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Personality Traits, Religiosity, and Academic Major

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Abstract

Personality traits are intimately involved with many, if not all, human endeavors, including the pursuit of a college degree. The purpose of this study was to see if there were differences in personality traits amongst academic majors and religiosity levels at Southern Adventist University. It also examined if there were differences in religiosity across academic majors. The differences in academic major and religiosity were compared between both gender and ethnicity. Fifty students from seven academic major categories were given personality and religiosity measures during a class, a LifeGroup, and several arranged meeting times. The results of these measures yielded several statistically significant results. There were significant differences between academic majors for personality trait Agreeableness and its aspect Compassion with science majors having the lowest outcomes. There were also significant differences for trait Conscientiousness and its aspect Orderliness. Specifically, there were differences between those within nursing and those in religion, psychology, and the arts. Differences in religiosity exist across personality traits. Agreeableness and its aspects Compassion and Politeness along with trait Openness/Intellect all differed in overall religiosity. There were significant differences between the genders for the religiosity measure Religious Exclusivity with males scoring higher. There were also ethnic differences between academic majors, especially between education and nursing, sciences, psychology, and math. Two major areas of this study did not yield significant results. Religiosity did not differ between academic majors or between ethnicities. There were also several other significant results in keeping with previous personality research. This study sets a solid framework for future research on the relationship between personality traits, academic major, and religiosity.

Keywords: *Big-Five personality traits, personality, academic major, religiosity, gender, ethnicity*

Personality Traits, Religiosity, and Academic Major

For millennia, Jews, Christians, and Muslims have heard it said, “Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6, New American Standard Bible). However, recent research has suggested that upbringing may not be the only factor influencing adult behavior. Wink, Ciciolla, Dillon, and Tracy (2007) discovered that religiosity in adolescence was not an accurate predictor of religiosity in adulthood. They determined that personality traits played a far more significant role. Similarly, it has been determined that personality traits are linked to choice of academic major and career plans in college students (Larson, Wei, Wu, Borgen, & Bailey, 2007). The purpose of this research study was to examine these claims while adding to the existing knowledge related to how personality differs between academic majors and levels of religiosity.

This literature review is intended to provide a background for the current study by clearly explaining what personality traits and religiosity are and by addressing the correlation between religiosity and personality with a special focus on how personality traits can be predictors of religiosity. Furthermore, it addresses the link between personality and choice of academic major. To do this research, research articles and meta-analyses were compiled. All the resources were peer-reviewed articles found on EBSCOhost’s PsycARTICLES. The major terms used in the search process were academic major, religion, spirituality, personality traits, Big Five personality traits, religion and personality, religiosity and personality traits.

Personality Traits

According to Wilt, Grubbs, Exline, and Pargament (2016), personality traits are “patterns of affect, behavior, and cognition that are stable and consistent over time and space” (p. 341). The Big Five personality traits—the dimensions of focus in this study—have been linked to

various important areas of life, including religiosity and well-being. These personality factors include Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Neuroticism, and Openness/Intellect (DeYoung, Quilty, & Peterson, 2007). All of these factors are continua that range from their namesakes to the opposite of said traits. Agreeableness is a social aspect of personality characterized by nurturing, kindness, and social inhibition. Low levels of Agreeableness can indicate aggressive or straightforward behavior. Both its high and low levels come with positives and negatives. This trait can be divided into aspects Compassion and Politeness. Compassion is related to the instinct to care for those in need while Politeness is linked to adherence to social customs and obedience to authority. Trait Conscientiousness is the personality factor related to hard work, with people with higher levels exhibiting grit and determination and those with lower levels being more likely to be lazy or have poor follow-through. It can be divided into Industriousness and Orderliness. Industriousness is related to motivation and a desire to be productive. Orderliness is characterized by a strong desire for things to have a place and for there to be solid boundaries around things (or ideas). Trait Extraversion is a trait related to both positive emotionality and sociality. Those high in Extraversion are more likely to be happy, contented, excitable, etc., and they are generally more inclined to participate and lead in social activity. Those low in this trait are less likely to experience positive emotion, especially in social situations. Its two aspects are Enthusiasm and Assertiveness. Enthusiasm is related to positive emotionality and excitability; Assertiveness is linked to greater social dominance and a willingness to put forth one's thoughts (DeYoung, Quilty, & Peterson, 2007). Neuroticism is characterized by negative emotionality and isolation. Those high in this trait are more sensitive to sadness, anger, fear, etc., and they are more likely to seek distance from others. Neuroticism's two aspects are Withdrawal and Volatility. Withdrawal is characterized by a propensity to be

overwhelmed by novel situations and to act avoidantly. Volatility is related to the propensity to act erratically and a willingness to forgo calmness quickly. Lastly, Openness to Experience is a trait characterized by an interest in ideas and aesthetics. Those high in this trait are often creatives and enjoy learning, while those low in Openness to Experience are more likely to be interested in less abstract things, preferring more rote tasks. Its aspects are Intellect and Openness. Intellect is characterized by a desire to deal with new ideas and abstractions; Openness is related to creativity and aesthetic sensibility (DeYoung, Quilty, & Peterson, 2007).

Table 1	
<i>Big Five Personality Traits and 10 Aspects</i>	
<u>Traits and Aspects</u>	<u>Descriptions</u>
Agreeableness	kind, nurturing, prosocial
Compassion	inclination toward helping the vulnerable
Politeness	inclination toward adhering to social conventions
Conscientiousness	hard-working, perseverant, judgemental
Industriousness	inclination toward engaging in productive achievement
Orderliness	inclination toward maintaining boundaries and purity
Extraversion	positive emotionality, social
Enthusiasm	inclination toward excitability and positivity
Assertiveness	inclination toward speaking out and leading
Neuroticism	negative emotionality, antisocial
Withdrawal	inclination toward avoidance of novelty and discomfort
Volatility	inclination toward erratic emotionality and behavior
Openness to Experience	idea-driven, aesthetically sensitive, novelty-seeking
Intellect	inclination toward new ideas and abstractions
Openness	inclination toward aesthetics and creativity
<i>Note.</i> These descriptions are limited and should not be taken to represent the whole range of detail for each factor or its aspects.	

These personality traits affect people in their decision-making as well as in their spontaneous actions. This includes the spiritual and religious realm. For instance, the personality trait Agreeableness was slightly linked with positive perceptions of difficulties and of God's role in times of distress. In contrast, trait Neuroticism was correlated with negative perceptions of

difficulties and the Divine's role in them. Neuroticism was also linked to less meaning experienced during a struggle in one's life. Overall, personality traits appeared to be predictive and stable over the lifespan. This was especially true with Conscientiousness, whereas Agreeableness and Openness were subject to a certain amount of variation over time (Wink, Ciciolla, Dillon, & Tracy, 2007).

Personality trait prototypes. Roth and von Collani (2007) split the different personality dimensions and correlated them with five prototypes of personality in a similar way to the two-dimensional split in von Collani and Grumm's 2009 study. The first of these prototypes was characterized by low Openness to Experience; normal levels of Agreeableness, Neuroticism, and Extraversion; and above normal levels in trait Conscientiousness. The second prototype was low in all scores except Neuroticism. The third grouping of traits was the exact opposite of the second prototype, being low in Neuroticism and high in all other traits. The fourth was the opposite of the first prototype with high Openness to Experience and low Conscientiousness. Lastly, the fifth prototypical grouping is characterized by high scores in all factors and extremely high scores in Conscientiousness and Openness to Experience. These prototypes showcase the interrelatedness of the traits and can clarify how they interact with each other (Roth & von Collani, 2007).

Personality over the lifespan. Schwaba, Luhmann, Denissen, Chung, and Bleidorn (2017) showed that personality traits change across the lifespan. This study specifically examined Openness to Experience to see how it evolved throughout one's life. The results were clear: it stayed constant in early adulthood, slightly declined in middle adulthood, and declined rapidly in late adulthood. However, the study also examined how culture can impact traits over one's lifespan. In this longitudinal study, the researchers found that attending cultural events

such as the opera or exploring new cultures increased Openness to Experience. This shows that, while traits are genetically based, they are significantly malleable. Age, environment, and life experiences all appear to play a role in personality.

Personality traits and academic major. While there has been little research done linking personality traits and academic major, the studies that exist show a significant relationship. Along with self-efficacy measures, the Big Five personality traits were shown to have a strong relationship with both academic major and career desires (Larson et al., 2007). While this study was done with Taiwanese students, Larson et al. (2007) suggest that this is in keeping with other research done in the United States, which says that personality is linked to choice of academic major.

Religion and Spirituality

Religion and spirituality are important psychological attributes of life. According to Hill et al. (2001), they can influence the way people develop and age, determine the way the brain is structured, and affect emotions. Religiosity was directly linked to a person's ability to adapt properly in a difficult situation or period of life, and it was directly connected to self-reported well-being (Wilt et al., 2016). Furthermore, religiosity and spirituality were related to personality. While there has been a recent shift in American culture that esteems spirituality and degrades religion, these two concepts are deeply related and cannot be completely disentangled from each other (Hill et al., 2001). For these reasons, religion and spirituality will be referred to as religiosity, which incorporates both of these terms while also adding in the element of lived experience or religious practices.

Personality traits and religiosity. Personality traits and religiosity appear to covary in important ways. Gebauer et al. (2014) have shown that as a society gets more religious, people

with high Conscientiousness and high Agreeableness tend to increase in their religiosity. However, Openness to Experience had the opposite correlation, meaning that as a society becomes more religious, those with high Openness tend to decrease in their religiosity. It had also been found that Extraversion was positively related to religious culture, showing that as a society becomes more religious, extraverts are more likely to become more religious as well. Neuroticism was unaffected by cultural influences. In a study of Muslims and their religious faith by Ghorbani, Watson, Chen, and Dover (2013), a correlation emerged between Openness to Experience and both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Intrinsic motivations, in the context of religiosity, are the desires one has to prioritize religion in one's life for its own sake. Extrinsic motivations are any other reasons behind religiosity in life. They could include social pressures or the need for community. Extrinsic factors associated with social pressure predicted lower levels of Openness to Experience whereas a desire for fullness in one's life predicts higher levels of Openness. Intrinsic motivations were also correlated to Openness to Experience. There was a correlation between mindful, intellectual perspectives toward religiosity and traits Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, and Extraversion. Trait Openness was related only to spiritual orientation and not to religion. Furthermore, Openness was correlated to experiences of religiosity; Extraversion was also linked to religious experiences. Openness to Experience was linked to beliefs in a paranormal reality. Lastly, Neuroticism was correlated negatively to existential well-being (MacDonald, 2000).

Lazar (2016), in a study of Jewish women, found that Conscientiousness and Agreeableness were both related to almost all measures of religiosity. However, neither of these traits was linked to religious experiences while praying individually or to experiences of spirituality, generally. Openness to Experience, on the other hand, was linked to both mystical

prayer and spiritual experiences. Neuroticism was linked negatively to most aspects of religiosity and Extraversion was not found to be in connection to any of the measures used in the study.

Saroglou and Muñoz-García (2008) found that religiosity was linked directly to Conscientiousness and Agreeableness. There was also a significant relationship between religiosity and Neuroticism. Openness to Experience was related positively to a subcategory of religiosity labeled spirituality, but it was negatively associated with the rest of the subcategories. Lastly, there were no significant relationships between Extraversion and religiosity. Each of these factors was also linked to personal values. Conscientiousness was connected to conformity and benevolence. Agreeableness was linked to these two values as well, and it was negatively correlated to values of power. Neuroticism was not directly related to any values. Openness to Experience was linked to physical indulgence, openness to change, and the continuum between self-transcendence and self-enhancement. Extraversion was related to hedonism, which is the desire and search for pleasure and stimulation.

Personality traits as predictors of religiosity. Religion and spirituality play a significant role in the lives of many people (Hill et al., 2001). It has been shown through longitudinal studies that, over the lifespan, both Agreeableness and Conscientiousness predicted more personal religiosity while Openness to Experience was negatively related to future religiosity (Gebauer et al., 2014). In Wink et al. (2007), the researchers related personality traits in adolescence to religiosity in late adulthood. They found that Conscientiousness was a strong predictor of religiosity in later adulthood. Furthermore, in women, Agreeableness showed the same results. The researchers also found that Openness to Experience in adolescence is a predictor of religious seeking later on in life.

These studies provide a helpful baseline in the study of how personality, academic major, and religiosity are interrelated; however, there were certain limitations to recent research. One such pitfall is the lack of quality studies done specifically on religiosity and spirituality. Much of the existing research is either old, or it utilizes religiosity as a secondary variable that provides information about another aspect of the study. This has led to a lack of good distinguishing factors between religiosity and spirituality. Furthermore, it has intertwined religiosity with other variables making it difficult to gauge what the literature says specifically about the variable individually. Another major limitation is the lack of consistency in the definition of terms and the use of tests to measure religiosity and personality traits. Many of the studies employed contradictory measures or used outdated tests.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this research study was to examine the claims and ideas presented in previous research while also adding to the existing knowledge regarding how personality differs between academic majors and levels of religiosity. This research also examined differences between the three previously stated variables for ethnicity and gender.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were operationally defined for this study:

1. Academic major was defined by self-report that was sorted post hoc into seven categories: 1) Religion, 2) Nursing, 3) Sciences, 4) Psychology, 5) Math, 6) Arts, and 7) Education.
2. Personality traits were measured using the *Big Five Aspects Scale* (DeYoung, Quilty, & Peterson, 2007).
3. Religiosity was measured using the *National Study of Youth and Religion* (Pearce, Hayward, & Pearlman, 2017).

4. Gender was measured using self-report and put into two categories: 1) male and 2) female.
5. Ethnicity was measured using self-report and put into seven categories: 1) White, 2) Hispanic, 3) Asian, 4) Native American, 5) Black, 6) Other, and 7) Bi/Multiracial.

Hypothesis

One research hypothesis guided this study: There are significant differences among personality traits between various academic majors for students at Southern Adventist University.

Null hypothesis: There are no significant differences among personality traits between various academic majors for students at Southern Adventist University.

Research Questions

Four research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What differences in religiosity exist across majors?
2. What differences in religiosity exist across personality traits?
3. What gender differences are there in the choice of academic major and religiosity?
4. What ethnic differences are there in the choice of academic major and religiosity?

Method

Participants

This study was conducted using 50 students from a diverse range of academic majors. Convenience sampling and snowball sampling methodologies were employed on Southern Adventist University's campus. Cookies were given as an incentive for participation. All participants were treated in accordance with the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct of the American Psychological Association (American Psychological Association, 2010).

Materials

The survey used for this study was the *Schmid Trait Relation Survey (STRS)*. This survey consists of 124 questions and is a grouping of two other major surveys: the *Big Five Aspects Scale* that measures personality traits (DeYoung et al., 2007) and, as a measure of religiosity, the *National Study of Youth and Religion*, which examines various aspects of practicing a faith (Pearce et al., 2017). Cronbach's alpha was not provided with these instruments nor were there any other measures of reliability or validity that accompanied the Big Five Aspects Scale (DeYoung et al., 2007). However, for the measure of religiosity, their model fit the constructs they desired to measure according to the Comparative Fit Index and the Tucker Lewis Index, which were both over .95 (Pearce et al., 2017). The rest of the variables were measured using self-report measures.

Design and Procedure

This study utilized a descriptive research design analyzing group differences, and the tests were administered via printed surveys. The participants were recruited via convenience sampling and snowball sampling methodologies. The surveys were administered during a class, LifeGroup, and arranged meeting times. Cookies were provided as incentives for the student participants. SPSS was used to analyze the data and create pertinent graphs and charts.

Data Analysis

After the data was collected, it was scored and coded. Gender was coded as 1 for males and 2 for females. Ethnicity was coded as 1 for White, 2 for Hispanic, 3 for Asian, 4 for Native American, 5 for Black, 6 for Other, and 7 for Bi/Multiracial. Academic major was coded post hoc into the following categories: 1 for Religion, 2 for Nursing, 3 for Sciences, 4 for Psychology, 5 for Math, 6 for Arts, and 7 for Education. Personality traits and religiosity were both coded

using the keys that accompanied the measures with personality employing mean scores and religiosity employing total scores. After the data were scored, it was entered into SPSS.

Descriptive statistics, MANOVAs, one One-Way ANOVAs, and Chi-Squares were used to analyze the data. The hypothesis and research questions were then evaluated.

Results

Fifty participants completed the STRS. Out of the participants, 38% were male, 54% were female, and 8% did not respond; 50% were white, 12% were Hispanic, 18% were Asian, 4% were black, 4% were other, and 12% were bi/multiracial (see Figure 1); 16% fell under the Religion category, 18% under Nursing, 22% under Sciences, 10% under Psychology, 6% under Math, 8% under arts, 8% under Education, and 12% did not respond.

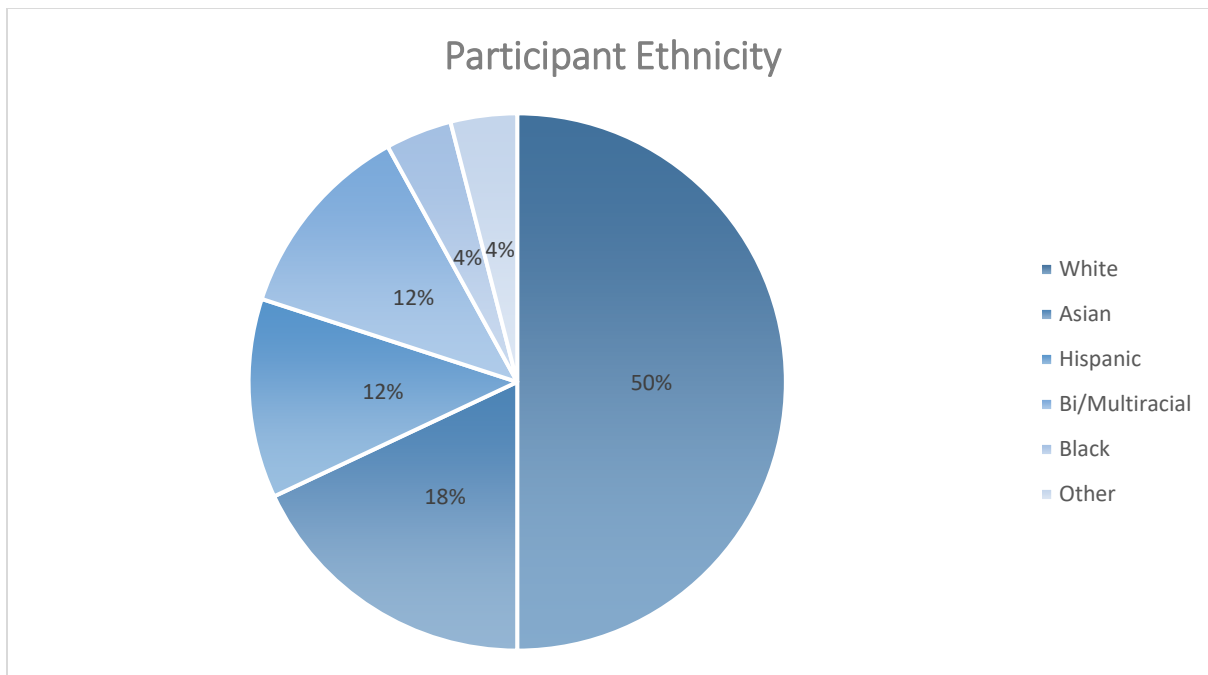


Figure 1. Pie Chart of Participant Ethnicity by Percentage

Hypothesis

The hypothesis for this research stated that there would be significant differences among personality traits between the various academic majors. Using a MANOVA, it was determined

that there are differences between academic majors for both Agreeableness and Conscientiousness ($F_{(6)} = 3.849, p = .004$; $F_{(6)} = 2.476, p = .041$) (see Tables 2 and 3). Compassion, an aspect of Agreeableness, was the main contributor to significance ($F_{(6)} = 4.920, p = .001$). Orderliness, an aspect of Conscientiousness, was also a main contributor to significance ($F_{(6)} = 3.521, p = .007$). There were no significant differences between academic majors and Neuroticism, Extraversion, or Openness/Intellect ($F_{(6)} = .832, p = .553, ns$; $F_{(6)} = 1.054, p = .407, ns$; $F_{(6)} = 1.127, p = .366, ns$). Overall, there were significant differences among personality traits between the academic majors; therefore, the null hypothesis should be rejected. More specifically, there are differences between individuals within the Sciences and those in Religion, Nursing, Psychology, Arts, and Education for trait Agreeableness. For Conscientiousness, there were differences between those within Nursing and those in Religion, Psychology, and Arts. There were also mean differences between Sciences and Arts.

<u>Academic Major</u>	<u><i>n</i></u>	<u><i>M</i></u>	<u><i>SD</i></u>
Religion	8	4.17	0.18
Nursing	9	4.28	0.45
Sciences	11	3.50	0.55
Psychology	5	4.26	0.44
Math	3	3.98	0.74
Arts	4	4.19	0.33
Education	4	4.30	0.17
Total	44	4.04	0.52

Table 3			
<i>Descriptive Statistics for Trait Conscientiousness</i>			
<u>Academic Major</u>	<u><i>n</i></u>	<u><i>M</i></u>	<u><i>SD</i></u>
Religion	8	3.25	0.40
Nursing	9	3.63	0.28
Sciences	11	3.40	0.52
Psychology	5	3.19	0.28
Math	3	3.18	0.28
Arts	4	2.80	0.12
Education	4	3.24	0.42
Total	44	3.31	0.42

Research Questions

The first research question of this study asked if there were differences between religiosity across academic majors. Using a MANOVA, the results were not statistically significant for any of the individual religiosity scales including the Religiosity Total ($F_{(6)} = 1.587, p = .178, ns$). Therefore, the results are inconclusive. Mean scores in Religiosity Total can be seen in Figure 2.

The second research question of this study asked if there were differences in religiosity across personality traits. Using a One-Way ANOVA, Agreeableness and both of its aspects, Compassion and Politeness, yielded statistically significant results ($F_{(20,29)} = 2.287, p = .021$; $F_{(20,29)} = 3.782, p = .001$; $F_{(20,29)} = 1.978, p = .046$). Openness/Intellect also yielded significant results ($F_{(20,29)} = 2.122, p = .032$). This indicates that people with differing levels of Agreeableness and Openness/Intellect also tended to have differences in their levels of Overall Religiosity. Enthusiasm, an aspect of Extraversion, neared significance ($F_{(20,29)} = 1.933, p = .051$) but did not meet the necessary criteria.

The third research question of this study asked if there were gender differences in the choice of academic major and religiosity. The results neared significance between the genders

for choice of academic major ($X^2_{(24, N=44)} = 12.164, p = .058, ns$). For religiosity, the only level that showed significance was Religious Exclusivity ($F_{(1)} = 7.171, p = .010$); however, the Religiosity Total did not show significance ($F_{(1)} = 0.032, p = .860$). This indicates that while men and women are not different in overall religiosity levels, they are different in their beliefs about how exclusive one should be in relation to other faiths, with men scoring higher in this regard.

The fourth research question of this study asked if there were ethnic differences in the choice of academic major and religiosity. There were significant results for choice of academic major ($X^2_{(24, N=37)} = 45.424, p = .005$). However, there were no significant differences for religiosity including the Religiosity Total ($F_{(5)} = .908, p = .484, ns$). This indicates that ethnicity tends to differ across academic majors but not in levels of religiosity.

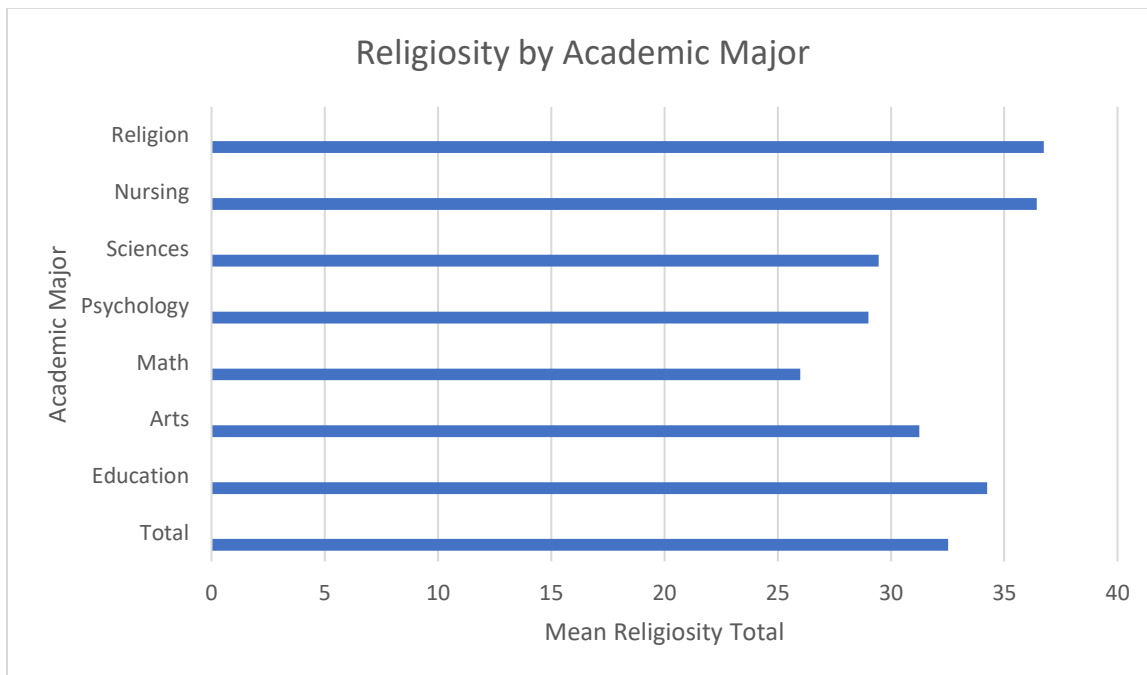


Figure 2. Bar Chart of Mean Religiosity Total by Academic Major

Other Interesting Findings

Although not specifically covered by the research questions, this study examined differences in personality between genders. The results were statistically significant for both

Neuroticism and Agreeableness ($F_{(1)} = 6.693, p = .013$; $F_{(1)} = 11.458, p = .002$). For Neuroticism, both aspects Volatility and Withdrawal were statistically significant ($F_{(1)} = 4.565, p = .038$; $F_{(1)} = 6.373, p = .015$). Aspects Compassion and Politeness of trait Agreeableness were also significant ($F_{(1)} = 12.467, p = .001$; $F_{(1)} = 5.962, p = .019$). Lastly, aspect Openness of trait Openness/Intellect was significant for gender ($F_{(1)} = 9.394, p = .004$). Another aspect that was covered was the differences in ethnicity between personality traits. Neuroticism and its aspect Withdrawal were both significant ($F_{(1)} = 2.748, p = .030$; $F_{(1)} = 3.540, p = .009$). Extraversion's aspect Assertiveness was also significant ($F_{(1)} = 4.255, p = .003$). Overall, these findings suggest that there are significant differences between genders and ethnicities for Neuroticism, which is interesting because this tends to produce insignificant results in most studies. Furthermore, Agreeableness and its aspects were significant for gender but not for ethnicity while aspect Extraversion was significant for ethnicity.

Discussion

The purpose of this research study was to add to the existing knowledge regarding how personality differs between academic majors and levels of religiosity. This research also examined differences between the three previously stated variables for gender and ethnicity. It was hypothesized that there would be personality trait differences between academic majors. Furthermore, the research asked if there would be religiosity differences across academic majors, and it questioned whether there would be religiosity differences across the personality dimensions. The last two questions asked if there would be gender and ethnicity differences across academic major and religiosity levels respectively.

The results of this study indicate that there are statistically significant personality trait differences across academic majors. Agreeableness and its aspect Compassion were both

different across majors, especially between individuals within the Sciences and those in Religion, Nursing, Psychology, Arts, and Education. This suggests that students who go into the Sciences are less agreeable and compassionate than those in other majors. Similarly, Conscientiousness and its aspect Orderliness both yielded significant differences between those within Nursing and those in Religion, Psychology, and Arts. There were also mean differences between Sciences and Arts. These findings suggest that those in Nursing and Sciences have higher levels of organization and grit in their personality makeup when compared with those in other fields.

Regarding differences in religiosity between majors, the results were not significant, which indicates that there are no major differences in religious and spiritual practices and beliefs between majors. This is especially intriguing because it means that religion majors are not necessarily more religious than those in other disciplines on campus. However, this study did find that there were personality trait differences for those with differing levels of overall religiosity, specifically for Agreeableness and Openness/Intellect. This suggests that those with differing levels of religiosity may also have dissimilar levels of Compassion, Politeness, and Openness/Intellect.

Lastly, this study examined gender and ethnic differences between academic majors and levels of religiosity. It was found that gender differences neared significance between majors while there were statistically significant differences between ethnicities. However, no significance was found when comparing gender and ethnicity differences between levels of religiosity. This indicates that gender and ethnicity may play a role in major life decisions but not necessarily in the relationship an individual has with their faith.

Limitations and Weaknesses

This study was not large enough to cover all possible aspects for the variables involved. Furthermore, this study is not necessarily generalizable to the entire United States' population of college-age students. Another limitation was the small sample size because several majors had to be grouped together due to a lack of representation. This means that the results do not represent all students at Southern because many of them have majors that were not directly studied. Similarly, due to the underrepresentation of certain majors, several post hoc tests could not be performed.

Link to Previous Research

This research showed strong connections to the previous research on these subjects. Other major life decisions showed strong connections to personality traits, and this research was able to showcase differences between personality traits for the somewhat novel area of academic major. These findings were also in line regarding gender and personality traits. Overall, the findings of this study support the findings of previous studies, especially concerning personality traits.

Importance of the Study

The results of this study provide a better understanding of how personality traits are related to major life decisions. They could benefit students as they attempt to discern what major they should enter into. For instance, students who select Science majors tend to be lower in Agreeableness; furthermore, students who select Art majors tend to be lower in Conscientiousness. The results of this study also explored gender differences. Students of both genders who have personality traits that showed significant results can use the information discovered to inform their decision-making process. Similarly, these findings could help career

counselors and psychologists as they seek to help students plan their futures. The findings related to levels of religiosity diminish stereotypes that certain majors are more religious than others.

Overall, this study adds valuable information to the personality research and literature that exists and could be of help in the process of discerning major and vocation.

Agenda for Future Research

For future research in this area, it would be beneficial to have a larger sample size. Furthermore, it would be helpful to have a sufficiently large representation from each of the academic majors, instead of lumping them into categories. Doing correlational and longitudinal research could add to the depth of understanding in new and interesting ways, especially because class standing could be factored in as a way of gauging what, if any, personality traits are related to changing majors multiple times. Lastly, replacing academic major with the variable of Christian denomination would allow for groundbreaking research in the overlapping subjects of religiosity and personality traits. It would be intriguing to study differences or correlations between Adventists, Catholics, Presbyterians, and adherents of Messianic Judaism.

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