



Generation Yø Psychological Traits, Entitlement, and Career Expectations

HROB*4100

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Abstract

In this article the authors propose a theoretical model of the relationship between the Big Five personality traits, psychological entitlement and future career expectations of Generation Y. Little is known about how these variables interact for Generation Y. A survey of 110 Generation Y post secondary students was conducted in North America, 71% female and 29% male. The study revealed that Generation Y is a levelheaded and practical generation, with realistic expectations of their first career job after post secondary school. Results indicated that women had a very realistic expectation of their salary, and that men generally expected a higher salary than the Canadian national average. This study is one of the first to compare the correlations between Generation Y's psychological sense of entitlement and their expectations of their first career job. It was found that entitlement did not correlate with any of the variables in this study, except for expectation of vacation time. Thus, proving that Generation Y does not let their sense of entitlement obscure their expectations of their future careers. Overall this article presents the analyses of the relationships between personality, entitlement and career expectations of Generation Y.

Introduction

With the emergence of Generation Y into the workforce, many employers are seeing the personality and cultural differences that exist between Generation Y and the other Generations. Generation Yers, also known as Millennials and Nexters, are the children of Baby Boomers who are born between 1980 and 1995. (Trunk, 2007; Alexander & Sysko, 2012; Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008). In this study we will refer to these people as Generation Yers. The school to work transition proves to be difficult for Generation Y and their employers as an expectancy gap exists between the two. For example, Generation Yers' expectations of work life balance are higher than previous generations (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Furthermore, they expect to find their ideal job right away (Arnett, 2004). The goal of this study is to determine: How does Generation Y students' psychological traits affect their entitlement and career expectations during the school to work transition? We hope to better understand what causes Generation Yers to have such high career expectations. The Big Five personality factors consist of openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism/emotional stability (Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, & Bushman, 2004). We refer to psychological entitlement as the phenomenon in which

individuals consistently believe that they deserve preferential rewards and treatment, often with little consideration of actual qualities or performance levels (Harvey & Martinko, 2009).

The Big 5 Effects and Causes of Entitlement

The Big Five Personality Factors are the five factors which psychologists believe personality is made up of. Johns and Saksø (2011) culminating definitions of the Big Five come from several sources (Digman, 1990; Hogan, 1991; Barrick & Mount, 1991; Barrick, Mount, & Judge, 2001; Barrick, Mount & Gupta, 2003; Ng, Eby, Sorensen & Feldman, 2005). The first component of the Big Five is conscientiousness; it is the degree to which a person is responsible and achievement oriented. Second, agreeableness is the extent to which a person is friendly and approachable. Third, neuroticism is the degree to which a person has appropriate emotional control. Fourth, openness refers to the extent to which a person thinks flexibly and is receptive to new ideas. Lastly, extraversion refers to the extent to which a person is outgoing versus shy.

The current literature indicates that narcissism and agreeableness both have a greater impact on entitlement than conscientiousness, extraversion and openness. The Psychological Entitlement Scale (PES) has found that of the Big Five Personality Factors, agreeableness and neuroticism have a negative correlation with psychological entitlement (Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, & Bushman, 2004). According to Chowning and Campbell (2009), agreeableness plays a large role in the study of narcissism, which is an already existing construct of entitlement. Twenge and Campbell (2008) explain that high expectations among employees could exist as a result of increased narcissism. Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, and Bushman, (2004) also state that entitlement is clearly a component of narcissism. The existing literature clearly demonstrates that the Big Five personality factors, narcissism and agreeableness, increase Generation Yersø's sense of entitlement and in turn, raising their career expectations.

Generation Y's Characteristics

The difference in career expectations of Generation Y and Generation X have influenced researchers to vastly explore Generation Yersø's personality characteristics and how they impact their career expectations. Research has shown that this generation displays certain characteristics that are formed from external environmental influences. Economic factors, high advancement in technology, and having "helicopter parents" contribute to Generation Yersø's characteristics and to the mentality that they can accomplish or obtain anything they want (Alexander & Sysko, 2012).

According to NaorDesh (2008) and Alexander and Sysko (2012), Generation Yers tend to be selfish, impatient, narcissistic, hedonistic, have a cavalier work ethic, and are willing to work hard and put in extra effort for immediate rewards and praise. Generation Yers are not loyal to the company they work for and they are willing to go from one company to another very easily, due to their increase in self-esteem and narcissism (Twenge & Campbell, 2007). However, Generation Yers also have positive characteristics; they are confident, tech-savvy, family oriented, as well as team and achievement oriented (NaorDesh, 2008; Alexander & Sysko, 2012). They want the best and strive for the best. Overall, Generation Yers have higher cases of narcissism, anxiety and a lower need for social approval. Thus managers should expect Generation Yers' expectations of their working environment to be higher than other generations (Twenge, et al., 2008).

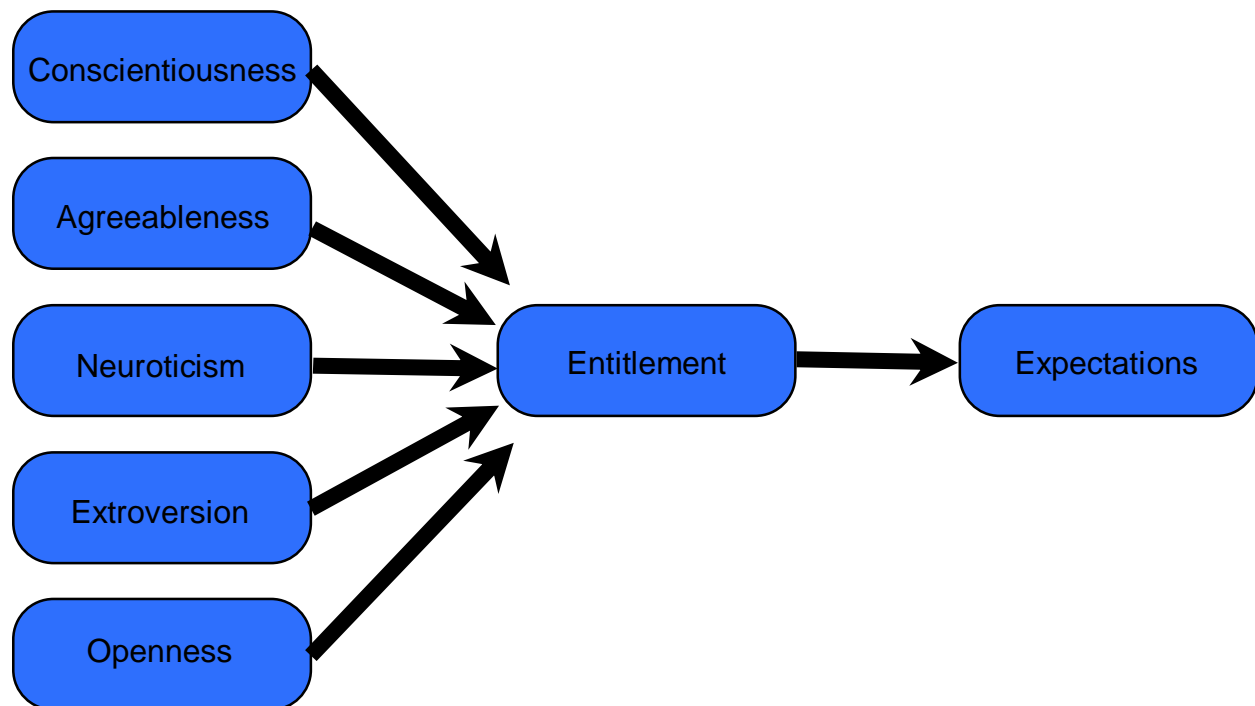
Generation Y's Entitlement and Expectations

Previous literature on the subject provides a deeper insight into Generation Yers' psychological entitlement. Generation Yers are more entitled than other generations when it comes to their careers (Twenge, 2006). Generation Yers believe they do not have to sacrifice, or put in as much work as their older generations in order to obtain a promotion or have the work-life flexibility that they think they deserve (Kelly & McGowen, 2011). These expectations were even displayed at school level as Generation Y students have been known to harass their professors for an increase in their marks for moderate work, in addition, they expect professors and, teaching assistants to go to exceptional lengths to accommodate their needs and preferences (Greenberger, Lessard, Chen, & Farruggia, 2008). A recent study showed that college students who reported being more academically entitled compared to others, also state that they have external pressure from their parents (Greenberger et al, 2008). Their parents recognize the achievements of their children by providing gifts and supplying higher recognition compared to others (Greenberger et al, 2008). In addition, Lancaster & Stillman (2010) explain that Generation Yers see themselves as a desirable commodity worthy of special treatment when they enter the job market. Although they have a lot to offer, they expect a lot from perks and promotions. This entitlement comes from being raised in the self esteem movement, with plenty of praise.

As shown in the theoretical model (Figure 1), the independent variables are the Big Five Personality Factors (conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, openness and extraversion).

These personality factors influence Generation Y's psychological sense of entitlement which would be directly influencing their expectations for their first career position in the workforce. The goal of this study is to determine: How does Generation Y students' psychological traits affect their entitlement and career expectations during the school to work transition?

Figure 1.



The five hypotheses:

H1: Conscientiousness, Extroversion and Openness will positively correlate with their career expectations.

H2: Neuroticism and Agreeableness will negatively correlate with their career expectations.

H3: Conscientiousness, Extroversion and Openness will positively correlate with their sense of entitlement.

H4: Neuroticism and Agreeableness will negatively correlate with their sense of entitlement.

H5: Sense of entitlement will positively correlate with their career expectations.

Methodology

Participants

The research sample for this study consisted of 110 participants from Generation Y (18-31 years old) attending a postsecondary institution. This sample consisted of 78 females and 32 males. The population of the study consisted of 757 individuals, 128 responses were collected but 18 responses were incomplete or unusable. All participants were recruited using social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter, as well as through direct contact by email. Due to the nature of the recruitment methods we compiled a convenience sample.

Measures

We obtained information regarding participants career expectations, personality characteristics, psychological entitlement and demographics. The information was collected using a confidential respondent completed online questionnaire which consisted of four different measures: Expectation Measure, Mini International Personality Item Pool (IPIP), Psychological Entitlement Scale (PES), and demographic questions, as shown in Appendix A. We captured participant's career expectations utilizing questions that were designed by the researchers. Career Expectation Measures assessed participant's expectations regarding : (a) salary, (b) vacation time, (c) length of time participants expected to wait to receive their first promotion, and (d) length of time participants expect to stay at the organization of their first career position.

The Mini IPIP Scale was used to measure participants personality characteristics with regards to the Big Five personality factors; conscientiousness, agreeableness, narcissism, openness, and extraversion. It was a five point likert scale that ranged from very inaccurate to very accurate (Donnellan, Oswald, Baird, & Lucas, 2006).

The Psychological Entitlement Scale is a seven-point likert scale used to measure participant's psychological entitlement. The scale ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree (Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, & Bushman, 2010). The nine questions assessed participant's perception of their entitlement.

We obtained participants demographic information using four questions that were developed by the researchers. The demographic questions assessed; (a) participant's age, (b) participants gender, (c) participants field of study, and (d) participants year of study.

Procedure

Participants were recruited through email, Facebook, and Twitter. A convenience sample was collected from 110 participants. Participants filled out the consent form before completing the online questionnaire through Lime Survey. Participation was voluntary and it was communicated that the information would be anonymous, confidential and participants could withdraw from the study at anytime. Upon completion of the survey, participants were debriefed on the study and given contact information for further questions and concerns.

Once the information was collected from the completed questionnaires the data was analyzed using a correlation analysis. Various aspects of the data were analyzed and compared to one another in order to make conclusions regarding those correlations. Correlations were made between each of the Big Five personality factors and gender, entitlement, and expectations, as well as a correlation between entitlement and the various measured expectations and gender.

Results

Big Five and Expectations

Table 1 presents the correlational findings of the study. it shows that we disproved hypotheses regarding the relationship between the Big five personality traits, and psychological sense of entitlement. In terms of the Big five personality traits, we noted a significant weak negative correlation between Neuroticism and time period until first promotion ($r=-0.204$, $p<0.05$).

Expectations and Entitlement

There was a significant weak positive correlation between entitlement and vacation time ($r= 0.209$, $p<0.05$). With regards towards the other factors and variables, there were no significant correlation between entitlement and the expectation measures.

TABLE 1.

		Correlations										
		Age	Gender	Year of Study	EM1	EM2	EM3	EM4	Entitlement	Extroversion	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness
Age	Pearson Correlation											
	Sig. (2-tailed)											
Gender	Pearson Correlation	-.286										
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.002										
Year of Study	Pearson Correlation	.586	-0.075									
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.465									
EM1	Pearson Correlation	.261	-.294	.253								
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.006	0.002	0.012								
EM2	Pearson Correlation	0.047	0.055	-0.069	-0.070							
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.634	0.572	0.506	0.479							
EM3	Pearson Correlation	-0.094	0.140	-0.102	0.023	-0.044						
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.350	0.164	0.336	0.818	0.662						
EM4	Pearson Correlation	0.195	-0.051	0.068	0.013	0.004	0.198					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.055	0.617	0.528	0.902	0.969	0.056					
Entitlement	Pearson Correlation	0.002	-0.142	0.051	-0.088	.209	0.075	-0.116				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.979	0.140	0.618	0.363	0.031	0.461	0.259				
Extroversion	Pearson Correlation	0.005	0.051	-0.034	-0.065	0.073	-0.133	0.086	0.031			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.959	0.594	0.740	0.504	0.456	0.188	0.404	0.746			
Agreeableness	Pearson Correlation	0.079	.274	0.113	-0.117	0.025	0.142	0.076	0.044	.256		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.411	0.004	0.268	0.226	0.799	0.159	0.459	0.646	0.007		
Conscientiousness	Pearson Correlation	-0.078	0.100	-0.031	0.180	-0.129	-0.016	-0.149	-0.072	0.040	0.115	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.415	0.300	0.764	0.062	0.187	0.872	0.145	0.453	0.680	0.231	
Neuroticism	Pearson Correlation	0.067	-0.091	.225	0.033	-0.100	-.204	-0.000	0.020	0.102	-0.022	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.486	0.343	0.026	0.732	0.307	0.042	0.998	0.835	0.291	0.820	
Openness	Pearson Correlation	.273	-.246	0.195	0.068	-0.096	-0.031	0.073	0.113	0.140	.210	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.004	0.010	0.055	0.481	0.326	0.761	0.476	0.240	0.145	0.027	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Unexpected Correlations

It is worth noting that seven unexpected correlations involving demographic factors involving age, gender, and year of study were found. First, there has been a significant weak positive correlation determined between age and expected salary ($r=0.261$, $p< 0.01$). Secondly, there is a significant weak positive correlation between age and openness trait ($r=0.273$, $p< 0.01$). Thirdly, there was a significant weak negative correlation between gender and expected salary ($r=-0.294$, $p< 0.01$). Fourthly, there was a significant weak positive correlation between gender and agreeableness ($r=0.274$, $p< 0.01$). Fifthly, there was a significant weak negative correlation between gender and openness ($r=-0.246$, $p<0.01$). Next, we have determined a significant weak positive correlation between year of study and expected salary ($r=0.253$, $p<0.05$). Lastly, a significant weak positive correlation between year of study and neuroticism ($r= 0.225$, $p< 0.05$) was determined. It should also be noted that males average expected pay was \$49,104, and females average expected pay was \$34,948.

Discussion

As Generation Y enters the workforce, employers are coping with the personality, expectations, and cultural differences that exist between Generation Yers and previous generations. Generation Yers expect to find their ideal job right away (Arnett, 2004). Management has had difficulty motivating Generation Y and keeping them committed to their organization (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). The general impression from an organizational standpoint would be that Generation Yers are disloyal, self important, and have high compensation expectations even though these allegations do not have substantial supporting evidence (Hill, 2008; Howe & Stauss, 2007; Jacobson, 2007).

There was a significant difference between males and females on two of the Big Five factor model traits and wage expectations. Firstly, women tended to be more agreeable than men, and men tended to be more open than women. Secondly, Stats Canada (2011) calculated that the average pay for a recent grad in Canada was \$35,000 and \$39,000 in Ontario. It was found that women had a more realistic expectation of pay \$34,948, compared to the national average. Males had an inflated expectation of pay at \$49,104, approximately \$10,000 dollars more than the provincial average.

The two variables that significantly correlated with Year of Study; Expectation of Salary and Neuroticism were unexpected but logical. As the Year of Study increased, it is reasonable to expect that neuroticism would increase as well. Interestingly, the further the participant proceeded in their education, the higher their salary expectation was. Meaning that, fourth year students presented higher stress levels, but also expected a higher pay when first entering the workforce.

Of the four future job expectation measures, only one correlated with psychological entitlement. It was found that Generation Yersø expectation of how much vacation time they should be provided within their first job correlated with their psychological entitlement. It was a weak significant correlation. It appears that Generation Yers do not let their sense of entitlement affect their expectations for their first career position.

Contribution to Research

This study has contributed to the debunking of the myth revolving around Generation Y being the "Entitled Generation". It was found that Generation Yers are fairly level headed, especially for women when it comes to their salary expectations. In this study, Generation Yers do not let their psychological sense of entitlement cloud their judgement on their future expectations within the workforce. Generation Yersø sense of entitlement is not at all affected by their personality traits. This study adds to the already large existing body of work regarding Generation Y in consideration to their expectations of their first career. This provides employers with some insight into the needs and wants of Generation Y, such as how much salary and vacation time they need to provide to their new Generation Y employees.

Limitations and future research

The present research has a few limitations. First, the survey did not explore differences in careers. It failed to include a question regarding what the respondent's future job will be. This affected the research as different jobs have various wages and starting salaries. It may appear that a participant is entitled by inputting a higher salary, when in actuality they have realistic job expectations based on their future career. Future research could develop a question to be included in the survey so respondent's expected salary could be adjusted with their expected career would be. This would allow greater depth of accuracy in regards to Generation Yersø entitlement on career expectations.

Similarly, the research questionnaire did not explore the option of whether participants are planning on furthering their education. In many cases a higher level of education results in a higher salary. For future research this issue could be addressed by asking participants whether they plan on furthering their education and to which level.

Secondly, the sample was not representative in terms of gender as we conducted a convenience sample. Participants were 71% female and only 29% male. Although there is a higher enrollment in postsecondary institutions for females, it is not consistent with this percentage. In 2007/2008 Statistics Canada reported an average of 42% postsecondary enrollment for males and 58% for females (Statistics Canada, 2012). This unbalance in responses in terms of gender could have skewed the results, as females were slightly less entitled than males. This under representation of males in the study could affect the results obtained from Generation Yers' sense of entitlement and career expectations. This was an issue with the research because females tend to fill out surveys more than males and the sample population had a higher ratio of females to males. Future research could use a different sampling method that will enable them to get a more balanced representation of both genders and find a predetermined ratio between males and females of the target population.

Thirdly, the respondents did not have an equal representative sample with regards to academic majors. There were no responses from math majors, 65.5% of respondents were science or business majors, 19.1% were art majors, and 3.65% were engineering majors. Future research can obtain more generalizable findings by conducting a cluster sample. This would allow each field of study to be more equally represented.

Lastly, we thought the P.E.S design functionality appealed to the older generations other than Generation Y because the design of the questions. An example being the question that stated: "If I were on the titanic, I would deserve to be on the first lifeboat." We feel that this question and the titanic is an issue that is better understood by older generations. Future research could attempt to use a measure that is more relevant to Generation Y in order to make stronger conclusions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, management should understand that Generation Y may be labelled the "Entitled Generation" but Generation Yers do not let their psychological entitlement interfere with their future career expectations. This study proved that Generation Yers are a level headed

generation that have fair and realistic expectations of the workplace. It is important for employers to note that women tend to be more agreeable, while males tend to be more open, and men tend to have a slightly higher expectation of pay than women. Managers should try and maintain a fair equitable pay structure, to help eliminate this expectation gap. Managers will be able to use Generation Yø three expectation measures of salary, vacation time, and company loyalty to help secure top talented recent graduates.

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Appendix A

Expectation Measures

1. For your first career position following graduation, what do you expect your salary to be?
 - a. _____
(This was an open-ended dollar value response capped at \$1,000,000.)
2. For your first career position, how much vacation time do you expect to be available to you in your first year of employment?
 - a. 0-1 week
 - b. 2-3 weeks
 - c. 4-5weeks
 - d. 6-7 weeks
 - e. 8+ weeks
3. For your first career position, how long do you expect to wait until you obtain your first promotion? A promotion being defined as either being given more responsibility or moved to a higher position that results in receiving more compensation.
 - a. I do not expect to receive a promotion Less than 1 year
 - b. 1-2 years
 - c. 3-4 years
 - d. 5 years or more
4. For your first career position, how long do you expect to stay with that employer?
 - a. Less than 1 year
 - b. 1-3 years
 - c. 4-6 years
 - d. 7-9 years
 - e. 10 years or more

20-Item Mini-IPIP Item Factor Text Original Item Number

Questions were answered with a five point scale: Very Inaccurate, Moderately Inaccurate, Neither Inaccurate or Accurate, Moderately Accurate, and Very Accurate

Am the life of the party. (+E)

- 1.Sympathize with others' feelings (+A)
- 2.Get chores done right away. (+C)
- 3.Have frequent mood swings. (-N)
- 4.Have a vivid imagination. (+I)
- 5.Don't talk a lot. (-E)
- 6.Am not interested in other people's problems. (-A)
- 7.Often forget to put things back in their proper place. (-C)
- 8.Am relaxed most of the time. (+N)
- 9.I Am not interested in abstract ideas. (-I)
- 10.Talk to a lot of different people at parties. (+E)
- 11.Feel others' emotions. (+A)
- 12.Like order. (+C)
- 13.Get upset easily. (-N)
- 14.I have difficulty understanding abstract ideas. (-I)
- 15.Keep in the background. (-E)
- 16.Am not really interested in others. (-A)
- 17.Make a mess of things. (-C)
- 18.Seldom feel blue. (+N)
- 19.Do not have a good imagination. (-I)

- Negative Items are reversed scored

Converting IPIP Item Responses to Scale Scores

This is how to score IPIP items:

For + keyed items, the response "Very Inaccurate" is assigned a value of 1, "Moderately Inaccurate" a value of 2, "Neither Inaccurate nor Accurate" a 3, "Moderately Accurate" a 4, and "Very Accurate" a value of 5.

For - keyed items, the response "Very Inaccurate" is assigned a value of 5, "Moderately Inaccurate" a value of 4, "Neither Inaccurate nor Accurate" a 3, "Moderately Accurate" a 2, and "Very Accurate" a value of 1.

C= Conscientiousness, A= Agreeableness, N= Neuroticism, O= Openness, E= Extroversion

Psychological Entitlement Scale

Please respond to the following items using the number that best reflects your own beliefs. Please use the following 7-point scale:

- 1 = strong disagreement.
- 2 = moderate disagreement.
- 3 = slight disagreement.
- 4 = neither agreement nor disagreement.
- 5 = slight agreement.
- 6 = moderate agreement.
- 7 = strong agreement.

Questions:

1. I honestly feel Iø'm just more deserving than others.
2. Great things should come to me.
3. If I were on the Titanic, I would deserve to be on the first lifeboat!
4. I demand the best because Iø'm worth it.
5. I do not necessarily deserve special treatment.
6. I deserve more things in my life.
7. People like me deserve an extra break now and then.
8. Things should go my way.
9. I feel entitled to more of everything.

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Received September 2, 2003
Revised January 27, 2004

Demographic Questions

How old are you?

- a) 18-20
- b) 21-23
- c) 24-26
- d) 27-29
- e) 30 or older

What is your gender?

- a) Female
- b) Male

What is your general field of study?

- a) Business
- b) Science

- c) Math
- d) Arts
- e) Engineering
- f) No post secondary attended
- g) Other_____

What is your year of study?

- a) 1st year
- b) 2nd year
- c) 3rd year
- d) 4th year
- e) Graduate studies
- f) No post secondary attended
- g) Other_____