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To cite this article: Sutton, Anna (2012) "But is it real?" A review of research on the Enneagram. Enneagram Journal, 5, 5-20

"But is it real?" A review of research on the Enneagram

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“But is it *real*?” A review of research on the Enneagram

by Anna Sutton

One of the most common questions I am asked when introducing people to the Enneagram goes something along the lines of: “Yes, but is it *real*? What scientific evidence is there?” It was exactly that question that prompted me to do my PhD research a few years ago. I could see the Enneagram worked for me but I wanted to know if it could stand up to rigorous psychological research. In this article, I have tried to summarise the published research on the Enneagram so that next time someone asks you that question you can answer confidently, “Yes, there is good evidence of its validity, let me tell you about it...”

Why do research on the Enneagram?

Much of our Enneagram knowledge has been built up through narrative and experience. The use of panel interviews, books with quotes and stories, videos, anything that uses examples from other people’s experience to make the types come alive is the way most of us learn about the Enneagram. We have deep, rich understandings and descriptions of the nine types. So why do research?

I believe solid research is important for two reasons. First, it helps to justify our use of the Enneagram. There are unfortunately a lot of fads and fashions out there, particularly when it comes to understanding and developing ourselves: “personality tests” on the web that can tell you what kind of animal you are, books aimed at improving your life based on nothing more than anecdotes of what worked for one person. Anecdotes are all very well and good in piquing someone’s interest but as professional Enneagram practitioners, part of our role is to demonstrate that the Enneagram is not just another fad, that the stories and experiences we use to flesh out the types are not just convenient but are real illustrations of the similarities and differences between people. It is only through well constructed and rigorous research that we can build up this evidence base and establish the Enneagram as a reliable and valid model of human personality and development.

The second reason it is essential that we have good research is to sound a note of caution that we do not lose the reality of the Enneagram in idiosyncratic interpretations or conjecture. One of the things we know from the Enneagram (and in fact from a lot of psychological research) is that we all view the world in a slightly different way and that we tend to make what we see “fit” with what we expect or want. This does not just stop happening when we are learning about or using the Enneagram. We may find a particular story about a type really strikes home for us but how do we know it is actually typical of that type and not just an individual quirk? Without good research to identify and define the types, we are open to making assumptions about types based in our own unique perceptions. Research is a way to keep different practitioners centred around the basis of the Enneagram – building our understanding certainly, but building on the same foundation so that our knowledge can be shared rather than fragmented.

I believe that, at its root, research is simply common sense. Of course we would want to check that a particularly fascinating story was true for other people of that type before using it as an illustration. Of course we would want to make sure we were not misleading people about how to understand themselves and others. Valuing research is no different from valuing authenticity in our practice. It is a journey of discovery, finding out new things and checking the things we think we know.

What makes a “good” theory of personality?

So on this journey of discovery, what are we trying to find out? What kind of things do we need to investigate if we are to be able to demonstrate that the Enneagram is a “real” model of personality? In my own work (Sutton, 2007), I found that researchers and theorists in the field of personality psychology are seeking to address three major criteria when evaluating personality theories. The first is a need for personality theory to be scientifically rigorous. That means a theory that makes clear, testable predictions. It may seem strange to say that a theory needs to be able to be proved wrong in order to be “good”. But if we have a theory that is so vague that anything we can imagine can fit into it, it is not actually of any use. A theory of gravity that said “sometimes things fall to earth and sometimes they don’t” would not be testable: if we dropped a rock and it floated, it would not have disproved the theory. This can be quite a problem with personality theories because we are dealing with such complicated objects – people’s minds – and it can be very tempting to say “sometimes we are like this and sometimes not” and leave it at that. A scientifically rigorous theory will not pretend that complicated things are simple, but it will make clear and testable predictions about those complicated things. An example of this in the Enneagram would be the way it describes each type clearly but also describes how each type changes in times of security or stress. If we say that Sevens are typically optimistic and cheerful but that under stress they will become more critical and pessimistic, that is a specific, testable prediction drawn from the theory.

The second criterion that is used for judging a personality theory is its usefulness. As Kurt Lewin, one of the earliest applied psychologists said, “There is nothing so practical as a good theory.” Particularly in my own field of work psychology, there is a desire for a theory that will be useful rather than an abstract description which cannot be applied to improve people’s everyday lives. We only have to look at the proliferation of books and courses based on the Enneagram to see the many different ways it is being applied. Research to prove the utility of a theory needs to check these claims. Instead of simply claiming, for example, that learning about the Enneagram can help teams to work together better, we need to demonstrate that it does and be able to specify exactly how it does so. *How* do people work together better? *What* has improved for them since they learnt about the Enneagram?

And finally, there is the search for a comprehensive theory, one which can encompass all that researchers have discovered so far within the field. This is personality psychology’s wish for a “Theory of Everything” and it has a lot of ground to cover because it needs to be able to describe how each of us is similar to and different from every other person on the planet, how we got that way and what we might be like in the future. Here we run into a problem. Investigation of the differences between people necessitates a “broad” approach, looking at averages across lots of people so we can tell how they are more or less different from everyone else, and losing sight of the individual. On the other hand, trying to understand individuals in detail, their personal histories and development, requires a “deep” approach, a detailed analysis of individual case studies that loses generalisability. I believe the Enneagram can provide a way of integrating the two. The Enneagram typology describes both how people of the same type share an internal structuring of personality as well as how they are different from others. Research can help to show that the Enneagram works for everyone but also that it tells us detailed things about individuals.

So a “good” personality theory is one that is scientifically testable, useful and comprehensive. The reason I was excited by the Enneagram when I first came across it, and still am now, is that I believe it meets those criteria as well as, if not better than, any other model of personality I have come across. That belief, however, and theoretical explanations of how good the Enneagram *might* be, is not enough. We need research to back it up.

What have we learnt so far?

Most Enneagram authors have tended to concentrate on how the Enneagram can help us to develop rather than conducting research to test the model itself, and while there has been some interest in publishing theoretical papers about the Enneagram, there has been less interest in conducting scientifically rigorous testing of the model. Combined with this is the unfortunate fact that there is still a disappointing level of prejudice against the Enneagram from many psychologists, which may well be limiting the publication of good research. This means that there is a relatively small pool of research dissertations and peer-reviewed papers to review. However, what we have so far makes for an interesting and convincing beginning to the research base for the Enneagram.

Theoretical publications

Several theoretical papers have attempted to develop the possible applications of the Enneagram. In the business field, for example, the Enneagram was incorporated into a dense theoretical paper presenting a new framework for knowledge acquisition and sense-making by Cutting and Kouzmin (2004), proposing that the Enneagram be used as part of an overall model to develop and integrate knowledge in the social sciences. A paper on market segmentation suggested using the Enneagram typology (Kamineni, 2005) to create different marketing strategies for each of the types as consumers. Suggestions on improving workplace spirituality (Kale and Shrivastava, 2003) recommended introducing the Enneagram to organisations as a way for companies to create a more harmonious and profitable company. And Brugha (1998) included the Enneagram in a proposal for a system for analysing development decision making in management. All of these papers, however, focused on theoretical developments or applications and while they indicated interesting areas for future work, did not conduct research to test these suggestions.

Similarly, in the counselling literature, Wyman (1998) presented a psychotherapy model aimed at the counselling practitioner which combined the MBTI and the Enneagram, suggesting that the former captured the “core self” and the latter described a person’s typical defence system. Given that Enneagram Types are already described in terms of a “core self”, it is hard to justify ignoring these descriptions in favour of the Myers-Briggs types without supporting evidence, which this paper unfortunately did not provide. The theoretical associations between the Enneagram and other psychological models was also discussed by Naranjo (1994) who drew parallels with models such as the interpersonal circumplex and the DSM-IV categories of mental illness. Again, although his theorising is detailed and seems theoretically sound, it also has not yet been tested.

We now turn to consider the practical research on the Enneagram that has been carried out over the past few decades. While my focus here is on the Enneagram in psychology, broadly defined, it is worth acknowledging that published research covers a range of areas, from Religious Philosophy to Education.

Enneagram Questionnaire studies

In line with much personality research, several studies have focused on constructing a reliable questionnaire to identify the 9 personality types. Several of these questionnaire studies have also had as their goal a demonstration of the reliability or validity of the Enneagram theory itself, rather than just the particular questionnaire under investigation. It is of course difficult to separate tests of the theory from tests of the instruments but this is a problem common to personality research, where the measure of a concept can become a proxy for the concept itself.

When we are constructing a psychological measure, we have two main concerns. The first is that the measure must be reliable. Just like if we were to measure how tall someone

was on two different occasions, we would expect to get the same height, if someone completes the questionnaire on two different occasions, we would expect to get the same results. The second concern is that the questionnaire should be valid: it should actually measure what we say it measures. To continue the example of height, a valid measurement would be centimetres but not kilograms. It is more difficult to demonstrate validity for psychological concepts than physical ones, but one of the ways we can do it is by demonstrating that the Enneagram types are different from each other in theoretically expected ways on other, already established, personality measures. In our example of height, this would be like saying that we expect that someone who is short in centimetres would also be short when measured in inches.

These theoretically expected and type-distinctive personality profiles have, in fact, been demonstrated for the Enneagram types on several established measures of personality.

First steps in validating the Riso-Hudson Enneagram Type Indicator (RHETI) were made by Warling (1995) when she collected data from 153 students who completed the RHETI and an already established questionnaire, Cattell's 16PF, which measures 16 different personality traits. She found significant correlations between the scales on the RHETI and comparable traits on the 16PF, as well as support for the distinctions between the Enneagram types. Dameyer (2001) undertook further research on the RHETI and demonstrated that test-retest reliability was high: 82% of her 135 respondents were identified as the same type the second time they completed the questionnaire. However, there was only weak agreement (42%) between a person's type as identified by the RHETI and the Wagner Enneagram Personality Styles Scale (WEPSS). In addition, relationships between the RHETI and the Adjective Checklist, which asks respondents to choose adjectives to describe themselves, were also not strong. This indicates that the two Enneagram questionnaires are not describing the types consistently, either with each other or in a way that can be captured clearly by an outside measure.

In recent years, the Big Five personality traits (Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability and Openness to Experience) have become the standard way of capturing the broad differences between people in the personality research literature. Further work on the RHETI, with a sample of 287 participants who completed the RHETI and a measure of the Big Five, showed that the nine type scales generally had theoretically predicted relationships with the Big Five (Newgent et al., 2004). Although there is still room for improvement in the RHETI, as some of the scales are less reliable than others, this provides some evidence that the differences between the Enneagram personality types can be demonstrated on the "industry standard" measure of personality traits.

Sharp (1994) conducted a study to test three other Enneagram questionnaires (the Wagner Inventory, the Cohen-Palmer Inventory and the Zinkle Inventory) and compare them with the Holland Vocational Preference Inventory, on the basis that personality type would have an influence on the kind of career environments people prefer. He asked 340 people to complete all four questionnaires and his analyses provided evidence that the Enneagram questionnaires had a valid structure. However, the results showed that there was only a weak relationship between Enneagram type, as measured by these questionnaires, and vocational preference.

In summary, while several Enneagram questionnaires have been developed and can show reasonable levels of reliability, demonstrating validity is more difficult. Using a personality questionnaire as a measure of someone's real Enneagram type is, of course, fraught with difficulty. Part of what makes the Enneagram so useful in application is the fact that it describes often-unconscious processes and motivations that we may initially not have easy access to. Asking people to complete a self-report questionnaire will of necessity miss out on this deeper understanding. Self-report questionnaires are only able to tap a

respondent's conscious self-concept; those who have not yet recognised their subconscious processes or default ways of operating will simply not be able to report accurately on them. It is therefore to be expected that Enneagram questionnaires may show lower reliabilities than questionnaires which measure explicit personality. While we can still use questionnaires as perhaps a first indication or a basis for guidance in discovering one's type, I would suggest that using self-report questionnaires on people who have never come across the Enneagram before is unlikely to provide convincing evidence for the model as a whole.

A reliable "criterion measure"

This brings us on to a constantly recurring problem facing Enneagram researchers: the lack of a standard (criterion measure) against which to assess the effectiveness of questionnaires or other approaches to determining type. Gamard (1986) focused his doctoral research on this problem by evaluating the level of agreement among "expert judges" who watched videoed interviews and were asked to type the interviewee. However, Gamard's research compared the expert judges' type decisions to a criterion rating based on a joint decision between himself and another Enneagram practitioner. So although the judges showed highly significant agreement among themselves, their agreement with the criterion rating was not high enough to reach significance. It seems strange that the author then interpreted this as not providing evidence for the reliability of expert judgements. A more reasonable interpretation would seem to be that there was consensus among the judges on the types that differed from the researchers' joint judgements. Additionally, the inter-rater agreement for the Enneagram was comparable to that found in research for inter-rater reliability in DSM-IV categories (which are used to classify mental illnesses) (Skodol et al., 2005), indicating that expert judges are able to make clinically valid judgements. However, Gamard's results also indicated that the judges were more confident of their intuitive rating of participants than was really warranted, and this sounds a note of caution when evaluating future research.

As Thrasher (1994) pointed out, Gamard's research used expert judges who, although very familiar with the Enneagram, were completely unacquainted with the participants. She suggested that people who were familiar with the participants ("significant others") might make better judges of type and asked her participants to nominate a significant other, who was then given a description of the nine types and asked to type their corresponding partner. Perhaps not surprisingly, results indicated that in this group of 118 pairs, significant others were only good judges of type if they were already very familiar with the Enneagram system.

Taking Gamard's and Thrasher's results together seems to indicate that maximising the accuracy of judgements by others can be done by increasing a judge's familiarity with both the person and the system. This is, of course, what the longer-term Enneagram workshops already do. A further complication for the self-report questionnaire approach is that there is some indication that our Enneagram type might have an influence on how we report our personality on other instruments, like the MBTI (Wyman and Magidson, 2008). This research showed that there was a significant relationship between Enneagram type and "misreporting" of a preference on the MBTI. This opens up an interesting area for further research in how our different conceptions of personality may interact.

Questionnaires tested against self-identified type

Having identified some of the difficulties we face in identifying an accurate criterion measure, it is worth mentioning a couple that have used either self- or other-identified type as a standard against which to assess their accuracy. The Essential Enneagram test, developed by Daniels and Price (2000) is interesting in that it uses a more narrative-based approach than the traditional questionnaire style adopted by others. Instead of answering a series of questions that are then scored to give a likely Enneagram type, in this test the respondent chooses

between paragraph-length descriptions of each type. The descriptions include essential information about the type (including worldview and attentional style) and were reviewed by representatives of each type to ensure their accuracy. Subsequently, a large sample of 970 people who did not yet know their type completed the test. Each person's initial paragraph choice was compared to their type as determined by either a typing interview or their own re-evaluation after a 10 week Enneagram course to determine how well the paragraphs identified a person's type. They found a statistically significant degree of agreement between respondents' original paragraph choice and their final type decision, with accuracy ranging from 37% for the Type 8 paragraph to 68% for Type 9. Although this is well above chance (we would only expect to be able to get classification right 1 in 9 times or 11% if it was pure chance), it is certainly not perfect and the test is presented more as a first step in self-discovery than a definitive means of identifying type. In line with this, the authors analysed how likely it was that a person who chose one paragraph was ultimately identified as each of the other eight types. This is developed in their book as a way of helping respondents to more correctly identify their type by describing the similarities and differences between these connected or look-a-like types.

Similarly, the Wagner Enneagram Personality Style Scales (WEPPS) has been developed over many years as an attempt to help people find their type using a self-report inventory. The WEPPS consists of items measuring both the "resourceful" (positive or adaptive) and "non-resourceful" (negative or non-adaptive) aspects of each of the 9 types (Wagner, 1999). On completion, a respondent has a score for how like them each type is (with the highest referred to as the *core style*), as well as a measure of how much they identify with both the resourceful and non-resourceful aspects of the type. The psychometric properties of the test were assessed on a large sample of 1,429 people and found a good level of reliability, comparable to that of other personality questionnaires. Validity was demonstrated by showing theoretically expected relationships between the WEPPS and other measures, such as conflict-handling modes, and also by finding a high level of agreement between scores on the WEPPS and self-determined type. Assuming that respondents' core style is an accurate representation of their Enneagram type, which these results indicate is a reasonable assumption, we can draw some interesting observations from this large sample. First, there were approximately 5% more type 9s than other types. Second, there were sex differences on some of the types: women were more likely than men to be type 2, 4 or 7 while the reverse was true for types 3, 5 and 8.

Although primarily aimed at developing reliable and valid questionnaires, these studies show us how using a good criterion measure can develop our understanding and application of the Enneagram. We can start to identify typical confusions between types and thereby be more equipped to help clients or students when first introducing the model. And we can also start to understand what some of the group differences might be – a first step in finding out why those differences exist and whether they have any practical implications.

Studies using self-identified Enneagram Type

Research based around Enneagram questionnaires makes up the majority of the work so far in the field. However, there are a few other studies that use a reliable criterion measure involving more complex or detailed methods of identifying type that provide us with some solid findings.

Wagner's (1981) doctoral dissertation and subsequent publication (1983) is a good example of this and was one of the first studies concerned with establishing the reliability and validity of the Enneagram as a typology of personality. In this, 390 participants established their Enneagram type on a workshop and then completed the Millon Illinois Self-Report Inventory scales and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. The workshop involved detailed oral

explanations and descriptions of the types, written type descriptions, listening to people of each type sharing their experiences, discussion with others of the same type as the participant and discussions with the workshop leader. In summary, decisions about type were based on a combination of self, peer and expert judgements. All of this was designed to ensure the typing process was as accurate as possible.

Wagner was able to demonstrate two important things. The first was that there were statistically significant differences between the types on the scales from these different personality questionnaires, indicating that the Enneagram captured distinct personality types. The second important finding was an indication that people's Enneagram type remained stable over time. The percentage of people whose initial type judgement remained the same ranged from 79% to 100%, depending on type, with an average stability of 85%. Interestingly, over half of those who did change their judgements settled on a type that was a neighbour of the original type, providing some initial support for the concept of the "wings".

Research by Brown and Bartram (2005) used a similar robust typing strategy to Wagner, establishing type for the people in their sample through courses and interviews. Their 241 respondents completed the OPQ (Occupational Personality Questionnaire) and found very encouraging results. Firstly, there were significant differences between the nine types on the Big Five traits that were in line with theoretically expected results and secondly, analysis could classify people into the correct type 75% of the time.

My own research was along a similar line but I tried to capture more than just personality traits in testing the descriptions of the types (Sutton et al., 2009). I asked over 400 people who knew their Enneagram type – established through a minimum of a week-long course – to complete 3 different personality questionnaires. These were: the Big Five, personal values (things people report as important in guiding their lives, such as security or self-direction) and a measure of implicit (that is, unconscious) motives. The latter is obviously difficult to measure but one approach is to use projective tests, where the respondent explains what they think is happening in an ambiguous picture. As the picture itself is ambiguous, the respondent has to project meaning onto it from within themselves and analysis of their responses can tell us something about their implicit motives.

I developed hypotheses of how each type would be expected to score on each trait, value or motive from reading the descriptions in published books and collating expectations from qualified Enneagram teachers and then tested these hypotheses with the results from my respondents. (e.g. Type 2 will score higher than others on Extraversion). Out of a total of 62 individual hypotheses, 53 were confirmed and only one showed the opposite result to that expected. Going back to our discussion earlier about what makes a "good" personality theory, this and the studies above provide excellent support for the Enneagram in terms of its ability to make testable predictions.

Stress and security points

Besides the descriptions of the personality types themselves, one of the other testable predictions the Enneagram makes is the idea that we change in type-related ways when we are under stress or in times of security and that these changes are represented on the Enneagram diagram by the arrows. Although they may be referred to by different names, such as integration / disintegration (Riso and Hudson, 1999), these changes are a central part of Enneagram theory and there have been a couple of studies that have tried to investigate them further.

Thrasher (1994) addressed this issue in her doctoral thesis by asking nearly 120 participants who knew their Enneagram type to complete an anxiety measure to assess the degree to which they were feeling stressed or secure. She also asked participants' "significant others" to type the participants as they were "usually, under stress and when doing well".

Unfortunately, she did not find any support for the concept of movement between types, either from the individuals themselves or from their significant others, though the results might be confounded by the fact, noted earlier, that significant others were found only to be reliable at choosing type when they were already familiar with the Enneagram. At around the same time, Twomey (1995) also made an attempt to address this issue. She asked 185 participants to complete a measure of ego strength to represent how “secure” the individuals felt and a measure of anxiety for how “stressed” they were, and then compared scores on these measures with their scores on the resourceful and non-resourceful scales of the WEPSS. Unfortunately she also did not find support for the idea that movement along the arrows in the Enneagram is a good representation for how we change in stress or security.

While these initial results are cause for caution in our understanding of stress and security changes, they should not be taken as definitive evidence that these changes do not happen. It is likely that the lack of support in these two studies could be simply down to methodological issues. As Thrasher (1994) suggests, future research in this area should use longitudinal studies and more sophisticated measures of stress or self-actualisation.

Applications

An essential part of the Enneagram teaching is its emphasis on self-actualisation, growth towards fulfilling one’s potential. The Enneagram is a great tool to help people develop their self-awareness, giving us insight into our own and others’ behaviour and motivations, easing personal and work relationships. It allows us to respond to the other person’s intention rather than misinterpret their behaviour, and so lends itself to team-building and relationship development. Integral to the Enneagram is the guidance it provides in overcoming one’s personality bias, loosening the limitations of personality. Despite this remarkable array of potential applications, there is very little research testing whether these promises can be fulfilled.

The use of the Enneagram in developing professional practice has been addressed in a couple of papers. Luckcock (2007) for example, recommends a combination of appreciative inquiry and the Enneagram in developing practitioner research and learning for education professionals. He demonstrates how this combination can provide a way to explore the subjective aspects of one’s own experience and engage with others in collaborative dialogue. In addition, Ball (2009) promotes the use of the Enneagram in developing problem-solving approaches in nursing, particularly when dealing with inter-professional issues.

Using a case study approach, Ormond (2007) looked at whether Enneagram training could improve team effectiveness and outcomes such as emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills for a small team of eight people. While team effectiveness was improved, there was no measurable effect on the other outcomes, though this is likely to be due to the small sample size. Participants did comment on improved self-awareness and personal growth in interviews however, so it may be a larger sample will be able to capture these changes in the future.

Another aspect of my own research was addressing the utility of the Enneagram for various work applications. I found clear and theoretically-justified relationships between the Enneagram types and work attitudes and outcomes, like job satisfaction, enthusiasm and even type of occupation (Sutton et al., 2007). In addition, I tested the effects of a 4 hour introductory Enneagram workshop on work attitudes and personal development by asking over 80 participants to complete questionnaires before and after the workshops. Similarly to Ormond’s work, the measures I used did not demonstrate a significant difference in self-awareness but participants did report a variety of positive outcomes, including improved understanding of themselves, a greater appreciation of diversity, improved communication with colleagues and increased confidence (Sutton et al., 2011).

Although we are making our first steps towards demonstrating the utility of the Enneagram in applied situations, there is still great scope for further work.

The Enneagram as a theory of personality

In summary, the research we have so far gives us a good indication that the Enneagram could fulfil the three criteria personality psychologists are looking for: we can make clear, testable hypotheses from it, it is practically useful and it is comprehensive. In practical terms, this is what we have learnt from the research:

- The personality types described by the Enneagram can be clearly differentiated from each other using other established personality measures. (For an example, see the table which summarises findings on the Big Five.)
- Enneagram personality questionnaires like the RHETI and WEPSS are reasonably reliable but we should still be cautious about their validity. That means, we're likely to get the same results on different occasions but there's no guarantee that's really our type.
- The types are reasonably equally distributed in the population, though there are some small differences.
- Trained practitioners are pretty good at typing people in interview, but not as good as they think they are!
- It may seem obvious, but the best way to make an accurate decision on a person's type is by a combination of good knowledge of the person and good knowledge of the Enneagram. Just one or the other won't do.
- Once people identify their type, it seems to be very stable.
- There is good evidence that learning about the Enneagram has a positive impact on self-acceptance, self-development and understanding of others.

The evidence so far is certainly promising, but by no means definitive. There is much that remains unanswered – or perhaps unasked? We do not yet have clear research on the centres, wings or subtypes, or evidence around personality development. We also still need further research to test the stress and security changes that the Enneagram proposes. We have good descriptions of the typical traits of each type, but it would be interesting to know what it's like for people who identify as that type and don't match the "average" trait profile. And clear evidence of the applications of the Enneagram is still in its infancy.

Personal conviction is a good starting point but it needs to be tempered with an understanding of what we have and haven't got evidence for. We have reason to be cautious in our claims for the Enneagram, but I also believe we are on to something good and have a solid basis for confidence in using the Enneagram in our own lives and introducing it to others.

Summary of the Enneagram Type scores on the Big Five

Three studies used the Big Five (Sutton, 2007, Newgent et al., 2004, Brown and Bartram, 2005) to investigate the Enneagram types, which means that we can start to see what trait profile is typical for each of the nine types. The following are brief definitions of the traits. It should be remembered that just like no Enneagram type is “better” or “worse” than any of the others, neither are different scores on these traits.

- **Extraversion:** people scoring at the higher end tend to be outgoing, sociable and confident, while those at the lower end are more reserved, independent and private.
- **Agreeableness:** higher scores indicate that people are trusting, altruistic and will tend to go along with those around them, while lower scores indicate that people are more sceptical, self-focused and tough-minded.
- **Conscientiousness:** those at the higher end are more dutiful, organised and disciplined, while those at the lower end are likely to be more disorganised and spontaneous.
- **Emotional Stability:** high scores indicate people are secure, calm and unflappable while lower scores indicate people are excitable, emotionally reactive and alert.
- **Openness to Experience:** people scoring high on this trait tend to be curious, liberal and novelty-seeking, while those at the lower end are more practical and conservative.

The table below shows the average score for each type on each trait.

	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Emotional Stability	Openness to Experience
Type 1			HIGH	high	low
Type 2	HIGH	high			low
Type 3	HIGH	low	HIGH		?
Type 4	low	?	low	LOW	high
Type 5	LOW	LOW			
Type 6	LOW	high		LOW	low
Type 7	HIGH		LOW	high	HIGH
Type 8	HIGH	LOW	high	?	high
Type 9	low	HIGH	low	HIGH	LOW

CAPS = found in more than one study

Lower case = found in one study and not found in others

? = contradictory evidence in different studies: high in some, low in others

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