An Investigation of the Relationship between Big Five and Narrow Personality Traits and Life Satisfaction in College Student and Adult Samples

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Christine A. Acevedo entitled "An Investigation of the Relationship between Big Five and Narrow Personality Traits and Life Satisfaction in College Student and Adult Samples." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Psychology.

John Lounsbury, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Jacob Levy, Richard Saudargas, Tricia McClam

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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NARROW PERSONALITY TRAITS AND LIFE SATISFACTION IN COLLEGE

STUDENT AND ADULT SAMPLES

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for the

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between broad and narrow personality traits and life satisfaction for college-aged and adult populations. Hypotheses were several-fold: first, that personality measures would be predictive of life satisfaction; second, that there would be differences in the correlations of Big Five personality traits and life satisfaction for both age groups; and third, that there would be differences between both age groups in the amount of variance in life satisfaction accounted for by three narrow personality traits, i.e., Optimism, Tough-Mindedness, and Work Drive. Archival data were used to compare an undergraduate sample at a Southeastern U.S. university (n=4844), and an adult sample from a database representing working adults (n=7633). Correlation and multiple regression analyses were used for each age group in examining the validity of Big Five and narrow traits and life satisfaction. A Fischer's *z* score was used to determine significant differences in the correlations by age. The Big Five and narrow traits were found to be predictive of life satisfaction for both groups, with Emotional Stability and Optimism showing the highest correlation for both age groups. There were significant differences in correlations between the age groups on measures of Extraversion ($z=4.64$, $p<.001$), Agreeableness ($z=1.92$, $p=.05$), Conscientiousness ($z=8.18$, $p<.001$), Openness ($z=2.44$, $p=.01$), Work Drive ($z=12.82$, $p<.001$), and Tough-Mindedness ($z=-2.87$, $p<.005$). Results were discussed in terms of comparing the predictive validity of personality traits and life satisfaction between the two age groups. Study limitations and directions for future research were noted.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In recent years, the field of psychology has seen the emergence and subsequent growth of theories within the area of positive psychology, which has resulted in an increased research focus on topics related to personal happiness and well-being. Specifically, extensive study has sought to identify and understand factors predictive of the subjective well-being of individuals. Variables such as socio-economic status, demographic variables, social and political climate, and even governmental policy have all been examined with regard to their influence on a person's sense of well-being. Variables related to vocational choice may also affect the quality and quantity of happiness a person experiences. In addition, as vocational decisions may play a central role in the lives of individuals, much of the research in this area has been gathered from occupational and/or vocational settings.

The study of personality has also been receiving increased attention within the field of psychology. Of particular interest has been the question of how many dimensions of personality are useful in describing individual differences. Initial work in trait theory has hypothesized the number of key traits important for personality, range from as few as three (Eysenck, 1947) to sixteen global personality factors (Cattell, 1946). As growth in this area of study has progressed, the number of critical factors, and how these factors have been defined, has varied. One model that has gained increasing consensus amongst professionals has been the Big Five model of personality. The Big Five model holds that personality may be optimally interpreted in terms of five primary dimensions and that these five dimensions underlie the larger number of personality variables (Goldberg, 1981; McCrae & Costa, 1985; Norman, 1963; Tupes & Christal, 1961).

The Big Five personality factors are Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism, which is often depicted in terms of its inverse--Emotional Stability.

One criticism of the Big Five personality factors is that the five dimensions alone are too broad to encompass the vast array of personality traits. To this end, an examination of narrow personality traits may provide further insight into individual personality. Comparative analyses between broad and narrow personality traits can show the relationships found between these personality factors and variables such as life satisfaction. Through research such as this, researchers may gain insight as to which personality traits are most predictive of an individual's subjective life experiences; specifically, research has examined narrow traits and has found that narrow traits are useful in predicting life satisfaction.

As the bulk of the research on both personality and on life satisfaction has been conducted with adults, there is a need within the field to examine these constructs in younger populations. From a developmental standpoint, particularly with regard to occupation, college years may be a formative period of identity development. It may also be a period of time in which both nascent and more fully developed vocational choices are made. Invariably, this may result in a period of trial-and-error regarding person-environment fit and suitable job placement. Within a vocational developmental framework, it may be of particular relevance to examine personality factors as they relate to life satisfaction for a younger demographic group. College is also a period of time in which individuals are making salient academic decisions, further defining the roles in their lives, and are experiencing increased independence and autonomy. Identifying and examining variables predictive of life satisfaction may necessarily contribute to our knowledge of this age group while adding relevant and much needed data to the current

literature. In addition, data gathered from college-aged individuals may provide a comparison with their adult counterparts. Data may yield information concerning possible differences found between the two groups, with regard to both broad and narrow personality traits and life satisfaction.

In addressing a lack of research within the current literature, the present study examined broad and narrow personality traits as correlates of life satisfaction in both adult and college-aged samples. More specifically, the present study examined relationships between personality variables and life satisfaction, how these relationships vary in strength, which variables are the most predictive of life satisfaction, and differences between the two age groups in correlations.

In the first chapter, conceptual issues regarding personality factors and life satisfaction, as found in the current literature, are discussed. Next, relationships between constructs are explored, with an accompanying review of the relevant literature for both groups. Research questions are introduced and hypotheses are provided.

The Big Five Personality Factors

Since discussion of the Big Five personality factors was first introduced at the American Psychological Association (APA) presidential address of L. L. Thurston (1934), the model has gained widespread acceptance amongst researchers in the field. Despite such early mention, however, it was not until the 1960's that the Big Five model was formally established. With a boom in psychometric evaluation between the 1930's and the 1960's, the search for stable personality factors took a prominent front seat in the field of psychology. As research in personality assessment gained interest, pioneers within the field began to outline personality dimensions found to be stable across time.

Cattell (1943) was the first to outline 16 primary and 8 sub-factors of personality, followed by Eysenck (1947), who identified a two and then a three-factor model of personality (Eysenck, 1970). This set the stage for the Big Five model of personality factors. In 1961, Tupes and Christal identified five recurring personality factors, based on Cattell's (1946) measures. In a replication of Tupes and Christal's (1961) study, Norman (1963) found reliable data to suggest five broad factors underlying a vast range of personality variables. Further study, through factor analysis, has found a convergence of variables into five unified personality factors (e.g., Digman & Takemoto-Chock, 1981; Goldberg, 1992; McCrae & Costa, 1985; Norman, 1963; Tupes & Christal, 1961). Subsequently, the five factor model received significant advancement with the publication of the NEO PI-R personality inventory (Costa & McCrae, 1985), which was based on the personality systems endorsed by Eysenck (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985), Guilford (Guilford, Zimmerman, & Guilford, 1976), Cattell (Cattell, Eber, & Tatsuoka, 1970), and Buss and Plomin (1975). In more recent years, Digman (1990) conducted an extensive survey of the literature. His contemporaries have agreed with his suggestion that the Big Five personality factors represent an overarching "unified theory" of personality (McCrae & Costa, 1987; Costa & McCrae, 1988; McCrae, 1989; Brand & Egan, 1989; John, 1990; Borkenau & Ostendorf, 1990).

While there remains variation in the precise definitions of personality factors within compatible models of Big Five, included in the most widely used and accepted taxonomy are Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism (Costa & McCrae, 1985; Costa & McCrae, 1992; Costa, McCrae, & Dye, 1991; Goldberg, 1981; John, 1990). The first of these, Openness, refers to the extent to which a person is open to a variety of experiences

(John, 1990). For example, if a person is intellectually curious, creative, has broad interests, and holds unconventional vs. traditional beliefs, that person will score high on measures of openness. Whereas a conservative personality may resist change and hold strongly to their beliefs, someone with a high degree of openness may be more flexible in their thinking and may prefer novelty to familiarity.

Conscientiousness refers to self-discipline, orderliness, organization, impulse control, and socially appropriate task behavior (John, 1990). A person scoring high on scales of conscientiousness may exhibit a high need for achievement, may prefer routine or planned behavior over spontaneity, and may regulate their impulses to a greater extent. Those who score high on conscientiousness are purposeful and engage in tasks in a sequential, orderly, fashion.

Extraversion describes a person's need for social interaction, expressiveness, and communication. This trait taps both the quantity and the intensity of social interactions (Costa & McCrae, 1992; John, 1990). The higher a person scores on a measure of extraversion, the more likely that person is to seek out social stimulation and excitement. Those who score high on Extraversion tend to be viewed as being talkative, energetic, active, and assertive.

Agreeableness refers to a person's disposition to be cooperative, equable, helpful, altruistic, and teamwork-oriented (John, 1990). High scorers on measures of agreeableness place a greater value on group harmony and cohesiveness than they do on their own self-interests. They are typically viewed as being friendly and generous, and they are more willing to reach a compromise than their antagonistic, uncooperative, and suspicious counterparts.

Finally, Neuroticism is characterized by a person's degree of emotional (in)stability (Costa & McCrae, 1992; John, 1990). Neuroticism describes a person's emotional reactivity and

their ability, or lack thereof, to regulate their emotions. For example, those who experience a high degree of negative emotions and who have difficulty with adjustment, with coping, and with responding to stressors will likely score high on measures of Neuroticism.   Costa and McCrae (1992) use six facets or subscales to measure Neuroticism-- Anxiety, Anger-Hostility, Depression, Self-Consciousness, and Impulsiveness.

With the increasing popularity of the five factor theory of personality, a growing body of research has examined numerous variables as they relate to the Big Five personality factors. For example, meta-analytic studies have shown that the Big Five have predictive validity with regard to various behaviors, ranging from job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991), grades, and psychopathology (Saulsman & Page, 2004). Meta-analytic data has also shown the Big Five to be valid within industrial-organizational environments (Tett, Jackson, & Rothstein, 1991), and within academic settings (Paunonen & Jackson, 2000). It has also been found to be valid with across diverse cultural groups (Barrick & Mount, 1991) and within various sub-areas of study, such as developmental and clinical psychology (Paunonen & Jackson, 2000). Owing to such extensive research, the Big Five has come to be one of the most commonly used and accepted models of personality and has been particularly accepted regarding its construct validity.

Despite the increasing acceptance of the Big Five personality factors, there remain several criticisms of the model. For example, while the Big Five is descriptive with regard to personality traits, it does not explain the underlying processes involved (McAdams, 1992). In other words, the Big Five personality factors are purely descriptive; they explain the "what," but they do not explain the "why" of personality. A second criticism of the Big Five pertains to research methodology. Factor analysis, the method used in arriving at the five factors, relies, in

part, on the subjective interpretation of the researcher. It can result in a "finding" without a theory; that is, it is based purely on empirical data without any underlying philosophy. Another criticism of the Big Five theory of personality is that the five factors are too broad to be accurately descriptive. These critics would say that the five factors do not encompass the vast spectrum of personality variables and there is much variance that cannot be accounted for (Paunonen & Jackson, 2000). Additionally, the Big Five model is based on typical behaviors; that is, it does not account for deviations to typical behaviors or those that depart from the norm (McAdams, 1992). In light of these criticisms, an examination of narrow personality traits may provide further information on relationships between personality factors and other quantifiable variables.

<center>The Big Five and Broad vs. Narrow Personality Traits</center>

Regarding the structure of personality, traits are typically viewed as being hierarchical, in that certain traits are included underneath other traits. The suggestion here is that personality variables are either broad or narrow in scale with regard to their descriptive ability. A hierarchical structure was first discussed by Eysenck (1947), who proposed that personality variables followed in this sequence: factor, trait, habitual response, and specific response. Following this time, traits have come to be viewed as being first-order, second-order, or homogenous, e.g., ability traits, temperament traits, and dynamic traits, including motivation and interest (Cattell, 1966). Notwithstanding Eysenck's use of language, however, the words "trait" and "factor" have been used interchangeably throughout the current literature. The author of the current study also uses them interchangeably.

With regard to classifying broad vs. narrow typology, the Big Five personality factors are oftentimes used as the benchmark. Traits of equal or greater breadth as the Big Five factors are considered to be broad traits and traits that are of less breadth are considered to be narrow (Schneider, Hourh, & Dunnette, 1996). The validity and widespread acceptance of the Big Five model may imply that broad factors are better predictors of behavior than narrow traits; however, when using the Big Five model, the issue of trait specificity comes into question. This may result in issues regarding a trade-off in bandwidth-fidelity.

The bandwidth-fidelity dilemma characterizes two co-existing dimensions of a given trait. The bandwidth of the trait describes its complexity, and fidelity describes its quality of information, or precision. These two variables interplay in that an increase of bandwidth results in decreased fidelity, and vice versa (Shannon & Weaver, 1949). The more narrowly defined a personality construct is, the higher its fidelity and the more limited it will be in its application (Stewart, 1999). Therefore, the use of broad or narrow traits typically involves a trade-off in precision (Murphy, 1993).

For broad traits, the bandwidth-fidelity dilemma may be seen in that the descriptive ability of a personality factor diminishes as the behavior becomes more general. While covering a wider range of variables, the lack of descriptive precision of broad traits may result in insignificant, unreliable, or invalid findings. As the Big Five model is a broad trait approach, the biggest criticism of this model is the inaccurate prediction and loss of meaningful results. So, if researchers are asking a specific question or looking at specific criteria, they may choose to abdicate the use of the Big Five model and instead look at narrow traits.

In a further refinement of personality factors, narrow traits may correct for the bandwidth-fidelity dilemma. Narrow traits are more specific, so they may be more unique and may vary to a greater extend amongst individuals. Depending upon the research question at hand, narrow traits, then, may yield higher predictability (Ashton, 1998; Borman & Penner, 2001; Mershon & Gorsuch, 1988; Moon, Hollenbeck, Humphrey, & Maue, 2003; Paunonen, 1998; Paunonen & Ashton, 2001; Paunonen & Nicol, 2001).

For example, it has been found that two separate components of Neuroticism, i.e., anxiety and depression, have a higher predictive validity individually than the larger broad factor (Moon et al., 2003). Moon et al. (2003) found that anxiety and depression also exhibit an opposite significant relationship, with no significant relationship for the broader factor of Neuroticism. For example, anxiety is significantly positive with regard to "escalation of behavior," while depression has shown a significant negative relationship with this variable (Moon et al., 2003). In this study, there was no significant relationship between "escalation of behavior" and Neuroticism. Recent study of the narrow construct of "work drive" has also shown high predictive validity to job and academic performance when compared to broader factors (Diefendorff, 2002; Lounsbury & Gibson, 2002; Ridgell & Lounsbury, 2004). Findings such as this suggest that low bandwidth assessments may be preferable when a specific question is being asked (Cronbach, 1960).

Conversely, while narrow traits are more precise, they may be limiting and have decreased complexity, resulting in decreased generalizability. As a result, it may be beneficial to use high bandwidth assessments when multiple outcomes are being examined (Cronbach, 1960). When assessing predictive validity, it is of critical importance to choose assessments in which

the criterion and predictor are well-matched (Cronbach, 1960). The extent to which the criterion and predictor are well-matched will help determine the predictive value of the factors; the better the match between criterion and predictor, the higher the predictive validity (Hogan & Roberts, 1996; Stewart, 1999).

When deciding to use broad or narrow traits in matching criterion and predictor, researchers may look at individual narrow traits, as mentioned, or they may also take a multidimensional approach. In taking a multidimensional approach, individual narrow traits may be combined to determine the predictive validity of their interaction. For example, by combining the traits of neuroticism, locus of control, self-esteem, and generalized self-efficacy, researchers have outlined a higher-order factor called core self-evaluation (CSE) (Judge, Locke, & Durham, 1997). This higher-order factor has been validated and relates to variables such as task motivation, productivity, job performance, and both job and life satisfaction (Bono & Judge, 2003; Erez & Judge, 2001; Judge, Bono, & Locke, 2000; Judge, Locke, Durham, & Kluger, 1998). Subsequent meta-analysis has confirmed the validity of this higher-order trait (Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2002).

Choosing to use both broad and narrow factors in determining predictive validity may offset the trade-off that is involved when only using one or the other. In many cases, predictive validity incrementally increases when examining narrow traits in addition to broad factors (Moon et al., 2003). According to Moon et al. (2003), individual, or narrow, traits may hold a high degree of predictive validity alone, but the validity may also decrease when combined into higher-orders. Looking at narrow traits gleaned from broad models, however, may lead to an incremental increase in validity between the predictive variables.

For example, Dudley, Orvis, Lebiecki, & Cortina (2006) conducted a meta-analysis in which the broad factor of Conscientiousness was broken into the four traits of achievement, order, cautiousness, and dependability. Data found that there were low correlations between the narrow traits of conscientiousness, which demonstrates the value of distinguishing amongst the traits found within a larger global factor. In addition, among the four narrow traits, dependability was found to have the strongest relationship with Conscientiousness. Findings provided valuable information regarding both the breadth and the driving force behind the construct. Finally, it was shown that the narrow traits of the broader factor Conscientiousness incrementally predicted job performance between the predictive variables (Dudley, Orvis, Lebiecki, & Cortina, 2006).

Another point to be made in support of examining both broad and narrow factors: even if a broad trait is found to be strongly associated with a particular criterion, the scope of a broad trait does not allow for a thorough understanding of the conditions responsible for the relationship. Examining both broad and narrow traits may help to determine whether relationships are due to only one narrow factor, a combination of factors within the broad trait, or they may help look at the relationships between those factors, etc. (Paunonen et al., 1999). Narrow traits included within the broader dimension may render more theoretically meaningful findings, demonstrating the corrective effect of these traits on bandwidth fidelity. By examining narrow traits in addition to the Big Five, researchers may gain a greater understanding of predictive factors and learn the unique contributions of each of the narrow traits.

Personality and Life Satisfaction

Personality traits have been an increased focus of research concerning factors predictive of an individual's subjective life experiences, such as life satisfaction, which is a relatively new

construct. Life satisfaction has been defined throughout the literature as a global cognitive evaluation of the quality of a person's life experience (Shin & Johnson, 1978; Diener, Emmons, Larson, & Griffin, 1985). Life satisfaction is also described as a cognitive conceptualization of Subjective Well Being (SWB), with the individual determining the criteria for evaluation and the degree to which affect influences their judgments (Diener, 1984). Life satisfaction can be viewed as a judgment made regarding the span of a person's entire life and, as a global measure, the respondent is allowed to weigh more specific domains, e.g., health, vocation, finances, relationships, etc., in whichever way they choose. As different people will place different weight on these variables and will have unique criteria, standards, and values for what constitutes a good life, measures of life satisfaction assess an individual's global judgment of their life experience.

Life satisfaction has been known to be related to other behaviors; for example, to measures of mental health, and has been shown to demonstrate predictive validity regarding specific behaviors such as suicidality (Pavot & Diener, 2008). Life satisfaction has also been found to have an inverse relationship with positive and negative affect, and has been negatively correlated with psychiatric symptoms such as depression, anxiety, and general psychiatric distress (Pavot & Diener, 1993; Frisch, Cornell, Villanueva, & Retzlaff, 1992). In fact, reports of life satisfaction have been able to adequately predict the onset of depression for up to three years later (Lewinsohn, Redner, & Seeley, 1991). Life satisfaction has also commonly been used to measure the quality of life for populations experiencing various health and medical concerns and has been related to changes in health status (Frisch, 1999), occupational functioning (Marks & Flemming, 1999), and interpersonal relationships (Furr & Funder, 1998).

Meta-analytic data show personality factors to be one of the strongest predictors of SWB (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998), including the long-term SWB measure of life satisfaction (Steel, Schmidt, & Shultz, 2008). Additional meta-analytic data show life satisfaction measures to be proximally related to personality constructs, stable over time, and show a stronger link with dispositional factors over domain-specific satisfactions, such as job satisfaction, marital satisfaction, etc. (Heller, Watson, & Ilies, 2004).

Regarding the tendency of life satisfaction to remain stable over long periods of time, Fujita and Diener (2005) conducted a 17-year long longitudinal study to examine its stability. Their findings yielded moderate fluctuations in life satisfaction, suggesting that life satisfaction has a set point, or a personal baseline that tends to remain constant over time. Exceptions to stability over time were found to be temporary disruptions aligned with changing life events. These findings show that a person's set point may predict relationships between personality factors, i.e., disposition or temperament, and life events affecting their level of life satisfaction. From a theoretical perspective, one may speculate that a person's degree of life satisfaction, as per his or her set point, may be biologically or genetically linked based on predisposition. In this way, the stability of a person's set point may result from homeostatic forces.

Despite the tendency for life satisfaction to remain stable, long-term shifts in life satisfaction may occur based on life events. For example, widowhood and unemployment have been found to be two life events in which people find difficulty adjusting (Lucas, Clark, Georgellis, & Diener, 2004), suggesting that circumstances may have long-term impact on well-being. Overall, however, there has been shown to be more variability between than within individuals with respect to life satisfaction, and while there may be short-term, intermediate, and

long-term effects on life satisfaction, it is generally regarded as being a stable variable (Pavot &

Diener, 1993; Fujita & Diener, 2005). It is interesting to note that that for those in whom life

satisfaction is more variable, their average level of satisfaction is also lower, suggesting that

greater stability is related to overall higher levels of satisfaction (Eid & Diener, 1999; Fujita &

Diener, 2005).

With regard to personality variables, three separate meta-analytic studies have found

significant relationships between personality and life satisfaction, with the strongest predictor of

life satisfaction in all three meta-analyses being Neuroticism with a significant negative

correlation (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998; Steel et al., 2008). Possible explanations for this

relationship relate to temperament; for example, those who score high on Neuroticism may be

predisposed to more negative affect and life events, or they may experience less satisfaction

(Costa & McCrae, 1991). Consistent with Fujita and Diener's (2005) findings regarding those

with greater stability in life satisfaction reporting higher average levels, those who score high on

Neuroticism exhibit greater instability on a variety of factors (Hepburn & Eysenck, 1989).

Data from three separate meta-analyses also suggest the weakest relationship of life

satisfaction with Openness to Experience. The strongest significant positive relationship

between personality factors and life satisfaction has seen mixed results between Extraversion and

Conscientiousness. Researchers have found a consistent, positive relationship between life

satisfaction and Extraversion. In particular, research has found that those who score high on

Extraversion show a greater sensitivity to rewards, report a higher number of pleasant events,

and report higher average levels of positive emotions, particularly in relation to social

interactions (Pavot & Diener, 1993).

While much research has found no differences in the relationship between personality traits and life satisfaction as a function of age and gender (Pavot & Diener, 1993), other findings indicate that the relationship between life satisfaction and both Extraversion and Neuroticism increases for women relative to men (Steele et al., 2008). Also, the predictive validity of Neuroticism dramatically decreases when controlling for component parts of anxiety and depression (Steele et al., 2008). Resource factors such as material possessions, family support, and being energetic have also been found to positively correlate with life satisfaction (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998) while psychoticism and defensiveness have been negatively correlated (Steele et al., 2008). Other factors which are related are health and marital status (Arrindell, Meeuwesen, & Huyse, 1991; Diener & Fujita, 1997), and self-esteem (Diener & Fujita, 1997; Pavot & Diener, 1993).

Findings such as these may add to the discussion as to whether life satisfaction may be regarded as being a state or a trait. While much of the research may suggest that life satisfaction may be dispositional, other findings also have noted the potential impact of environment; for example, inmate populations, abused women, psychiatric populations, and those in underdeveloped countries have demonstrated substantially lower levels of life satisfaction (Pavot & Diener, 1993).   Further research is needed to provide information as to whether life satisfaction is a top-down or a bottom-up process; that is, whether life satisfaction is contingent upon environmental factors, or whether it is a result of inborn, genetic, or dispositional factors.

The lack of research as to whether broad or narrow traits are most efficacious in predicting life satisfaction contributes to the ongoing broad vs. narrow debate. Further investigation is needed to compare the predictive validity of Big Five vs. narrow traits for life

satisfaction. Comparative data may identify valid predictors of life satisfaction while determining the incremental validity of the predictors. In observing both broad and narrow traits, interrelationships may be observed between the narrow traits, they may be compared against the larger global factor, incremental validity beyond the global factor may be determined, and variability in predictive validity may be examined.

<div align="center">The Big Five and College-Age Students</div>

The most common populations that have been examined with regard to Big Five personality traits have been adults; however, it is important not to generalize data gathered from adults to younger populations. Early adulthood is a period of development in which substantial change is occurring on multiple fronts, i.e., biological, cognitive, psychological, social. From a developmental standpoint, then, college-aged students may differ from adults on a number of variables. Personality factors are commonly viewed as being stable over the course of a person's life; however, personality development does not stabilize until approximately age 30 (McCrae & Costa, 2003). There may be significant differences between college-aged students and adults with regard to personality variables.

It is important to first note that the five-factor structure of personality emerges consistently across younger and adult populations. It has been noted that the actual structure of personality becomes invariant beginning with adolescence (Costa & McCrae, 1994). Owing to the emergence of the five-factor structure during adolescence, adapted adult measures of the Big Five model have been found valid in measuring younger-aged groups. Adult ratings from a third party, i.e., a teacher or a parent, and self-report measures, are typical methods that have been found valid for younger populations. In fact, even respondents as young as 10 years old have

been found to demonstrate structurally valid self-reports of Big Five factors (Soto, John, Gosling, & Potter, 2008).

Despite the continuity in personality structure, scores on each of the five factors may change over the course of development from adolescence into adulthood. So, while the five factors, themselves, may be invariant between these age periods, life events may affect a person's standing on a given trait. For example, research has shown that college-aged populations score consistently higher measures of both Neuroticism and Extraversion (McCrae & Costa, 2003). In addition, younger populations also consistently score lower on both measures of Agreeableness and Conscientiousness than their adult counterparts (McCrae & Costa, 2003). Similar to adult studies, however, research has found similar findings of higher Neuroticism scores amongst females when compared to males (Fogle, Huebner, & Laughlin, 2002).

In a further examination of Big Five traits, it has been shown that Openness, and Agreeableness positively correlate with GPA, and Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Openness all relate to classroom performance (Rothstein, Paunonen, Rush, & King, 1994). Similar to studies on adult job performance, Conscientiousness has been shown to have strong predictive validity with regard to academic performance (Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2003; Furnham, Chamorro-Premuzic, & McDougall, 2003; McIlroy & Bunting, 2002). In short, all of the five factors have been found to be positively related to academic achievement, with Neuroticism being negatively correlated, or positively correlated as Emotional Stability (Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2003; Furnham & Medhurst, 1995; King & Napa, 1998; Lounsbury, Gibson, Sundstrom, Wilburn, & Loveland, 2003). Broad factors have also been found to have relationships with real-world criterion variables amongst adolescents and young adults, such as

smoking and alcohol consumption, attending parties, driving habits, and sharing money (Paunonen & Ashton, 2001).

Social relationships also play a significant role in the lives of younger populations, as opposed to their older adult counterparts, and have been found to be related to personality characteristics. For example, Agreeableness and Extraversion have been positively related to the quality of social relationships amongst adolescents (Sturaro, Denissen, VanAken, & Asendorpf, 2008). Emotional Stability, Conscientiousness, and self-esteem have been negatively related to conflict with father; conflict with mother has been negatively related to Emotional Stability and self-esteem; and conflict with best friend has been negatively related to Extraversion and self-esteem, with perceived support being positively related to Extraversion (Sturaro et al., 2008).

It has also been shown that there are greater fluctuations in personality during emerging adulthood, and that environmental factors may have a strong influence on the subjective reports of young adults (Sturaro et al., 2008; Soto, John, Gosling, & Potter, 2008). According to Soto et al. (2008), there are larger individual differences on measures of Big Five personality traits in younger populations. The overall trend in self-report data is that scores decrease on measures of acquiescence and increase in coherence and differentiation across domain with age. Increased scores on coherence were especially marked for Extraversion, while Agreeableness and Conscientiousness showed significant increases in differentiation. In addition, quality of relationships, identity formation, changes in self-concept, social roles, person-environment transactions and frequent changes in environment, are other variables that affect Big Five personality measures.

Narrow Personality Traits and College-Aged Populations

When looking at narrow traits, "need for achievement," a subcomponent of Conscientiousness, "need for understanding," a narrow trait of Openness, were found to have stronger predictive validity regarding academic achievement amongst adolescents (Paunonen & Ashton, 2001). Other narrow traits that have stronger predictive validity with GPA then their broader counterparts are achievement, endurance, understanding, complexity, organization, self-discipline, straightforwardness, competence, dutifulness, and ideas (Paunonen & Ashton, 2001; Paunonen & Nicol, 2001). Academic success has also been found to be related to the narrow traits of aggression, optimism, tough-mindedness, and work drive (Lounsbury, Sundstrom, Loveland, Gibson, 2003). With regard to these variables and academic success, narrow factors not only provide more detailed information regarding predictive validity, they add incremental validity to the Big Five factors.

Additional research has found that while personality shows similar structure between adolescent and adult years, personality variables related to excitability and withdrawal are more significant for younger populations (Cattell & Beloff, 1953; Cattell, Cattell, & Johns, 1984). Similar to findings on the job performance of adults, numerous studies have found narrow personality factors to be indicators of academic achievement in adolescent populations (Mandryk & Schuerger, 1974; Munson & Rubenstein, 1992; Sneed, Carlson, & Little, 1994; IPAT, 2003).

As with prior research on younger populations and Big Five traits, age-related trends in self-report data, e.g., acquiescence, coherence, and differentiation, may further contribute to observed differences in scores on narrow personality variables and life satisfaction with their adult counterparts. Changing roles, identity formation, and other unique cognitive,

psychological, social, and other developmental differences between college-age and adult populations begs the question regarding the predictive validity of narrow traits and life satisfaction. The current literature is significantly lacking with regard to data on college-aged populations on these variables.

<div align="center">Life Satisfaction and College-Aged Students</div>

Findings within the literature to suggest that, like adults, the majority of younger populations do report overall satisfaction with their lives (Diener & Diener, 1996); however, predictive factors have been found to differ from adults. Prior research shows variances in life satisfaction with age (Diener & Suh, 1998), which may be a result of age-specific stereotypes (Heckhausen, Dixon, & Baltes, 1989) life constraints or availability of resources (Baltes, Lindenberger, & Staudinger, 2006), or differences in expectancies of change (Freund, 2006). Marital status is another variable which is significantly correlated with life satisfaction (Diener & Seligman, 2002). With the diverse environments and range of stressors specific to populations of varying age, study regarding life satisfaction across age is warranted.

While research on college-aged populations has been limited, findings suggest that the cumulative impact of daily life experiences may have a stronger effect on life satisfaction of younger populations than do major life events; specifically, positive daily experiences may be the strongest predictor of life satisfaction (McCullough, Huebner, & Laughlin, 2000). Both peer and family experiences on multiple domains, e.g., social support or social rejection, parenting style, number of people in the house, have been found strongly related to life satisfaction (Gilman & Huebner, 2003). In addition, fluctuations in life satisfaction may be seen with both positive and with stressful life events and environmental experiences (Gilman & Huebner, 2003).

Other differences found with regard to age and life satisfaction involve variables related to clinical and/or psychiatric data. For example, significant relationships with life satisfaction have been found with adolescent mental health and suicidality (Valois, Zullig, Huebner, & Drane, 2004). In addition, the extent to which life satisfaction is thought to influence emotional and behavioral responses may be seen by the extent to which changes in life satisfaction reflects changes in coping strategies. For example, change in life satisfaction has been associated with risk-taking behaviors for adolescent populations, such as substance abuse (Zullig, Valois, Huebner, Oeltmann, & Drane, 2001), and sexual risk-taking behavior (Valois, Zullig, Huebner, Kammermann, & Drane, 2002). Whether these variables are a consequence or a determinant of life satisfaction is yet to be known. It has been suggested, however, that high levels of life satisfaction actually serve as a "buffer" against psychopathological behaviors in response to stressful events (Suldo & Huebner, 2004). In this way, life satisfaction may be associated with adaptive coping and emotional stability, allowing professionals to take a preventative vs. a remedial approach to mental health and well-being. In addition, this demonstrates the reciprocal nature of life satisfaction and life events in that life satisfaction may not only be a by-product of situational factors, but may also influence the outcomes of behaviors, whether occupational, interpersonal, psychiatric, etc.

Suldo and Huebner (2006) underscored these findings with similar data, suggesting that adolescent life satisfaction may be significantly related to both adaptive and maladaptive functioning. Specifically, they found that adolescents who scored high on life satisfaction also scored low on emotional and behavioral problems, and high on measures of adaptive psychosocial functioning, with exception to extraversion. Additionally, those adolescents in the

top 10% of life satisfaction scores have been found to be at a particular advantage by exhibiting superior social, intrapersonal, and cognitive functioning (Suldo & Huebner, 2006).

Educational experiences, having an overarching and central role in the lives of adolescents and young adults, may play a crucial part in the global evaluation of adolescent life satisfaction. For example, school-related correlates include perceived support from teachers, school satisfaction, and academic self-concept (Suldo, Shaffer, & Riley, 2008). Self-directed learning, which includes self-management and monitoring behaviors, has also been positively correlated with life satisfaction among college-aged populations (Lounsbury, Saudargas, Gibson, & Leong, 2005).

Personality factors have been found to be significantly related to life satisfaction for college students; similar to adult populations, there has been found a stronger relationship between personality and temperament variables with regard to life satisfaction than demographic data. In their perusal of the aggregate literature on adolescents and life satisfaction, Gilman and Huebner (2003) consistently found that the strongest predictors for this age group have been self-esteem, self-reliance, self-efficacy, locus of control, and social interest. Their findings coincide with the previously held suggestion that life satisfaction for adolescents is contingent upon four inner traits: self-esteem, sense of control, optimism, and extraversion (Myers & Diener, 1995). Perhaps related to these constructs, an individual's perception of their own social competence, or social self-efficacy, is another variable that has been shown to be a strong predictor for this age group (Fogle et al., 2002). Regarding the five-factor model specifically, numerous studies have found Extraversion to be positively related to adolescent life satisfaction and Neuroticism to be negatively related (Fogle et al., 2002; Gilman & Huebner, 2003; Heaven, 1989; Huebner, 1991;

Huebner, Funk, & Gilman, 2000). These findings also coincide with those on adult populations examining the relationship between the Big Five factors and life satisfaction, with respect to Neuroticism being the strongest predictor (Fogle et al., 2002).

Cross-sectional and longitudinal data show relative stability in measures of global life satisfaction over periods of one to two years, indicating that, as with their adult counterparts, measures in life satisfaction tend to be stable, consistent, and temporally reliable, and not based on momentary influences (Huebner, Funk, & Gilman, 2000). An examination of gender differences has not found any differential effect of gender on predictors of life satisfaction for this age group (Fogle et al., 2002).

Additional research is needed to determine whether changes in either domain-specific or global reports of life satisfaction changes with age over larger age spans. Due to a lack of research in the current literature, it remains relatively unknown as to whether changing life circumstances, available emotional or coping resources, self-esteem, identity, social relationships, situational influences, or other developmental changes or milestones may account for differences in measures of life satisfaction with age. In particular, limited research on broad vs. narrow personality traits with regard to their relationship with life satisfaction requires further investigation for college-aged populations.

CHAPTER 2

THE CURRENT STUDY

The rationale for this study is based on recent conceptualizations of personality traits as having functional value for individuals. As Buss (1996, p. 192) noted, personality traits "represent individual differences in the qualities or resources individuals can draw upon to solve adaptive problems." By way of example, Buss suggests that an emotionally stable person "may rely on steadiness of nerves, inner resilience, and the capacity to rally from setback," which allows the person to focus on work demands without performance being impaired by anxiety, worrying, loss of energy, etc. As individuals mature, one possibility is that the effects of personality in general problem-solving for life satisfaction will increase, leading to larger correlations between personality traits and life satisfaction with age. In addition, compared to college students, adults are likely to have acquired a broader range of life experiences and, as such, personality has had more opportunities to affect the behavior and satisfaction of adults.

From an evolutionary psychology standpoint, personality traits have adaptive functionality for humans; thus, traits such as the Big Five which have evolutionary value may contribute to life satisfaction. In the case of college students, with their more limited life experiences, personality traits have had less opportunity to affect experience and, thus, life satisfaction. On the other hand, given their relatively paucity of life experiences, college students overall life satisfaction may be more directly affected by some personality traits such as Emotional Stability, which affects their ability to cope with stress, and may lead more directly to increased life satisfaction. This may be explained by the fact that there are less

vocational/occupational, practical, and personal demands seen with younger populations, thus, leading to greater measures of life satisfaction with regard to personality trait.

The current study investigates differences in trait-satisfaction correlations between adult and college-aged populations. Current literature in developmental psychology has found a positive correlation between life satisfaction and age, with older adults showing greater life satisfaction (Prenda & Lachman, 2001). It has been hypothesized that differences in life satisfaction with age may be due, in part, to the variable of having identified one's purpose in life. To this end, searching for a life purpose and life satisfaction scores have been found to be most salient within adolescent and young adult populations, when compared to their mature adult counterparts (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007). Other mediating factors, such as hope, optimism, etc., have also been found to be related to higher levels of life satisfaction for differing age groups (Bronk, Hill, Lapsley, Talib, & Finch, 2009).

Contrastingly, the current literature has also found a relationship between life satisfaction and subjective views of self due to age-specific stereotypes (Heckhausen, Dixon, & Baltes, 1989), differences in availability of resources as per age group, and age-related constraints in varying domains (Baltes, Lindenberger, & Staudinger, 2006). In addition, it has been hypothesized that reflecting on past experiences and on future anticipations may result in age-related differences and developmental tasks, thus, impacting life satisfaction scores. With increased age, a subsequent shift of focus on growth to maintenance and prevention of loss, with regard to various life domains, may also result in differences in life satisfaction (Freund, 2006; Lachman, 2004). Increased constraints on perceived future time availability, and expectation for change, may also impact measures of life satisfaction with age, contributing to differences of life

satisfaction seen between younger and older populations (Carstensen, Isaacowitz, & Charles, 1999; Heckhausen et al., 1989).

     With consideration to contrasting findings within the current literature, four broad goals will be investigated in the context of the present investigation for college student and adult populations:

     Research Question 1: As there is a lack of evidence within the current literature to strongly suggest a direction of change with regard to age and life satisfaction, the current study will investigate a two-tailed hypothesis. An overarching question examined in the present study is whether the relationship between personality traits and life satisfaction changes with age. More specifically, I investigated where there was a difference in the magnitude of correlations between college-aged and adult populations for the Big Five and narrow traits. Since there is no compelling reason for choosing one over the other, I investigated two-tailed research questions rather than one-tailed, directional hypotheses, for five of the eight personality variables.

     Research Question 1a. There will be a significant difference between college-students and working adult samples in the magnitude of correlations between life satisfaction and Openness.

     Research Question 1b.   There will be a significant difference between college-students and working adult samples in the magnitude of correlations between life satisfaction and Conscientiousness.

     Research Question 1c. There will be a significant difference between college-students and working adult samples in the magnitude of correlations between life satisfaction and Agreeableness.

Research Question 1d. There will be a significant difference between college-students and working adult samples in the magnitude of correlations between life satisfaction and Work Drive.

Research Question 1e. There will be a significant difference between college-students and working adult samples in the magnitude of correlations between life satisfaction and Tough Mindedness.

Research Question 2: Is there a difference in the amount of variance in life satisfaction accounted for by the Big Five traits for adults versus college students?

Hypothesis 2a. Based on the work of DeNeve and Cooper (1998), Fogle et al. (2002), and Steel et al. (2008), it is hypothesized that Emotional Stability will display the largest correlation with life satisfaction for both adult and college populations. Those who score lower on Emotional Stability may be predisposed to more negative affect and negative life events; conversely, they may experience less positive affect, and lower level of satisfaction (Costa & McCrae, 1991). In addition, those who score lower on Emotional Stability exhibited greater instability on a variety of factors (Hepburn & Eysenck, 1989) while those with greater stability in life satisfaction report higher average levels of life satisfaction (Fujita & Diener, 2005).

Hypothesis 2b. Owing to the changing life demands and developmental differences found between the two age groups, e.g., increased responsibilities, specialized roles of adults, it is hypothesized that there will be a significant difference in the amount of variance in life satisfaction accounted for by all Big Five factors, between the two age groups, with exception to Emotional Stability. This is based on findings that those who score high on Emotional Stability show stability across domains, and that increased life satisfaction is positively correlated with

stability in life satisfaction (Fujita & Diener, 2005). The correlation between Emotional Stability and life satisfaction will not be significantly different in magnitude or amount of variance in life satisfaction between the two age groups.

Hypothesis 2c. Based on the findings of Fogle et al., (2002), Pavot and Diener (1993), and Steele et al. (2008), it is hypothesized that Extraversion will display the second largest correlation with life satisfaction for both adults and college-aged students. A consistent relationship between life satisfaction and Extraversion has suggested that those who score higher on measures of Extraversion may have more sensitive reward systems (Pavot & Diener, 1993). In addition, it has been shown that social relationships are related to personality characteristics. Extraversion have been found positively related to the quality of social relationships which has, in turn, been found related to global measures of life satisfaction (Gilman & Huebner, 2003; Sturaro et al., 2008). Social interest has been found to be related to global satisfaction (Gilman & Huebner, 2003) in that those in the top 10% of life satisfaction scores have been found to be at a particular advantage by exhibiting superior social functioning (Suldo & Huebner, 2006).

Hypothesis 2d. With regard to younger populations, in particular, social relationships have been found to be especially salient, as to their interplay with personality characteristics (Sturaro et al., 2008). It is hypothesized that there will a significant difference in the magnitude and amount of variance in life satisfaction accounted for by Extraversion between the two age groups, with the college-aged sample showing a higher correlation.

Research Question 3: Is there a difference in the amount of variance in life satisfaction accounted for by the three narrow traits—Optimism, Tough-Mindedness, Work Drive—for adults vs. college students?

Hypothesis 3: Based on the work of DeNeve and Cooper (1998), it is hypothesized that Optimism will account for the greatest amount of variance in life satisfaction, among the narrow traits, for both age groups. Those who have positive expectations are found to be more satisfied with their life (Myers & Diener, 1995) and those who score higher on Optimism have been found to have more positive expectations across a wide range of situations (Lounsbury et al., 2005). According to Lounsbury et al. (2005), Optimism has been found to be one of the highest correlates (among personality traits) of life satisfaction. As a result of differing developmental status, i.e., nascent career and occupational development, and increased vocational, interpersonal, and general life opportunities available to younger populations, it is hypothesized that there will be a significant difference in the amount of variance in life satisfaction accounted for by all narrow traits, between the two age groups, with exception to Optimism. The correlation between Optimism and life satisfaction will not be significantly different in magnitude or amount of variance in life satisfaction between the two age groups.

Research Question 4: A fourth question to be addressed in the present study is whether there is a difference in the incremental variance associated with narrow traits in accounting for life satisfaction of adults versus college students above and beyond the variance accounted for by the Big Five traits.

Hypothesis 4: Specialized roles unique to differing age groups, and age-related trends in self-report data-- e.g., acquiescence, coherence, and differentiation, and other unique cognitive, psychological, social, and developmental differences--have been found to contribute to differences in scores on narrow traits and life satisfaction for both age groups (Soto et al., 2008). As a result, it is hypothesized that narrow traits will result in an increased variance of life

satisfaction for both age groups. Specifically, it is believed that narrow personality variables will

contribute to variance in life satisfaction above and beyond the Big Five personality factors for

both age groups.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Overview

Data were retrieved from archives maintained by Resource Associates, Inc., which had

been collecting nationwide data on personality traits and life satisfaction from both college

student and adult participants, from a Southeastern state university and an online job search

database. Data from 7633 adult participants were used for the purposes of this study. Resource

Associates, Inc. had also collected data from the University of Tennessee First Year Studies

program on personality traits and life satisfaction, from which archived data for college-aged

students were retrieved. For the purposes of the current study, data from 4844 college student

participants were used. Approval was secured by The University of Tennessee Institutional

Review Board prior to requesting the archival data from Resource Associates, Inc. No individual

names or other identifies were used in the dataset.

Participants and Procedures

College-aged participants

Data for college-aged participants were collected from undergraduate students enrolled in

an Introductory Psychology course and an undergraduate Peer Mentoring Program at a large

Southeastern state university. Owing to the fact that there were no significant differences

between the results of these two groups of participants, the two groups were combined. Of the

4844 participants, 40% were male (60% female). Fifty-five seven percent of the participants

were Freshmen; 26%, Sophomores; 14%, Juniors; and 5%, Seniors. Eighty-four percent of the

participants self-identified as Caucasian, 9% were African-American, 2 % were Hispanic, 2%

were Asian, and 3% self-identified as "Other." The median age of participants was 18-19 years old.

Participants from the archived data had been solicited to complete an online personality inventory upon data collection. Feedback was given to each student regarding their personality traits in relation to a variety of areas, including student life, area of study, social life, stress management, living situation, and campus resources. Students from the Introductory Psychology course earned extra credit for their participation, and those from the Peer Mentoring program were invited to complete a Personal Style Inventory (PSI) as part of a training session. All data were collected between March and April of 2004.

Measures. The personality inventory used for the college-aged participants was the Resource Associates Adolescent Personal Style Inventory (APSI) for College Students. The APSI is a normal personality inventory, contextualized for adolescents. It has been used on those from early, middle, and late adolescents on participants from middle school through college (Jaffe, 1998). Scale development, norming, reliability, criterion-related validity, and construct validity information for the APSI can be found in Lounsbury, Gibson, and Hamrick (2004); Lounsbury, Gibson, Sundstrom, Wilburn, and Loveland; (2003); Lounsbury, Hutchens, & Loveland (in press); Lounsbury, Loveland, and Gibson, (2003); Lounsbury, Steel, Loveland, and Gibson (2004); Lounsbury, Sundstrom, Loveland, and Gibson, 2003; and Lounsbury, Tatum, Gibson, Park, Sundstrom, Hamrick, and Wilburn (2003). Collective research has shown APSI constructs to be internally consistent and show high convergence with common traits on other widely used personality inventories, such as the 16 PF, NEO-PI-R, and the Myers-Briggs Temperament Inventory. The instrument also significantly predict variables, such as academic

performance, teacher ratings of behavior, school absenteeism, adjustment, at-risk behavior, sense of community, leadership, satisfaction in variety of areas, vocational interests, and career decidedness. The APSI for College Students has also been shown to predict logically-related psychological constructs, such as rule-adherence, vigilance, self-esteem, sensation-seeking, self-actualization, empathy, etc.

The APSI for College Students is comprised of 118 items, in which respondents are asked to express agreement or disagreement on a five-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree; 2= Disagree; 3=Neutral/Undecided; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly Agree). For the purposes of this study, the personality traits that were examined are as follows: *Agreeableness*--being agreeable, participative, helpful, cooperative, and inclined to interact with others harmoniously. Coefficient alpha for this scale was .75 in the present study.

Conscientiousness—being conscientious, reliable, trustworthy, orderly, and rule-following. Coefficient alpha for this scale was .79 in the present study.

Emotional Stability--overall level of adjustment and emotional resilience in the face of stress and pressure; the inverse of Neuroticism. Coefficient alpha for this scale was .84 in the present study.

Extraversion—tendency to be sociable, outgoing, gregarious, warmhearted, expressive, and talkative. Coefficient alpha for this scale was .82 in the present study.

Openness—receptivity and openness to change, innovation, new experience, and learning. Coefficient alpha for this scale was .75 in the present study.

Optimism--having an optimistic, hopeful outlook concerning prospects, people, and the future, even in spite of difficulty or adversity; a tendency to minimize problems and persist, despite setbacks. Coefficient alpha for this scale was .85 in the present study.

Tough-Mindedness—tendency to rely on facts and data to appraise information and make decisions; being analytical, realistic, objective, and unsentimental. Coefficient alpha for this scale was .79 in the present study.

Work Drive—being hard-working and industrious, expending long hours, time, and effort to reach goals and achieve at a high level. Coefficient alpha for this scale was .84 in the present study.

Satisfaction.--Developed from Andrews and Withey's (1976) conceptual model of overall life satisfaction. This measure was previously used as an outcome measure in a study of changes in life and job satisfaction (Lounsbury & Hoopes , 1986), and also in a study of personality correlates of career decidedness and life satisfaction among college students (Lounsbury et al., 1999). A set of 22-items served as life satisfaction measures. Examples of items include asking respondents to rate their satisfaction with "Yourself," health, financial situation, friendships, social life as a whole, safety and security, future prospects, and "Your Life as a Whole." Responses were made on a seven-point Likert scale: 1--Very Dissatisfied, 2—Dissatisfied, 3--Slightly Dissatisfied, 4--Neutral, 5--Slightly Satisfied, 6--Satisfied, 7—Very Satisfied. The inventory also gathered demographic information, including questions on age, sex, race/ethnicity, year in school, type of residence, major, and grade-point-average (GPA). Coefficient alpha for this scale was .84 in the present study.

Adult participants

Data for the adult sample were gathered from an archival database provided by a nationwide job search company that offers online, personality-based career assessments to companies for employee career development, succession planning, leadership development, mentoring, coaching, workforce planning, outplacement, and transition services. Participants were from 41 different vocational sectors or occupational backgrounds, and were from a wide range of income earnings. Job categories included business management, sales, clerical and administrative jobs, computer technology and IT jobs, airline and transportation, medical health care professional, science and technology, banking and financial jobs, manufacturing and warehousing, education, entertainment, hotel and hospitality, non-profit and charity, telecommunications, self-employment, etc. Fifteen percent of the respondents chose "Other" for their occupational category.

Fifty-two percent of the adult participants were male, and forty-eight percent were female. One percent of the adult participants were age 19 or younger, eleven percent were between age 20-29, twenty-four percent were between age 30-39, thirty-five percent were between age 40-49, twenty-seven percent were between age 50-57, two percent were between age 60-69, and .1 percent were 70 or older. Racial and ethnic demographic data for the adult population were not available. All data for the adult participants were collected between March 2003 and January 2008.

Measures. The personality instrument used in the current study was the *Personal Style Inventory (PSI)*, a work-based personality measure. The PSI has extensively shown both criterion-related and construct validity, and has been used in a variety of settings internationally,

for career development and pre-employment screening (Lounsbury, Gibson, & Hamrick, 2004; Lounsbury, Gibson, Sundstrom, Wilburn, & Loveland, 2003; Lounsbury, Loveland, et al., 2003; Lounsbury, Park, Sundstrom, Williamson, & Pemberton, 2004; Williamson, Pemberton, & Lounsbury, 2005).

The PSI consists of 118 items, which are rated by the applicants on a five-point Likert scale. The personality variables that data were gathered for the purposes of the current study are defined below:

Teamwork/Agreeableness—the propensity or ability to work as part of a team; the ability to function cooperatively on work group efforts. Coefficient alpha for this scale was .83 in the present study.

Extraversion—the tendency to be sociable, outgoing, gregarious, expressive, warmhearted, and talkative. Coefficient alpha for this scale was .84 in the present study.

Conscientiousness-- dependability, reliability, and trustworthiness; the inclination of a person to adhere to company norms, rules, and values. Coefficient alpha for this scale was .74 in the present study.

Openness-- receptivity/openness to change, innovation, novel experience, and new learning. Coefficient alpha for this scale was .80 in the present study.

Emotional Stability/Resilience--overall level of adjustment and emotional resilience in the face of job stress and pressure. Coefficient alpha for this scale was .82 in the present study.

Tough/Tender-Mindedness—appraising information and making work decisions based on logic, facts, and data, rather than feelings, values, or sentiments. Coefficient alpha for this scale was .86 in the present study.

Optimism--having an upbeat, hopeful outlook concerning situations, people, prospects, and the future, even in the face of difficulty and adversity; a tendency to minimize problems and persist in the face of setbacks. Coefficient alpha for this scale was .86 in the present study.

Work Drive--disposition to work long hours, including overtime, and an irregular schedule; investing high levels of time and energy into job and career; being motivated to extend oneself, if necessary, to finish projects, meet deadlines, be productive, and achieve job success. Coefficient alpha for this scale was .82 in the present study.

Life Satisfaction—a 26-item Life Satisfaction Inventory (LSI), which has been used in prior publication on life satisfaction and has shown sound reliability and construct validity (Lounsbury, et al., 2004), was provided to adult participants. Items were rated by participants on a five-point Likert scale, with bipolar anchors. Respondents were asked to report "how you would typically act or feel" or "how you think you would act or feel, or in general" for a given question, in reporting how they would best describe themselves. Examples of items include: "I am very happy with my social life, including the number and quality of friendships I have," "I have achieved a standard of living which is satisfactory for me," and "I have lot of fun and enjoyment in my life at present." Coefficient alpha for this scale was .88 in the present study.

Statistical analyses

Correlation and multiple regression analyses were used for each of the research questions and hypotheses for both age groups for Big Five personality variables, to examine their relationship with life satisfaction. Correlation and multiple regression analyses were also used in examining the relationship between life satisfaction and narrow personality variables for the college-aged

and adult samples. Differences between the correlations of college-age vs. adult participants were tested using Fischer's r to z statistical analysis (Guilford & Fruchter, 1973).

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

College-Aged Participants

In determining the importance of personality in relation to life satisfaction, correlation coefficients were calculated between personality variables and life satisfaction to determine the magnitude of the relationships. There was no significant difference found between personality traits and life satisfactions between the two groups of peer-mentors and other students, so responses for both groups were combined. All of the Big Five and narrow personality variables, with exception to Tough Mindedness, were found to be significantly related to life satisfaction. Of the personality traits that showed the largest significant correlations with life satisfaction, two were Big Five traits, and the third was a narrow trait. The largest significant correlations with life satisfaction out of all the personality variables were Emotional Stability ($r = .47$, $p < .001$), Optimism ($r = .44$, $p < .001$), and Extraversion ($r = .33$, $p < .001$). Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and the correlations for the personality and life satisfaction variables among the college-aged sample.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations with Life Satisfaction for College-Aged Sample (n=4844)

	Mean	*SD*	*r*
Agreeableness	3.74	.62	.21*
Conscientiousness	3.47	.61	.29*
Emotional Stability	3.17	.70	.47*
Extraversion	3.68	.74	.33*
Openness	3.57	.60	.16*
Tough Mindedness	2.32	.65	-.01
Work Drive	3.18	.62	.25*
Optimism	4.01	.57	.44*
(Range = 1-7) Life Satisfaction	5.34	.78	---

*p < .001

A multiple regression analysis was performed with hierarchical order of entry. First, the Big Five personality variables were entered into a multiple regression to predict life satisfaction. Second, the narrow traits were entered into a multiple regression equation after the Big Five traits were entered. Finally, a multiple regression analysis of the narrow traits, without the Big Five traits, was conducted.

All Big Five traits were significant in contributing to variation in life satisfaction. The R^2 Change statistic for the Big Five variables showed that Emotional Stability accounted for 30% of the variation in life satisfaction ($p < .01$); Extraversion accounted for 4% of the variation in life satisfaction ($p < .01$); Conscientiousness accounted for 2% of the variation in life satisfaction (p

< .01); Agreeableness accounted for .4% of the variation in life satisfaction ($p < .01$); and

Openness accounted for .2% of the variation in life satisfaction ($p < .01$).

When the three narrow traits were added to the prediction equation after the Big Five

traits had been entered, Optimism accounted for 5% of variation in life satisfaction ($p < .01$),

making it the second highest contributing variable behind Emotional Stability ($p < .01$). An

additional 2% of variance was contributed by Work Drive ($p < .01$), and .2% of variance in life

satisfaction was added by Tough Mindedness ($p < .01$). Table 2 presents multiple regression

data for the Big Five and narrow personality variables for life satisfaction.

Table 2

Multiple Regression for Big Five Followed by Optimism, Work Drive, and

Tough Mindedness for the College-Aged Sample (n=4844)

Model (Constant)	R	R^2	R^2 Change
1. Emotional Stability	.55	.30	.30*
2. Extraversion	.58	.34	.04*
3. Conscientiousness	.60	.36	.02*
4. Agreeableness	.60	.36	.00*
5. Openness	.60	.36	.00*
6. Optimism	.65	.42	.05*
7. Work Drive	.66	.43	.02*
8. Tough Mindedness	.66	.44	.00*

*$p < .01$

A multiple regression of the narrow traits without the Big Five traits showed that both Optimism and Work Drive significantly ($p < .01$) contributed uniquely to the prediction of life satisfaction, with Optimism account for 33% of the variance in life satisfaction ($p < .01$), and Work Drive contributing an additional 1.2% of variance in life satisfaction ($p < .01$). Table 3 presents the results of a multiple regression analysis of narrow personality variables predicting life satisfaction for the college-aged sample.

Table 3

Multiple Regression for Optimism, Work Drive, and Tough Mindedness

for College-Aged Sample (n=4844)

Model (Constant)	R	R^2	R^2 Change
1. Optimism	.57	.33	.33*
2. Work Drive	.58	.34	.01*
3. Tough-Mindedness	.58	.34	.00*

*$p < .01$

Adult Participants

In determining the importance of personality in relation to life satisfaction, correlation coefficients were calculated between personality variables and life satisfaction to determine the magnitude of the relationships among the adult sample. All of the personality variables, with exception to Work Drive, were found to be statistically significant. The largest correlation was between life satisfaction and Emotional Stability ($r = .49, p < .001$). The second highest

correlation with life satisfaction was with narrow trait of Optimism ($r = .42, p < .001$), followed

by Extraversion ($r = .25, p < .001$). Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics and the

correlations for the Big Five and narrow personality variables and life satisfaction for the adult

sample.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations with Life Satisfaction for the Adult Sample (n=7633)

	Mean	SD	r
Agreeableness/Teamwork	3.48	.800	.18*
Conscientiousness	3.36	.742	.15*
Emotional Stability	3.42	.762	.49*
Extraversion	3.75	.788	.25*
Openness	3.71	.760	.11*
Tough Mindedness	3.09	.833	.05*
Work Drive	3.32	.800	.02
Optimism	3.80	.806	.42*
Life Satisfaction	2.55	.051	---

*$p < .01$

A multiple regression analysis indicated that all five of the Big Five significantly

contributed to variation in life satisfaction. Emotional Stability accounted for 19% of the

variation in life satisfaction ($p < .01$); Extraversion accounted for 2% of variance in life

satisfaction ($p < .01$); Openness accounted for .5% of the variance in life satisfaction ($p < .01$);

and Conscientiousness and Agreeableness each accounted for .1% of variation in life satisfaction ($p < .01$).

When narrow traits were added to the Big Five, all eight personality variables were found to significantly and uniquely account for variation in life satisfaction. The variables that contributed to the greatest variation in life satisfaction were Emotional Stability, Optimism, and Extraversion (19%, 4%, and 2%, respectively, all $p < .01$). Work Drive accounted for 1% of the variation in life satisfaction ($p < .01$), and Openness accounted for .5% of the variation in life satisfaction ($p < .01$). Table 5 shows the adult multiple regression data for the Big Five and narrow traits as predictors of life satisfaction.

Table 5

Multiple Regressions for Big Five Traits and Life Satisfaction for Adult Sample (n=7633)

Model (Constant)	R	R^2	R^2 Change
1. Emotional Stability	.43	.19	.19*
2. Extraversion	.45	.20	.02*
3. Conscientiousness	.45	.20	.00*
4. Agreeableness	.45	.20	.00*
5. Openness	.46	.21	.01*
6. Optimism	.50	.25	.04*
7. Work Drive	.50	.25	.01*
8. Tough Mindedness	.51	.26	.00*

*$p < .01$

A multiple regression of the narrow traits without the Big Five traits showed that

Optimism accounted for 19% of the variation in life satisfaction, followed by with Tough

Mindedness (.6%) and Work Drive (.5%). All three of the narrow traits were found to be

statistically significant in contributing to variability in life satisfaction. Table 6 provides

multiple regression data for the narrow personality traits and life satisfaction.

Table 6

Multiple Regression for Optimism, Work Drive, and Tough Mindedness for Adults (n=7633)

Model (Constant)	*R*	R^2	R^2 Change
1. Optimism	.44	.19	.19*
2. Work Drive	.44	.20	.01*
3. Tough Mindedness	.45	.20	.01*

*p < .001

A Comparison of the Correlations Between the Two Age Groups

A Fischer's *z* score (Guilford & Fruchter, 1973) was used to test whether there were

significant differences found between two independent correlations; specifically the correlation

of each personality variable with life satisfaction for both age groups. There were significantly

different common correlations between the two age groups on six variables: Extraversion,

Openness, Conscientiousness, Optimism, Work Drive, and Tough Mindedness. The college

sample scored higher on all correlations, with exception to Emotional Stability and Tough

Mindedness. There was no significant difference found between the two groups on correlations

of Emotional Stability and Agreeableness with life satisfaction.

The strongest difference between the two age groups was on the correlation between

Work Drive and life satisfaction. The correlation between Work Drive and life satisfaction was

greater for the college sample ($r = .25$, $p < .001$), with the z test indicating that the difference in

magnitude between the two correlations was significant ($z = 12.81$, $p < .001$). The next

strongest difference between the two age groups was on the correlation between

Conscientiousness and life satisfaction ($z = 8.02$, $p < .001$), with the college sample showing a

greater magnitude of correlation ($r = .29$, $p < .001$) than the adults ($r = .15$, $p < .001$). The

correlation between Optimism and life satisfaction was greatest for the college sample ($r = .49$, p

$< .001$) than the working adult sample ($r = .42$, $p < .001$), with the z test indicating that the

difference in magnitude between the two correlations was significant ($z = 4.81$, $p < .001$). The

correlation between Extraversion and life satisfaction was greatest for the college sample ($r =$

$.33$, $p < .001$) than the working adult sample ($r = .25$, $p < .001$), with the z test indicating that

the difference in magnitude between the two correlations was significant ($z = 4.76$, $p < .001$).

On measures of Tough Mindedness ($z = -3.27$, $p < .001$), there was a greater magnitude of

correlation for the adults ($r = .05$, $p < .001$), with no significant correlation among the college

students. The correlation between Openness and Life Satisfaction was greater for the college

sample ($r = .16$, $p < .001$) than the working adult sample ($r = .11$, $p < .001$), with the z test

indicating that the difference in magnitude between the two correlations was significant ($z =$

2.77, $p < .01$). A comparison of the correlations on common personality variables and life

satisfaction between the college-aged and adult samples can be found in Table 7.

Table 7

Results of z Tests to Compare Common Correlations Between

College-Age Students and Working Adults

	Correlation with Life Satisfaction		
	College-Aged[a]	Adult[b]	z[c]
Agreeableness/Teamwork	.21**	.18**	1.7
Conscientiousness	.29**	.15**	8.02**
Extraversion	.33**	.25**	4.76**
Openness	.16**	.11**	2.77*
Emotional Stability	.47**	.49**	-1.41
Optimism	.49**	.42**	4.81**
Work Drive	.25**	.02	12.81**
Tough-Mindedness	-.01	.05**	-3.27**

n[a] $= 4844$, n[b] $= 7633$
*$p < .01$, **$p < .001$

[c] Fisher *z* test refers to the *z* statistic for testing the difference between two independent

correlation coefficients (Guilford & Fruchter, 1973).

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

In determining the importance of personality in relation to life satisfaction for college-age students and working adults, Big Five and narrow personality variables and life satisfaction were examined to determine the significance and magnitude of the relationships for both age groups and their predictive validity. To this end, it was hypothesized that both Big Five and narrow personality traits would be predictive of life satisfaction for both college-aged and working adult samples, and that there would be non-directional differences in five of the eight personality variables between the two age groups. Specific focus was then concentrated on a comparison between the two age groups on the three remaining personality variables: Emotional Stability, Extraversion, and Optimism. Finally, a comparison between the two age groups examined whether narrow traits contributed to incremental predictive validity above and beyond the Big Five traits.

Differences in common correlations between the two age groups may underscore developmental differences regarding personality traits and measures of life satisfaction by age, as such differences have found in cross-sectional, longitudinal, and meta-analytic studies within the current literature (Deneve & Cooper, 1998; Huebner et al., 2000; Soto et al., 2008; Sturaro et al., 2008). A lack of findings with regard to college populations, however, made it difficult to hypothesize the directionality of change between the two age groups. In addressing the first research question, there were significant differences between the two age groups on all personality variables, except for Emotional Stability and Agreeableness. To this end, four out of the five two-tailed hypotheses were confirmed.

In addressing the hypotheses that there would be a difference in correlation between the two age groups, the current findings were that the college sample had higher correlations on six of the eight personality variables in their relationship to life satisfaction: Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Openness, Optimism, and Work Drive. A higher correlation for this age group with regard to personality variables may be attributed to a variety of reasons.

For example, it may be explained by that fact that as younger populations have decreased life demands and responsibilities, the relationship between personality variables and life satisfaction becomes stronger. A more salient role of personality for college populations may be that younger age groups are more volatile or elastic, while their older counterparts have additional factors contributing to life satisfaction outside of trait—such as marriage, families, careers, etc. So, as a person is younger, the driver for life satisfaction may be more who you "are," and personality factors may have a greater impact on life satisfaction. In this way, decreased life demands may make the role of personality more important for younger individuals, whereas in older age groups, other factors contribute to life satisfaction, e.g., college students may increased family supports, increased general life stability and sense of safety as a function of increased emotional, moral, financial, and other dependence on family.

Other factors within a biopsychosocial framework, such as reduced health concerns and increased physical vitality (Frisch, 1999), salience of social and friend networks (Furr & Funder, 1998), decreased vocational demands (Marks & Flemming, 1999), etc., may result in personality playing a greater role with regard to life satisfaction in younger age groups than in older populations. So, additional factors outside of trait may further contribute to life satisfaction in older age groups.

Based on prior research, it was hypothesized that the strongest correlations for the Big Five traits would be between Emotional Stability and life satisfaction, followed by Extraversion and life satisfaction for both age groups (Diener, 1984; Myers, 1992). The rationale for this hypothesis was that findings within the current literature continually support Emotional Stability and Extraversion as being two of the greatest predictors of life satisfaction regardless of age or other demographic variable. For example, with regard to Emotional Stability, a positive relationship has been shown between a person's level of adjustment, ability to handle stressful situations, and resilience, and their overall sense of well-being (Diener, 1984). The literature has consistently and repeatedly found Emotional Stability, or its converse of Neuroticism, to be one of the highest predictors of life satisfaction (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998; Steel et al., 2008), which has been shown to be the case when biosocial factors are considered (Deneve, 1994).

For both the college-aged and the adult samples, the strongest correlations among the broad personality traits were found between Emotional Stability and life satisfaction. This confirms the researcher's hypothesis that Emotional Stability is a personality variable which has consistently been found to be one of the strongest predictors of life satisfaction (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998; Costa & McCrae, 1991; Fogle et al., 2002; Steel et al., 2008). In addition, these findings may help bolster previous findings within the current literature that have, conversely, shown that those who score high on Neuroticism report more negative affect and life events, and experience less satisfaction (Costa & McCrae, 1991).

It was also hypothesized that there would not be a significant difference between the correlations of Emotional Stability and life satisfaction for the college-aged and adult samples. As Emotional Stability has been shown to be a universal predictor of life satisfaction across

demographic variable, such as age, marital status, gender, and education (Deneve, 1994; Deneve & Cooper, 1998), no difference between the correlations for the two age groups was expected.

Results of the current study confirmed this hypothesis. Not only was Emotional Stability the strongest correlation for both groups, but it was also the personality variable that accounted for the largest percentage of variation in life satisfaction for both groups, with no significant difference observed between the two age groups for this relationship. A possible explanation for no difference in correlation between the two age groups may be that Emotional Stability is the overarching variable providing for life satisfaction in a variety of domains, e.g., Emotional Stability plays a role in occupational and other types of satisfaction, interpersonal relationships and other life roles, and increased sense of self and identity may all contribute to both Emotional Stability and life satisfaction (Heller, Watson, & Ilies, 2004). The findings of the current study may add to the current knowledge base in that stronger relationships between life satisfaction and Emotional Stability for adult populations may further demonstrate how personality traits serve a functional role across different segments of the life span. The present results also reinforce the observation that key personality traits, such as Emotional Stability, are among the strongest predictors of life satisfaction, and may contribute to the knowledge base that personality is one of the strongest predictors of life satisfaction (cf. DeNeve & Cooper, 1998), including long-term measures of life satisfaction (Steel, Schmidt, & Shultz, 2008).

Regarding Emotional Stability in particular, over the other five factors, Emotional Stability may be the key that underlies life satisfaction across differing life areas, such as marital satisfaction, job and career satisfaction, and other domain-specific satisfaction. In this way, there would be no difference in correlation between differing age groups, as Emotional Stability may

be the highest variable related to all satisfaction, happiness, and well-being throughout all phases of life, regardless of what the tasks are, whether school, work, etc. Without Emotional Stability, it may be hard to have a successful career or satisfying job (Lounsbury et al., 2003; Lounsbury et al., 2005), good relationships including marriage; as well as cope with all manner of other stressors, hence it is a small wonder that Emotional Stability is so strongly associated with overall life satisfaction, regardless of age group.

Of the Big Five factors, it was expected, and the results confirmed, that Extraversion would show the second strongest relationship with life satisfaction for both the college-aged and the adult samples. The findings that Extraversion was the second largest predictor of life satisfaction for both college-aged and working adult samples are consistent with previous findings that those who score higher on Extraversion are more sensitive to reward systems (Gilman & Huebner, 2003; Sturaro et al., 2008). It has been shown that social relationships are related to personality characteristics, that social interest is related to global satisfaction, and that Extraversion is positively related to the quality of social relationships which, in turn, relates to global measures of life satisfaction (Gilman & Huebner, 2003; Sturaro et al., 2008). In addition, high scores observed here for Extraversion support previous findings that those who score highest on life satisfaction demonstrate superior social functioning (Suldo & Huebner, 2006).

With regard to the college-aged sample, the current findings are consistent with previous research which has shown that college students who score higher on measures of Emotional Stability and Extraversion report higher levels of life satisfaction (Heaven, 1989; Huebner, 1991; Pavot & Diener, 1993; Huebner, Funk, & Gilman, 2000; Fogle et al., 2002; Gilman & Huebner, 2003; Steele et al., 2008). For younger populations, social relationships play a particularly

important role with regard to reported measures of life satisfaction. An individual's perception of their own social competence has been shown to be an especially strong predictor for younger age groups (Fogle et al., 2002). In addition, interpersonal and social relationships play a more significant role for this age group than their older counterparts, and Extraversion has been shown to be positively related to the quality of social relationships (Sturaro et al., 2008). As with the findings on Emotional Stability, in the case of Extraversion it may be that as life gets more complex, factors other than the trait itself may contribute to more life satisfaction, such as stress and satisfaction associated with one's job, career, marriage, children, and overall financial situation. So, while older individuals may still demonstrate varying levels of Extraversion, other variables may contribute to life satisfaction in such a way that this personality traits plays less importance in life satisfaction. For younger populations, personality may play a greater role in life satisfaction because they have not established or experienced a career, marriage, children, mortgage, etc.

For these reasons, another hypothesis related to Extraversion was that the college-aged sample would show a higher-magnitude of correlation between Extraversion and life satisfaction, and that Extraversion would account for a greater percentage of variance in life satisfaction when compared with their adult counterparts. The results of the current study affirmed these hypotheses, supporting prior research which found that Extraversion played a more salient role with regard to life satisfaction in younger age groups.

An unexpected finding of the present investigation concerned the correlation between Agreeableness and life satisfaction. In the present study, there was no significant difference between the two age groups on this common correlation. There may be several explanations for

this finding. It has been found that individuals who score higher on measures of Agreeableness have been found to work better with others, cooperate more with peers, gain more benefit from social interactions, and work more effectively in teams, thereby, facilitating work performance in both academic and occupational settings alike (Lounsbury et al., 2003). There have also been findings across age of mediating factors related to Agreeableness, that help contribute to life satisfaction. For example, Prenda and Lachman (2001) found that future planning and perceived control were mediating factors that significantly impact life satisfaction, and that future planning and perceived control were negatively related to both Neuroticism and Agreeableness across demographic variables, including age.

Regarding narrow traits, it was hypothesized that the strongest relationship for both age groups would be between Optimism and life satisfaction--which the results of the current study confirmed. The findings of high correlations between Optimism and life satisfaction for both age groups are consistent with previously held findings that Optimism is one of the highest correlates, among personality traits, of life satisfaction (Lounsbury et al., 2005). A strong relationship between Optimism and life satisfaction is consistent with previous research which indicates that individuals who have more positive expectations about different facets of their lives—such as marriage, job, career, and financial security—report being more satisfied with their lives and higher levels of life satisfaction (Myers & Diener, 1995). Additionally, the relationship between positive expectations and scores on Optimism has been found across a wide range of work situations (Lounsbury et al., 2005), which may imply that positive expectations and Optimism are related constructs as underlying factors related to life satisfaction.

An unexpected finding was the significant difference between the correlation of Optimism and life satisfaction for the two groups. In fact, the strongest differences between the two groups were for correlations of life satisfaction and Work Drive, Conscientiousness, and Optimism, with the college-age group showing a greater magnitude in each case. A possible explanation for higher-magnitude correlations for the college students may continue to be that decreased life demands allow personality variables to play a greater role with regard to life satisfaction. In this way, the relationship between Work Drive and Conscientiousness and life satisfaction may play a greater role in life satisfaction as a function of factors other than personality contributing to life satisfaction in working adult age groups. A stronger relationship between Optimism and life satisfaction in college populations may also be accounted for by the importance placed on future anticipation and increased future prospects, career and academic anticipations, etc. For example, college-aged groups may be full of hope, there are fewer things going on in their lives, and there are less factors impacting life satisfaction than in older adults, so personality may play a more important role.

Tough Mindedness was the only correlation with life satisfaction which was not significant for the college sample. A possible explanation may be that the attributes related to Tough Mindedness—such as critical thinking, interpersonal analyses, making tough decisions, attributes that are important to doing well in a business or organizational setting, etc.—are more important for working adults and less important for college students. However, as skills related to Tough Mindedness within occupational or other settings may have a greater importance for adult populations, the relationship between Tough Mindedness and life satisfaction for adults was still relatively small.

In addressing the final hypothesis, the results of the present study indicate that narrow personality variables contributed significantly to the prediction of variance in life satisfaction above and beyond the Big Five personality factors for both age groups. For both age groups, narrow traits were shown to predict life satisfaction above and beyond the Big Five personality variables. Such findings support prior research findings that narrow traits add incremental validity to broad personality factors, i.e., the Big Five personality traits, regardless of setting and demographic characteristic (Ashton, 1998; Paunonen, 1998; Paunonen, Rothstein, & Jackson, 1999; Lounsbury, Sundstrom, Loveland, & Gibson, 2003). The implication from this finding may be that the Big Five is not enough in predicting life satisfaction. More specifically, it has been shown the narrow traits of Work Drive, Tough Mindedness, and Optimism add to the predictive validity of life satisfaction in both college student (Lounsbury & Gibson, 2003) and adult populations (Lounsbury, Gibson, & Hamrick, 2004).

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Implications for Future Research

The purpose of this study were several-fold: to quantify personality traits and life

satisfaction and examine the relationship between these variables, to compare Big Five with

narrow traits in predicting life satisfaction, and to examine whether there were differences

between these variables across age groups. There are both practical and research implications

for this study. The current study successfully demonstrates the utility of measuring broad and

narrow personality traits in the prediction of life satisfaction. In addition, the current study

provided important information on the role of narrow personality traits, beyond the Big Five

personality traits, in predicting life satisfaction. This is particularly the case for younger age

groups, as the bulk of the current literature has tended to focus primarily on adult populations.

With regard to differing age groups, while traits are generally considered to be stable

variables, younger age groups are considered to be at an advantageous stage of development in

which change is more easily introduced, and there is greater adaptability in learning how to

engage with their environment (Costa & McCrae, 1994). In this sense, the personality traits of

younger students are viewed as being more malleable. One area which could be investigated by

future research is discovering which variables are most likely to impact measures of life

satisfaction for this age group, e.g., which variables show the strongest relationship between life

satisfaction, which variables are most likely to coincide with an increase or decrease life

satisfaction, etc. Further study may also provide information as to what types of environments

are found to be most conducive to well-being, increased productivity, goodness-of-fit, and provide greater reward to the individual.

The importance of these questions lies in their potential to identify possible factors predictive of life satisfaction. Data yielded from this research may contribute to the body of knowledge in a variety of occupational sectors and it may provide information as to the goodness of fit between personality type and vocation. As life satisfaction is important criteria of mental health (Frisch et al., 1992), data may be useful in both psychological etiology and treatment plan development. It may also be used to better understand the relationship between life satisfaction and objective measures, such as vocational variables, marital and other relationship status, income, etc. Ultimately, it may contribute to the larger body of knowledge regarding personality traits and happiness, and may help us to understand factors predictive of life satisfaction.

This information is important insofar as it may promote the positive psychology of varying age groups, and highlight factors that may promote positive developmental adaptation, whether academically, vocationally, psychologically, interpersonally, etc. Findings may help us to gain an understanding of personality variables that may yield higher levels of life satisfaction or increase the likelihood of experiencing greater well-being.   Life satisfaction is an important part of positive mental health; it may engender opportunities for personal or social growth, and it may provide an individual with adequate coping mechanisms. The current findings have implications for the larger study of personality theory, and future research may determine whether relationships between personality traits and life satisfaction continue to be supported. Additional research may also explore the incremental variance or predictive validity of additional narrow traits to those used in the current study, and continue to examine whether personality

variables or measures of life satisfaction differ by age group demographic. Continued research may examine other potential mediating factors, or interactions between variables, that may further contribute to life satisfaction above and beyond personality characteristics.

<p style="text-align: center;">Limitations</p>

A current limitation of the study can be found within its sample. The college-aged participants reflect a relatively homogenous demographic, in that the majority of participants were of comparable socioeconomic status, were primarily Caucasian, and living in the Southeastern U.S. region. A more diverse sample may more accurately reflect cross-country findings within this particular age group and may render findings more generalizable. Differing race and ethnicity, minority status, religion, socioeconomic background, cognitive development, and educational status may yield differing results than what the current sample produced. In addition, the current sample used primarily students from an introductory psychology course, which may yield data less generalizable to those in other fields of study or occupation. Other factors that may have potentially impacted life satisfaction measures, such as maturation, peer supports, distance from family, or issues related to college adjustment, may be further investigated.

Influences such as parents and household environments, teachers and academic settings, and other environmental factors, may provide additional information as to personality development. In addition, while Big Five and narrow personality traits may correlate with life satisfaction, the causal relationship may not be determined.

Longitudinal, as opposed to cross-sectional, data may provide additional information as changes in personality and life satisfaction variables with age. Longitudinal findings may

suggest changes in which personality traits are most predictive of life satisfaction, or changes in the strength of correlations. Both college-aged and adult data were gathered by self-report, which is not an objective measure, and may be less reliable due to a social desirability or other participant bias. Finally, a two-tailed statistical analyses used for each hypotheses does not indicate a direction of change regarding the strength of the variables.

Summary

Personality has been shown to be one of the greatest predictors of life satisfaction, and previous research has found personality factors to be one of the strongest predictors of life satisfaction when compared to other life domains (Costa & McCrae, 1980), including almost all biosocial indicators (Deneve, 1994). This study examined broad vs. narrow traits with regard to life satisfaction; specifically, Big Five personality factors were examined along with the narrow traits of aggression, optimism, tough-mindedness, and work drive. Hypotheses were based upon findings of significant relationships between these narrow traits and subjective variables (Lounsbury et al., 2003). For the purposes of this study, Big Five and narrow personality traits were examined in relationship to life satisfaction for college-aged and adult populations.

Data found that Big Five and narrow personality traits significantly predicted measures of life satisfaction for both age groups and differences in correlations were found between the two age groups for both Big Five and narrow traits. Additionally, this study found that narrow traits predicted unique variance above and beyond the Big Five personality traits. Data suggests that future research may contribute to the current literature regarding the relationship between personality and life satisfaction. Research is especially sparse as to life satisfaction predictors during transitional life stages, such as college years to adulthood. Understanding life satisfaction

during transitional life phases may provide insight into interpersonal, vocational/occupational outcomes with regard to these variables.

Further study may help us to better understand variables predictive of satisfaction. This may include gaining information on ways in which personality traits may impact how people respond to stressors, identifying trait-related coping methods, the relationship between persistence or resilience on life satisfaction, and life satisfaction as it relates to expecting positive outcomes. From a clinical standpoint, understanding dispositional factors that may affect treatment planning and outcomes, and other issues related to positive psychology and wellness, may contribute to both preventative and remedial treatment methods within the field of psychology.

In addition, increased understanding of personality as it relates to satisfaction may provide professionals with valuable information regarding goodness of fit between person and environment. This may add to the current knowledge on job and career satisfaction, whether people are better suited for various job placements, how to maximize a person's skills, and other issues related to career counseling, planning and development. Continued study may seek to explore the different conditions under which traits are important, and find additional mediating factors that may contribute to satisfaction above and beyond personality traits.

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Vita

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