

Is the Enneagram Institute's RHETI® version 2.5 Scientifically Validated?

[The Enneagram Institute website](#) claims that their test, the RHETI® version 2.5, is "scientifically validated." RHETI is the acronym for the Riso-Hudson Enneagram Type Indicator which was developed by New Agers Don Riso and Russ Hudson. If it is scientifically validated that would give it more credibility. Is the claim accurate? We turned to someone who is engaged in this field of research, [Jay Medenwaldt](#) for his input. His response:

In support of the claim of being "scientifically validated," the Enneagram Institute cites three documents, [Bartram & Brown \(2005\)](#), [Brown & Bartram \(2005\)](#), [Scott \(2011\)](#), which they referred me to over email when I requested validation information. Here is a list of reasons why these studies do not warrant the claim "scientifically validated." I will be working on a more detailed analysis in the near future. Initially this claim seems to be an overstatement which may indicate a lack of familiarity with these types of tests and reports. There are at least six areas of concern.

**1. The studies cited have not been published in any peer-reviewed journals.**

- a. The peer-review process is a staple of science and the method used to ensure high quality. Scientists are hesitant to trust or rely on studies that have not been published in peer-reviewed journals because they are assumed to have major flaws that prevented them from getting published.

**2. The studies cited only test a very small set of claims made by The Enneagram Institute.**

- a. These claims seem limited to the common characteristics of each type, and even within that small range, only some of the claims are tested. There is no testing about wings, triads, relationships between types, growth directions, whether or not people who use the enneagram actually do grow as claimed, and so on.
- b. In short, enneagram theory makes thousands of claims about how people are or aren't, what is healthy or unhealthy for them, what motivates them, how they feel, how they relate to others, and so on. The studies cited only test a tiny fraction of these claims.

**3. The results do not uniformly support or verify the enneagram.**

- a. For instance, the test correctly typed 73% of people. Similar metrics use 70% as a metric for acceptable, so 73% barely meets that, but that also likely means some types are below the 70% mark.
- b. Some hypotheses seem as though they were not supported but once I complete a more thorough review will be better able to answer that

concern; however, the next point also falls within this category, which is why I still mention it.

**4. The test does not seem to match the types as described by The Enneagram Institute.**

- a. The test was updated to match the empirical data, but the claims about the types were not updated.
- b. Just one of many examples, the question "I have tended to dwell on 'worst case' scenarios" was originally a question for type 6s, but after the data showed type 4s were agreeing to this question more frequently, the question was changed to a type 4 question, but as far as I can tell, the claims about type 4s or 6s were not updated. Several other questions were changed or removed in similar fashion.
- c. At best, this shows that some of the claims about how these types think, act, or feel are incorrect (meaning the claims of the test were NOT verified). At worst, it is just pure deception, but I am hesitant to go that far since their lack of credentials makes it likely that they do not understand test development well enough to be intentionally deceptive about this.

**5. The more detailed claim, that the RHETI 2.5 has been "independently scientifically validated," is false.**

- a. The RHETI was independently tested by Sara Ann Scott for her dissertation (2011). In her acknowledgements, she notes that she collaborated with Don Riso and Katy Taylor of The Enneagram Institute in creating the new version and they used her results to modify the RHETI for the current version (2.5). They had a mutually beneficial relationship which invalidates the claim of independence, even though they may not have had a formal agreement.
- b. Moreover, most of the participants were former students of Don Riso's and were recruited by him for the study through an e-mail he sent from The Enneagram Institute, so their enneagram training likely influenced their responses. In other words, even if the researcher was independent of The Enneagram Institute, the test participants were not.

**6. Two of the studies that allegedly verify the RHETI used a very different version of the RHETI.**

- a. The RHETI 2.5 is the current version came from collaboration with Scott on her dissertation, which was completed in 2011. The previous testing of the RHETI cited was completed in 2005.
- b. The test was drastically changed, changing from an ipsative test (do you prefer a or b) to a Likert scale (how much do you agree on a 1-5 scale), changing the wording of questions, removing questions, and recategorizing some questions to go with a different type.

## References

- Bartram, D., & Brown, A. (2005). Putting the person into personality: SHL Short research report 2005. *London: SHL Group plc.*
- Brown, A., & Bartram, D. (2005). Relationships between OPQ and Enneagram types. *London: SHL Group plc.*
- Scott, S. A. (2011). An analysis of the validity of the enneagram. The College of William and Mary (Dissertation).