

Personality's effects

Life satisfaction

How satisfied are you with where life has taken you? The subject came up in discussion with friends last week. Before that I'd never given it much thought.

In reflection, I'd have to say my satisfaction level remains high after 76 years. I managed to carve out a career for myself at a relatively early age after getting married, having a child and finishing college, which got me started.

I can't help but believe my natural propensity toward being a "people person" only helped boost my overall satisfaction level.

And now a study in the Netherlands published in the American Psychological Association's Journal of Personality and Social Psychology and summarized by Robby Berman of Medical News Today

seems to verify that, saying the connection between certain personality types associated with higher life satisfaction persists throughout life and strengthens with age.

It cites the "Big Five personality traits" believed to be connected with higher life satisfaction. "The Big Five are broad personality traits that characterize how a person feels, thinks and behaves," Berman reported.

Some psychologists use different names for the traits, and no personality can be exclusively described by any one trait, as most people have a combination. The traits are described below by their most extreme expressions.

1. Openness, or being open to new experiences. Those with a high level of this trait may engage in so-called magical thinking, and be considered eccentric. Someone with a lack of openness is inflexible and closed-minded.

2. Conscientiousness describes either "a motivated, perfectionist workaholic with high conscientiousness" or the opposite, "an irresponsible, distractible, or thoughtless person with too little of this trait."

3. Extraversion is "a social person who may also be an excitement and attention-seeker. With a shortage of extraversion, a person is withdrawn or may be cold to others."

4. Agreeableness describes those seeking to get along and perhaps selfless in their attempts to do so; they may also be submissive and gullible. Those with low levels of this trait appear deceitful, manipulative, uncaring, or suspicious.

5. Neuroticism describes insecure, overly emotional people who are perhaps depressive and helpless. Conversely, low levels of the trait are associated with fearlessness and shamelessness.

Emotional stability, the fundamental driver of satisfaction, occurs when a person is neither high- nor low-neurotic but balanced between them.

The study, reported Berman, analyzed public anonymized data collected for the Longitudinal Internet Studies for the Social Sciences panel survey from 2008 to 2019. The 9,110 participants were a nationally representative sample of people ages 16 to 95 living in the Netherlands.

The study found personality traits

LETTERS

Founders on schools

Denial, hypocrisy, and obfuscation seem to be the basis of too many of our political leaders. Education bills dictating curriculum, removing books from libraries under the guise of protecting children, and removing funds from public schools to reinforce the pretext of parental rights de-grade education for all and the development of Arkansas.

The idea parents know what is best for their children conflates caring for and nurturing sons and daughters with the intellectual development of all children through education. A recent letter in the Democrat-Gazette suggests education, as an experiment, has run its course. The founding fathers offered a succinct statement on the importance of education through the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. This foundational document describing the process for admitting a new state to the union states: "Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged."

Perhaps there is a benefit of reading and understanding the impact historical and foundational documents has on our modern society.

DOUGLAS FRANKLIN
Rogers

She is my reminder

Lately, as I reflect more deeply on my life, I have come to realize we are all blessed with special reminders of how beautiful it all can be. The won-

OPINION

Mike Masterson



primarily associated with a person's satisfaction level apply equally to all phases of a person's life, growing stronger in later years. Those who are emotionally stable are those most likely to feel generally satisfied with their lives.

Researchers determined "work satisfaction is closely tied to conscientiousness while social satisfaction is linked to extraversion and agreeableness," Berman wrote.

Human personalities are not fixed, but heredity plays a potentially large role. Dr. Adam Feltz, who wasn't involved in the study, told Berman the best estimates are about 50 percent of our personalities involve our heredity. "There is a lot of controversy around these estimates because it is very difficult to identify how much of the variation in personality is a result of shared environments versus shared genes."

Feltz, an associate professor of psychology at the University of Oklahoma, said data suggests our personalities are relatively stable during early childhood, undergo a significant change through adolescence, and restabilize in adulthood. "People on average tend to become more agreeable with age," he said. "Through working on organizational skills, being more open, more friendly and outgoing, we can increase our happiness in different areas of our life over time."

California therapist Dr. Alisa Ruby Bash said one finding was the relationship between personality traits and satisfaction grows stronger.

"It has to do with the saying, 'what you put out, you get back,'" said Dr. Bash. "When we are uplifting and positive, people want to be around us, and give us more love and appreciation."

Let lawmakers know

Rep. Mary Bentley was planning to introduce her revised HB1610 as soon as Monday. It is by far the worst bill for the free flow of public information in Arkansas ever constructed, unless you and your legislator favor public boards and agencies meeting in secret.

I encourage all my valued readers to please take a moment and reach out to urge your legislators to vote against this terrible and needless attack on the open-meetings provision of our state's widely envied Freedom of Information Act of 1967.

Allowing one-third of an elected body to meet serially in secret will destroy FOIA, and all to benefit those who want to conduct our business in private.

Mike Masterson is a longtime Arkansas journalist, was editor of three Arkansas dailies and headed the master's journalism program at Ohio State University. Email him at mmasterson@arkansasonline.com.



Caught up in the vortex

OPINION

When I was 14 I wanted a job. A man at our church ran a restaurant in a truck stop and said he could put me to work bussing tables.

My dad took me to the restaurant for coffee with the fellow churchman. A young Black male was bussing tables.

The church friend told me he'd get that kid fired in a couple of weeks and bring me aboard.

On the way home I told my dad I didn't want the job if it meant firing that young Black employee. My dad said, "Lord have mercy."

I wound up bussing tables at the Montgomery Ward cafeteria in the old University Mall. They called me "Lightning," which my work pace wasn't.

I must already have been liberally indoctrinated in critical race theory by some school teacher.

The Fayetteville School District was doing training of teachers and handed out a survey by which the teachers were directed to check boxes to assess themselves on two pages of questions inviting their introspection on their sensitivity to white privilege.

White privilege is the ragingly evident truth that historically it's been better in America to be white than Black or other. It accepts that white advantages have been passed down naturally and are manifest still.

Let's say I'd been born Black instead of white in Little Rock in December 1953.

It is likely that I would have received a lesser public education considering that the local white people were inclined to go on rampages against children of my color joining them in their bigger, better schools.

It is likely I would not have had the same economic and social connections by which I got an apprentice-type job while in high school writing sports articles for a local daily newspaper. It's likely, then, that all of you conservative white readers out

John Brummett



there would not be receiving today's encouragement to be less resentful and defensive—as if you're afraid you're losing it—when somebody mentions white privilege.

It's not today's white person's fault that there has been white privilege. It is, however, a white person's failing not to seek to become better sensitized to that.

It is absolutely shameful to declare that we're not going to allow any encouragement of white sensitivity in the glorious insularity of our little racism-plagued province.

A series of events led to a right-wing group getting a copy of the aforementioned questionnaire and reacting angrily. The group sent the questionnaire to Fox News, which pounced, of course. It reported that the state had leaned disapprovingly on the Fayetteville school district for the evil of inviting teacher introspection on race.

Under fire, the superintendent assured the state that no teacher would be compelled to do anything based on the questionnaire and that nothing further would be done.

Then, of course, Fox gave Gov. Sarah Sanders the opening she naturally took to punch her talking-point button and declare that this kind of liberal indoctrination and teaching of critical race theory would not be tolerated while she was governor.

She was saying she would not permit in her state any discussion of white privilege or any work on becoming more sensitive to it.

She was saying that asking teachers to be introspective was indoctrinating kids and teaching what she and the right-wingers call critical race the-

ory and rail against.

"We've already reached out to the district to ensure no teacher is forced to sign this pledge," Sanders told Fox. "We're making sure it doesn't happen again. We will teach kids how to think, not what to think."

In other words: Down here we'll permit them not to think about racial disadvantage.

The superintendent told Fox that the questionnaires weren't collected and were handed out merely for individual introspection. There was no "pledge" sought.

Handing out a questionnaire to teachers at a training conference is not indoctrinating a single child. There is no child involved in the transaction.

I would agree that a teacher should not, in becoming more sensitized, start telling younger children that they have racial privilege. But nothing on that document suggests such a thing.

Its references are to teachers' understanding of the different situations and needs of all the little faces looking forward from their stations every school morning.

By high school, the higher-achieving kids can probably handle ragingly evident truth about white advantages. Or they will have by then the ability to engage in that thing for which teenagers are known—talking back to grownups.

I first learned of this questionnaire from Sanders' Twitter feed when she bragged about what she'd told Fox about what she wouldn't tolerate in Fayetteville.

We live these days in an insular right-wing news vortex—from mad white conservatives to Fox to Sanders and back around.

Let's see if a gentle breeze of reason can survive in that vortex.

John Brummett, whose column appears regularly in the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, is a member of the Arkansas Writers' Hall of Fame. Email him at jbrummett@arkansasonline.com. Read his @johnbrummett Twitter feed.

LETTERS

Education progress

I've been following Gov. Sarah Sanders' LEARNS program designed to reform education in Arkansas. She has commented that only 35 percent of our kids could read at grade level. Oh my gosh ... time to do something different because what we've been doing for years (and before the covid shutdown) has obviously not been working. So I began looking online and found the following information.

On the Booneville School District webpage it states that the district has a 95 percent graduation rate, which is 6 percentage points above the statewide graduation rate. (In 2021 Booneville spent an average of \$11,620 per student.) And the National Center for Education Statistics and the Arkansas Department of Education say that the Booneville graduation rate is in the top 20 percent in Arkansas. However, our math proficiency is 33 percent and our

reading proficiency is at the 33 percent level. I admit that I am not a math major, but doesn't that mean that we are graduating a lot of kids who can't read proficiently and solve simple math problems?

It will be interesting to see how Governor Sanders' plan works out in the future. She must feel as I do: If you keep doing the same thing over and over you'll get the same results. Meanwhile, I think the education system should raise a "red flag" to let all know that the education of our children should be a top priority. And certainly, standards need to be raised to reflect the reality of this dire situation. How about posting any progress made in reading/math scores on the digital displays in town? Let the citizens know that this is a priority in our community and that a "high school diploma" actually has merit.

ANDI ELLIOTT
Booneville

Sick of the whining

I'm so sick and tired of people whining about a cartoon strip. Bring it back if it makes racist people feel good. Only showing Arkansas' true colors. The man said he hates a whole race of people. Would we be having this discussion if the creator of Curtis said he hates white people? Yes, because white Americans would be up in arms and feel Black Americans shouldn't say that about good white folks.

Get off of it. It was wrong no matter what race. If you agree with what he said, stop thumping your Bible at people because it's not right to think or agree with such disgusting rhetoric. Bring it back so I can get back to real commentary and not racist whining.

GERARD MARSH
Little Rock

Editor's note: Dilbert is no longer available for publication.

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