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Mystie Saturday

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Personality Traits and Narrative Identity:
How Experience and Behavior Shape Our Understanding of Ourselves

by

Mystie L. Saturday

Dr. Robyn Fivush
Adviser

Psychology

Dr. Robyn Fivush
Adviser

Dr. Patricia Bauer
Committee Member

Dr. Yun Kim
Committee Member

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Mystie L. Saturday

Dr. Robyn Fivush

Adviser

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Abstract

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Do dispositional personality traits influence the way one tells stories about their lives? Dan McAdams' defines dispositional personality traits (Layer 1), personal concerns and motivations (Layer 2), and narrative identity (Layer 3) as different domains of personality. Previous research has examined the relationships between Layers 1 and 2 and between Layers 2 and 3, but little work has examined the potential relationship between Layers 1 and 3. In the current study, I addressed this gap by creating a novel narrative coding scheme for trait Conscientiousness, then used this scheme to code for Conscientiousness in narratives of different event types from 97 participants. Multilevel linear models were used to assess the relationship between narrative Conscientiousness expression and dispositional Conscientiousness scores. Results indicated that Conscientiousness was expressed differently depending on narrative event type, but there was minimal evidence to suggest that dispositional Conscientiousness level determined how much Conscientiousness was expressed in narratives.

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Personality Traits and Narrative Identity:

How Experience and Behavior Shape Our Understanding of Ourselves

One conceptualizes their life through stories, and others learn about who one is through the stories that they tell. Such stories about the self, often referred to as *personal narratives*, are tools individuals use to create meaning from their life experiences and understand their place in the world. Because narratives shape how one understands their experiences, and these experiences also influence how one acts and expresses themselves in their daily life, a potential connection between the narratives one tells and their personality traits can be established.

McAdams (1995) presents a three-pronged model of personality, focusing on the domains of dispositional personality traits, personal concerns and motivations, and narrative identity. Several studies have addressed the relations between dispositional traits and personal concerns, as well as the interactions between personal concerns and narrative identity. Surprisingly, though, very little research has focused on the relations between dispositional traits and narrative identity, leaving a gap in the understanding of this model.

In this study, I examine the possible relationship between dispositional traits and narrative identity. Can an individual's score on a dispositional measure of personality be used to predict how they tell narratives? Can dispositional personality traits be reliably and accurately coded for in life narratives? If themes of dispositional traits are consistently expressed within narratives, then this expression implies that personality creates a lens through which one sees the world, affecting one's outlook on their life and the world around them. Additionally, this would suggest that individuals have a consistent narrative style influenced by their personality, a question long left unanswered in the narrative identity literature. To explore these questions, I created a novel narrative coding mechanism for dispositional personality traits, specifically

focusing on Conscientiousness as an initial test case. I employed this coding mechanism in the current project to assess whether the expression of personality traits in narratives lines up with personality as determined by a dispositional self-report measure. I expected to find that expressions of trait Conscientiousness would differ by narrative event type, with some types of narratives eliciting higher expressions of Conscientiousness than others, and that the degree of this Conscientiousness expression would differ by one's Conscientiousness score from a dispositional personality measure.

In this introduction, I begin with an overview of McAdams' three-pronged approach to personality before discussing each layer of the model in more detail. This framework provides a theoretical rationale for why we might expect relations between and among these three personality layers. I review research that shows previously established relationships between the layers of traits and personal concerns and the layers of personal concerns and narrative identity, as well as correlations between dispositional trait scores and narrative features. Then, I provide rationale for why I specifically chose to look at trait Conscientiousness in this study, such as the parallel correlations between both Conscientiousness and narrative identity with well-being. Finally, I conclude by giving a more detailed overview of the current study.

Dan McAdams' Three Layers of Personality

Dan McAdams (1995), one of the most prominent theorists in the subfields of personality and narrative psychology, presents a three-pronged approach to understanding personality. He originally referred to these different domains of personality as levels, but in recent literature has switched to the terminology of layers, since referring to them as levels implies that the model is hierarchical (McAdams & Manczak, 2015). As such, in this paper I have chosen to refer to the different personality domains in this model as layers. In order to delineate these three layers

before going into greater detail about each one, Layer 1 describes dispositional personality traits, that is, information that can be gained from self-report measures or upon first meeting someone. This is the most well-studied and defined of the three domains. Layer 2 accounts for personal concerns and motivations, or what a person wants and how they go about getting it. This domain gives an account of an individual in a more temporal context. Layer 3 is the domain of narratives, which are the stories that people tell about their lives and how they make sense of themselves within the world. Narratives provide a deeper look into an individual's actual identity, an understanding otherwise invisible to the outside world (McAdams, 1995). Though all of these layers address different aspects of personality, they are all attempting to describe the same person, and are therefore assumed to be somewhat related (for a visual representation, see Figure 1).

Layer 1: Dispositional Traits

Personality *traits* are stable and enduring characteristics that are defined by patterns of behaviors, attitudes, and feelings expressed by an individual. They are relatively consistent across time and contexts, though environmental factors sometimes influence their expression (Roberts & DelVecchio, 2000). When one describes their siblings to their college friends who have never met said siblings, one is most likely to describe them in terms of personality traits, such as being quiet and reserved. Trait descriptions are most useful when attempting to capture a static representation of an individual.

Layer 1 is typically measured through a person's scores on a dispositional self-report measure. A wide variety of personality trait theories exist in the personality psychology literature, but one of the most widely used models is the Big 5 model of personality, often referred to by the mnemonic OCEAN, which came into prominence in the 1980's after showing

reliability and validity in individuals across time, culture, and location (Costa & McCrae, 2006). This model presents the five core personality traits of Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. McCrae and Costa (2013) describe these five traits as follows. Openness to Experience is the most elusive of the traits, as it concerns facets such as curiosity, exploratory tendency, and creativity. Individuals who are high in Openness are adventurous and enjoy new experiences, while those who are low in Openness prefer tradition, consistency, and routine. Individuals who are high in Conscientiousness are hardworking, disciplined, and organized, while those at the opposing end of the spectrum are disorganized and have a greater propensity to procrastinate. Extraversion is perhaps the most well-known of the Big 5, reflecting an individual's need for stimulation and enjoyment of social interaction. Individuals who are highly agreeable are generous and warm, while those low in Agreeableness are more often described as cold and closed off. Finally, Neuroticism deals with emotional control and stability, with individuals who are highly neurotic often being consumed by their thoughts and emotions, and less neurotic individuals having more regulated emotional expression and responses (McCrae & Costa, 2013).

The Big 5 model of personality provides a well-defined and widely understood framework for trait psychology. This model has provided a robust structure that has allowed the layer of personality traits to be the best understood within McAdams' theory. Additionally, this model has shown extensive reliability and validity across time and different cultures, further adding to the definitiveness of this layer (Costa & McCrae, 2006). However, these trait descriptions do not offer much detail about how personality manifests within one's day to day life, thus leading trait descriptions alone to often be supplemented by descriptions from McAdams' other two layers of personality.

Layer 2: Personal Concerns and Motivations

Personal concerns are “contextualized facets of human individuality that speak to motivational, social-cognitive, and developmental concerns in personality” (McAdams et al., 2004, p. 762) and are usually conceptualized through the constructs of agency and communion, each of which are motivational narrative themes. Agency is the idea that one has the ability to exert control over their own life, often shown through motivation to pursue or achieve personal goals (Adler et al., 2016). Communion, on the other hand, is the idea that one expresses the desire to experience togetherness or harmony with their close others or in their environment (Adler et al., 2016). In essence, agency is a motivational focus on the self, while communion is a motivational focus on things outside of the self. This layer of McAdams’ model provides a more temporal component of personality, dealing with constructs situated in time, place, or one’s social role. Such concerns are often based on external stimuli, whereas traits are assumed to come from a consistent, internal standard. In fact, much previous work has shown a genetic basis for personality traits (Sanchez-Roige et al., 2018), whereas environmental factors and one’s pathway through life determine how these motivational concerns will change over time. For example, one’s goals and aspirations as a college student, as well as how one goes about pursuing those goals, are very different than the concerns and motivations of young parents raising newborn children. This study will not deal directly with this domain of McAdams’ theory of personality (for more information about the way this layer manifests and how it is typically measured in research, see McAdams 1995).

Layer 3: Narrative Identity

The third and final prong of McAdams’ model of personality encapsulates life narratives and narrative identity. The kinds of *narratives* we are concerned with here are those that deal

with identity – stories about important events in one’s life and how those events relate to who one is on a fundamental level. Thus, *narrative identity* is “a person’s internalized and evolving life story, integrating the reconstructed past and imagined future to provide life with some degree of unity and purpose” (McAdams & McLean, 2013, p. 233). Narratives are the stories that one tells about important life events, whereas narrative identity is the personalized identity conceptualized by weaving the stories of important life events together in a meaningful way. By connecting who one was in the past with who one is in the current moment and who one is striving to be in the future, as well as creating meaning from important life events and understanding how those events have shaped a person, narrative identity is formed.

The narratives one tells about important life events are obviously related to an individual’s autobiographical memory (Fivush, Booker, & Graci, 2017). The nature of memory is reconstructive – every time an event is recalled from the past and related to the current developmental self, one’s understanding of the event changes, and thus the memory of the event in one’s mind changes. This is the process of *narrative meaning-making* – making sense of experiences and events in a way that helps one understand themselves, the world around them, and their close others. This further reiterates the importance of narratives in one’s understanding of self, as personal narratives are the tool that one uses to make sense of their memories, and how those memories relate to their current identity.

Given the time and labor-intensive nature of narrative research, one might wonder why researchers opt to study narratives rather than other measures of personality, such as quantitative self-reports. What do narratives add our understanding that is not accounted for by dispositional trait measures? Firstly, a review conducted by Adler and colleagues (2016) suggests that narrative identity work adds incremental validity to the field of personality psychology because it

has been well correlated with individual well-being. That is to say, an individual's well-being has been shown to improve when they have a coherent understanding of their evolving life story, and how important events from their past have influenced the person that they are in the present. By having the self-awareness and ability to actively introspect about who one is and how they exist in the world at large, well-being is positively influenced. This relationship holds true even when controlling for Big 5 traits (Adler et al., 2016).

Secondly, narratives capture specific personal details that a simple dispositional assessment could not – they offer a greater understanding about how personality traits manifest in one's day to day life. Consider, for example, two individuals whose dispositional measures indicate that they are highly conscientious: Noah and Ruth. On a dispositional personality measure assessing Big 5 traits, Noah and Ruth both average a score of 4.5 on the dimension of Conscientiousness, meaning that they are both very organized, always meet deadlines, and always try to do their best work. On paper, based on these quantitative scores, Noah and Ruth appear to be exactly the same. Let's say that they both receive a promotion at work – we can predict that this will increase their overall level of well-being given that they are conscientious. However, in a narrative, Noah might say that he finds personal value in work success, so getting this promotion makes him feel good because it proves that all of his hard work has paid off. Ruth, however, indicates that this promotion is meaningful to her because now she is able to spend more time with her family. We get a deeper insight to how this Conscientiousness manifests in both individuals' lives, a level of detail that cannot be gathered from dispositional measures alone. Thus, although these two individuals look like they have the same personality expression based on quantitative data, from their qualitative responses to the narrative prompts it can be seen how a personality trait manifests differently from individual to individual.

Thirdly, narratives garner a different insight to an individual than self-report measures allow, similarly to how observer-report measures offer a different understanding of someone than self-report measures would. Previous research has shown that for measures assessing Big 5 traits, self-reports filled out by an individual correlate with observer-reports filled out by their friends or coworkers (Mount, Barrick, & Strauss, 1994). This exhibits the validity of these different measure types describing the same personality patterns in one individual while still assessing slightly different perspectives. Think about filling out an introductory questionnaire for a class, where the student is asked to list three words that could be used to describe themselves. Often times, the student might ask a friend what words to use in response to this question. In this case, the friend is able to provide an objective perspective on the student's true character, similar to what would be provided by an observer-report psychological measure. Conversely, dispositional measures used in most studies are self-report, that is, they only account for one's personality to the extent that it is understood by the individual. However, there are many mannerisms and behaviors that one engages in that are only noticeable from an external perspective. Narratives are produced by the individual, but are analyzed by an external source, and thus narratives offer a different understanding not otherwise accounted for by other measures of personality. They allow researchers to pick up on things of which the participants themselves may not be consciously aware.

Existing Relationships between Layers

Thus far, work concerning the relationships between these three layers has been done in a mostly hierarchical fashion. Connections have been drawn between dispositional traits and personal concerns, and further connections have been drawn between personal concerns and narrative identity. For example, Roberts and Robins (2000) conducted a study which connected

Big 5 traits and trait narcissism (Layer 1) to thematic clusters of major life goals (Layer 2) such that all five of the Big 5 traits were significant predictors of at least one of the life goal clusters as defined within the study. In a similar project, Roccas and colleagues (2002) analyzed connections between Big 5 traits (Layer 1) and personal values (Layer 2) and found that trait Conscientiousness correlated positively with achievement and conformity values, with parallel results being drawn between the remaining four traits and other value clusters. Similarly, a plethora of literature has established relations between personal motivations and goals (Layer 2) and life narrative themes (Layer 3), such as the correlation between motivations for intimacy and the narrative theme of communion (McAdams et al., 2004). However, very little work has attempted to connect dispositional traits (Layer 1) and narrative identity, aside from a few correlational studies between Big 5 traits and life narrative themes (McAdams et al., 2004). Dispositional personality traits have never been attempted to be measured directly from personal narratives in the way that personal values and motivations have been measured. This heavily misconstrues McAdams' model of personality by implying some sort of hierarchy in which Layer 1 can only be related to Layer 2 and Layer 2 can only be related to Layer 3, or in which Layer 3 is derived from Layer 2 which is in turn derived from Layer 1. However, it is more accurate to view these different constructs as components of the same core personality, overlapping and influencing one another in a multi-directional fashion. Each of these layers attempts to describe the same person in a slightly different manner or in different contexts, but ultimately all refer to the same thing: the personality of the individual in question. If this is indeed the case, then each of the layers should have some relationship to and correlation with one another. Thus the major objectives of this study are to explore if traits are reliably expressed in narratives in a way that can be captured by a narrative coding mechanism, if scores on

dispositional measures can be used to predict how one narrates their life, and what consistent trait expression in narratives would imply for the field of personality psychology overall.

Trait of Choice: Conscientiousness

Because this is the first study to examine direct expression of personality traits in narratives, I decided to focus on one specific personality trait that has been very well-defined in the personality literature as an illustrative example: Conscientiousness. As mentioned before, individuals who score highly on Conscientiousness measures are hardworking, disciplined, and organized. They typically always try to do their work to the best of their abilities, and get things done in a timely manner. High scores in trait Conscientiousness, like narrative identity, have been shown to be positively associated with both subjective and psychological well-being, as well as general life satisfaction (Boyce, Wood, & Brown, 2010; Grant, Langan-Fox, & Anglim, 2009). Given that both having a well-constructed narrative identity and scoring high in Conscientiousness are positively associated with an individual's overall well-being, we can expect that Conscientiousness should manifest in narratives in a way that can be empirically measured with a narrative coding scheme. Conscientiousness has also been described as one of the most concretely defined traits of the Big 5 model, whereas traits like Openness to Experience are more abstract, which made creating a narrative coding scheme for this trait more feasible (McCrae & Costa, 2013). Additionally, we know that personality traits are stable characteristics, and that many narrative features are stable across different narrative types and audiences. Thus, if personality traits are reliably expressed in narratives, then we can expect that this expression is also consistent across narrative types and audiences. On the other hand, we know that environmental factors sometimes play a role in one's personality expression. Thus, certain event types may pull for the expression of Conscientiousness in different ways.

The Current Study

The current study expands on McAdams' three-pronged model of personality by exploring connections between the layer of personality traits and the layer of narrative identity. Previous literature in this area has been lacking, as most research thus far has focused on the relationships between Layer 1 and Layer 2 and between Layer 2 and Layer 3. Based on parallel relationships between both narrative identity and trait Conscientiousness with general well-being, I opted to create a narrative coding scheme focused specifically on this trait and how it may possibly manifest within life story narratives.

Creating the Conscientiousness coding scheme was the crux of this project. Many reliable narrative coding schemes already exist, but no such schemes focus specifically on the expression of dispositional traits in narratives, though dispositional traits have often been shown to be correlated with narrative aspects. Given the exploratory nature of this project, I decided to focus on only one of the Big 5 traits: Conscientiousness. I then used the constructed coding scheme to code narratives from a previously collected dataset from a study conducted by Pasupathi and colleagues (2021) that included four narratives each from a sample of emerging adults: a low point narrative (a very negative emotional experience), a transgression narrative (a time where one violated their moral code), a turning point narrative (a time where one's understanding of themselves changed), and a high point narrative (a very positive experience). I examined the Conscientiousness scores coded from each of these narratives to Conscientiousness scores from the dispositional measure employed in the initial study to determine if personality traits are indeed revealed through personal narratives, if personality traits can be used to predict how one narrates their life, and if personality traits are consistently expressed in narratives regardless of the event type being narrated upon.

Although this study was exploratory in nature, I did expect to see relations such that individuals scoring high in dispositional trait Conscientiousness would express both more aspects of Conscientiousness and express Conscientiousness more frequently in their personal narratives than individuals scoring low in dispositional trait Conscientiousness. I also expected themes of Conscientiousness to be revealed differently depending on narrative event type, primarily that the Conscientiousness dimension of Responsibility & Dutifulness (defined in the coding scheme described in more detail in the pages that follow) would be expressed more often in transgression narratives (those that focus on times when the narrator violated their personal code of ethics) than in the other three event types elicited from participants in this study.

Methods

Participants

137 college students from a public university in the Pacific Northwest were recruited to participate in this study. 21 students from that sample began participation but did not complete the procedure, and thus were eliminated from the analyses of the original study, yielding a sample of 106 participants. The average age of participants in this sample was 20 ($SD = 3.2$). 66.0% ($n = 70$) self-identified as female and 34.0% ($n = 36$) self-identified as male. 78.3% ($n = 83$) self-identified as White, 16.0% ($n = 17$) self-identified as Asian, 8.5% ($n = 9$) self-identified as Mixed Race, 5.7% ($n = 6$) self-identified as Latin-x, and 3.8% ($n = 4$) self-identified as other races. 9 additional students were eliminated from this secondary study due to either not sufficiently answering the narrative prompts or failing to complete the dispositional personality measure in the initial project, yielding a total of 97 participants that were included in the analyses that follow. Participants provided 4 narratives each for a total of 388 observations. As this project is a secondary analysis of a previously approved study, with data collected more than two

years ago, additional approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was not required (Pasupathi et al., 2021).

Procedure

This study employed a completely within-subjects design. Participants completed an online Qualtrics survey after providing informed consent. Participants first completed a series of self-report measures, including a demographics questionnaire and the Revised NEO Personality Inventory. Narratives about four different event types (a low point, a transgression, a turning point, and a high point) were collected using the standardized life story prompts developed by McAdams and colleagues (McAdams, 1996). Low points are unpleasant and associated with negative emotions, such as despair and general sadness. Transgressions involve doing wrong or violating one's code of ethics to an extent that elicits a negative psychological reaction. Turning points indicate a substantial change in one's understanding of oneself. Finally, high points are associated with positive emotions such as joy and excitement, and are generally described as peak experiences in one's life. As an example, the high point narrative prompt given to the participants was as follows:

Many people report occasional "peak experiences." These are generally moments or episodes in a person's life in which he or she feels a sense of great uplifting, joy, excitement, contentment, or some other highly positive emotional experience. Indeed, these experiences vary widely. Some people report them to be associated with religious or mystical experience. Others find great joy or excitement in vigorous athletics, reading a good novel, artistic expression, or in love or friendship. A peak experience may be seen as a "high point" in your life story -- a particular experience that stands out in your memory as something that is extremely positive. Please describe below in some detail a

peak experience that you have experienced sometime in your life. Make sure that this is a particular and specific incident (e.g., happened at a particular time and in a particular place) rather than a general "time" or "period" in your life. Please write about exactly what happened, when it happened, who was involved, what you were thinking and feeling, why this event is significant, and what this event says about you and your personality. (Pasupathi et al., 2021)

Narratives were always written in the event order of low point, transgression, turning point, and high point in order to ensure that participants were ending the study on a positive note, as the low point and transgression narratives are often upsetting and difficult to discuss.

In the initial study, participants were then given their original narratives and asked to edit them once as if they were telling the story to their mother and once as if they were telling the story to a close friend, resulting in 12 narratives total for each participant. Pasupathi and colleagues (2021) were interested in examining how individuals narrate their life events differently depending on the audience they are addressing. However, for the purposes of this study, only the four initial narratives elicited by the prompts were analyzed. These narratives were coded for trait Conscientiousness based on the coding scheme developed for this study.

Materials and Measures

Demographics. Participants completed a demographics questionnaire which assessed characteristics such as age, gender identity, and ethnicity.

Personality. Personality traits were assessed by the Revised NEO Personality Inventory (Costa & McCrae, 2008). This is a 60 item dispositional measure used to assess the strength of five core personality traits as described by the Big Five model of personality; the traits are as follows: Neuroticism (N), Extraversion (E), Openness to Experience (O), Agreeableness (A), and

Conscientiousness (C). Participants were asked about the extent to which they agreed with statements about themselves, such as “I am someone who tends to be disorganized,” and “I am someone who has few artistic interests.” Participants rated how much they agreed or disagreed with each statement on a Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Select items were reverse-scored. Sums of all questions referring to a particular trait were calculated, with higher numbers corresponding to a stronger presence of that trait within the individual and lower numbers corresponding to a weaker presence of that trait. For example, an individual who exhibited a composite score of 55 across all Conscientiousness items included in the measure would be considered more conscientious than someone who exhibited a composite score of 25. This measure of trait Conscientiousness has shown high inter-item reliability ($\alpha = 0.89$ in sample A, $\alpha = 0.92$ in sample B; Mooi et al., 2011).

Coding Development. A novel narrative coding scheme was created as the crux of this project using a grounded theory approach (Adler et al., 2017). In order to capture the theoretical, top-down aspects of trait Conscientiousness in full, as well as ensure that our scheme assessed similar manifestations of the trait that are assessed by dispositional measures, we conducted a review of the Conscientiousness literature to see which dimensions of the trait are most commonly assessed in practice. In the NEO-PI, the personality inventory most often used to assess Big 5 traits, the six facets of Conscientiousness are listed as competence, order, dutifulness, achievement striving, self-discipline, and deliberation (Costa, McCrae, & Dye, 1991). MacCann, Duckworth, and Roberts (2009) define eight facets of Conscientiousness for high school students: industriousness, perfectionism, tidiness, procrastination refrainment, control, cautiousness, task planning, and perseverance. In a meta-analysis of several different measures of Conscientiousness conducted by Roberts and colleagues (2014), the most common

dimensions assessed across all measures were orderliness, industriousness, self-control, and responsibility. Close reading across these theoretical definitions yielded four core dimensions of the trait that were used to guide the theoretical development of the coding scheme:

Industriousness, Responsibility & Dutifulness, Orderliness, and Self-Control, which further incorporated multiple facets within each of these overarching dimensions.

Industriousness is defined as “the tendencies to work hard, aspire to excellence, and persist in the face of challenges” (Roberts et al., 2014, p. 1317). This dimension is primarily concerned with work ethic, achievement, and success, and is composed of the following five facets: hard-working/competence, aspire to excellence, persist challenges/perseverance, perfectionism, and refrain from procrastination. Responsibility is concerned with the following of social rules and upholding promises made to others, while Dutifulness “refers to strict adherence to standards of conduct” (Costa, McCrae, & Dye, 1991, p. 889; Roberts et al., 2014). This dimension is primarily concerned with responsibility to others, such as friends, family, and mentors, as well as responsibility to society as a whole. This dimension is composed of the following three facets: rule-following, moral oughts, and thinking about consequences to others.

Orderliness is the dimension of Conscientiousness concerned with being prepared and keeping one’s home and work environment tidy and organized (Roberts et al., 2014; Costa, McCrae, & Dye, 1991). Overall, this dimension is concerned with life organization, both physically in the home and mentally in terms of making careful decisions and planning out one’s life, and is composed of the following three facets: tidiness, planning, and routine. Finally, Self-Control is defined as the “propensity to control impulses or...the ability to inhibit a prepotent response” (Robert et al., 2014, p. 1317). This dimension is primarily concerned with self-discipline, holding oneself accountable, and having general control over one’s life. This

dimension is composed of the following three facets: control of life and circumstances, deliberation/cautiousness, and thinking about consequences to self.

Once the theoretical dimensions were conceptualized, a team of two coders read through multiple narrative transcripts both independently and together and compared how they would code each transcript based on the coding scheme in its current form. In order to increase clarity, several revisions were made to the coding mechanism including adding descriptions of specific instances that should not get coded as trait Conscientiousness (e.g. mentions of struggling with inner thoughts or emotions should not get counted as perseverance, a facet of Industriousness), adding key words under descriptions of facets, and making definitions of facets and dimensions more specific. The complete coding manual is available in Appendix A.

Each of the four narrative types (low point, transgression, turning point, high point) from each individual were given a score on a dimensional, 5 point scale (0-4) for each of the four described dimensions of Conscientiousness, yielding 4 scores per narrative for each of the 4 narratives, for a total of 16 scores per participant. These scores depended upon the number of facets mentioned within the narrative (e.g., mentioning both hard-working and aspiration to excellence for Industriousness), as well as how much each of the mentioned facets was elaborated upon by the individual. Elaborations were considered to be multiple mentions of the same facet (e.g., mentioning hard-working several times across the narrative) or an expansion on a single mention of a facet (e.g., providing a lot of detail about a specific instance of working hard to achieve something). Narratives that made no mention of any facets of the intended dimension received a 0. Narratives that mentioned one facet of the dimension with little or no elaboration received a 1. Narratives which featured mentions of at least two facets or many elaborations on a single facet received a 2, while narratives that featured at least two facets, one

of which was heavily elaborated upon received a 3. Narratives that featured elaboration on at least two facets or mentions of more than two facets total received a 4.

Once the two coders achieved consensus on coding together and the coding scheme was considered complete, reliability was assessed. The coders independently read through and coded the transcripts of 25 individuals (4 narratives each yielding 100 narratives total, 25.8% of the total number of narratives) in accordance with the completed coding scheme and compared results, yielding 86.2% agreement across all dimensions and facets of the coding scheme. Given the complexity of this particular coding scheme, it was determined that this was an acceptable level of coding agreement, and the master coder was allowed to move forward with coding the remaining narratives.

Analytic Plan

This study explores two primary questions: Can Conscientiousness scores derived from narrative coding accurately predict an individual's Conscientiousness score on a dispositional personality trait measure? How does trait Conscientiousness manifest differently (if at all) across narrative event types? To answer these questions, I ran four multilevel linear model analyses for each of the four core dimensions (Industriousness, Responsibility & Dutifulness, Orderliness, and Self-Control) of the Conscientiousness coding scheme using an incremental model-building approach. Multilevel linear modeling is a generalization of linear regression that allows for intercepts and slopes to vary by group, and thus is a great way to account for variables that are not completely independent of one another. This is a practical statistical approach for some studies, like this one, which see data nested within structures. Data can be nested in time points, geographical location, individuals, etc. Models were built out using narrative event type (low point, transgression, turning point, and high point) as a Level 1 predictor and baseline

Conscientiousness (score from the NEO Personality Inventory) as a Level 2 predictor. Statistical significance of model fit was assessed using chi-square analyses. I predicted that expression of Conscientiousness in narratives would vary as a function of baseline Conscientiousness such that participants with higher baseline Conscientiousness scores would express more Conscientiousness in their narratives than participants with lower baseline Conscientiousness scores. I further predicted that expression of Conscientiousness in narratives would vary by narrative event type, specifically such that transgression narratives would include more expressions of Responsibility & Dutifulness than narratives of other types.

Results

The hypotheses were evaluated using multilevel linear modeling (MLM). In this study, we see narrative responses ($n = 388$ narratives, 4 each from 97 participants), each of which has been coded on four different dimensions of Conscientiousness, yielding four level 1 (L1) narrative prompts nested within level 2 (L2) individuals ($n = 97$). Narrative prompt type (L1) had four categories of low point, transgression, turning point, and high point. Level 2 (L2) was individual baseline trait Conscientiousness as assessed by the NEO Personality Inventory. Trait Conscientiousness was grand-mean centered at L2. I sought to predict each of the four coded dimensions of Conscientiousness (Industriousness, Responsibility & Dutifulness, Orderliness, and Self-Control) using narrative prompt type and baseline trait Conscientiousness.

Descriptive and Preliminary Statistics

Table 1 gives an overview of the means and standard deviations of Conscientiousness scores given to all participants across the four dimensions of Conscientiousness by narrative event type. The vast majority of these scores are relatively low, as many of the narratives in this study expressed no indications of Conscientiousness as the trait was defined in the novel coding

scheme. It is worth noting, however, the high mean of Responsibility & Dutifulness shown in transgression narratives across participants.

Table 2 shows the intercept, variances, and deviance in the intercept-only model for Industriousness. Table 3 shows the intercept, variances, and deviance in the intercept-only model for Responsibility & Dutifulness. Table 4 shows the intercept, variances, and deviance in the intercept-only model for Orderliness. Table 5 shows the intercept, variances, and deviance in the intercept-only model for Self-Control. Acceptable intraclass correlations were found for Industriousness (ICC = .10), Responsibility & Dutifulness (ICC = .00), Orderliness (ICC = .03), and Self-Control (ICC = .06). This suggests that any given pair of scores of Industriousness, Responsibility & Dutifulness, Orderliness, or Self-Control drawn from a particular person would be expected to correlate at .10, .00, .03, and .06 respectively. That is to say, any given pair of scores from the different dimensions of Conscientiousness will exhibit little to no correlation and data will not be clustered together, satisfying the independence assumption needed to run an MLM analysis.

Hypothesis Testing

For all dimensions of coded Conscientiousness, multilevel models were assessed incrementally by starting with an intercept-only model, then adding varying intercepts of the L1 predictor and then the L2 predictor as appropriate, determined by a combination of evaluating statistical significance of the predictors, change in the amount of variance, change in deviance scores (checked using chi-square analyses), and confidence intervals. Tables 2-5 show the variance estimates, regression coefficients and standard error, and deviance for each progressive model of Industriousness, Responsibility & Dutifulness, Orderliness, and Self-Control.

The final model for Industriousness included varying intercepts of L1. This model included results for low point narratives ($b = 0.61, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.41, 0.80]$), transgression narratives ($b = 0.14, p = .15, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.05, 0.34]$), turning point narratives ($b = 0.67, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.47, 0.87]$), and high point narratives ($b = 0.72, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.53, 0.92]$). This final model suggests that predicted Industriousness would be higher for individuals when responding to high point, low point, and turning point prompts than when responding to transgression prompts.

The final model for Responsibility & Dutifulness included varying intercepts of L1. This model included results for low point narratives ($b = 0.78, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.60, 0.96]$), transgression narratives ($b = 2.09, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.91, 2.27]$), turning point narratives ($b = 0.43, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.25, 0.61]$), and high point narratives ($b = 0.25, p < .01, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.07, 0.33]$). This final model suggests that predicted Responsibility & Dutifulness would be higher for individuals when responding to transgression prompts than when responding to other prompt types.

The final model for Orderliness included varying intercepts of L1 and L2. This model included results for low point narratives ($b = 0.25, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.14, 0.35]$), transgression narratives ($b = 0.05, p = .33, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.05, 0.16]$), turning point narratives ($b = 0.43, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.33, 0.54]$), and high point narratives ($b = 0.23, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.12, 0.33]$), as well as results for individuals' baseline level of Conscientiousness ($b = 0.01, p = .10, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.00, 0.02]$). This final model suggests that predicted Orderliness would be higher for individuals when responding to high point, low point, and turning point prompts than when responding to transgression prompts. It is also important to note that although the model including L1 and L2 as predictors was determined to be better-fitting for the data collected in this study than the

model including just L1 based on AIC and BIC scores, this improvement in fit was determined to be not statistically significant based on chi-square analyses.

The final model for Self-Control included varying intercepts of L1. This model included results for low point narratives ($b = 0.68, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.53, 0.83]$), transgression narratives ($b = 0.47, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.33, 0.62]$), turning point narratives ($b = 0.71, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.57, 0.86]$), and high point narratives ($b = 0.13, p = .07, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.01, 0.28]$). This final model suggests that predicted Self-Control would be higher for individuals when responding to low point, transgression, and turning point prompts than when responding to high point prompts.

Discussion

The purpose of this project was to expand upon Dan McAdams' (1995) three-pronged model of personality by drawing a more defined connection between two layers of this model: dispositional personality traits (Layer 1) and narrative identity (Layer 3). To do this, I developed a novel narrative coding scheme for trait Conscientiousness that coded narrative expression of Conscientiousness along four dimensions based on the existing trait literature (Costa, McCrae, & Dye, 1991; MacCann, Duckworth, & Roberts, 2009; Roberts et al., 2014): Industriousness, Responsibility & Dutifulness, Orderliness, and Self-Control. I then employed this coding scheme in this study to explore two primary questions: Firstly, are traits revealed through narratives differently depending on one's baseline level (one's score on a traditional dispositional measure) of that trait? Secondly, are traits revealed through narrative differently depending on the event type being narrated? Overall, I found that baseline Conscientiousness was not a significant predictor for expression of any of the dimensions of Conscientiousness aside from Orderliness. Narrative type, however, was found to be a significant predictor of expression of all four dimensions of Conscientiousness, such that Industriousness and Orderliness were shown less in

transgression prompt responses than in responses to other prompt types, Self-Control was shown less in high point prompt responses than in responses to other prompt types, and Responsibility & Dutifulness was shown more in transgression prompt responses than in responses to other prompt types.

Effects of Baseline Conscientiousness

I have argued that since dispositional traits and narrative identity are both aspects of personality and attempt to describe the same person, then they should be somewhat correlated. Thus, participants' baseline Conscientiousness scores should predict their expression of Conscientiousness in narratives. However, I found minimal evidence to support this claim. For the dimensions of Industriousness, Responsibility & Dutifulness, and Self-Control, multilevel statistical models including baseline Conscientiousness as a predictor of narrative expressions of Conscientiousness scores did not increase model fit over models including narrative event type as the sole predictor. For the dimension of Orderliness, the model including baseline Conscientiousness as a predictor was found to be better-fitting than the model including narrative event type as the sole predictor, but was not found to be significantly better fitting than the event-type model when tested with chi-square analysis. This may be due to the sensitivity of chi-square analyses, but even so baseline Conscientiousness was not denoted as a significant predictor within the MLM analysis. In essence, trait Conscientiousness measured through a standardized, validated self-report questionnaire was not found to be a significant predictor of Conscientiousness expression in narrative, at least for narratives coded in accordance with the coding scheme developed for this study.

Why is it the case that trait Conscientiousness does not correlate with Conscientiousness expression in narratives? It is possible that the coding scheme itself measures Conscientiousness

differently than how it is measured in dispositional measures. Although based in theory, it is clear from the results that Conscientiousness as measured by the coding scheme does not correlate with Conscientiousness as measured by a validated dispositional measure. This is also the first study to develop a coding scheme that directly measures dispositional traits from narratives. An acceptable level of inter-rater reliability was achieved between coders during the coding process, but the scheme may not be valid, that is, it may not be measuring what it is intended to measure. Alternatively, perhaps dispositional traits and narrative identity are truly looking at different aspects of personality, and should be studied separately as they are in accordance with McAdams' model. As noted previously, little correlation has been found between traits and various dimensions of narrative meaning-makings up until this point (McAdams et al., 2004), which could be due to the fact that narratives are really accounting for a different aspect than is covered by dispositional traits. This could indicate that McAdams' initial idea of a hierarchical model of personality is more accurate than the idea of overlapping domains of personality, that is, perhaps the metaphor of personality "levels" is more accurate than the metaphor of personality "layers." Additionally, most participants in the study showed little to no Conscientiousness at all in their narratives, as noted by the low average scores seen in Table 1. Across all narrative event types, many participants received scores of zero for each of the Conscientiousness dimensions laid out in the coding scheme. This lack of narrative Conscientiousness expression led to a very small amount of variability in the data collected, limiting the statistical power of the analyses performed. The sample size was sufficiently large, but perhaps not enough Conscientiousness was captured within this study to produce significant results. This could be because trait Conscientiousness simply does not come across in the types of narratives elicited from the participants in this study; narratives focusing specifically on

successes in the workplace or at school may be more Conscientiousness-focused than more general narratives about important life events. Personality traits are also described as general patterns of behavior across time and contexts, but may not be explicitly expressed within recollections of specific events. In this way, self-report measures, which typically ask participants to answer in a way that reflects general behavior or what they would be most likely to do in a given situation, may be better equipped to capture behavioral trends than narrative expressions.

Effects of Narrative Event Type

However, for all four dimensions of Conscientiousness described in the coding scheme, narrative event type was found to be a significant predictor of how much Conscientiousness was expressed in narrative responses. The dimensions of Industriousness and Orderliness were expressed more in responses to low point, turning point, and high point prompts than in responses to transgression prompts, while the dimension of Responsibility & Dutifulness was expressed more in responses to transgression prompts than in responses to the other three prompt types. Given that transgression events are often focused on times when an individual violated their personal code of ethics or moral code (Pasupathi et al., 2021), and the dimension of Responsibility & Dutifulness is composed of the facets of rule-following, moral oughts, and thinking about how one's actions affect the people around them, this pattern follows. This is a pattern that became evident during narrative coding, as almost every participant, regardless of baseline Conscientiousness, discussed morals and ethics in their transgression responses.

Interestingly, however, it was also found that the dimension of Self-Control was expressed more in responses to low point, transgression, and turning point prompts than in responses to high point prompts, which was not as evident of a pattern during narrative coding.

High point narratives focus on happy, positive times in one's life, but the facets of Self-Control focus more on controlling one's life trajectory, being cautious, and thinking about consequences to actions. High points do not challenge the self; they focus on the feeling of being happy rather than how or why happiness is being felt (Pasupathi et al., 2020). The other prompt types, however, focus on sad or challenging times, and are thus evocative of questioning how or why one is feeling negatively (Pasupathi et al., 2020). For example, a common theme among participants was feeling distressed about being out of control of situations, such as medical problems or family members or other close others passing away. Being in a highly positive emotional state as one is in high point narratives, however, does not bring about the same feelings of needing to gain control, and therefore Self-Control would be expressed less in narratives of this type. Overall, it is safe to say that individuals narrate differently depending on the type of experience that is being discussed.

Limitations

The results of this study should be taken in light of several limitations. In addition to the lack of diversity in age, race, and educational status of the participants, several aspects of the study limit my conclusions. Firstly, it is possible that the coding scheme developed for this project may not capture Conscientiousness in the same way that dispositional measures capture it. Although based in theory after reviewing much of the literature covering the trait of Conscientiousness, the lack of correlation between Conscientiousness scores from the coding scheme and Conscientiousness scores from a dispositional measure implies that there may be a lack of consistency in the way the trait is being assessed. A different research team reviewing the same literature might have come up with a different way of conceptualizing the trait in a coding mechanism that may have showed higher correlation with dispositional measures. It is also

possible that not enough Conscientiousness was expressed within the narratives written by these participants to produce meaningful results. As noted before, the means of the scores across all trait dimensions and event types, aside from Responsibility & Dutifulness in transgression narratives, were relatively low, and therefore the amount of narrative data with sufficient Conscientiousness expression was actually lacking. Finally, this study only accounts for the relationship between traits and narratives by looking at the expression of one of the Big Five personality traits. It is certainly possible that there is a relationship between one's dispositional personality traits and the way that they narrate, even if this relationship does not hold for trait Conscientiousness. Perhaps Conscientiousness is simply a more implicit personality trait, governing how one goes about doing their work and keeping order in their lives, but does not really influence the way that one talks about their life or their experiences. Traits like Openness to Experience or Agreeableness, however, which govern how one interacts their world and the people around them more outright, may be more explicitly expressed in the stories one tells and thus in their personal narratives.

Future Directions

This study is the first in the field to quantify dispositional personality expression through direct coding of narratives, and adds to the literature by creating the first narrative coding scheme to measure dispositional personality traits through narrative coding. However, due to the necessarily limited scope of this project, I was only able to explore the effects of one personality trait. Future studies should continue to question the relationship between these two layers of personality by looking at and coding for the other dispositional traits in the Big Five model. Further, given findings in the field suggesting that people adapt their narratives to their audience, it would be interesting to see if the expression of dispositional personality traits in narratives

differs depending on the audience an individual is addressing (McLean & Jennings, 2012; Pasupathi et al., 2020; 2021) . Finally, although dispositional traits have been shown to be fairly consistent over time, it is not uncommon to see small shifts throughout the lifetime (Roberts & DelVecchio, 2000), so coding for personality traits in narratives told at different points in the lifespan would also be an important addition to this literature. The ideas and arguments presented here are just the beginning of a great number of questions to be explored by personality psychologists in coming studies.

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Table 1*Means and standard deviations of coded conscientiousness scores by dimension and event type.*

	Industriousness	Responsibility & Dutifulness	Orderliness	Self-Control
Low Point	0.61 (1.02)	0.78 (0.98)	0.25 (0.56)	0.68 (0.81)
Transgression	0.14 (0.52)	2.09 (1.12)	0.05 (0.22)	0.47 (0.81)
Turning Point	0.67 (1.08)	0.43 (0.78)	0.43 (0.66)	0.71 (0.84)
High Point	0.72 (1.19)	0.25 (0.68)	0.23 (0.55)	0.13 (0.37)

Table 2

Model Summaries: Parameter Estimates from Two-Level Multilevel Regression Models Predicting Industriousness as a Function of Narrative Type and Baseline Conscientiousness

	Model 1: Varying Intercept-only	Model 2: Varying Intercept with Narrative Type	Model 3: Varying Intercepts with Narrative Type + Baseline Conscientiousness
<i>Regression coefficients (fixed effects)</i>	<i>b (SE)</i>	<i>b (SE)</i>	<i>b (SE)</i>
Intercept	0.54 (0.06)***	0.54 (0.06)***	0.54 (0.06)***
L1: Low point	--	0.61 (0.10)***	0.61 (0.10)***
L1: Transgression	--	0.14 (0.10)	0.14 (0.10)
L1: Turning Point	--	0.67 (0.10)***	0.67 (0.10)***
L1: High Point	--	0.72 (0.10)***	0.72 (0.10)***
Baseline Conscientiousness	--	--	-0.00 (0.01)
<i>Variances (random effects)</i>			
τ_{00} (variance between individuals)	0.10	0.12	0.12
σ^2_{γ} (within individual residual)	0.91	0.84	0.84
<i>Model summary</i>			
Deviance	1100.2	1076.8***	1076.7
AIC	1106.2	1088.8	1090.7
BIC	1118.1	1112.5	1118.5

Note. Standard errors are listed in parentheses. Changes in deviance scores were evaluated with a chi-square test of the difference between each model and the preceding model. Statistically significant chi-square tests of deviance are noted.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 3

Model Summaries: Parameter Estimates from Two-Level Multilevel Regression Models Predicting Responsibility & Dutifulness as a Function of Narrative Type and Baseline Conscientiousness

	Model 1: Varying Intercept-only	Model 2: Varying Intercept with Narrative Type	Model 3: Varying Intercepts with Narrative Type + Baseline Conscientiousness
<i>Regression coefficients (fixed effects)</i>	<i>b (SE)</i>	<i>b (SE)</i>	<i>b (SE)</i>
Intercept	0.89 (0.06)***	0.89 (0.06)***	0.89 (0.06)***
L1: Low point	--	0.78 (0.09)***	0.78 (0.09) ***
L1: Transgression	--	2.09 (0.09)***	2.09 (0.09)***
L1: Turning Point	--	0.43 (0.09)***	0.43 (0.09)***
L1: High Point	--	0.25 (0.09)**	0.25 (0.09)**
Baseline Conscientiousness	--	--	-0.00 (0.01)
<i>Variances (random effects)</i>			
τ_{00} (variance between individuals)	0.00	0.03	0.03
σ^2_Y (within individual residual)	1.33	0.78	0.78
<i>Model summary</i>			
Deviance	1211.9	1019.0***	1018.7
AIC	1217.9	1031.0	1032.7
BIC	1229.8	1054.7	1060.4

Note. Standard errors are listed in parentheses. Changes in deviance scores were evaluated with a chi-square test of the difference between each model and the preceding model. Statistically significant chi-square tests of deviance are noted.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 4

Model Summaries: Parameter Estimates from Two-Level Multilevel Regression Models Predicting Orderliness as a Function of Narrative Type and Baseline Conscientiousness

	Model 1: Varying Intercept-only	Model 2: Varying Intercept with Narrative Type	Model 3: Varying Intercepts with Narrative Type + Baseline Conscientiousness
<i>Regression coefficients (fixed effects)</i>	<i>b (SE)</i>	<i>b (SE)</i>	<i>b (SE)</i>
Intercept	0.24 (0.03)***	0.24 (0.03)***	0.24 (0.03)***
L1: Low point	--	0.25 (0.05)***	0.25 (0.05)***
L1: Transgression	--	0.05 (0.05)	0.05 (0.05)
L1: Turning Point	--	0.43 (0.05)***	0.43 (0.05)***
L1: High Point	--	0.23 (0.05)***	0.23 (0.05)***
Baseline Conscientiousness	--	--	0.01 (0.01)
<i>Variances (random effects)</i>			
τ_{00} (variance between individuals)	0.01	0.01	0.01
σ^2_{γ} (within individual residual)	0.28	0.26	0.26
<i>Model summary</i>			
Deviance	621.0	594.8***	592.2
AIC	627.0	606.8	606.2
BIC	638.9	630.6	633.9

Note. Standard errors are listed in parentheses. Changes in deviance scores were evaluated with a chi-square test of the difference between each model and the preceding model. Statistically significant chi-square tests of deviance are noted.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 5

Model Summaries: Parameter Estimates from Two-Level Multilevel Regression Models Predicting Self-Control as a Function of Narrative Type and Baseline Conscientiousness

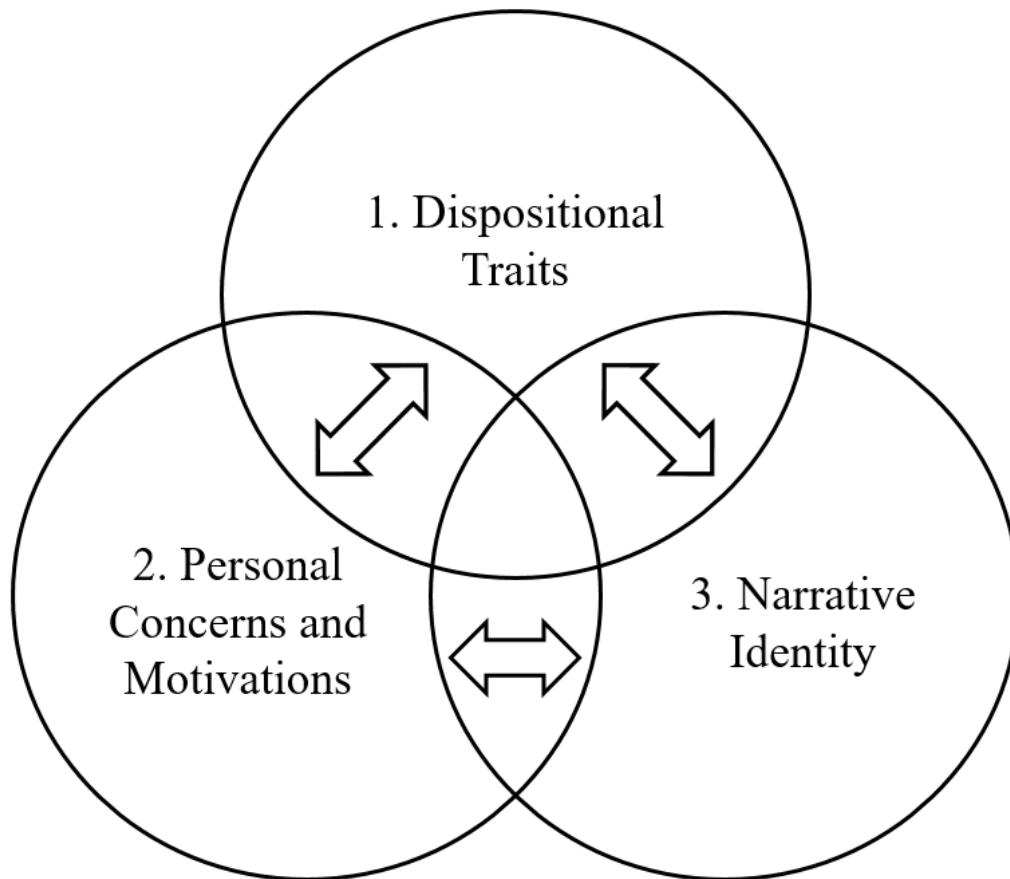
	Model 1: Varying Intercept-only	Model 2: Varying Intercept with Narrative Type	Model 3: Varying Intercepts with Narrative Type + Baseline Conscientiousness
<i>Regression coefficients (fixed effects)</i>	<i>b (SE)</i>	<i>b (SE)</i>	<i>b (SE)</i>
Intercept	0.50 (0.04)***	0.50 (0.04)***	0.50 (0.04)***
L1: Low point	--	0.68 (0.07)***	0.68 (0.07)***
L1: Transgression	--	0.47 (0.07)***	0.47 (0.07)***
L1: Turning Point	--	0.71 (0.07)***	0.71 (0.07)***
L1: High Point	--	0.13 (0.07)	0.13 (0.07)
Baseline Conscientiousness	--	--	0.01 (0.01)
<i>Variances (random effects)</i>			
τ_{00} (variance between individuals)	0.04	0.05	0.05
σ^2_{γ} (within individual residual)	0.55	0.48	0.48
<i>Model summary</i>			
Deviance	891.0	850.8***	849.6
AIC	897.0	862.8	863.6
BIC	908.8	886.6	891.3

Note. Standard errors are listed in parentheses. Changes in deviance scores were evaluated with a chi-square test of the difference between each model and the preceding model. Statistically significant chi-square tests of deviance are noted.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Figure 1

Dan McAdams' Three-Pronged Approach to Personality



Appendix A

Conscientiousness Coding Scheme

Dr. Robyn Fivush & Mystie Saturday, 2021

Narratives are coded on a 0-4 scale for each of the following dimensions of Conscientiousness. Scores are based on how many facets of each dimension are mentioned within the narrative, as well as how elaborated those mentions are. Elaborations can either be multiple mentions of the same facet or an expansion on a single mention of a facet.

- 0 – no mention
 - 1 – one facet mentioned, minimal or no elaboration
 - 2 – at least two facets mentioned **OR** one facet heavily elaborated
 - 3 – at least two facets mentioned **AND** one facet heavily elaborated
 - 4 – at least two facets mentioned, both of which are at least minimally elaborated **OR** more than two facets mentioned
-
- LP = Low Point
 - TP = Turning Point
 - TG = Transgression
 - HP = High Point

“Negative” expression of themes does not necessarily imply low conscientiousness. People who tell stories relating to these themes still see their lives through the lens of conscientiousness. For example, telling stories about breaking rules implies some sort of care about rules that are in place – people scoring low in the domain of conscientiousness would feel no need to actually talk about their rule-breaking, they would simply do it. This is a clear expression of how themes are revealed differently through narrative than they are through dispositional measures.

Industriousness: “...captures the tendencies to work hard, aspire to excellence, and persist in the face of challenges.” (Roberts et al., 2014)

- Hard-working/competence: – The narrator makes mention of working hard to achieve a specific goal or hone a certain skill.; “Competence [is] the sense that one is capable, sensible, and accomplished.” (Costa & McCrae, 1991)
 - Key words: accomplished, hard-working
 - *16-LP*: “Someone that I might be is a person who is willing to work hard to get the job done and over time, I have accepted that challenge and practiced to get everything I have ever done right.”
 - *107-TP*: “...it made me realize that if I work hard I can do well at whatever it is I’m doing.”
- Aspire to excellence: The narrator mentions wanting to be the best at their craft or some other personal skill. They want to excel or be successful in life.
 - Key words: success

- *129-LP*: “I used this upsetting event to motivate me to set a very specific goal: to become the undisputed best trumpet player of my class by my senior year. And it was the best goal I’ve ever set for myself. In fact, by my senior year, I was indeed the best trumpet player by a very large margin.”
- *17-TP*: “...it was a turning point in my academics and my desire to be successful in the future.”
- **Persist challenges/perseverance**: The narrator expresses struggling with something but persisting and overcoming this struggle regardless. The narrator is motivated. Struggling with inner thoughts and emotions does not get counted.
 - Key words: motivated/motivation, struggle
 - *16-HP*: “A peak experience in my life would have to be the time I found out I passed my AP calculus class my senior year of high school. This made me feel so relieved and happy because throughout my senior year, I was really struggling in calculus and I tried so hard to get a good grade.”
- **Perfectionism**: The narrator mentions wanting to be perfect at something or reacts very negatively to making small mistakes. They take a lot of time to do their work and pay attention to the smallest details.
 - *76-TP*: “I also know that life is not perfect, and that it is OK to stop trying to be.”
 - *115-TP*: “...to try and make myself the epitome of perfection.”
- **Refrain from procrastination**: The narrator shows a tendency to get work done far before deadlines and avoid procrastination.
 - Key words: procrastination
 - *63-TP*: “I also know what I am doing wrong and how much I could be accomplishing when I am procrastinating.”

Responsibility & Dutifulness: “Responsibility reflects the tendency to follow through with promises to others and follow rules that make social groups work more smoothly” (Roberts et al., 2014) “Dutifulness refers to strict adherence to standards of conduct.” (Costa & McCrae, 1991)

- **Rule-following**: – Narrator pays attention to rules that govern social situations.
 - *117-TG*: “We started breaking into houses and taking alcohol, drugs, money, guns...We knew it was wrong but we also knew that we couldn’t get caught, and we were ruthless kids who didn’t care about much at all.” (negative expression)
 - *32-TG*: “The fact that I had technically stolen something ate away at my insides.”
- **Moral oughts**: – The narrator makes mention of doing things that they believe are right or standing up for what they believe in or standing up for oneself. They do not necessarily have to say “morals” specifically, but making mention of morals is a good indicator of this aspect. They are upset when others do not adhere to their moral obligations.
 - Key words: guilt, right, wrong, morals, regret, abandonment

- “Dutifulness...does not concern the origin or sophistication of moral principles, only the extent to which principles or standards are observed.” (Costa & McCrae, 1991)
- *32-TG*: “If I do something I see as wrong, it eats me up and will make me physically uneasy.”
- *The prompt which elicited the transgression narratives includes phrases such as “a time when you violated your personal code of ethics,” so if such phrases are included in the introductory section of this narrative type they do not get counted
- Thinking about consequences (others): – The narrator mentions not wanting to disappoint or let down others. They are concerned with how their actions are perceived by others, and whether that perception is in a positive or negative light. They are concerned with how others will react to their personal choices. Commitments are important to them. Concern with other’s emotions.
 - Key words: disappointment, commitment
 - *21-TG*: “When making sometimes stupid or dangerous choices I always think about what my mom would feel or say about this.”
 - *32-TG*: “My first grade psyche would not have handled the disappointment of my teacher well at all. I aim to please always and am terrified of disappointment.”
 - *118-TG*: “...I was just so passionate about Drama Club, and that he’d provoked me by talking about how glad he was he quit to play soccer...I’d told this kid how he’d let all these people down by flaking out on a commitment he made!”

*Rule-following vs Moral oughts – Rule-following is adherence to an external standard, whereas moral oughts are internal standards. Rule-following does not explicitly mention whether an action is right or wrong or imply that the narrator has violated a personal code of ethics.

*If it is unclear whether a mention is moral oughts or one of the other two facets of this dimension, that is, if the classification could go either way, moral oughts should trump the other facet.

Orderliness: “tendency to keep one’s environment tidy and well organized” (Costa & McCrae, 1991); “encompasses the overarching tendency to be prepared” (Roberts et al., 2014)

- Tidiness: – The narrator expresses that cleanliness or tidiness in their home or work environment is important to them.
 - *53-TP*: “I can keep the place clean and to my liking all the time.”
 - *55-TP*: “I feel it is really important to be clean and tidy for the sake of my own things and others because no one should have to live in someone else’s mess.”
- Planning: – The narrator carefully plans not only day-to-day activities and routines, but also makes long-term plans, such as setting goals for the future and plans for how to achieve them. This facet is specifically concerned with decisions about concrete actions in the world, such as pursuing a college education or majoring in a specific subject. Making short-term decisions in specific situations does not get counted.

- Key words: decisions
- *17-TP*: "...my thoughts of going to college began in high school."
- *94-TP*: "I had originally planned on going to a school that wasn't WWU, and I found myself regretting my decision to go here."
- **Routine**: – The narrator expresses that having a routine is important to them and makes them feel more in control. They do not enjoy interruptions to routine and view change and disorder as difficult obstacles.
 - Key words: certainty, familiarity, stability
 - *47-LP*: "Prior to any of this I had never experienced moving so having so many familiar and stable places be taken away all in a short amount of time was unsettling to me. I was unable to get excited for the future because my mind just circulated around maladaptive thoughts of how I would never be able to gain certainty again and that I would continue to lose familiar things in my life."

Self-Control: "propensity to control impulses or...the ability to inhibit a prepotent response" (Roberts et al., 2014)

- **Control of life and circumstances**: – The narrator does not jump into things without thinking them through first. They are not reckless and do not express sensation-seeking behavior. They express a desire to control self or their pathway through life adequately. The narrator takes responsibility for their own actions and behaviors. They make notes about being the personal cause of something. Decisions about abstract things, like personal lifestyle, are included in this facet. Controlling emotions is not included.
 - Key words: taking control, empowerment
 - *17-TG*: "I might be a person who can get angry and sad when decisions don't go the way I expect them to go."
 - *22-TG*: "It showed me that I do not do well with temptation, but I can do well with a foreign babe." (negative expression)
- **Deliberation/Cautiousness**: – "Deliberation refers to caution, planning, and thoughtfulness" (Costa & McCrae, 1991); The narrator expresses careful decision making and does not jump into things quickly. This facet is specifically concerned with the decision-making process and weighing options carefully.
 - *17-TG*: "Today I think things through and that event will remind me of the consequences of not listing the pros and cons for making a decision. This event has taught me that don't make a mistake that I know I will regret. The event comes up in my head every time I make a decision."
 - *46-TP*: "I became wary of yet another decision I had made... Was it right to change schools? If I went to Central, I was going to major in Social Services. If I stayed at Western, I was going to study Human Services or Psychology."
- **Thinking about consequences (self)**: – The narrator makes mention of consequences not necessarily related to others' perceptions. They are focused on the consequences that they

would face for their actions, such as getting hurt or being punished, but not necessarily disappointing others.

- *2I-TG*: “This event has made me question my actions more and think about consequences, because everything you do has a consequence.”

*Procrastination (or lack thereof) also seems to be an aspect of self-control...”Individuals low in Self-discipline are prone to procrastination, and they quickly give up when faced with frustration.” (Costa & McCrae, 1991)

*Deliberation vs Planning – Deliberation is about the decision-making process, while planning is more matter of fact “this is what I want to do and how I will go about achieving it.”