Personality Traits within the Field of Nursing and Desired Field of Work

A Senior Honors Thesis

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Introduction & Significance

Personality

Personality is defined as the individual differences in the characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving (American Psychological Association, 2019). Personality is a unique make up for each and every person. There are many components of personality and different assessments used to define this intricate make up. The different tests and theories of personality categorize the aspects of personality in a manner that is unique to each assessment.

Psychologists have worked tirelessly to attempt to create a model of personality that would encompass the vast majority of the population, therefore there is not one singular gold standard for personality theories. Overall there are two views to looking at personality. The idiographic view and the nomothetic view. The idiographic view looks at personality as something that is unique to every person, and there could be one individual that has such unique traits that it is only possessed by that individual (McLeod, 2017). In contrast, the nomothetic view of personality states that personality traits have the same psychological meaning to every individual and that individuals are highly compatible (McLeod, 2017). McLeod also adds that the nomothetic view acknowledges that many people have certain personality traits and the individual differences allow them to fall on a continuum of that trait (2017).

Some of the most prevalent theories of personality include Freud’s Tripartite theory, Trait Approach to Personality, Eysenck’s Personality theory and the Big Five Personality Model. The Freud Tripartite theory views personality as a three-dimensional entity that includes id, ego and super-ego and develops throughout the individual’s life (McLeod, 2017). The id is the individual’s impulses and drives, the ego is the person’s ability to control their impulses and allows these impulses to be processed within their external world and the person’s super ego is
the aspect of personality that incorporates morals and values of the society and individual’s environment (McLeod, 2017). The Trait Approach to Personality theory is one in which states that certain traits make individuals behave in certain ways and should remain consistent across situations and over time (McLeod, 2017). Eysenck’s Personality model states that personality based on biological factors and the person is born with a certain predisposition to how they will interact with their environment (McLeod, 2017). To further explain his theory Eysenck worked with soldiers and theorized that personality can be broken down into Introversion / Extroversion (E); Neuroticism / Stability (N) and that the balance of the traits had to do with the balance of excitation and inhabitation in the Autonomic Nervous System (McLeod, 2017). The five-factor model of a personality was theorized by Lewis Goldberg in the 1960s (Ackerman, 2019). The big five personality test categorizes certain aspects of a person into five different parts and the interplay of these aspects are thought to provide a personality profile of that individual. All of these theories look into personality in very different ways and provide many different explanations for the origin and influences that shape an individual’s personality.

As for a dominant personality trait or make up of the United States it is a very hard concept to generalize due to the vast variety in the regions, cultures, races and ages that make up the population. However, one study, explained by Khazan, found the relationship of the big five personality traits and the regions of the United States. In a study that was conducted by Rentfrow, he found that in terms of personality the United States could be broken into three regions the Midwest and Southeast; the West Coast, Rocky Mountains and Southwest; and the Northeast and portions of Texas (Khazan, 2019). Overall the Midwest and Southeast tended to be more friendly and conventional when compared to the other regions (Khazan, 2019). In respect to the big five personality traits the Midwest and Southeast had the high levels for the traits of
extroversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (Khazan, 2019). As for the West Coast, Rocky Mountains and Southwest the population tends to be more relaxed and creative and tended to be higher in the trait of openness (Khazan, 2019). The Northeast and portions of Texas tended to be temperamental and uninhibited according to the study (Khazan, 2019). As for the big five personality traits of the Northeast and part of Texas tend to be higher than the other regions in neuroticism and have a moderate amount of openness (Khazan, 2019). This study is very interesting because it supports some of the thought that the environment individuals are in has an effect on personality. In addition, these finding do not necessarily mean that each individual from these particular region’s personality make up in relation to the big five is exactly as outlined above. These findings are just a gross generalization of each region.

**Nursing**

Nurses are well known for their ability to be nurturing, but a nurse’s actions also include assessing the patient, surveying for risks, planning individual actions, creating patient centered goals and prioritizing care for each patient (Rhodes, Morris & Lazenby, 2011). The job description of nursing is a difficult one to generalize due to the vast options of field of work. As the American Nursing Association states, responsibilities of the nursing profession can range from nursing in the hospital making acute care decisions to a nurse in a school providing vaccines for the students (n.d.). Despite the vast array of type of nursing, all nurses use the same process to evaluate and care for their patients. The nursing process includes assessment, diagnosis, planning, implementation and evaluation (American Nursing Association, n.d.). The assessment of a patient includes not only an assessment of the patient’s body systems and appearance but also their social life, psychological health and relationships (American Nursing Association, n.d.). It is important for the nurse to take a wholistic approach when assessing the
patients’ health and wellbeing. Diagnosis is the process in which the nurses forms a nursing diagnosis based both on symptoms and psychosocial influences (American Nursing Association, n.d.). The nurse, along with the patient, creates patient centered and realistic goals for the patient (American Nursing Association, n.d.). In the implementation part of the nursing process, the nurse provides consistent care that aligns with the patient’s care plan and provides careful documentation on the care provided (American Nursing Association, n.d.). The final aspect of the nursing process is evaluation, meaning that the nurse will evaluate the effectiveness of the care plan and the patient’s response to the interventions (American Nursing Association, n.d.).

The nursing process is a very important aspect of nursing care because it provides a universal course of actions for all nurses to follow regardless of where they might be working. In addition to the nursing process the nurses also have many roles to consider in patient care. For examples nurses are responsible for completing providers orders, administering medications, performing prescribed treatments and providing primary and emergency care to patients (McKay, 2019). McKay also emphasizes the fact that nurses spend a lot of time interacting directly with the patients and their family, which allows the nurse to be the key monitor of the patients’ health (2019).

In the nursing profession there are a multitude of paths that an individual can take as a registered nurse. Nurses can work directly in the hospital, in out-patient settings, in the community as a community health nurse, in labs doing nursing research and even over the computer as a telehealth nurse. In respect to working in the hospital nurses could work in intensive care units, labor and delivery, pediatric nursing, geriatric nursing to list a few specialties. In the hospital there is also opportunity to become a nurse manager, which is working more on the leadership end of nursing rather than direct patient care, care managers who help to
coordinate the patient’s care across disciplines and even task specific teams such as the vascular team that places IVs and other lines in patients. Out-patient settings for nursing could mean many things, some examples include out-patient surgery and procedures or out-patient chemotherapy centers. In addition, out-patient can refer to offices of providers such as pediatric offices, primary care provider offices or a gynecologist. Community health nursing is an area of nursing that encompasses many different places that a nurse could work. Nurses who chose to be community health nurses could be a school nurse, a home health nurse that goes and visits patients in their home or even a nurse that works for a county department and keeps track of infection rates or diseases throughout the county. Some nurses do not even have direct contact with patients such as nurse who work in research. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in 2019 nearly three million nurses were working in the United States (2020). According to the research, thirty-one percent of these nurses work in a general medical and or surgical hospital, fifteen percent are working in outpatient settings, twelve percent of nurses were working in in home health care service, nine percent were working in skilled nursing facilities and seven percent were working in physicians’ offices (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020). The specialties that are being explained are the ones indicated by the students in this research study.

**Pediatric Nursing**

A pediatric nurse is a nurse that is responsible for caring for children from infancy to childhood and into adolescence. Pediatric nurses can work in the hospital or in outpatient settings caring for children with various conditions and treatments. Krischke highlights that in pediatric nursing the opportunities are endless because within the field of pediatric nursing there are a multitude of subspecialties including oncology, cardiology, neurology and many more (2011). Pediatric nursing is a nursing specialty that is focused on family-centered care (Krischke,
Caring for children is a major aspect of the job but also being able to adapt nursing skills in order to make the patient comfortable is a major skill of pediatric nursing.

**Maternity**

Maternity nursing is a field of nursing in which the nurses work with women who are pregnant and delivering their baby. A majority of the nurses’ role includes supporting the women during their labor and delivery, monitoring both the mother and baby and education throughout the process (Ballard, 2018). There are many phases of childbirth, and the nurse has different tasks in each part of the patient’s labor. During the labor and delivery portion the nurse is responsible for monitoring the baby and the mother’s blood pressure, heart rate and other vital signs (Ballard, 2018). After the baby is born the nurse is responsible for the continuation of monitoring both the mother and infant. In addition, there is a lot of education that is needed on infant care and the changes that are expected for the new mother.

**Intensive Care Nursing**

Intensive care nursing is a specialty that is a highly skilled and specialized area of nursing. As Mararac states working as an intensive care nurse is a job in which you must have quick thinking and have a lot of dedication to the specialty because it takes a lot of work to learn all of the advanced skills that are needed on the job (2016). There are many types of intensive care units that overlap with other nursing specialties. Some of the intensive care units include a neonatal intensive care unit, pediatric intensive care unit, cardio thoracic intensive care and medical intensive care to name a few. One of the unique parts of working in an intensive care unit is that fact that the nurse to patient ratio is often smaller than other units (Mararac, 2016). Working with only one or two patients truly allows the nurse to focus on the patient’s status and changes.
Emergency Nursing

Working in the emergency department (ED) is a specialty of nursing that is very different from many other specialties in the hospital. Working in the ED is a face-paced environment that can be incredibly stressful to the nurse when attempting to take care of many patients (Brooks, 2018). Finding the best way to stabilize a patient and relieve their pain is essential in the ED because the nurses are working in crisis situations (Brooks, 2018). Another interesting part of the nursing specialty is the fact that on a given day each patient that the nurse is caring for could have a different admitting diagnosis.

Geriatric

The term geriatric means working with the elderly population. A nurse that works in geriatric nursing must know the needs of the aging population (Nursing Specialties Explained, 2019). To work with the geriatric population the nurse must have good communication skills, the ability to be patient and the nurse must be comfortable with handling death and dying (Nursing Specialties Explained, 2019). Although many floors do have geriatric patients in the hospital, a nurse who specializes in geriatrics can work in the hospital, in out-patient settings or even in the patient’s own home as a community health nurse.

Psychiatric Nursing

A psychiatric nurse can sometimes be referred to as a mental health nurse as well. These nurses work with patients in various settings. Some of the settings that these nurses work in include the hospital, in-patient psychiatric centers, prisons and even schools that focus on students with psychiatric disorders (What do psychiatric and mental health nurses do?, 2020). Psychiatric nurses work with patients that have a mental illness and work with the patient to try to manage their mental illness and live a productive life (What do psychiatric and mental health
nurses do?, 2020). Working in this specialty, the nurse develops skills in crisis interventions, mental health exams, therapeutic communication and patient assistance.

**Oncology**

Working as an oncology nurse is a specialty that is very unique and specific. Working in oncology means that the nurse is caring for patients with cancer and those patients who are undergoing treatment for cancer. Many nurses that are in oncology are chemotherapy certified and oncology certified. An oncology nurses’ role is to implement treatments to the patients including chemotherapy and other treatment modalities and to monitor the patients progress in treatment (Nursing Specialties Explained, 2019). The nurses that work in oncology are often incredibly sympathetic because they are dealing with patients that have life-threatening illnesses (Nursing Specialties Explained, 2019).

**Hospice and Palliative Care**

Hospice and palliative care are two different things, however sometimes a nurse will work on a floor that has both types of patients in an inpatient setting. Hospice care is dealing with patients who are at the end of their life, generally with six months or less to live, and there is no use of life saving treatments being used for the patient. Palliative care is a type of care in which life-saving treatments are still being implemented, but the focus of the palliative care is to provide comfort for the patient. Many hospice nurses can work in the hospital or in the patient’s home, whereas many palliative nurses tend to work in the hospital setting. The role of hospice and palliative care nurses focuses not only on the patient’s physical needs, but also providing compassion and attention is a major role of the nurse (Understanding the role of a hospice nurse, 2018).

**Airforce Nurse**
An Airforce nurse is often grouped with the term military nurse to refer to the nurses that care for patients within all branches of the United States military. Military nurses care for the military personnel on the front lines of the nation’s battles and wars. Military nurses, like other nurses, can work in a variety of places, such as military bases, military hospitals or even in foreign territory in active war zones (Military nurse career guide, 2020). Military nurses often have the same responsibilities of other nurses in the respect that they assess patients, administer medications (Military nurse career guide, 2020). In an active war situation, it may be the nurse’s responsibility to triage the patients and stabilize them (Military nurse career guide, 2020). Military nursing is a specialty that although may seem incredibly different from all others incorporate many of the same principals of nursing.

**Operating Room**

The operating room is a place in which various surgeries take place for many patients. Nurses in operating rooms have many roles to play in order to take care of the patient. One role that the nurse could have is being the scrub nurse, which means that the nurse is responsible for maintaining sterility and assisting the provider by giving them their supplies needed to operate. The circulating nurse in the operating room is responsible for managing the overall nursing care in the operating room (Nursing Specialties Explained, 2019). It is vital in the operating room that the nurse is an advocate for patient safety and focuses on positioning and making sure the patient is safe throughout the surgery.

**Nurse Anesthetist**

A nurse anesthetist is a nursing role in which nurses are responsible in ensuring the safe administration of anesthesia to patients. One thing that differentiates a nurse anesthetist from the other specialties that are mentioned is that in order to work as a nurse anesthetist you are require
to have a bachelors, a registered nursing license and a master’s degree (What is a nurse anesthetist?, 2020). Some other responsibilities of a nurse anesthetist include performing epidural and nerve blocks, providing care after procedures and monitoring vital signs during a procedure in which the patient is under sedation (What is a nurse anesthetist?, 2020). Many nurse anesthetists probably work in the hospital but also could work in outpatient surgery centers.

**Orthopedic**

The word orthopedic means that the person is working in the branch of the medical field that deals with bones. Nurses that work in orthopedics often times care for patients that have sustained fractures or other injuries and people who are having joint replacements (Nursing Specialties Explained, 2019). Some of their nursing duties including inserting IVs, assisting the patients with post-operative care and changing dressings of the surgical site (Nursing Specialties Explained, 2019). Orthopedic nursing can be performed in patient at the hospital or outpatient.

**Medical Surgical**

Medical Surgical nursing is a specialty that encompasses many different types of floors and patients. Medical Surgical nursing is primarily caring for adult patients before and after surgical procedures as well as when patients have an illness that needs to be medically managed (Nursing Specialties Explained, 2019). Working as a medical surgical nurse provides ample opportunity to become an expert in many skills that are essential to be a good nurse. Medical Surgical nursing is the basis of all nursing and has a variety of skill sets needed to work in this specialty.

**Personality and Nursing Specialties**

Personality and specialties in nursing may intertwine in a way that has not been widely explored. Many nurses do not turn to their personalities to determine their specialties however
there is some research that supports the fact that certain kinds of work can draw particular personalities (Joyce, 2016). Emergency nurses tend to be more open to new experiences. When comparing ICU nurses to community health nurses, ICU nurses tend to be more flexible and adaptable to uncertainty. In contrast, community health nurses tend to be very plan oriented and have a strong need to understand the details of situations (Joyce, 2016). As Stokowski suggests that differences a range in personalities of nurses may reflect the fact that there is diversity within nursing specialties (2015). In addition, the study also indicated that emergency department nurses tended to be more introverted, critical nurses tended to be more dominant and self-sufficient whereas oncology and palliative care nurses tend to be highly emotionally sensitive (Stokowski, 2015). As outlined in this study, personality can be in accordance with the roles of these nurses. Being emotionally sensitive for example would be very helpful in both oncology and palliative care nursing because in these specialties the nurses often work with people in pain and possibly patients who are experiencing life-threatening illnesses.

**Significance**

Personality has been used as a tool to determine and evaluate a multitude of things such as individual’s satisfaction in life, success in life and many other things. Personality tests have been widely used for finding the right career. There has been research done that indicates that certain personalities and certain traits lead people into specific career paths or tend to allow people to excel in certain tasks of their job.

There has been some research on the caring professions and the personalities that are associated. Baldacchino and Galea conducted a descriptive study that found that for Nursing students they had personality traits that were “low in neuroticism, average in openness, high in agreeableness and higher in extraversion and conscientiousness” (2012). It was also found that
there was not significant difference in personality traits of nursing students across age or gender (Baldacchino & Galea, 2012). This study highlights that the nursing students share common personality traits, and these traits can be found in the caring profession.

The role of personality when finding a nursing specialty is a concept that has not been widely researched. This is a concept that could have a great significance in the nursing field. The ability to enter a profession that has such flexibility in jobs is one of the many benefits of a nursing career. However, the multitude of job opportunities and specialties that are available in nursing can be overwhelming for a nurse entering the work force. Looking into the personality could provide a guide to see if the nurse’s personality is similar to the other nurses in the specialty personality. This is not to say that if a person has a passion to work in a specific area of nursing and their personality does not fully align with the others in this specialty that the specialty is not where the nurse should work. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the interplay of personality of nursing students and their desired specialty of nursing that they would like to work in after graduation.

**Background**

Personality as outlined above is a topic that has many different aspects and theories surrounding it. Personality has been thought to be constant and unwavering throughout an individual’s lifetime. In some theories such as the Eysenck’s Personality model personality is thought to be biologically based, however not all of the models indicate that personality does not change over a period of time. In relation to the Big Five model of personality it is thought that the individual’s personality does tend to change over time. Although researchers appreciate the fact that some big five personality traits continue to change throughout one’s life, it is thought that emerging adulthood is a point in life in that many of these personality changes occur
Emerging adulthood includes individuals who are between the ages of 18 and 30 years old, who typically do not have offspring, do not own a home and or do not make enough money to be fully independent (Schwaba & Bleidorn, 2016). In addition, Schwaba and Bleidorn noted that there are a lot of individual differences in people who are in the emerging adulthood stage and these different life experience may influence the change in their personality traits (2016). Overall aging can result in people having better control over their emotions, people become more altruistic and some individuals even become more trusting (Gorvett, 2020). It is important to highlight however that those who had above average neuroticism in adolescence may still have above average neuroticism in adulthood, but other aspects of their personality could have shift or changed (Gorvett, 2020).

Although it is not the main topic being presented in the research it is important to note that personality disorders are present in many different forms and differing degrees among individuals. According to the American Psychiatric Association, a personality disorder is “[A] way of thinking, feeling and behaving that deviates from the expectations of the culture, causes distress or problems functioning, and lasts over time” (para. 1, 2018). There are approximately ten different diagnosable personality disorders and individuals are generally over the age of eighteen when they are diagnosed with a personality disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2018).

In respect to when personality is developed it is really dependent on the theory that is being considered about personality. If the theory is one that supports the ideation that personality is biologically determined, then personality would be determined at birth. However, if many theories consider the individuals environment and acknowledge that it does change over time, therefore, it would be incredibly difficult to pinpoint when exactly personality is developed.
The Big Five Model of personality is the tool that is utilized for this research due to the fact that it is a widely used and accepted tool to determine personality. After the popularity of Goldberg’s five-factor model fellow psychologists Paul Costa and Robert McCrae proved the efficacy of this theory and renamed it the Big Five model. This model is now one of the most widely accepted theory and framework for personality used across disciplines today. The five components of this personality theory are extraversion, agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism. Each of the factors have two drastic sides, and people fall along this continuum for each of the five personality traits outlined in this theory.

The first of the five factors that is highlighted in the big five model is extraversion. Extroversion measures the energy that people get from interactions with other people (Ackerman, 2019). A person who scores high in extroversion is generally energized by social interactions and derives energy from highly social situations. As Grohol states, people who are high in the extraversion factor tend to be more comfortable in expressing their emotions outwardly and will never shy away from giving their opinion (2019). On the other hand, people who score low in extroversion tend to be quieter. Interacting socially is draining for them, they tend to not appreciate being the center of attention and they tend to think things through before speaking aloud (Grohol, 2019). As stated before, some people can be both energized by social situations yet a little quieter if their personality falls within the two extremes of the extroversion criterium.

Agreeableness is the next factor featured in the big five personality model. Agreeableness simply measures how a person interacts. This trait describes a person level of trust, affection, altruism (Grohol, 2019). A person that scores high in this category are thought to be very compassionate and kind towards others (Ackerman, 2019). In addition, a person who scores
highly in this component is sensitive to the needs of others (Ackerman, 2019). On the other side of this factor, a person who does not have a high score for agreeableness tends to not be as well received by others. A person who scores low in this category has little interest in other’s thoughts and feelings and tends to be very competitive and stubborn (Grohol, 2019).

Openness is the next trait that is explained in the big five personality model. Openness measures a person’s creativity and imagination as well as their intelligence. A person who scores high in this trait tends to enjoy learning and embrace new ideas and new experiences with excitement (Grohol, 2019). In contrast, an individual who has a low score in this trait tend to prefer routines and stays within their comfort zone (Ackerman, 2019). Scoring lower in this category could indicate that the person tends to like more concrete and less abstract ways of thinking and learning.

Conscientiousness is the fourth component of the big five personality model. This portion of the model highlights a person’s ability to control impulses and goal driven behaviors (Ackerman, 2019). Goal-orientation, scheduling and being on time are all traits that are associated with scoring high in conscientiousness (Grohol, 2019). Rather than being very schedule driven and organized, a person who is on the lower end of the conscientiousness tends to not like schedules or plans, they tend to procrastinate and are less detail oriented (Grohol, 2019).

The fifth and final component of the big five personality model is neuroticism, which is also known as emotional stability. As the name implies, this factor shows the person’s ability to be emotionality steady and their ability to be even tempered. The people who score high in this category get upset very easily, appear to be anxious and worrisome and have low self-esteem (Grohol, 2019). In addition, if the person were to have a tumultuous period in life, it would be
difficult for them to stabilize their mood (Grohol, 2019). On the contrary, a person who is low scoring in neuroticism is more confident in themselves (Ackerman, 2019). Scoring low in neuroticism lends the person to being described as emotionally stable, rarely moody and does not worry excessively (Grohol, 2019).

One theory that supports the study is the Holland theory of vocational types. This theory states that individuals tend to enter the work environment that would foster to their skills and abilities and would allow for their attitudes and values to be recognized by their workplace (Nauta, 2010). Holland also contributes the idea that vocational interests are an expression of personality, and that both personality and vocational interests result from a blending of heredity and the environment (Woods & Hampson, 2010). In Hollands theory he suggests that most people’s personality can be explained with the six personality traits: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (Nauta, 2010). The model characterizes the person as the trait that is most prevalent, to the trait that is least dominant in the individual and then does the same with the vocational environment that the person desired to work (Nauta, 2010). Childhood personality traits are thought to be a major influence on career choice (Woods & Hampson, 2010). This theory is one that provides a basis for the study that is being conducted by the researcher. Although the researcher is looking at specialties within nursing rather than an array of vocations, this theory can be applied because nursing specialties could be considered different career interests.

Study Purpose and Research Questions Reiterated

Although there are theories and about both personality in nursing and personality based vocations, there is a gap in literature that connects these two ideas. There has been some research that has looked into the personalities of nurses and or nursing students, however there is limited
research that looks into the aspect of nursing specialties. The purpose of this research is to
ascertain if the nursing specialty an individual chooses is linked to their personality. In addition,
the research will determine if overall nursing students have a similar personality profile. The
research questions include: do nursing students have a similar Big Five personality profile? Is
there a relationship between Big Five personality traits and desired specialty of nursing?

Methods

A 50-question survey, that is a self-reported measure for the IPIP Big-Five Factor
Markers, obtained from Open-Source Psychometrics Project was administered to senior nursing
students in four-year school in a Western New York college. In addition, the researcher added
two qualitative questions that addressed preferences for desired nursing specialty and reason for
entering the field of nursing.

Research Design

A cross-sectional mixed method study was used by the researcher to examine if there is a
relationship between personalities of nursing students and their desired field of work. The
research design that was implemented in this survey was a cross-sectional mixed method survey
study. The researcher used this method because it was resolved that this method would be the
best to determine if there is a correlation between nursing student’s personality and their desired
specialty of nursing. With using this type of design, it allowed for easily accessible data and
timely results.

Setting

The setting for this research design was at a 4-year liberal arts college in Western New
York. The survey was administered during one of the students’ senior nursing courses.

Data Collection
In order to complete this research, an IRB proposal was completed and approved. See Appendix A for mention of this document. Data was collected at one-time in the classroom in September 2019. Students who met the following inclusion criteria were invited to participate in the study: (1) current nursing student in the traditional BSN program, (2) student must be in their second (senior) year of the program. Students who met the following exclusion criteria were excluded from participating: (1) any student who was not a current student in the traditional BSN program, (2) any student who was not in their second (senior) year of the program. Before data were collected, the researcher read the IRB approved script to eligible participants informing them about the study and that their participation was voluntary. In addition, informed consent was obtained from eligible participants who agreed to be in the study before the survey was administered. The researcher explained that all of the survey answers would remain confidential and that the information would be disposed of properly by the researcher. Students who gave informed consent were given a paper copy of the survey questions. Once completed, the student (explain what they did to give the survey back to you- did you have a pile on the table, did you hand collect them, have a box?) Please refer to Table 1.0 for a copy of the survey that was administered.

Table 1.0 Nursing and Personality Survey

How old are you? ________

Please circle your Gender: Male   Female   Other   Prefer not to indicate
What field of nursing do you desire to work in upon completion of nursing school?

Why did you enter the Nursing profession?

Data Analysis

Student responses were collected using a paper survey, however, the researcher had to manually enter each participant response into an online program for analysis. The researcher entered responses one at a time into the Open-Source Psychometrics Project Big Five Personality test (Open-Source Psychometrics Project, 2019) to get the results of each respondent’s personality make-up. Each individual participant’s score was entered into a spreadsheet on Excel. Then the researcher used a basic tally system to quantify the data. The survey was first categorized by the respondent’s gender and age. The personality traits were broken down into the 5 categories of the Big Five Model. The categories were: extroversion, emotional stability, agreeableness, conscientiousness and intellect/imagination. After this data was collected, the
researcher calculated the mean age of respondents and mean score in personality category described above. The researcher then analyzed the narrative data obtained with the last two items on the survey. This resulted in several nursing specialty types including: pediatric nursing, labor and delivery nursing, intensive care unit nursing, emergency department nursing, geriatric nursing, hospice and palliative nursing, oncology nursing, air force nursing, psychiatric nursing, operation room nursing, nurse anesthetists, orthopedic nursing, medical surgical nursing and no preference. The researcher then tallied the responses by marking the respondents highest scoring personality trait with the field of nurses that was indicated. Lastly, the researcher found the percentage of respondents for each category of nursing that had each of the personality traits.

**Results**

**Sample Demographics**

A total of sixty-seven nursing students were surveyed. Out of this population 63 of the respondents were female, three of the respondents were male, and one respondent preferred not to indicate. The age range of the respondents was 20-26 years old with an average age of 21.15. The respondents were all in their third semester of the bachelors nursing program at a four-year school in a Western New York college.

**Personality Traits**

The personality traits were broken up into five categories being extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness. The numbers that are explained in these results are the percentiles that the students fell in. These percentiles are the percent of people, out of one hundred that the students’ responses were higher than the other responses.

The average percentile score for extroversion was 57.45. The average percentile score for the trait of neuroticism was 44.93. In terms of agreeableness the average score for the nursing
students was 74.1. The average percentile score for conscientiousness is 69.88. The average percentile score for openness is 32.9.

Findings were correlated according to preference for specialty area and percentage of personality type. Refer to Table 2.0 for details.

Table 2.0 Specialty and Personality Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specialty</th>
<th>Extroversion Percentage</th>
<th>Neuroticism Percentage</th>
<th>Agreeableness Percentage</th>
<th>Conscientiousness Percentage</th>
<th>Openness Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pediatrics</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Labor and Delivery</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensive Care Units</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Department</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
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Desired Field of Nursing

Out of the sixty-seven students, twenty (29.8%) indicated that they would like to work in pediatric nursing. Twelve out of the sixty-seven students (17.9%) indicated that an intensive care unit as their desired field. Eleven out of sixty-seven students (16.4 %) wrote labor and delivery as their desired specialty. Six of the sixty-seven students (9%) desired to work in the emergency department. Out of the sixty-seven students two students (3%) indicated geriatrics as their desired field of nursing. Three out of the sixty-seven students (4.5%) indicated that psychiatric nursing was their desired specialty. Three out of sixty-seven students (4.5%) did not indicate a specialty that they would like to work in. Three out of sixty-seven students (4.5%) indicated
oncology as their top choice to work after school. One out of sixty-seven students (1.5%) indicated the desire to work in hospice and palliative care. One out of sixty-seven students (1.5%) indicated that they wanted to be an Airforce nurse. One out of sixty-seven students (1.5%) indicated that they wanted to work in the operating room. One out of sixty-seven students (1.5%) indicated that being a nurse anesthetist is their desired field. One out of sixty-seven students (1.5%) indicated that they would like to work in orthopedics. One out of sixty-seven students (1.5%) indicated that medical surgical nursing is their preferred field of work.

**Pediatric Nursing**

Out of the twenty students that wrote pediatric nursing as their desired field two of the respondent’s highest personality trait percentile was extroversion. None of the students who indicated pediatric nursing had their highest personality trait in neuroticism. Seven out of twenty of the students who indicated pediatric nursing as their desired field had agreeableness as their highest personality percentile. Ten out of twenty of the students who indicated pediatric nursing as their desired field had conscientiousness as their highest personality trait. One of the twenty students had openness as their highest personality percentile. Overall, there is a strong pattern that indicated that the students who indicated pediatric nursing as their preference were highest in the trait of conscientiousness.

**Labor and Delivery**

Out of the eleven students that wrote labor and delivery as their desired specialty one of these students had extroversion as their highest personality percentile. None of the students who indicated labor and delivery nursing had their highest personality trait in neuroticism. Seven out of the eleven students that had agreeableness as their highest personality trait. Three out of the eleven students with a preference for labor and delivery had conscientiousness as their highest
PERSONALITY TRAITS WITHIN THE FIELD OF NURSING

personality trait. None of the students who indicated labor and delivery nursing had their highest personality trait in openness. Overall, students who indicated labor and delivery had agreeableness as their highest personality traits.

**Intensive Care Nursing**

Out of the twelve students that put intensive care nursing as their preferred field none of the students had their highest personality trait in extroversion. Four out of the twelve students that indicated intensive care nursing as their desired field had their highest personality trait in neuroticism. Two of the twelve students had agreeableness as their highest personality trait. Six out of the twelve students that indicated intensive care nursing as their preference had conscientiousness as their highest personality trait. Out of the twelve students that indicated intensive care nursing as their preference none of them had openness as their highest personality trait. There is a strong pattern that indicated that the students desire to work in an intensive care setting have personalities highest in the trait of conscientiousness.

**Emergency Department**

Out of the six students that indicated the emergency department as their preference, two of them had extroversion as their highest personality traits. None of the students who indicated the emergency department as their choice of work had neuroticism as their highest personality trait. One of the six students who indicated the emergency department as their job choice had agreeableness as their highest personality trait. Two of the six students with a preference for the emergency department had conscientiousness as their highest personality trait. One of the six students who wrote the emergency department as their desired field had openness as their highest personality trait. There is not one particular Big Five personality trait that coincided with individuals who desire to work in the emergency department.
Geriatrics

Out of the two students that indicated their preferences for geriatrics, neither had their highest personality trait in extroversion, agreeableness or openness. One of the students who indicated geriatrics had neuroticism as their highest personality traits. One of the two students who indicated a preference for geriatric nursing had conscientiousness as their highest personality trait. There is not one personality trait that strongly relates to the students who desire to enter geriatric nursing.

Psychiatric Nursing

Three students indicated psychiatric nursing as their preference for desired specialty. Two of the three students who chose psychiatric nursing had agreeableness as their highest personality trait. One out of three of the students who want to be a psychiatric nurse had neuroticism as their highest personality trait. Extraversion, conscientiousness and openness were not the highest personality trait reported in the students who want to work in psychiatric nursing. For the students that indicated psychiatric as their desired specialty of nursing, the dominant personality trait of the big five traits is agreeableness.

Oncology

Three students indicated that oncology is the specialty that they would like to work in. One out of the three students that indicated oncology had extroversion as their highest personality trait. Two out of the three students had agreeableness as their highest personality trait. Neuroticism, conscientiousness and openness were not any of the three student’s highest personality trait. The main personality trait of the big five traits is agreeableness for students who desire to work in oncology.

Undecided Preference
Three people indicated that they did not have a preference for a specialty after graduation. One of the three students had openness as their highest personality trait. The other two students that did not have a preference had agreeableness as their highest personality trait. The Big Five personality trait that was the most commonly the highest for students with an undecided preference was agreeableness.

**Hospice and Palliative Care**

The one student that indicated hospice and palliative care had agreeableness as their highest personality trait. The most prevalent personality trait for the student who indicated hospice and palliative care nursing is agreeableness.

**Airforce Nurse**

The one student who intends to be an Airforce nurse has extroversion as their highest personality trait. The most prevalent personality trait for the student who indicated Airforce nursing is extroversion.

**Operating Room**

The one student who indicated that the operating room is their preference for a nursing specialty had extroversion as their highest personality trait. The most prevalent personality trait for the student who desires to work as an operating room nurse is extroversion.

**Nurse Anesthetist**

The one student who indicated desire to be a nurse anesthetist has conscientiousness as their highest personality trait. Therefore, the highest personality trait for the student who desires to be a future Nurse Anesthetist is conscientiousness.

**Orthopedic Nursing**
The one student who desires to work in orthopedic nursing had their highest personality trait in conscientiousness. Therefore, the highest personality trait for the student desiring to work as an orthopedic nurse is conscientiousness.

**Medical-Surgical Nursing**

The one student who indicated the desire to work in medical-surgical nursing had their highest personality trait in conscientiousness. Conscientiousness is the personality trait that is highest for medical-surgical nursing.

**Discussion**

Overall, the researcher found a significance in the evidence that there is a correlation between nursing students and personality traits and that there is a correlation between the desired field of nursing specialty and personality traits of the respondents. To emphasize this fact, for the sixty-seven nursing students that responded to the survey, the average of the trait of agreeableness was higher than 74.1 percent of the other people that had taken this personality test. In addition, the average score for the students in the personality trait of conscientiousness was higher than 69.88 percent of others that had responded to this personality assessment. Also, there were differences across the specialties that were indicated by the respondents. Ten out of the twenty students that indicated their preference for pediatric nursing had conscientiousness as their highest percentile of personality traits. In comparison, seven out of the eleven students that indicated labor and delivery as their preference had agreeableness as their highest percentile of personality trait. In addition, out of the three people that did not have a preference for which specialty they would like to enter the highest personality trait percentile was in the personality of openness. As for intensive care nursing the highest personality trait percentile of the respondents was conscientiousness. For the students that indicated they wanted to work in the operating room
and as an Airforce nurse as their desired specialty, extroversion was the highest personality trait. These findings are findings that have not been clearly outlined in other literature, therefore they are brand new findings in respect to each particular specialty being outlined.

The findings in the researchers study overall showed that the nursing students had a similar personality make up. This can be attributed to the fact that a majority of the students were well above the other respondents of the personality indicator in the categories of agreeableness and conscientiousness. Thus, indicating that the students in this researcher overall had similar personality makeups. This finding addresses the researcher’s question as to whether or not nursing students have a similar personality profile. Although the research of how the big five personality traits correlate to nursing is limited it has been found that nurses tend to have similar personality traits. These finding support the findings of the study conducted by Baldacchino and Galea, that indicated that nursing students tended to have high scores in the traits of agreeableness and conscientiousness (2012).

In addition, the data indicates that there is a difference in the dominant personality traits of the respondents for each of the specialties. However, the some of the specialty’s highest personality traits of the respondents were agreeableness and conscientiousness, which overall was the highest two traits overall. These findings are indicated in the study by Joyce, which found that in many cases a certain type of work attracts a particular personality make-up of the individual (2016). The research question that aimed to discover if certain nursing specialties correlated with particular Big Five personality traits was partially answered by the data obtained. The data from the study was conclusive that about half of the specialties that were outlined in the research had a particular Big Five personality trait that was the highest among the students. One aspect of the study that made it difficult for the researcher to have a conclusive answer to this
question is the fact that for five of the nursing specialties only one student indicated their preference for working in that particular specialty.

**Limitations**

The researcher does acknowledge that the research presented does have many limitations when looking into the study for widespread implications. One limitation of the research was that the survey was only conducted with a small group of nursing students in a Western New York institution. In order to get more data that is significant, the research would need to be conducted at several universities across the United States. As for the makeup of the students that were surveyed the majority of the students were female with an average age of 21.15 years old and were all senior nursing students. In addition, the sample was homogenous in respect to race, most of the respondents were white. In order to get a more wholistic approach on the data, the researcher notes that more men should be included, as well as nursing students that are of all ages, in all semesters and a more diverse cultural sample should be included in order to get a better picture. Also, the study was a one-time, cross-sectional study, which is a limitation. In order for the data to be more significant the research should do the study over many years. In addition, the researcher surveyed the students to see the desired field of work, however some of the students may not end up in their specific specialty as their entry level nursing job. In order to truly see if there is a correlation between personality and specialty, it is noted that the survey should be conducted with nurses who are actually working in the specialty. Another limitation of the study is the fact that the results of the personality indicators were the percentiles in relation to the other people that have taken the test not the general population. It is noted that in order to get a better picture the data of big five personality traits should be found for the general population.

**Implications**
Clinical Implications for Nursing and Healthcare

Although the researcher did appreciate limitations within the study, the researcher’s findings will likely provide helpful details and support for future studies that research the connection between personality in the profession of nursing and more specifically the differences in personality of nurses in specialties. The results do not necessarily mean that if a person’s personality does not align with a certain specialty that they should not enter that specialty, but rather that if a person does not have an idea of the type of nursing that they would be interested in, perhaps research could help to lead them. In addition, it is evident that many people in the caring profession have a passion for people and tend to have genuine interest in helping others. However, the specialties of nursing are vastly different in how and who the nurse has the potential to impact. A nurse in the Emergency Department must care for the patients in a different way than the nurse that works in oncology who also must take care of a patient differently that is in the operating room. This research supports the fact that although overall the nursing students had similar personality traits, the personality traits that were most prevalent differed between the specialties.

Educational Implications

There are not many educational implications that this study can provide for nursing education. The main thing that can be taken away from the study in respect to nursing education is the fact that nursing students in the study had a similar personality make-up. This information could be useful when determining teaching and learning styles in the classroom. Personality types have been found to have an influence on the learner’s motivation and their ability to process and recall information that is being taught (Learning styles of the 16 personality types, n.d.). This is important to consider because if the students that the educators are instructing in
lectures, labs and clinical have similar personalities they also could have a similar learning style. If the professors and nursing educators catered their teaching to match how each personality learns best there could be the possibility of more effective instruction.

**Research Implications**

With the results that were obtained from this study, the researcher thinks that there are some implications for further research. One area of research that could be linked to this study includes the idea of nurse’s personality and job satisfaction and burn-out. Job satisfaction and burn-out are two very common ideas that are widely researched within the field of nursing. It would be very interesting to see how personality influences burn-out and job satisfaction in nursing. In addition, in order to make the research a more targeted evaluation, it would be very interesting to look into job satisfaction and nurse burn-out in specific nursing specialties and explore if the nurse’s personality has any role.

**Conclusion**

Personality is a topic that has had a myriad of theories and studies surrounding the topic. The topic of personality is of great importance because it is vital to understand why others think and act in certain ways and to a degree this actions and thoughts can be attributed to personality. The main theory that is explained in this study is the Big Five Model that explains an individual’s personality as a blend of five aspects that include extraversion, agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism. In many ways, personality is an important aspect to nursing in order to be able to care for the patients. In the nursing profession there are many different specialties and these specialties provide very diverse opportunities for nurses. The purpose of the study was to examine if nursing students overall had similar Big Five personality traits. In addition, the purpose of the study was also to examine if there is a relationship between
the student’s desired field of nursing and personality. The researcher’s study was conducted at a small Western New York college and the data was obtained from a survey that was given to sixty-seven students. The results of the study indicated that the nursing students of this institution had similar Big Five personality traits. In addition, there was a dominant Big Five personality trait among the students that indicated a specific specialty for about half of the specialties that were outlined. The researcher expressed the limitations of the study however believed that the study emphasized the similarity in personality of future nurses. The study can serve as a basis for looking into how personality intertwines with nursing specialties, job satisfaction for nurses and burn-out in nursing.
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