

Change in Self-Reported Personality in Students of Acting

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Abstract : Recently, the field of personality change has received an increasing amount of attention. Previously under-researched variables, such as the intention to change or taking on new social roles (in a working environment, education, family, etc.), have been shown to be relevant for personality change. Following this line of research, our study aimed to determine whether the process of acting can bring about personality changes in students of acting and, if yes, in which way. We hypothesized that there will be a significant difference between self-reported personality traits of students acting at the beginning and the end of preparing for a role. Additionally, as potential moderator variables, we measured the reported personality traits of the roles the students were acting, as well as empathy, disintegration, and years of formal education. The sample (N = 47) was composed of students of acting from the Faculty of Dramatic Arts (first- to fourth-year) and the Faculty of Modern Arts (first-year students only). Participants' mean age was 20.2 (SD = 1.47), and there were 64% of females. The procedure included two waves of testing (T1 at the beginning and T2 at the end of the semester), and students' acting exercises and character immersion comprised the pseudo-experimental procedure. Students' personality traits (HEXACO-60, self-report version), empathy (Questionnaire of Cognitive and Affective Empathy, QCAE), and disintegration (DELTA9, 10-item version) were measured at both T1 and T2, while the personality of the role (HEXACO-60 observer version) was measured at T2. Responses to all instruments were given on a 5-point Likert scale. A series of repeated-measures T-tests showed significant differences in emotionality ($t(46) = 2.56, p = 0.014$) and conscientiousness ($t(46) = -2.39, p = 0.021$) between T1 and T2. Moreover, an index of absolute personality change was significantly different from 0 for all traits (range .53 to .34, $t(46) = 4.20, p < .001$ for the lowest index). The average test-retest correlation for HEXACO traits was 0.57, which is lower than proposed by other similar researches. As for moderator variables, neither the personality of the role nor empathy or disintegration explained the change in students' personality traits. The magnitude of personality change was the highest in fourth-year students, with no significant differences between the remaining three years of studying. Overall, our results seem to indicate some personality changes in students of acting. However, these changes cannot be unequivocally related to the process of preparing for a role. Further and methodologically stricter research is needed to unravel the role of acting in personality change.

Keywords : theater, personality change, acting, HEXACO

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