



The big five among male and female students of different faculties

Gidi Rubinstein *

Psychotherapy, School of Behavioural Sciences, Netanya Academic College, 23 Dubnov Street, Tel-Aviv 64-369, Israel

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Abstract

Costa and McCrae's (1992) NEO-PI-R (Big Five) questionnaire has become an accepted instrument for the measurement of occupational propensities and includes scales for evaluating levels of Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness. A Hebrew translation of its shortened version was administered to 320 Israeli male and female students of the natural sciences, law, the social sciences and art (mean age = 24.03 years). It was found that Neuroticism is negatively related to both Conscientiousness and to Agreeableness, which is positively related to both Openness and Conscientiousness; the latter are negatively related to one another. Women are significantly more agreeable and conscientious than men. Law students are significantly less agreeable and open to experience than students of all other faculties, and more neurotic than natural science students. Female students of the natural sciences are significantly more agreeable than both their male counterparts in the natural sciences and than law students. The results are discussed in light of the specific characteristics of the different fields of study and in context of traditional gender role expectations from men and women.

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* Corresponding author. Tel.: +972 3 6969697; fax: +972 3 6919831.

E-mail address: gidirubi@netvision.net.il

1. Introduction

The question of which personality variables are relevant to career choice and job satisfaction has been considered by several personality theories. For instance it has been suggested by [Osipow and Fitzgerald \(1996\)](#) that career choice is based on an assumption that professional occupation and need satisfaction are linked. Theories of this kind have given rise to not a few studies into how certain professions and certain personality traits might be related. [Roe \(1956\)](#), for instance, found evidence supporting a linkage between family background and career choices. She suggested, for instance, that children who had been raised in homes in which parents were sensitive to their needs and maintained warm and satisfying relations with them choose people-oriented professions. [Holland \(1992\)](#) suggested a classification of six personality types according to which an individual can be classified as (1) Realistic; (2) Investigative; (3) Artistic; (4) Social; (5) Enterprising and (6) Conventional. He further proposed that individuals of the same personality type tend to flock together and create work environments that suit their needs. Thus artistic individuals are wont to foster work environments that reward creative thinking and behavior. As, according to Holland, an individual is usually a combination of mbpes (e.g., realistic–investigative, or artistic–social), he or she will probably seek an occupation which meets a variety of needs.

Empirical evidence has suggested that the choice of different professions does seem to be associated with specific personality types ([Tokar, Fischer, & Mezydlo-Subich, 1998](#)). According to this line of findings, hysterical individuals are attracted to literary and theatrical careers and enjoy leisure activity which encourages social interaction, use of intuition, and emotional and expressiveness. Obsessive individuals, on the other hand, prefer professional and leisure activities in which technological skills are required and obsessive traits are rewarded. Engineers, continuing with these findings, are predominantly obsessive, accountants seem to be particularly paranoid, theater and drama students are extremely hysterical and narcissistic, and students of medicine share the latter's propensity for narcissism ([Silver & Malone, 1993](#)). [Kline and Lapham \(1992\)](#) found that students of engineering and the natural sciences are also highly obsessive and that students of art and social science students are sociable and sensitive to sensory experiences, whereas [Harris \(1993\)](#) proposed that students of natural science are particularly accurate. According to [Wilson and Jackson \(1994\)](#) physicists are introverted, reserved, cautious, and unsociable in comparison to professionals in the fields of industry, research, and instruction. Ambition, achievement, and low affection are typical of marketing students, according to [Matthews and Oddy \(1993\)](#), whereas in [Granleese and Barrett's \(1990\)](#) study, accountants were found to manifest introversion, conformity and sociability. Three Israeli studies indicated that students of engineering and natural sciences students are more authoritarian than psychology and philosophy students ([Weller & Nadler, 1975](#)), natural science students are more authoritarian, religious and right-wing than social science students ([Rubinstein, 1997](#)), and that students of interior and product design are significantly more creative and less authoritarian than both behavioral science and law students ([Rubinstein, 2003](#)).

Since the rates of men and women are different within the various fields of study (e.g., natural science students are mainly men, while humanity students are mainly women), sex differences seem most relevant to the study of personality traits, which are characteristic of individuals who choose different vocations. Certain sex differences may be of particular interest with respect to vocational differences. For instance, rates of depression among women are twice that of rates among men,

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