Week 5 – Personality (Consequential Outcomes):

Why might personality predict life outcomes?

→ **Direct effects:** predicting from the general to the particular. E.g. does conscientiousness predict specific expressions of conscientious behaviour?

→ **Indirect effects**: 'mediation' – where some intervening variable or process forms a link in the chain between personality & outcome. E.g. via situation selection (for instance, because John is higher in openness, he is more likely to put himself in a certain situation or pursue certain goals that lead to a particular outcome).

→ **Interactive/conditional effects:** refers to person x environment interactions. E.g. via differential reactivity to events/situations. For instance, someone low in neuroticism may respond more strongly/in a more adaptive way to a certain event associated with a certain life outcome.

History of prediction:

→ **The Lexical Hypothesis**: *important* personality characteristics will, over human history, be coded in language.

- Personality characteristics will be *important* if they enable us to make predictions about what other individuals are going to do.
- For example, who might help us, who might hurt us, who will offer leadership, who is reliable.

→ **Formal assessment of personality & abilities:** e.g. in educational contexts.

- *Binet & Simon (1905, 1908, 1911)* identified children who may benefit from alternate education.
- Development of the Scholastic Aptitude test (SAT) in 1926.

→ **Occupational contexts:**

- Military selection & placement under *Robert Yerkes (1915)*
- 1950s-1970s diversification & mobility of work
- Growth of Human Resources management

The prediction of achievement:

Job performance:

Schmidt & Hunter (1998):

→ Conducted a meta-analysis of 85 years of research to predict certain outcomes.

→ Predictors included abilities, personality traits, work experience, references etc.

→ Criterion was job performance – typically measured in terms of supervisory ratings (but other indicators too including sales records)

→ **Employment interviews** were found to be the biggest predictor of achievement at work.

→ **Conscientiousness** was found to be strongly associated with higher job performance (r = 0.31).

→ **Integrity tests** (a blend of conscientiousness & agreeableness) were also found to be strongly associated with higher job performance (r = 0.41).

→ The strongest individual differences predictor was found to be **cognitive ability** (or 'intelligence'), r = 0.51. But, personality *adds* to the predictive validity of cognitive

ability (e.g. combining cognitive ability with an integrity test leads to the highest predictive association, r = 0.65).

Barrick & Mount (1991, 1998):

→ Conscientiousness predicts **performance across *all* occupations** (especially so for *effort-related* [rather than skill-related] criteria).

→ Extraversion predicted performance well in two specific job areas – **management & sales.**

Hurtz & Donovan (2000):

→ Performed an updated meta-analysis to check the replicability of earlier findings.

→ Conscientiousness predicts **job performance** *moderately* in the region of r = 0.2 (moderate predictive effect).

→ Agreeableness, openness/intellect & low neuroticism predicts performance in **customer service roles**.

→ Extraversion & low neuroticism predicts performance in **management & sales roles**.

Occupational success:

→ Indices typically reflect popular views of job desirability or 'prestige' related to wages, years of education required, etc.

→ E.g. Duncan socioeconomic index – typical top scorers include doctors, dentists, lawyers.

Predictors of occupation success include:

→ **Openness/intellect:** r = 0.18 *(Sutin et al., 2009)*

→ **Extraversion:** r = 0.16 *(Roberts et al., 2003)*

→ **Conscientiousness:** r = 0.15 *(Roberts et al., 2003)*

→ Personality predicts various indicators of occupational success (income, promotion etc.) up to 47 years later.

Educational achievement:

→ A combination of **cognitive ability and conscientiousness** predicts **achievement across programs** (*Kuncel et al., 2001*).

→ *Poropat (2009)* **predicted school/university GPA from:**

- Cognitive ability: r = .25
- Conscientiousness: r = .22
- Openness/intellect: r = .12
- Agreeableness: r = .07

▪ Of personality measures, only **conscientiousness** adds to prediction above cognitive ability.

Educational attainment:

→ E.g. highest level completed/years spent in full time education.

→ **Openness** is consistently the strongest predictor; r ~ .35

Educational engagement:

→ **Openness** predicts **intrinsic motivation** (interest & enjoyment of study topics) in university students; r ~ .35.

→ Openness also predicts **breath/depth of reading** in university students; r ~ .25

Choice of college major:

→ **Extraversion:** economics, law, political science & medicine.

→ **Neuroticism:** arts, humanities, psychology.

→ **Agreeableness:** medicine, psychology, sciences, arts & humanities.

→ **Conscientiousness:** science, law, economics, engineering, medicine & psychology.

→ **Openness/intellect:** humanities, arts, psychology & political science.

Why does personality predict achievement?

1. Direct effects (*from the general to the particular)*: e.g. expressions of conscientiousness. Conscientiousness predicts most strongly for *effort-related* criteria.

2. Indirect effects (*mediation*): selecting into a program of study that increases later likelihood of particular kinds of outcomes. For example, conscientiousness & extraversion predict 'occupational success' (higher wages etc.) *via* choice of major (e.g. law).

E.g. *Corker et al., 2012:*

→ Found that use of **effortful study strategies** explained the relation between conscientiousness & educational achievement (i.e. conscientiousness leads to the use of effortful study strategies, which leads to better academic performance).

3. Interactive effects (*moderation*): e.g. responding to the demands of work, extraverts may respond well to the interpersonal challenges of leadership & management roles. E.g. extraverts respond more strongly to rewards (*Smillie & Wacker, 2015*). Salesforce control systems make use of rewards (i.e. commissions & bonuses). Management roles bring a range of rewards (e.g. pay, status).

E.g. *Stewart, 1996:*

→ Extraversion only predicts performance in salespeople when performance is linked with rewards.

→ If new sales are rewarded, then extraversion predicts new sales (but not customer retention). If customer retention is rewarded, then extraversion will predict customer retention (but not new sales).