

Skill is Not Enough: Personality, Profession, and Performance

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Medical personnel undergo rigorous training and qualification. But another factor influences their performance and psychological well-being – their personalities

Personality is to a man (sic) what
perfume is to a flower

Charles Schwab

A More Rigorous Definition

Personality is the complex of all the
attributes – behavioral, temperamental,
emotional, and mental – that characterize
a unique individual.

The Recognized Risk

We have become aware of the professional
liability associated with the psychopathic
personality in medical practice

- Dr Shipman in the UK
- Dr Swango in the US
- Dr Patel in Australia

We should also recognize the significant impact of normal personalities on our patients and ourselves

The Personality Package

- Naturally occurring combinations of personality traits (statistical cluster analysis)
- Validation by determining the relationship between the constellation (combinations) of traits and criteria
- Devise mechanism to detect response falsification (lying)

Dimensions of Normal Personality

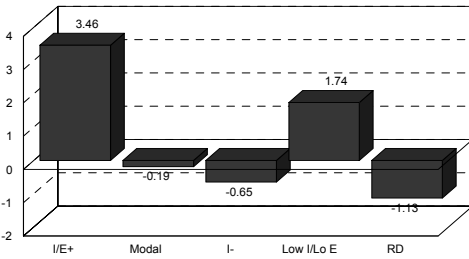
- Two broad categories
 - Instrumental (achievement oriented) traits
 - Ex: Independence, need for challenge
 - Expressive (interpersonal orientation) traits
 - Ex: Warm, sensitive to others' needs
- Each dimension has orthogonal negative components
 - Negative Instrumentality – arrogant, autocratic
 - Negative Expressivity – verbal aggression, spineless, subservient

Constellations of Personality: Determined by Cluster Analysis

5 Major constellations

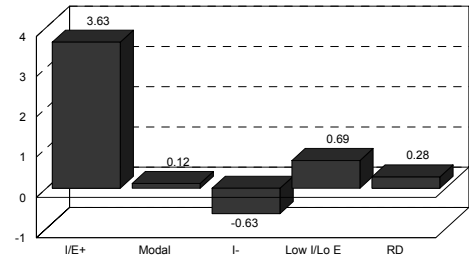
- IE+ Hi on Positive I & E; low on negative I & E
- I- Hi on negative I; low on other components
- Modal Average on positive I & E
- E- Hi on negative E, low on positive I & E
- RD Statistically determined as dissembling

Astronauts: Personality Cluster Performance on Job Competence
Performance Factor



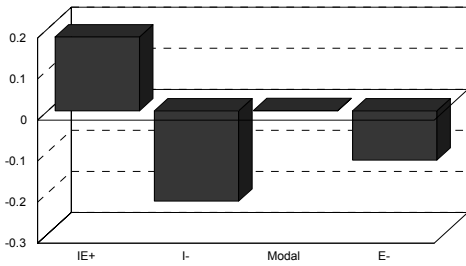
Probit scores: mean = .76, stan.dev. = 5.1

Astronauts: Personality Cluster Performance on Teamwork and Group
Performance Factor



mean = .77, sd = 6.7

360 Degree Assessment of 750 Managers in Major Airline
Composite rating by direct reports, peers, supervisors



Detecting Test Falsification

- Determine statistically improbable combination of responses
 - based on normative responses regarding desirable and undesirable attributes
- Classify those with improbable pattern as RD (Response Desirability)
- Validate by predicting job performance
- RD and terminations in an airline
 - 10% of population — 50% of termination for cause

The Honeymoon Effect

- The relationship between personality and performance changes over time
- Applicants for desirable positions will try their hardest when first selected, obscuring personality-performance relationships
- Over time, the relationship will emerge
- Airline reservation personnel
 - no correlation at end of training
 - modest correlation after 3 months
 - highly significant correlation after 6 months

The Type A Controversy

- Some years ago a dismal view of attainment was widespread
- Persons with a Type A personality were seen as hard charging achievers with impressive attainment – but who would fall to heart attacks and other stress-related maladies at an early age

Type A Resolution

- Janet Spence & Bob Helmreich decomposed the Type A construct and found two factors associated with instrumentality
 - Achievement Striving – associated with productivity and eminence
 - Impatience/Irritability associated with health problems
- Moral: success does not inevitably extract a cost in terms of health

Personality and Self-selection

- People select themselves into many professions
 - Hi Instrumental into challenging occupations
 - Hi expressive people into caring professions
 - IE+ people may seek professions satisfying both needs
 - Gender differences in personality are minimal in professions such as medicine, science, commercial aviation
- Performance and job satisfaction higher when personality and profession congruent

A Cautionary Note on Personality and Selection

- Personality assessment for selection is an imperfect process
- Performance of newly hired may change over time
- Professional performance is the last stage of selection

Goals of Pre-med Students

- We surveyed pre-med students at the University of Texas asking their motives for entering medicine
 - Overwhelmingly their motivation was altruistic, to help people and society
 - Financial and status goals were secondary

Should Personality be a Consideration in Selection for Medical School or Residency?

- Is assessment for psychopathology warranted?
- Should constellations of normal personality influence selection?
- Could personality assessment be used to help candidates choose medicine or medical specialty?



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