four dimensions of behavior, DiSC personality assessments provide 15 classical patterns and 2,014 combinations of the four dimensions.

While a great deal of research exists on both student retention and attrition and the many personality profiles and their use, very little exists on the logical communicative link between the two. By exploring the personality types of their students, teachers can adapt their communication styles, pedagogy, and classroom environment to meet the unique needs of their students. Even school administrators can benefit from understanding the behavioral preferences of students as they are admitted to schools,

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participate in financial aid and academic planning sessions, and finally work with career services personnel. At each step in the academic life of a student, it is crucial that these persons of influence be knowledgeable in how to speak to and work with their students in a manner that will enhance their satisfaction and ultimately increase the likelihood of retaining said students.

Literature Review and Development of Research Questions

Specific research on the subject of the correlation between personality and learning types, student retention, and the communication processes that can help or hinder an institution's effectiveness with such is limited. Previous work that uses the DiSC personality profile has not been discovered thus far. However, a large body of research exists to address the subject of student attrition in terms of demographic factors and student reported reasons for dropping out. Further research focuses on the use of the MBTI (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator) and its implications for retention and student team effectiveness, the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF), and the College Adjustment Inventory (CAI). Other existing studies focus on students' learning styles and how teaching strategies can be modified to fit the unique way(s) in which students learn using the Dunn and Dunn Learning-Style Model.

Studying college attrition is not a new science. Pantages and Creedon (1978) summarize the research findings from 1950-1975 "in the hope that these data will provide useful information for colleges that are attempting to deal with the attrition problem" (p. 50). The authors provide specific recommendations for implementing intervention programs to minimize attrition and emphasize that "colleges shift their attention from prediction to the prevention of attrition" (p. 94).

In a more recent study, Upcraft and Gardner (1989) found that "approximately one quarter of incoming freshmen do not return to the same institution the following year, with half of these students making the decision to leave in the first 6 weeks." (as cited in Pritchard, Wilson, & Yamnitz, 2007, p. 15) According to the authors, "Students who

withdraw during first semester often cite emotional reasons for dropping out" (Pritchard, Wilson, & Yamnitz, 2007, p. 15). The study suggests "several factors that may contribute to the successful adjustment of college students (eg, self-esteem, coping tactics, perfectionism, optimism, and extroversion)" (p. 15). A large body of research exists that works to address some of these emotional and other student-reported reasons for leaving school. One such study conducted phone surveys with students after they had withdrawn in their first year of study. The author challenges the effectiveness of the existing literature which focuses on predictive and explanatory models. According to Harrison (2006), "The predictive model has, over time, proved largely unsuccessful" and "The explanatory model has been more successful, with some degree of consensus over students' reported reasons for withdrawal, albeit hampered by recording methods within institutions" (p. 378). The survey responses outline the respondents' self-reported reasons for dropping out "particularly with reference to demographic factors and their pathways into higher education" (p. 379). The most frequently cited negative experiences and primary reasons for leaving are then listed. The author concludes by proposing an alternative retention model based more on persistence than withdrawal. He asserts that "such a model would find its legitimacy in understanding that students are attached to an institution by a network of connections of varying strength; some academic, some social, and some personal" (p. 389).

Further studies on the subject of student retention and attrition focus more specifically on community colleges and/or certain classes. According to Snyder, Tan, and Hoffman (2004), "Community colleges serve 53% of all first-time students enrolled in

public higher education, including disproportionate numbers of working, first-generation, adult, and other traditionally underrepresented students" (As cited in Schuetz, 2005, p. 60). Additionally, "About half of all first year community college students leave higher education before beginning their second year- a rate that has held steady for over 40 years" (Schuetz, 2005, p. 60). The author cites Tinto's (1975, 1988, 1993) interactionalist model of student departure and its examination of person-environment fit. Cohen and Brawer (2003) assert that the community college has a particular responsibility to minimize attrition since for many students, "the choice is not between the community college and a senior residential institution; it is between the community college and nothing" (As cited in Schuetz, 2005, p. 62). Part of the problem, the author explains is the prevalence of part-time college faculty who maintain intermittent office hours as they juggle other jobs and teaching assignments. Furthermore, "although part-time faculty are generally well-qualified to perform their duties, they tend to have fewer years of teaching experience and fewer opportunities to develop the strong connections to students, colleagues, and institutions in ways that have been tied to enhanced student persistence and success" (Schuetz, 2005, p. 64). Another report focusing on the reasons that students withdraw from individual classes notes that "Most schools do not collect information from students when they withdraw from a course, and this information could be important, given the need for staying in college" (Dunwoody & Frank, 1995, p. 553). The study examines the following two factors for why students withdraw from classes: (a) reasons reported by the students and (b) reasons professors reported for why students withdraw, both including both personal and course considerations. Tinto (1987) suggests

that "the key to successful student retention lies with the institution, in its faculty and staff, not in any one formula or recipe" (As cited in Dunwoody & Frank, 1995, p. 554). Stevens et al. (1989) claims that "attrition could not be predicted on the basis of scores on personality scales" (Dunwoody & Frank, 1995, p. 554).

A review of the literature with regards to student retention and personality types produced a number of resources, but none which identified the DiSC personality profile as the basis for a study. However, the MBTI has been used as a model from which to predict student retention. Van (1992) claims, "Knowledge of a student's learning type can aid teachers and counselors in retaining high-risk college students" (p. 20). The author notes that separate studies "show that student interest, application, and academic success are positively related to the presentation of material in a manner which is congruent with the individual's style of learning" (p. 20). The author suggests that "Modifications to curriculum can be made in order that the full spectrum of learning type can be reached" (p. 24), but does not offer ideas for such implementation. Another study examines the use of the MBTI and its implications for enhancing student team effectiveness in business courses. The author cites previous studies that indicate that team learning leads to increased levels of student satisfaction and a positive attitude towards the subject matter. The authors suggest that "personality traits can either facilitate or impede effective communication" (Amato & Amato, 2005, p. 42). Recommendations include "teaching students to understand personality differences and the role that personality plays in group dynamics" (Amato & Amato, 2005, p. 49). If the previous statement that team learning

enhances student satisfaction and student satisfaction levels increase retention, then this suggestion offers areas of possible further research and exploration.

Subsequent literature has been found that addresses student personality type with the use of a variety of other personality profiling tools and inventories. One such study uses the Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (16PF) and suggests that "To provide early intervention, counselors need to be able to identify stable personality characteristics that might precipitate poor adjustment" (Lidy & Kahn, 2006, p. 123). Conclusions include evidence that "perceived social support mediates the relationship between three personality factors- Emotional Stability, Social Boldness, and Abstractedness- and three aspects of adjustment to college- academic adjustment, social adjustment, and institutional attachment" (Lidy & Kahn, 2006, p. 130). Using just three measures of personality characteristics- Achievement, Conscientiousness, and Resiliency- taken from an instrument called the College Adjustment Inventory; another study finds a strong correlation between conscientiousness and GPA. The authors conclude, "The results of the current study support earlier research indicating the usefulness of personality variables for the prediction of college performance and retention" (Tross, Harper, Osher, & Kneidinger, 2000, p. 332). They suggest that colleges implement programs and/or classes that help students acquire the necessary skills to succeed and that "both students themselves and colleges invest the resources necessary to increase behaviors associated with increased conscientiousness" (Tross, Harper, Osher, & Kneidinger, 2000, p. 330).

In reviewing the literature on this topic, studies were found that address not only personality types, but also learning types and their relationship to academic achievement

and retention. One such study examines learning styles and course outcomes for adult learners at a two year college. The authors state that with the diversification of college enrollments, now is the time to meet the instructional needs of the changing student population. According to Miglietti and Strange (1998), "Serving students well should include examining students' preferences for different teaching styles as well as their expectations of the classroom environment" (p. 1-2). Previous research has devoted much attention to the learner's role in actively engaging in their education, but has only secondarily considered the facilitator's influence on student satisfaction and retention. The study finds that learner-centered classes are related to higher grades and overall satisfaction. The authors subsequently suggest that "faculty can improve the outcomes of their efforts by systematically assessing and implementing these dimensions of teaching style" (Miglietti & Strange, 1998, p. 15). Using the Dunn & Dunn Learning-Style Model and a measure of perceptual stimuli (verbal kinesthetic, tactile/kinesthetic, visual picture, visual text, and auditory), a recent study determines that "with some rather simple straight-forward modifications, students can begin to learn and study with techniques that are congruent with their learning-style strengths so that they can take control of and responsibility for their learning" (Cutolo & Rochford, 2007, p. 10). Recommendations are offered so that teachers can adapt to the varying learning styles and address the needs of the students and the "ways in which students learn so that they can assist them in maximizing their learning potential and earning degrees" (Cutolo & Rochford, 2007, p. 12).

While it is evident that a problem exists when students and teachers find themselves with conflicting personality styles, the answer to how to bridge this gap remains to be seen. "Personality provides a conduit through which humans interact, and the process of teaching and learning is no different. Students occasionally complain of not being compatible with their teachers or having personality conflicts" (Polk, 2006, p. 26). Krueger (1972) attests, "Some researchers have said that weaknesses in personality are a major cause of teacher failure" (as cited in Polk, 2006, p. 26). If, in fact, teachers are unaware of their own personality styles and behavioral preferences, how can they adjust accordingly to meet their students' needs? The DiSC assessment may be the first step in teachers' and administrators' self-exploration and subsequent adaptation to the varying needs of their students. The DiSC is the preferred method for such an endeavor because of its ease of administering. Even a "quick assessment" can be done in the duration of an admissions interview or in a classroom group activity. Furthermore, the assessment provides just four dimensions rather than up to 16 as in other personality profiles. Finally, a unique characteristic of DiSC is that it offers two graphs in the assessment, one describing the respondent at work and the other in their home or personal environment. For both the teachers and the students, this provides work (or educational) driven behavioral tendencies that should be the focus of coordinating communication styles and methods in the classroom.

Theories which will provide a further foundation and elements for implementing personality and learning type guided communication for this study include the "theory of

careers" developed by John Holland, the Functional Perspective, and Self-Efficacy

Theory. Holland's underlying basis is

> "human behavior is a function of the interaction between individuals and their environments. The theory focuses on an assessment of individuals, their environments, and the interaction or "fit" between individuals and their environments. Three specific assumptions are associated with these three essential components of the theory: (1) people tend to choose environments compatible with their personality types; (2) environments tend to reinforce and reward different patterns of abilities and interests; and (3) people tend to flourish in environments that are congruent with their dominant personality types" (Feldman, Smart, & Ethington, 2004, p. 528).

One study assesses the relative merits of Holland's theory in relationship to students'

personality types, intended majors, and college expectations. Pike (2006) explains, "What

Holland initially proposed as an exploration of personality and vocational preferences,

has evolved over time into a complex theory drawing on principles from psychology and

sociology that focus on the intersection of the personal and the social through the concept

of person-environment fit" (p. 819).

In studying the reasons why and when students miss classes, Van Blerkom

(1990), asserts,

> "Assuming that students make decisions to not attend class, it is argued that these decisions are based on perceived self-efficacy. If students view themselves as capable of successfully accomplishing a task they will more likely attempt it. However, if they view themselves as less capable, they are more likely to avoid the same task" (p. 7).

The same theory that is used here with regards to single classes can be expanded upon to

include students' college careers as a whole.

After a review of the existing literature, I have found that very little exists to

specifically address the communication processes interwoven in each stage of seeking a

degree in higher education and/or the methodologies that can be utilized to improve

student retention. Furthermore, much of the existing literature is grounded in the fields of

education and psychology, not communication studies where the application of such

methodologies can begin. My approach will be to take the existing work, propose

methodologies for communicating in accordance with students' personality and learning

types, and illustrate how to implement them. Specifically the study will explore the

following research questions:

RQ1: Are there differences based on personality type in terms of what students

experience as motivating?

> A. In the classroom
> B. Towards degree completion

RQ2: Are there differences based on personality type in what students describe as either

their best learning moment or their poorest learning experience in the classroom?

RQ3: Are there differences based on personality type in terms of how students regard

collaborative work during their college experience?

RQ 4: How can faculty and/or staff use awareness of student personality and learning

types to modify classroom (or other) communication in an effort to improve student

retention?

Methods

Qualitative Interview Protocol

Data collection for this study included a series of semi-structured qualitative

interviews aimed at gathering the necessary data and critical incidents to answer the

research questions. (see Appendix A). According to Baxter and Babbie (2004),

> "Semi-structured interviewing is characterized by substantial freedom on
> the part of the interviewer. The interviewer can pose the questions in
> whatever order makes greatest sense given the flow of the conversation
> with the informant. The interviewer is trying to maximize in-depth talk by
> the informant, so the interviewer expends a lot of energy trying to probe
> for additional details" (p. 330).

"Qualitative interviewing focuses on understanding meanings and the rules of

meaning-making" (Baxter & Babbie, 2004, p. 325). Subjects for the study were

interviewed to gain insight into the critical incidents which took place during their

enrollment in an educational institution as a degree seeking student. The meaning(s)

behind their responses were then classified by the researcher as being a motivating or

non-motivating factor, an indicator of satisfaction or dissatisfaction in the classroom,

and/or a critical incident which caused them to either persist to graduation or discontinue

their pursuit of an education with the institution. All of the aforementioned were further

classified and examined based on a subject's dominant personality type.

Subjects

An institution that can be described a private, career-focused college hosting a

variety of business and medical programs provided the focus of this study. The sample of

students studied included a representative five students from each of the four DiSC types

who are classified as either in a "graduate" (describing their alumni status) or

"withdrawn" (used as a descriptor for those who withdrew from the college) status, for a total of 40 former student/alumni interviews. While the DiSC profile does offer 15 different "classical patterns" representing the numerical combination of the four types, only a student's dominant type will be considered for the purpose of this study. The rational for doing so is that current efforts made by the institution's faculty and staff include reference to just the primary type: D, i, S, or C. Students who are classified as "active" will not be included in the interviews, as it is yet to be determined if and when they will complete their education.

Interviews took place at a mutually designated location, the educational institution itself, over the phone, or in very few cases via email. Participants were assured that their information would be used primarily for my purposes as a graduate student and secondarily in an effort to assist the educational institution in classroom communication effectiveness. This assurance served two purposes: 1) Many of the students were those with whom I had established a rapport in previous interactions. My rationale for wording my request came from wanting to reach out to them as a graduate student rather than an administrator from the school seeking survey input, referrals, etc. 2) Some of the former students, I concluded, may have had a negative experience with the educational institution. In this case, I wanted to stress that they would be helping me on a personal level. Again, with many of them I had previously established a positive rapport. They were informed that their names would be recorded in the final study as a code and that identifying information would be omitted. Interviews were audio recorded with the

permission of the participant and were destroyed upon completion of the project to ensure subjects' anonymity.

Soliciting Subjects

In determining how to solicit participants from both the graduates of the college and from the students who were no longer enrolled, contact information which included student identification numbers, names, majors, primary personality types, last date of attendance (LDA), home addresses, phone numbers, and emails were gathered from the aforementioned database owned by Carrigan College. Initial contact was made with subjects via an email requesting their participation. Appendix B details the template which was used for all subjects during the first attempt to make contact with them.

After the initial round of emails, approximately 15 former students and/or alumni responded affirmatively indicating their willingness to participate in the study. However, just 6 followed through by completing the email question responses. Others wrote back and declined to participate due to a lack of time, personal issues, and/or work obligations. Those who did respond via email provided detailed responses to all of the questions included in the interview schedule and offered to be available for follow up questions if needed.

A second round of emails was then sent out by the researcher, each one tailored in terms of formatting and content to better suit the varying personality types. Determinations on how to proceed with the tailored messages were derived from an instructor supplement entitled *Everything DiSC- Adapting to the styles*. Email communication with "D" personality types was kept brief and to the point, using bullet

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points to outline the terms of participation. For "i" personality types, the communication was more informal and conversational, using first names only. Correspondence with "S" types was friendly and focused on how the subject could help the researcher. (See Appendix C). Communication with "C" personality types gave step by step instructions on what would be expected from participants should they agree to take part in the study.

In an effort to further solicit willing subjects, phone calls were made several days after the second email was sent out. Phone conversations and messages followed similar communication patterns as listed above. Again, the personal nature of the study and emphasis on helping the researcher as part of her academic pursuits was utilized and personal contact information was provided.

As the researcher neared the completion of the 40 interviews needed, two more techniques for soliciting subjects were employed. One was a request to fellow Carrigan College colleagues from around the state to provide referrals for potential candidates for subjects. When contacting any referred former students or alumni, the staff or faculty members' name(s) who referred them was mentioned in the request for participation. This method yielded no additional subjects from campuses other than the one where the researcher is employed. The final method for gathering subjects included the use of the internet social networking site Facebook. When previous attempts to contact students who did not complete their program of study via email or phone did not work, said students were searched and contacted via Facebook. Cell phone numbers and/or updated email addresses were gathered and arrangements made to complete interviews either over the phone or in person.

Data

In examining the relationship between personality types, student retention, and the communication processes affecting that relationship, a variety of data was analyzed. A large amount of quantitative data was gathered from a database, currently utilized by Carrigan College. The database contains archived information regarding student personality types, demographic information, program of study, and current status (active, graduate, or withdrawn). A comparison of students' personality types and retention rates of the students based on their personality types was analyzed and reported. (See Appendix D)

Unique to the Columbus Campus of Carrigan College, an Adult Learner Inventory tool has been administered in a number of courses to gather both quantitative and qualitative information about the students. The tool gathers demographic, personality, learning type, and program of study information as well as motivations for seeking higher education by providing common reasons as selection choices and allowing for "fill in the blank" answers. The tool then quantifies responses to measure the characteristics typical of the adult learner with regards to autonomy, goals, life experiences, applicability of coursework and respect from teachers and administrators. Students are then asked to rank order motivating sources for seeking higher education including social, external, and personal. Potential barriers to education are identified by a series of check boxes along with another "fill in the blank".

The Adult Learner Inventory (ALI) provides insight into the non-traditional student's motivation(s) for seeking higher education based on life-changing events,

preference for theory or application, and perceived barriers to learning that might impede

the completion of their degree. Students are asked to rate how much they agree or

disagree with common characteristics of an adult learner as identified by Lieb (1991) and

then rank order common sources of motivation for an adult learner as offered by Lieb

(1991). Additionally, they are offered the opportunity to answer open ended questions

that identify: 1) Relevant comments in regards to exploring motivating factors for the

adult learner, 2) What differentiates adult learners from recent high school graduate

students, 3) What instructors can do to recognize these differences and provide an

environment more conducive to the adult learner, 4) What administrators can do to

recognize these differences and provide a facility more conducive to the adult learner, 5)

Circumstances that would inhibit the adult learner seeking higher education. Many of the

interview questions found in the Interview Schedule are modified from the ALI tool in an

effort to explore motivators and critical incidents experienced by both the students who

persisted to graduation and those who did not.

The VARK Questionnaire, conducted online at www.vark-learn.com asks

participants to self report on their learning preferences given 16 different scenarios.

Respondents are to choose an answer(s) that best explains their preference and are able to

skip a question if they feel it does not apply to them. Participants are then given a

numeric breakdown of the four categories (Visual, Aural, Read/Write, and Kinesthetic)

detailing how high they scored on each of the four. Links can be found to printable

handouts for study strategies designed for each learning preference and a full report of the

results is available for purchase. A limited amount of archived data has been incorporated, as well as new data gathered from interviewees when applicable.

Classroom communication that has provided either motivating results or un-motivating results has been explored and categorized using the interview results. Specific examples of moments in the classroom that caused satisfactory or unsatisfactory outcomes were requested of both the graduate and withdrawn students. Open ended responses were solicited during the course of the interview which allowed students to expand upon their experiences during their time at Carrigan College.

Data Analysis

Learning incidents recorded during the interviews were content analyzed in an effort to uncover personality-based communication matters that may have affected the students' reasons for continuing and completing their education or withdrawing from school. The interview question responses gathered from the participants were analyzed using thematic analysis methods outlined in the *grounded theory* approach. According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002),

> "Two features of *grounded theory* (or the *constant-comparative method*, as it is also known) are important: (1) Theory is grounded in the relationships between data and the categories into which they are coded; and (2) Codes and categories are mutable until late in the project, because the researcher is still in the field and data from new experiences continue to alter the scope and terms of his or her analytical framework" (p. 218).

As such, interviews were transcribed, transferred into a more readable and comparable format (a spreadsheet categorized by both personality type and graduate or withdrawn statuses), and then finally compiled into the included tables by themes that were apparent to the researcher. Themes consistent with both of the aforementioned were then further

expanded upon in the discussion explanations of the research questions. Basic statistical

analysis was used to determine if there is a correlation between personality types and

retention. An assessment of the impact of classroom communication on said relationship

is provided in the discussion of each research question.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore communication effectiveness per students' personality types to assess how educational institutions can better communicate with said students in an effort to increase both retention and overall satisfaction. The study has proven to uncover useful insights into motivating and un-motivating factors as reported from both graduate and withdrawn students from the college. The subsequent section will discuss the findings as they relate to each of the four research questions.

Discussion of RQ1

RQ1: Are there differences based on personality type in terms of what students experience as motivating?
A. In the classroom
B. Towards degree completion

The data collected suggests there are distinct differences based on personality types in terms of what students experience as motivating in the classroom, but not much variation in what motivates them towards degree completion. Table 1.1 summarizes the data findings and interview excerpts representing the preceding themes.

Graduates whose primary personality type is a "D", which stands for "dominant" reported being motivated in the classroom when they have freedom of choice, are engaged in leadership roles, are actively engaged, and feel that their instructors pay attention to them as individuals. This differs for the withdrawn "D" personality type students in that they reported being motivated primarily by challenges, competition, and opposition to authority. They demand that instructors are able to communicate effectively and that they themselves have a vested interest in the subject matter. These variations may lead to the cause of a student's choice to discontinue the pursuit of their degree when

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a dominant student does not see the link between the classes they are taking and their own career goals. One student in particular, who failed to complete her degree with just one class to go, noted when it came to completing the Presentation Skills class, "I just don't have the confidence and don't see the purpose". Furthermore, she stated, "There wasn't any motivation to keep you excited in what was going on" and that she needed "more description on how speeches can be fun and how you would use it". She went on to express while even though she works in the healthcare field, she has no intentions of giving presentations in a formal manner or becoming a teacher, so she didn't see how those skills were beneficial to her. In Van Blerkom's study he proposed self-efficacy as an approach to explain students' attendance behavior. He claims, "One of the sources of information that students use to make self-efficacy judgments is their own prior performance" (Van Blerkom, 1990, p. 7). Upon further exploration, it was found that this particular student had dropped or failed the course twice before, with one of those attempts in an online course and one on campus.

In analyzing responses from the "i" personality type, which stands for "influencer", a commonality among both the students who completed their degree programs and those who did not was their obvious interest in having autonomy in decision making, freedom of expression, opportunities to persuade others, and being actively engaged by their instructors. This personality type referred to staff and faculty by name more often than any other and often got bogged down during the interview trying to remember a specific person's name. One graduate said, "The teacher used lots of personal examples, so that made me feel like I could talk freely". Another discussed how

one of her biggest motivators was, "Learning the importance of appearances, what you say, how you conduct yourself". She remembered one instructor telling her, "at any given time an employer could walk into the building and if there are going to be jobs like that, I wanted to be the first up to get one. So I guess just being successful and knowing that people here were watching".

With "i" personality types who completed their degrees, reports of un-motivating factors tended to be based upon perceived instructor inadequacy and inexperience. One comment was that the instructor "wasn't qualified to teach" and that the tests were "full of questions that didn't pertain to anything we were learning". Another shared an experience when a new instructor came in and insisted that "everything had to be done a certain way and it made it more difficult than it should be". This assertion the graduate bases on the claim that he "had been a student for a while and knew how things should be done". Finally, a graduate with an "i" personality type expressed dissatisfaction for one instructor who "didn't teach us. There is a lot to learn, but we didn't do anything. We just had to read and take some tests, but we had to be re-taught all the hands on stuff by the next instructor".

Students who did not complete their degrees and whose primary personality type is "i" were more likely to report un-motivating factors as being linked to the instructor's lack of communication, failure to make the subject interesting, or overall poor presentation style. One former student said, "There was no excitement and it didn't keep my interest at all. The teacher didn't communicate. He read right out of the book. It didn't stimulate me or keep my attention". Another asserted that in the online

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environment "it is hard to keep yourself motivated due to the lack of communication and one on one like in a class". Southall (2002) attests, "An often overlooked fact is that teachers serve by example. A teacher's passion for teaching and learning does not go unnoticed by students" (as quoted by Polk, 2006, p. 24). This sentiment can be discovered with the following excerpt from a former student's interview transcript when asked about a time when she was not motivated to complete an assigned task.

> "If they aren't excited about the material, why should we be? If they don't try to make it interesting, like we are just going to go in and talk and not do anything. Like my psychology teacher last semester, she was so monotone and scatter brained that I didn't learn anything. My speech teacher is real monotone and does everything by slide shows and doesn't get you involved".

Both graduates and students who withdrew from their program of study who are "S" personality types, which stands for "steadiness", cite motivating factors such as: instructor supportiveness, assistance, and positive reinforcement. Responses often began with "the teacher" or "the instructor" followed by a description of motivating factors to include times when teachers were particularly encouraging and reassuring. One graduate said, "The instructor validated what you felt was important and that each person was important". A former student stated, "You could tell that she liked what she was doing and cared about every student". Both sets of students noted that they valued "the freedom to do it any way we wanted", "being creative", and being able to "pick any project".

When questioned about times when they were not motivated to complete an assigned task, subjects with this primary personality type were the most reluctant to place blame on a particular instructor or say anything negative about them as a person. One graduate had the following comment: "I would say, OK, I like the instructor. It's not that

I don't like you, but I don't like what you are teaching". Another, when probed about the instructor's communication in the class in relationship to her lack of motivation, responded, "Absolutely not. The teacher was terrific. He was great. We never got bored in there. He was very encouraging. Nothing about it was his fault. It was just not a class I felt fitted to". A student who withdrew from her program took full responsibility for her own lack of motivation by saying, "My teacher was just very, very smart and very knowledgeable about what she was teaching, so I don't think it was the class. It was me".

"C" personality type graduates', which stands for "conscientiousness", responses to the question about motivating factors illustrates their desire for applicability to goals and standards, a need for setting high expectations for self and others, and a positive outcome when given the opportunity to be the expert. One graduate proudly reported on the following experience in a course:

> "I was the first one to actually draw blood and then I helped the instructor help the other students. I got to go back and help the other students who had not done it yet. She (the instructor) was more comfortable with me doing it than the students helping one another, because they had not yet done it and weren't familiar with it yet".

According to Tross, Harper, Osher, and Kneidinger (2000), "Conscientiousness can be defined as the tendency to carry out tasks in a careful manner until their completion. A more conscientious person is diligent, disciplined careful, organized and planning" (p. 324). When asked to recall a time when they were not motivated to complete an assigned task, "C" personality type students who withdrew from college had the following to offer: "The topic for a paper in that class was just 'ethics'. No details, just write. No guidelines, no specifics, no discussion with anyone on ideas. It was just me

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and the computer". "It was completely on your own. Do it, practice it, show up, and get finished". "He gave no instructions on a large project. He didn't tell us what or how to do it. If we asked questions, he said figure it out on our own". With these responses it can be argued that the students who did not persist to graduation may have had the inherent conscientiousness to do so but lacked the instructor provided resources to be successful.

> "Given research that indicates that conscientiousness is important for subsequent college and job success (both in terms of performance and retention), and that it can be improved with substantial effort, it is imperative that both students themselves, and colleges, invest the resources necessary to increase behaviors associated with increased conscientiousness" (Tross, Harper, Osher, & Kneidinger, 2000, p. 330).

Factors that played a part in students' motivation for completing their degrees were not as much determined by personality types as individual reasons for persisting through to graduation, many of which involved one's family, children, desire for a better job, and an overall interest in education. While the overall motivating factors are very similar, Holland's previously mentioned theory of vocational choice and person-environment fit may offer further insight into the graduates' motivations. According to Smart, Feldman, and Ethington (2000),

> "The theory links psychological factors (i.e. students' personality types) with sociological factors (i.e. the characteristics of academic disciplines) to create a model of person-environment fit that can be used to explain students' selection of academic majors, socialization into a major, and student learning and development during college" (as quoted in Pike, 2006, p. 801).

While the scope of this study doesn't allow for exploration into choice of major and its impact on said students, certain indicators of a fit between the pursuit through completion of their degrees and subjects' varying personality types can be seen. One "D" type

graduate notes her "determination to never fail" as a factor in degree completion. Two "i" graduates said, "The teachers kept it interesting". One "S" graduate cites her tendency to "finish everything, even if it's something I don't like". Finally, two "C" graduates reported being motivated by "setting an example" or "setting a foundation……by example setting".

Data findings which proved to be less contingent on personality types were the former students' reasons for failing to persist to graduation or "barriers to degree completion". These included, regardless of personality type: "Time and money. I was a single mom with three kids", "Family and health issues", "Transportation. I lost my car", and "Family and work obligations". As the educational institution which provided the basis for the study is a career college, many of the students are "non-traditional" students, otherwise defined as "adult learners". According to Wlodkowski, Maudlin, and Campbell (2002), "Work conflicts and home and family responsibilities (which typically do not affect traditional-age students to the same extent) and financial difficulties in paying tuition are some reasons commonly given by adult students for dropping out" (as quoted in Guidos & Dooris, 2008, p. 46). Other factors included an overall disinterest or change of heart in their chosen field of study or a "realization that a rapid learning process and progression of the classes was not a good fit". Table 1.2 summarizes the key themes that either motivated a student towards degree completion or inhibited them from doing so.

RQ2: Are there differences based on personality type in what students describe as either their best learning moment or their poorest learning experiences in the classroom?

Action-oriented "D" personality types, whether they completed their degree programs or not, report their best learning moments in the classroom to include both applicability of learning concepts and skills to real world settings and encouragement and a personal interest shown by their instructors. (See Table 2.1) However, more graduates were found to cite examples of how instructors offered opportunities to apply knowledge gained in the classroom than did students who did not complete their degrees. Very simply stated, "The teacher did the book stuff, but also the real life stuff too" or "We got to get in there and do it from day one". According to Schwartz and Fischer (2006),

> "General knowledge does not come from memorizing a lecture or text but from working with concepts in action and thought. From the student's perspective, a clearly worded text or succinct lecture does not constitute a strong enough argument to change a view, because neither the text nor the lecture sufficiently challenges the sensorimotor or action experiences that students are using to create their own representations" (p. 7).

Conversely, more students who did not complete their degrees offered examples of encouragement and personal attention from instructors as their best learning moments in the classroom than did graduates. According to Tinto (2002), "Students are more likely to persist and graduate in settings that involve them as valued members of the institution. Frequency and quality of contact with faculty, staff, and students has repeatedly been show to be an *independent* predictor of student persistence". An example of this type of interaction can be seen in the following excerpt from an interview transcript with a "D" personality type student, although she did not complete her program of study: " The

teacher would just make me feel better about going to school……..and showed an interest in not just our school life, but personally too".

In reporting on poor learning experiences, graduate "D" personality types primarily focused on perceived lack of respect from their instructors including, "the instructor was not helpful and treated us 'like five year olds'. It was bad enough that I wrote and complained to the school". (See Table 2.2) One also reported on a poor experience with a fellow student who was continually rude and disruptive in the classroom by saying, "With my personality type, I can take it for so long, but then it got to be too much". An analysis of the respondents shows that the "dominant" personality type, whether having completed their programs of study or not, are the most likely to directly address factors influenced by knowledge of their personality types. To illustrate, one former student cited, "The instructor's personality type and mine didn't click". According to Polk (2006), "Despite the viewpoint that students can not adequately access teaching ability because of the confounding personality variable, Erdle, Murray, and Rushton (1985) argued that personality is reflected in a person's classroom teaching behaviors, which are validly evaluated by students" (p. 26). Another student who did not complete her degree described her poorest learning experience in terms of the instructor's teaching style without a direct reference to personality differences in noting, "The instructor was really fast…..It was just really fast, the way he taught; sometimes I just need some things step by step how to do it".

Considering the dominant nature of this personality type, a researcher could expect that when asked about poor learning moments, the "D" type would provide

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information rich descriptions and revel the opportunity to express ideas and opinions about classroom instruction and methods. However, among the students who did not complete their degrees, very few were able to cite concrete examples showing dissatisfaction with instruction. Rather, they noted the following in response to poor learning experiences: "I left the class so many times frustrated and dissatisfied with myself', "Nothing was horrible. If I think of one later, we'll come back to that one", or "I just got overwhelmed and became unmotivated, there was never a teacher who made me feel that way".

Subjects from both the graduate and withdrawn students who are primarily "i" personality types described their best learning experiences as ones where they perceived an ability to gain social acceptance, positive communication from their instructors, and an instructor's ability to relate course material to their own personal experiences. Two of these "influencer" students shared experiences in which they were able to use their communication skills and competencies in a classroom setting to both inform and persuade their classmates. Several of the "i" types expressed a liking for their instructor's interpersonal communication abilities, energy and passion for teaching, and abilities to share their own "real world" experiences with their students. According to Schwartz and Fisher (2006), "Good teachers can shift the chemistry of their classes to build on the dynamics of the learning process and use texts and lectures from their discipline as supports for learning instead of having textbooks and lectures dominate the curriculum" (p. 2). One graduate, in describing her best learning experience, shared the following:

> "She taught us Basic Insurance, and I'm not interested in that part at, but it was the way she taught. I was able to retain the information, do very well

on the tests, and I was very proud. I think because of her own experience, she didn't use the book a lot. Just to hear her talk about her own experiences helped me to see the bottom line more than any textbook".

The most social of all the DiSC types, this group cited more direct communication references when discussing their poor learning moments in the classroom. Four of the five graduate "i" types described incidents where there was very little communication and/or feedback from their instructors. One commented,

"The instructor would not communicate with us as far as our grades went. You can't know what mistakes you are making early on to be able to correct them before the next test or assignment. Even when I sent emails, she would not reply. After midterms, she did a lot better. But, I gave her the worst survey I ever had, and I'm sure that I wasn't the only one. She didn't grade our first test until the fourth week of class. There was definitely a communication error there".

Former students who withdrew from the college were less inclined to offer specific examples of poor classroom experiences and either could not cite an example or instead stated what their "least favorite" subject in school was. However, one "i" former student, who would not name either the course or the instructor, discussed in detail a poor experience with an instructor who lacked (in her opinion) both credibility and confidence. According to Polk (2006),

"Recent studies suggest that effective teachers, between knowing their subject matter and managing their classrooms, teach with energy and enthusiasm (Hamann, Lineburgh, & Paul 1998; Madsen 2003), and use a high level of teacher intensity (Madsen, Standley, & Cassidy 1989). Teacher intensity refers to a global level of enthusiasm and other behaviors, such as maintenance of eye contact, closeness to students, voice use, and gestures and expressions (Madsen, Standley, & Cassidy 1989)" (p. 25).

The former student attested, "When I listen, I look at someone and am paying attention to eye contact, body language, their confidence, and everything to see if it is rehearsed. I think that was a lot of it, just the fact that she wasn't confident".

While "i" type graduates were more focused on the lack of communication from instructors in sharing a poor learning experience, when questioned about un-motivating factors, one graduate reiterated the previous sentiment concerning an instructor's nonverbal communication. She explained,

> "The teacher wasn't the best math teacher. She wasn't real helpful with it. She just seemed like she was over it. It wasn't anything she said, just how she acted. It was her body language. She would come in, set her stuff down, turn around and look at us, and sigh like, 'I'm here'".

Graduates whose primary personality type is "S" reported their best learning experiences in the classroom to be ones where the instructor provided one on one assistance and encouragement and opportunities for real world application. These subjects offered many compliments to the school itself and its faculty. Having instructed a number of these students in previous courses, they more often than any of the other types directly complimented me as an instructor and/or a particular liking for one of my classes. Students with this personality type who did not finish their degrees mirrored the sentiments of their graduate counterparts on many occasions. One did offer a varying viewpoint which included learning as fun and a means to retain information for the long term. She described, "We played games and it made the room exciting. It wasn't just learned to pass a test, it was instilled in my head".

When it came to poor learning experiences in the classroom, both graduates and withdrawn "S" students noted difficulties with instructors who were inexperienced.

Similar to their reports of un-motivating factors, these students qualified negative comments about the instructors' teaching ability by commenting, "I think she was a really nice person, but she didn't have any idea what she was doing as far as teaching. I'm not saying she was a bad person, I'm just saying she wasn't prepared". A former student shared,

> "The knowledge was there, but the teaching ability lacked. It was hard. Not so much because of her, but there were 3-4 students in there who were very rude, very disruptive, and very hurtful, who had things to say about the way she was teaching. I thought it was very sad because you could tell that she wanted to learn and was open and willing to new ideas. It hurt me because it hurt her and she didn't deserve it".

As previously described, a study by Schuetz (2005) explores the issue that approximately two-thirds of the faculty in community colleges consists of part-time employees who hold full-time employment positions elsewhere. They assert, "This hidden structural condition makes it harder for community college students to connect with faculty" (p. 64). While they may hold the knowledge and experience needed in their given subjects, they may lack in their ability to devote the needed time to really work with these students who desire that one on one connection.

Graduates who have a primary style defined by "conscientiousness" or "C" discussed similar but opposite experiences in reporting both their best and worst learning experiences in the classroom. Both populations desire that the instructor have an ability to relate to their students as well as foster a sense of trust and competency with them. One graduate, when asked about her best learning moment, described her instructor as follows: "All of the students seem to love him. It made me want to be just like that. I

thought when you were the instructor you had to be so much different, but that would be talking at them instead of with them. If you had questions, he had the answer".

In describing poor learning moments, graduates with a "C" personality type cited examples such as: "A teacher has to realize that not everyone catches on at the same pace and that people do have to have repetition or see something written down" and "She just couldn't come down to our level". According to Van (1992) and as can be concluded by these graduates' comments, "Classroom instruction, however, which addresses the various learning styles of students increases the chances of scholastic success for all learners" (p. 24).

When students who were identified as "C" personality types who did not complete their programs of study were asked to recall their best or poor learning moments in the classroom, applicability to real world scenarios and the desire for details, structure, and explicit guidelines for expectations were reoccurring themes consistent with the responses yielded for both questions. Even though they did not complete their degrees, the following two comments from former students illustrate the need for knowing that skills learned would serve them well in the future. One noted, "I learned new things that I am able to use now in the real world". Another, when questioned about un-motivating factors during her time as a student offered, "I was so confused and got frustrated ……..I didn't know what it had to do with what we were learning".

According to Tross, Harper, Osher, and Kneidinger (2000), "A less conscientious person is unreliable, imprecise, disorganized, and impetuous" (p. 324). This is not the case with the "C" type former students who did not persist to degree completion. Instead,

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these subjects expressed the desire for being given specific details and guidelines for expectations by their instructors. These former students appreciated and recalled as their best learning moments when instructors "Gave us an outline and went through what would be on the test and her expectations" or 'She walked us through were to find the details". As described by Hough and Schneider (1996), "achievement involves setting one's own goals to further master one's environment, whereas conscientiousness involves adapting to goals set by others" (as quoted in Tross, Harper, Osher, & Kneidinger, 2000, p. 324). According to "C" personality type former students in reporting poor learning experiences in the classroom, the goals and expectations for learning outcomes were not clearly communicated from instructors. One of theses students commented, "The teacher was totally incompatible with me. We would ask questions and it seemed like he couldn't answer them, simplify them". Another complained, "It was all on us. We were never prepared for what was coming up on the tests, what to study". According to Schwartz and Fischer (2006), "Students do not always see what they need to do to create their own understanding" (p. 9). This may be the case even more so for the "C" personality types who need instructors to pave the way to learning with the use of details, outlines, agendas, and grading rubrics which provide clearly defined expectations and standards for performance.

RQ3: Are there differences based on personality type in terms of how students regard collaborative work during their college experience?

In response to the question about recalling experiences when students participated in group work during their time at Carrigan College, more than 50% of respondents indicated that they did not like working in groups for a variety of reasons. The most predominant reason, regardless of personality type or whether or not the subject completed their program of study, was that subjects felt that there was a lack of participation from other students with whom they were engaged in collaborative work. Others simply expressed a preference for working alone, claimed that students are just too busy to coordinate group meetings outside of class, or stated that they did not like to "rely on" or "wait on" other people.

Both graduates and withdrawn students with a primary personality type described as "dominant" or "D" explained that they are usually the leader in a group project and/or "end up being the one person who works and the others slack off". One former student noted, "It's hard. You can't get everyone to agree and communicate and be on the same page and on the same wavelength". She went on to share an experience from one class in regards to the communication issues that took place. She reported, "People were stubborn and didn't want to see it as, didn't want to believe other people's life experiences. They thought it could only happen the way they knew and believed and didn't want to be open to other ways. Upon probing for more details the following dialogue took place:

Researcher: What role do you generally play in a group?
Subject: I tend to voice my opinion, and I liked the brainstorming. There are times when I am the leader, I guess you could call it, and organize everything. But, I don't really like that role.
Researcher: Do you feel you get pushed into that role?
Subject: Yes, because I suck it up and do it because no one else will do it. I'm like alright I'll do it.

The greatest amount of variance between graduate and withdrawn students in terms of preference for working with a group was found with the "i" personality types. The majority of "i" graduates found group work to be "fun", as it fostered teamwork capabilities and the opportunity to "work with a variety of people". However, the vast majority of "i" personality types who did not complete their programs of study expressed a lack of satisfaction with their group project experiences, citing lack of participation from group members as the primary reason. The most social of all of the personality types, the "influencers" tend to enjoy involvement with other people and having fun while accomplishing tasks. Quite the opposite seems to be true when in fact others are not participating to the level expected by these personality types.

Another personality type known for their desire to be involved with people is the "S" type. Additonally, they expect everyone to do his or her share when engaged in group projects. According to one "S" former student, "I think its fun as long as you don't make me do all the work. I will do my part, but not everybody's part". In expressing reasons for a dislike of group work, this group provided more concrete examples of negative experiences including: "not everyone would show up", "younger students didn't want to do anything but look at wedding dresses", and "immaturity from a few of the girls in the group who didn't click". This personality type, both those who did and those who did not

complete their programs of study, provided the most neutral responses in regards to the question about group work. These were grounded primarily in the students' dislike for taking a leadership role and preference for "taking a task as assigned". (Table 3.1)

Conscientious, or "C" personality types, both graduates and withdrawn students, expressed mixed emotions about working in groups. Responses were evenly split which indicated a preference or dislike for collaborative learning. Both, however, indicated a demand for holding team members accountable to a higher standard, as is reflected by the following statements: "When someone else comes up short and my grade depends on it, that's the only trouble I have, when my grade reflects what someone else is doing", and "I liked it as long as I didn't get stuck with people who didn't want to do the work but took credit for it".

Discussion of RQ4

RQ 4: How can faculty and/or staff use awareness of student personality and learning types to modify classroom (or other) communication in an effort to improve student retention?

In identifying self-reported factors that proved to be either motivating or un-motivating for the subjects in this study, one reoccurring theme is obvious. Students who either completed their programs of study or failed to do so have one common demand from staff and faculty with regards to communication within the educational structure. They need to understand how they will use what they have learned and its relevance for them both as a student and when they begin their careers post-graduation.

One graduate commented on the skills she learned during a business writing course and how she uses them today in her professional career. "She taught me a lot

about the business side and writing the papers like we do. And, even today, when I am writing letters to my customers, I pull those back out to make sure that I am putting it in the right format". Another graduate comment regarding a similar course was, "I understood the importance and purpose and it changed my writing ability and I use it now in communicating in email more appropriately".

In contrast, former students who did not persist to graduation commented: "I couldn't understand why I was taking classes that were outside what I was going to school for and I started losing interest, especially in the online classes", "We had to fill out the workbooks that were never graded. That didn't benefit me because I was looking at the big picture and how and when would I ever use this stuff", and "I would think, when am I going to use this?"

According to Polk (2006), "Teachers must also be sure to make students aware that they are using what they have learned (Langer 2000). Students will be pleasantly surprised to hear a teacher say, 'I attended a class during my trip last week and here is something I learned.'" (p. 24). Graduate responses consistently mirrored this sentiment by commenting on motivating factors such as an instructor's "own experience", "personal examples", and "real world examples".

Schwartz and Fischer (2006) explain,

> "Instructors will have to resist simply retelling the text's story or reciting their own and instead look for opportunities to help students create personal experiences that make sense of the intellectual treasures that earlier generations have struggled to understand and preserve, building an understanding by creating their own pathways" (p. 9).

Former students who withdrew from their programs of study agreed by stating: "I couldn't relate to the course", "I wanted more of the hands on stuff", and "It just wasn't realistic in what you do in the real world, in my opinion".

A second factor that merits discussion here is that the majority of both the graduate and withdrawn students expressed a dislike for group work and collaborative learning. According to Hernandez (2002) and Stewart, Manz, and Sims (1999), "Teamwork experiences have become an integral part of the business curriculum as faculty respond to employer demands that new hires must be prepared to work in self-managed work groups" (as quoted in Amato & Amato, 2005, p. 41). This proves unfortunate for those respondents who "tend to want to work alone" or "would rather be by myself".

In terms of student learning outcomes, "Many researchers have argued that group collaboration fosters higher level learning outcomes such as those outlined in Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive domain" (Bloom et al.,1956) (Amato & Amato, 2005, p. 41). Additionally, "Studies by Bligh (1972) and Kulik and Kulik (1979) concluded that team learning leads to higher levels of student satisfaction" (Amato & Amato, 2005, p. 41). Why then do students continue to report both dissatisfaction and a dislike in general for collaborative learning?

Based on respondents representing all of the personality types, these former students become frustrated with group work when they sense a lack of participation from other students which either requires that one person do all of the work, and/or affects the grade awarded to all participants regardless of the amount of work contributed to the

project. Instructors need to draw from, in its simplest terms, the *functional perspective*, "which seeks to explain 'the role of communication in determining the extent to which particular task requirements are fulfilled and how their satisfaction, in turn, contributes to the appropriateness of choices groups make'" (Gouran, Hirokawa, Julian, & Leathan, 1993, p. 537-574, as quoted in Frey, 2003, p. 6). Assuming that instructors may lack the necessary resources and training to be able to put students in groups based on personality preferences and compatibility, at the very least a well defined set of guidelines for expectations and measurable outcomes for group members' participation should be enforced.

Limitations of the Research

The purpose of this study was to identify ways to increase communication effectiveness per student personality types in an effort to enhance student retention and overall satisfaction. To do so, one has to explore well beyond just the existing statistical data which identifies student personality types and whether or not they completed their degrees. Instead, an in depth examination had to occur which served to uncover critical communication incidents which proved to be either motivating or un-motivating for the subjects of this study.

One limitation includes the fact that all participants came from just one of the several campuses across the state from the educational institution which provided the basis for the study. Respondents have just one set of staff, faculty, and fellow students from which to draw their communication experiences. Furthermore, students engaged in completely online or distance learning programs would provide an entirely different

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perspective on communication methods based on the communication channels they experience in contrast to the face to face interaction described here.

Another limitation is that the researcher, having worked at the college for a number of years at the time of the study, had developed a rapport with many of both the graduates and withdrawn students. This rapport may have inhibited a respondent from being completely open and honest in his or her experience at the college, especially if that experience was a negative one. Many subjects had additionally been a student in one or more of the courses taught by the researcher herself, which may have provided cause for withholding information and/or negative experiences as a student.

Additionally, in seeking respondents who did not complete their course of study, those who may have provided the most data rich descriptions of un-motivating or poor classroom experiences were not likely to agree to participate in a study that could be perceived as helping the school with future retention efforts. At the onset of this study, the hope was that these students could be reached and given a voice with which to express their concerns as they pertain to classroom communication and adaptability to their unique personality and/or learning types. Unfortunately, this population proved to be the most difficult to reach and therefore non-existent in the research results here.

A final limitation for this study was the lack of relevant findings originating from students' learning style assessments. 36 of the 40 respondents completed the VARK learning style inventory either in a previous course or as requested for the purpose of participation in this study. No clear correlations were made between a students personality type and learning style, as the large majority of these respondents were either

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a Read/Write learner or a Kinesthetic learner, regardless of their primary DiSC type. However, the VARK assessment has been very rarely used at Carrigan College, unlike the DiSC assessment which every student receives, and is therefore rarely a focus or topic of conversation in the classroom.

Direction of Future Research

Future research that could prove useful for educational institutions seeking to enhance communication effectiveness per students' personality type would include an examination of the staff and faculty's personality types as well. Much could be discovered in exploring how a teacher's personality type affects their ability to instruct in a classroom and communicate with his or her students. Models that focused on lesson planning, grading rubrics, projects, and collaborative learning could be incorporated that focused more on individual students' personality and learning types instead of a "one size fits all" method that doesn't take any of these into consideration.

Future studies which focus solely on a students' personality type should strive to capture former students who expressed dissatisfaction with the educational institution as a whole or can pinpoint a communication incident which ultimately influenced their decision to withdraw from a course or a school. While these subjects may be difficult to recruit well after a student leaves a school or transfers to another, an "exit interview" similar to those used upon separation of employment might be a way to gather such information. Then, if in fact a communication error or defining moment took place by fault of the school or a particular incident, immediate corrective action can occur.

Another potential area which would merit further study would include distance learning environments and their unique communication challenges. Increasing student retention rates through increased communication effectiveness may be even more crucial in web based or distance education. According to Hall (2008),

> "A number of researchers have suggested that the retention rate for distance education students is lower than for traditional face-to-face students (Nash, 2005, O'Brien & Reener, 2002, Scalese, 2001). Administrators interviewed for *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (Carr, 2000) agreed that course completion rates in distance education courses are often 10-20 percentage points lower than in traditional classes" (p. 1).

Subject responses for this study indicate an increased level of dissatisfaction and/or a lack of motivation when there was a lack of feedback and communication from online instructors. Many former students described poor learning experiences in the classroom as follows: "very little communication", "instructor would not communicate about our grades or reply to emails", "teacher refused to answer a number of questions". After expressing her lack of motivation for online classes, one graduate, when asked about the communication in an online course, said the following: "It's delayed a lot of the time. If you have a question here in class, the instructor can answer it. But, online, you have to wait".

A final suggestion for potential future research would lie within the administrators and staff of a college. The college which provided the basis for this study takes an active role in providing one on one admission interviews, financial planning, and career consultations. The same principles that apply in increasing communication effectiveness in the classroom could and should be expanded to the staff with whom potential and new students have extensive contact prior to the first day of classes.

Conclusion

This study is of benefit to both the communication and education discipline in terms of its benefit for creating a better understanding of communicative issues that may prove useful for enhancing student retention and satisfaction. The unique approach to exploring the issue in terms of personality and learning types may provide a new perspective from which to begin to create potential solutions for the problem of student attrition which continues to plague educational institutions. In special consideration of community and business colleges, with their larger populations of adult learners and non-traditional students, this study and recommendations for future research begins to introduce a new discourse for administrators, staff, and faculty to consider in looking to the future of educating this unique student body. According to Miglietti and Strange (1998), "With the need for continuous learning to adapt in today's society, nonparticipation among adult learners will have serious consequences for everyone-the individual, the institution, and society" (p. 2).

The majority of the participants of this study, whether or not they completed their degree program, expressed a need to realize the relevance of what they were learning in the classroom for their future career goals. In considering how these findings can help faculty and/or staff to modify communication in the ultimate effort to increase student retention, personality differences can not be ignored. The question is not whether a student sees the connection between their classes and careers post-graduation, but *how* they see that connection. It is imperative that educators become better versed in *how* to

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communicate their messages in ways that will have a positive influence on any and all of the various personality types that may be represented in an educational institution.

Colleges must keep up with the ever changing demands from their student bodies in terms of current and relevant course materials, technologies, methodologies, and instructor training and development. Today's student demands so, and tomorrow's employers will seek out the graduates who can best assimilate into the workforce by incorporating the aforementioned into the way they perform their job duties and collaborate with work teams. Based on the results of this study, it is apparent that personality and learning type considerations should likewise not be overlooked in retaining and graduating an educational institution's current and future students.

Table 1.1- Most Prevalent Motivating Themes in the Classroom

Motivating in the classroom- "D" Type Graduates	Motivating in the classroom- " D" Type Withdrawn Students
Freedom of choice and self motivation "I was motivated to present something that would be interesting to both me and my class" **Leadership, active involvement w/tangible results** "My class made me the head of the project" **Opportunity to take charge, argue a point and showcase knowledge** "I was prepared with all of my notes and the other students weren't" "I feed off of the attention" **Instructor's attention to the student as an individual and seeing their future potential** "Extra effort on the part of the instructors builds confidence in a student"	**Challenge, competition, debating, opposition to authority** "I'm motivated by competition. I love to debate" "A girl in the class told me that she was going to sit in the back of the room and chomp her gum through it (my presentation). Therefore, I was more motivated to do it, and do it better than her and over her trying to interrupt me" "We were both dominant, so we collided bad. We got called to the Dean's office and she didn't quite know what to do with two high "D's" sitting in front of her" **Interest in the subject matter, instructor's ability to communicate effectively** "I was really interested in the subject and she taught it really well, she was a really good teacher" "I was motivated by things I was interested in, rather than something in the class that I didn't understand" **Descriptive nature of what was going on and how it would be utilized** "Instructor was descriptive as to what we would be doing, what things took place, what to be expected on the job and in the field"
Motivating in the classroom- "i" Type Graduates	Motivating in the classroom- " i" Type Withdrawn Students
Self driven, teacher influence and personal encouragement " I was determined, so that was my driving force"	**Autonomy in decision making and freedom of expression** "In a research paper, the topic was self chosen"

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"The teacher keep me motivated by saying you are doing great and just letting me know that"

"Just one staff member being there and caring and understanding"

"The teacher who used lots of personal examples, so that made me feel like I could talk freely"

Making positive first impressions

"Learning the importance of appearances, what you say, and how you conduct yourself"

"Knowing that people here were watching"

Motivated by creative freedom and the ability to share skills and persuade others

"We had to come up with our own company and present it to the class. I got to use my new skills on the computer. The teacher allowed us to be as creative as we wanted"

"The teacher gave us a choice. It was wide open as to the topic we could choose"

"I chose the topic because a lot of people were talking about it"

"I can just naturally talk to people"

Teacher involvement, engagement, and encouragement

"The teacher paid special attention to us and went above and beyond to make it interesting"

"The instructor was always there to let us know that we could do it"

"The teacher was just interesting, realistic, and hands on"

Motivating in the classroom- "S" Type Graduates	Motivating in the classroom- " S" Type Withdrawn Students
Instructor support and one on one assistance "The instructor validated what you felt was important and that each person was important" "She would go around and encourage us" ***Combination of process, guidelines, and structure along with creativity and fun*** "Having a deadline really helped me focus. I like having clear guidelines, but then the freedom to do it any way we wanted" ***Engagement in group activities*** "In a Management class we had a group project to plan a Christmas party. My committee was the most important, so I had to be motivated"	***Instructor encouragement and positive reinforcement*** "After a talk with the teacher, she reassured me that I really could do it" "The teacher was just excited and motivating and brought everything to life" "You could tell that she liked what she was doing and cared about every student" ***Ability to get continuous feedback*** "I was able to turn in parts and he would encourage me to think about other aspects" ***Freedom of choice and ability to be creative*** "She left it open ended and allowed us to be creative and I like to be creative" "My favorite thing was the final project because we got to pick any project"
Motivating in the classroom- "C" Type Graduates	Motivating in the classroom- " C" Type Withdrawn Students
Provided an opportunity to be the expert "I was the first one in my class to get it, so the instructors had me help the other students" ***Set high expectations for self and others*** "I knew that I could help them and I found that I could learn from them" "It was really important for me to succeed" ***Preference for procedures and applicability to goals and standards*** "The discussions in class helped to keep everyone on task and on track" "The instructor taught us how to set goals and accomplish things"	***Logical, systematic approach*** "When I would get stuck, she would ask 'What do you need to figure out before we can fix this?' She just talked me through it" "I had to communicate with everyone to get approval, organize, and make sure it all works out" ***Knowledge of performance expectations*** "One of the other students had done a paper on it before, so I talked to her about it a little beforehand"

Table 1.2- Most Prevalent Motivating Factors for or Barriers to Degree Completion

Towards degree completion- "D"	*Barriers to degree completion- "D"*
"I have always enjoyed learning and can't imagine myself out of school" "My determination to never fail and my family's support" "Better life, job stability, improved quality of life for children, husband, and self" "My kids and wanting to get a better job" "I knew that if I didn't do it at that time, I would never. From the very beginning, it was always positive and the school did a very good job of just letting us know that you were there. Everyone always seemed available"	"Time and money. I was a single mom with three kids" "Financial Aid. It was getting really expensive" "I had just one class to go, Speech. I just don't have the confidence and don't see the purpose" "Pregnancy and illness. I was in the medical field because my entire family works in healthcare. But, I hated it" "I stopped going because I was going for Medical Assisting because of all of the job opportunities. Then I started to realize that I would have to wake up every day and do that job"
Towards degree completion- "i" "My child and wanting to get a good job to support her" "Knowing the end result" "I just wanted to earn my degree, be an adult and get out on my own, and graduate with Honors" "The teachers kept it interesting" "I was so involved with the classes because the teachers kept it interesting and I was getting good grades"	*Barriers to degree completion- "i"* "Personal life, wasn't able to make time for it, lack of cooperation from spouse" "No transfer of credits into the RN program" "My son and his health issues" "I didn't like the Business program because it was so different from what I was experiencing in the workplace" "Family and health issues"
Towards degree completion- "S" "My family, kids, boyfriend, my entire support system" "I'm never one not to finish something, even if I don't like it" "Just to know I could do it at my age. My family now says they always knew I could" "Partly my daughter. To not disappoint her.	*Barriers to degree completion- "S"* "I had a child with medical problems and I didn't like online classes. I had a lot on my plate and don't think I could have done well in any class" "Family issues" "I was completely unmotivated when I realized I was in an area of study that I was

Partly for myself because I dropped out of college once a long time ago" "To change careers and get a good job in the medical field"	not even interested in" "My dad's health" "My daughter's health. It was just too much. My mind was in too many different directions"
Towards degree completion- "C" "Wanting to support my family, make decent money, and get insurance and benefits" "My family and children, setting an example for them" "I love to learn and accomplish things" "I wanted the overall education" "My kids, going to school for my passion, and setting a foundation for their future by example setting"	***Barriers to degree completion- "C"*** "Transportation. I lost my car" "My family was in a slump and needed me to help before we lost our house" "My husband got cancer" "Family and work obligations" "Realization that a rapid learning process and progression of the classes was not a good fit. I wanted a traditional college setting"

Table 2.1- Best Learning Moment in the Classroom

"D" Graduate	"D" Withdrawn Student
Immediate results and applicability of learned skills and concepts "While I was listening to the teacher, I could be answering questions in my workbook and learning how to do it on my own. I prefer hands-on learning" "We got to get in there and do it from day one" "The teacher did the book stuff, but also the real life stuff too" ***Individual attention and recognition of efforts*** "I felt proud and gained information guaranteed to help me in the future" ***Autonomy in decision making and the opportunity to teach others*** "It was really informative because of my personal interest and then being able to teach others"	***Immediate results and applicability of learned concepts and skills*** "The real world scenarios and simulation. The hands on. It wasn't really the instructor, but that it was real life" ***Individual attention and recognition of efforts*** "The instructor pulled me aside after class because I was the only one who got all the answers right on the final and asked me how I did it. Her message was confirming" ***Able to learn in a competitive way*** "Playing games. I'm a very competitive person. In order to win you have to know the answers" ***Encouragement and personal interest from the instructor*** "She encouraged us to do better and always made herself available to help and showed a personal interest in not just our school life, but personally too" "Her presence gave me the confidence, and she just believed in me"
"i" Graduates	**"i" Withdrawn Students**
Positive feedback from instructor and peers, social acceptance and recognition "Realizing how good I was at making everyone else learn and the impact it had on the entire class" ***Instructor communication- interpersonal*** "He was energetic and passionate in his teaching style and it rubbed off on us" "It had a lot to do with the communication from the instructor" ***Instructor communication- credibility and***	***Positive feedback from instructor and peers, social acceptance, recognition*** "I did well in Presentation Skills. If I am really dedicated to something and want to get my point across I can persuade people to look at something differently" ***Instructor communication- interpersonal*** "You could tell that they cared and weren't just there to do a job" "A teaching style that is very personal" "Took time out for every student"

real world application "The instructor knew his material and would give us the hands on" "I think because of her own experience, she didn't use the book a lot. To hear her talk about her own experiences helped me" "She broke it down with lots of personal examples that were so realistic"	*Instructor communication- credibility and real world application* "The teacher explained it to me in my language and related it to the class"
"S" Graduates	**"S" Withdrawn Students**
Instructor communication- credibility and real world application "They share their personal experiences" "Real world examples to help with explanations and problem solving" *One on one assistance and encouragement* "She spent extra time with me" "My instructor always helped out a lot" "She was very encouraging" "The teachers were constantly encouraging"	*Peer support and approval* "I realized I could do it well and heard the comments from my classmates that gave me a lot of confidence" *Instructor support and approval* "Her feedback gave me a boost of confidence" "The teacher was awesome, fantastic" *Application of information and skills* "From the class I could see the reasons behind what we were doing" *Learning to retain information* "We played games and it made the room exciting. It wasn't just learned to pass a test, it was instilled in my head"
"C" Graduates	**"C" Withdrawn Students**
Instructor ability to relate to students "He always talked to us and wanted to know where we were coming from" *Teacher/student relationship of trust* "The instructor ensured us of our capabilities for accomplishing goals and offered herself as a guinea pig for blood draws" *Autonomy in decision making and opportunity to show expertise* "My teacher supported by ability and let me continue with my method as long as I got the answer right"	*Given details and understanding of expectations* "Gave us an outline and went through what would be on the test and her expectations" "She walked us through where to find the details" *Applicability to real world scenarios* "I learned new things that I am able to use now in the real world" *Instructor communication and feedback* "The way she taught was amazing. It made it fun to learn and to just be there" "It helped to get positive feedback"

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Opportunity for self-exploration and tools for the future "I love the personality test because it pointed out weaknesses that I probably knew I had but didn't want to address. It gives you keys and instruments to help you in the future and with other classes"	

Table 2.2- Poor Learning Moment in the Classroom

"D" Graduates	"D" Withdrawn Students
No opportunity to apply information learned "Unable to really apply anything. It takes me much longer to learn things when I am not able to work with them" *Lack of respect from the teacher* "The teacher was arrogant and responded condescendingly at times" "He called us lazy and told the class it was not his fault that the whole class was failing, it was ours" *Lack of tolerance for rude, disruptive students* "She had to be talking all the time, asking questions. I got to the point where I finally told her to sit down and shut up. She told on me and me had to go see the Dean"	*Unmotivated by boring work and lack of stimulation* "We read the book and then had to do it. There wasn't anything fun about it" *Personality conflict with instructor* "The instructor's personality and mine didn't click" *Lack of control over environment* "The instructor was really fast, and I just didn't want to go to that class. I thought I could do better at home on my own without all of the distractions"
"i" Graduates	**"i" Withdrawn Students**
Lack of communication with and feedback from the instructor "It was just boring. It was not a very interactive class" "If I would ask a question she wouldn't answer it and was really rude about it" "There was very little communication with her" "The instructor would not communicate about our grades or reply to emails" *Lack of tolerance for rude, disruptive students* "One student was rude to the instructors and mouthy for no reason, which was annoying"	*Lack of communication with and feedback from the instructor* "The teacher refused to answer a number of questions" *Instructor inflexibility* "It was more about her than making us understand. It was her way, with no other options and I just don't sit well with that" *Instructor lack of credibility and confidence* "Her presentation style and the fact that she just wasn't confident and it was evident"
"S" Graduates	**"S" Withdrawn Students**
Instructor lack of credibility and	*Instructor lack of credibility and*

experience	*experience*
"She didn't have any idea what she was doing as far as teaching. She just needed to have more experience"	"It was her first time teaching and she was struggling. The knowledge was there, but the teaching ability lacked"
Overwhelming amount of information and work	***Lack of feedback and explanations***
"Because of the workload, I felt that she scared me so much that it affected my other classes"	"The material was so dry and there were no in depth explanations"
Lack of tolerance for other students' irresponsibility	"We were not getting feedback and didn't really understand what we were doing at times"
"When people didn't show up for class and had some lame excuse, then asked to make tests up next week"	***Unable to assimilate into the class***
	"I felt like I was behind everybody, because it seemed like everybody else was fresh out of high school and I was 10 years older"
"C" Graduates	**"C" Withdrawn Students**
Instructor lack of confidence and competence	***Lack of clarification of concepts***
"It was apparent that the instructor was nervous and she kept telling us that she knew it was boring. Occasionally, she would teach us methods that were incorrect"	"We would ask questions and it seemed like he couldn't answer them, simplify them. He knew what he was talking about, he just couldn't explain it"
Lack of specific details and structure	***Lack of specific details, structure, and guidelines for expectations***
"We asked questions to which we received no answers. The class was self taught"	"There was no help or guidance from the instructor"
Instructor inability to relate to students	"We were never prepared for what was coming up on the tests, what to study"
"Each person learns differently and she really didn't understand that"	"Some of us had to take the course over with a different instructor who did explain it so that we could understand"
"The way she talked with the other students. She just couldn't come down to our level"	

Table 3.1- Experiences with Collaborative Work in the Classroom

"D" Graduates	"D" Withdrawn Students
Lack of participation from other students "I do not enjoy group work…..I usually end up being the one person who works and the others slack off" "We did a lot of group work, which I am not very fond of. I tend to be the leader. I don't think I can count on other people" *People are too busy* "We do not always have time to work with others outside the classroom" *Considers group work to be motivating* "We could do it together and get both points of view. I would like to see more group work in the future" "I would prefer to work in a group. They are most of the time motivating"	*Lack of participation from other students* "There is a risk for some not doing their part. I study my own way" "With too much group work the focus isn't solely on you and your grade reflection" *Lack of communication* "It's hard, you can't get everyone to agree and communicate and be on the same page and on the same wavelength" *Considers group work to be motivating* "We got to debate both sides. Working is a group is good, but the minute it is boring, forget it" "I like that everyone finds different things and maybe I wouldn't have found that and vice versa"
"i" Graduates	**"i" Withdrawn Students**
Views group work as fun and good for teambuilding and getting others' input "It was a lot of fun. The people made it fun" "I really liked it because you could get ideas from other people and it helped you learn how to work in a team" "It was good to get everyone's opinions and input and getting to work with a variety of people" *Dislikes relying on others* "At least it is my work and I'm not relying on someone else to do what they are supposed to do" "I'm pretty much one to do it on my own. I don't like to wait on other people"	*Lack of participation from other students* "Many times one or two are actually motivated and the others will slack off" "I usually get stuck with people who slack off" "I pretty much took on the whole project. My partner just sat on the sidelines" *Prefers solitary learning* "I would rather be by myself and concentrate" *Likes to get assistance from others* "If you don't understand something, there is someone right there who can help"
"S" Graduates	**"S" Withdrawn Students**
Lack of participation from other students	*Lack of participation from other students*

"At times frustrating due to lack of team work. Not everyone would show up" "When you have to depend on someone else and they're not dependable, it affects your grade and that's not fair to you" "The younger students didn't want to do anything but look at wedding dresses and stuff during class" ***Prefers solitary learning*** "It was a challenge for me to participate and connect with other people. I tend to want to work alone" ***No preference for a leadership role*** "I am never the leader in a group. I do not feel comfortable in that role"	"There was immaturity from a few of the girls in the group who didn't click" "I think its fun as long as you don't make me do all the work. I will do my part, but not everybody's part" ***Views group work as opportunity for team building*** "Everyone worked together and it was fun to see the gratification that everyone got out of it. It was a good learning experience" ***No preference for a leadership role*** "I am more likely to take a task as assigned. I am not really a leader in a group" "I wouldn't say that I am the leader, but once I get a topic I offer my input and opinions. I can be a leader and hope to one day"

"C" Graduates	"C" Withdrawn Students
Preference for solitary learning "I tend to think that I work best alone. Group work can be nice to bounce ideas off of others" "I am not a group person. I like to do everything myself" ***Views group work as valuable*** "One in particular was fun. My partner and I had the same ideas for a business" "I like group work and the varying viewpoints that I don't have" ***Lack of participation from other students*** "Some students didn't do their part. I wound up having to type it all. I decided I didn't like group work"	***Views group work as valuable*** "It helps to bounce ideas of off someone else" "It was good to get the ideas of other people and their understanding" "There were a lot of group projects we did. They were all good experiences" ***Lack of participation from other students*** "If someone is not pulling their weight, they should not get credit for it" ***Preference for solitary learning*** "I am more independent and just like to do my work and get it done, read it to myself and do it"

Appendix A- Interview Schedule

1. If you did not complete your program of study, what prohibited you from doing so?
2. If you did complete your program of study, what was your biggest motivating factor for doing so?
3. During your time at Carrigan, did you feel that you understood how your classes would help you to reach your career goals?
4. Do you know what your primary style is from the DiSC assessment?
5. Do you know what your primary style is from the VARK assessment?
6. During your time at Carrigan, did you feel that your individual personality and/or learning style were understood by your instructors?
7. Did you feel that the coursework complimented or inhibited your style and preferences?
8. Think of specific moments in your college career that were particularly motivating or un-motivating for you as a student.
9. Think of your best learning moments or experiences in the classroom, or the opposite (any poor) experiences in the classroom and share that story.
10. In these examples, can you identify factors that caused you to believe that your instructor had a personality that was similar to yours? Or opposite of yours?
11. Can you comment on the amount of group work that you engaged in while attending Carrigan? Would you have liked more, or less?
12. Are there any questions that you wished I would have asked, or additional comments that you would like to make now?

Appendix B

Dear Former Student,

*I, as a graduate student in the Communication Studies department of IUPUI, am conducting research for my thesis. My topic is Student Personality Types and Retention. I am reaching out to you based on both your personality type (recorded here as "**insert primary personality type**") and your "**insert graduate or withdrawn**" status from Carrigan College.*

I am asking that you participate in my study by providing answers to less than 15 questions concerning the communication style(s) during your time as a student. This can be done in person, over the phone, or via email.

Your information will be kept confidential by me, and again is being used for the purpose of my needs as a student at IUPUI working on my Master's degree.

Would you be interested in helping? It would be greatly appreciated!

Thanks,

Melissa

Appendix C

Insert subject name,
 Have you had an opportunity to answer the questions on the Interview Schedule?
If at all possible, I'd like to receive them back by September the 22nd.
I still have to code all of the data and then start on the 75-100 page paper to follow!
Yikes!
Thanks for your much needed help and support,
Melissa

Appendix D- Statistical Comparison of Personality Types and Retention

Percentage of total student body by primary DiSC type

Campus	D	I	S	C
Anderson	35.37%	34.01%	17.01%	13.61%
Columbus	*31.33%*	*26.51%*	*24.10%*	*18.07%*
Indianapolis	35.58%	28.21%	16.35%	19.87%
Lafayette	36.15%	23.68%	24.31%	15.86%
Medical	29.08%	25.13%	23.55%	22.24%
Muncie	33.03%	31.19%	21.10%	14.68%
Northwest	35.65%	20.87%	20.87%	22.61%
Terre Haute	37.84%	23.65%	24.32%	14.19%
Grand Total	33.46%	26.41%	21.39%	18.75%

Retention/Attrition statistics for all campuses by primary DiSC type

Student Status	D	I	S	C
Complete	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.18%
Graduate	*26.84%*	*27.93%*	*37.00%*	*33.64%*
Permanent Suspension/Expulsion	1.05%	0.40%	0.16%	0.18%
Reschedule>365	0.11%	0.00%	0.16%	0.00%
Suspended	5.47%	5.14%	2.58%	4.23%
Withdrawal	*66.53%*	*66.53%*	*60.10%*	*61.76%*
Grand Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Melissa G. Barnett

Education

Indiana University
Master of Arts, 2010
Major: Communication Studies, *Concentration:* Corporate Communication
Bachelor of Arts, 2005
Major: Communication Studies, *Minor:* Spanish

Memberships/Affiliations

Rainmakers Action Board Member and Activity Chair
Career Development Professionals of Indiana
Vice President of Education- Seymour Toastmasters
Women's Professional Development Conference Marketing Committee
Columbus Young Professionals
Career Development Institute Alumni- 2009
Southern Indiana Human Resource Association

Recognitions

Harrison College Director of Career Services of the Year Nominee- 2008, 2009
Founding Member- Rainmakers Marketing Group- 2008

Professional Experiences

Director of Career Services- Harrison College   December 2006-present

Business/Communication Faculty- Harrison College   June 2005- December 2006