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Self via Story: Employing a Narrative Methodology to Examine the Development of...

June 2002

Self via Story: Employing a Narrative Methodology to Examine the Development of Adolescent Self-Understanding

by

Deborah L. Ferrara

A Thesis

Presented to the Graduate and Research Committee

of Lehigh University

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

This Thesis is accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Science.

Date

Thesis Advisor

Co-Advisor

Co-Advisor

Chairperson of the Department

To my children

Jesse Francesco ~ Deborah Myrtle ~ and Dejan Daniel Ferrara

Your selfless understanding gave birth to this self-understanding project
My love and gratitude ALWAYS

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ABSTRACT

This study examined high school and college participants' responses to an open-ended narrative task in order to investigate the development of adolescent self-understanding. The premise of this study was that the majority of past self-understanding research has not fully captured the more interpretive, socioculturally active, and experiential aspects of adolescent self-understanding. Thus, younger and older adolescents were asked to write a story about themselves that captured who they were within an active social world. In light of past research, it was hypothesized that responses would evince developmental and gender differences. Analyses revealed developmental differences in modes of "Self-Portrayal" and "Sociorelational Interactions". In addition, responses showed gender variations in "Choice of Settings", "Modes of Self-Portrayal" and "Sociorelational Interactions". Typological profiles regarding developmental and gender differences were delineated. In addition, the benefits and limitations of this narrative task were discussed.

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Self is an elusive construct that defies a simple and neat definition. When we attempt to understand how self understands self, we are faced with quite the paradox since the elusive construct self is now positioned as both subjective interpreter and objective cognitive representation. Over one hundred years ago William James pondered these riddles of self and self-understanding and devised a functional definition of self that is still widely respected and acknowledged. James (1893) posited self as being comprised of an interactive, dynamic and dialectical union of objective ('me") and experiential ("I") aspects. He went on to explain that the "me" self was comprised of material, social, and spiritual, (psychological) characteristics. Likewise James claimed that the essence of "I" consisted of the subjective aspects of agency, distinctness, continuity, and reflection. This thoughtful definition not only addressed the multifaceted nature of self, but it also provided an explanation of how self understands self via delineating how there can be a subjective, experiential "I" intuiting and interpreting information about a more objective cognitive representation of "me".

Although there has been a great deal of research on self-understanding since James' time, many of the self-understanding studies do not give just due to both the subjective "I" and more objective "me" characteristics that comprise self. In fact, many self-understanding studies neglect the more interpretive, intuitive, and innovative "I" aspects of self and give most attention to the more tangible "me" self-aspects. Granted, most self-understanding researchers acknowledge that both aspects exist. However, much of the time the research focus, and ensuing methodology, is directed toward a specific component of self-understanding (e.g., the cognitive organization of self understanding) at the expense of shadowing the more interpretive, experiential self-aspects (e.g., choosing an experience[s] that reflects one's sense of agency). In essence, most self-understanding studies, with some notable exceptions, are oriented toward discerning an objective and, at best, quasi-social picture of how self understands self rather than attempting to let participants convey a more interpretive, intuitive, experiential, and social situated understanding of self. Since self-understanding is an interpretive process and self is a social being who continually understands self from life experiences, we need to apply a methodology that allows one to convey self actively participating in life. In essence, further knowledge concerning self-understanding depends upon employing a methodological tool that will encourage persons to choose and portray experiences that they believe best convey their understanding of self.

This thesis reviews relevant self-understanding literature in an effort to discern how self-understanding has traditionally been conceptualized and studied. The argument is made that we have hit a glass ceiling in accessing information about self-understanding due to restrictive conceptualizations and methodologies. In particular, the literature review shows how a lack of choice in self-presentation and often times content may be preventing persons from expressing the particulars of who, what, and where they place value and generally how they understand self experiencing the vicissitudes of their lives. In response, it is suggested that a narrative methodology might do much to illuminate self-understanding, particularly developmental changes in adolescent self-understanding. It is further maintained that self understanding may be more accessible via using a narrative task that is designed to let persons choose how they will portray self and to disclose the experiences, socially dynamic interactions, and personal interpretations that *they* believe best express their understanding of self. Consequently, an exploratory study is presented that employed a narrative methodology to examine the development of adolescent self-understanding in order to grant participants choices in how they will present self (form) and what they will choose to present (content).

Self-Understanding Knowledge

Self-understanding knowledge consists of one's thoughts and attitudes about the self (Damon & Hart, 1988). Some self-understanding knowledge studies have used information processing models that conceptualize self as a cognitive organizer who stores and clusters self-relevant information (i.e., attributes, traits, features, and skills) in long-term memory. Further, knowledge concerning one's understanding of self was given different terms, the two most popular being self-concept and self-schema. Regardless of name, however, studies investigating self-understanding knowledge generally focus on either, <a> examining the quantity, quality, and/or processing of personally relevant information or <b> examining how role and/or how an immediate hypothetical situation influences self-knowledge.

The methodological mainstays of self-knowledge studies were predominately interviews and inventories. Interviews generally used some form of the "Who Are You?" (WAY question) and responses were tallied for number and type of self-adjective (e.g., I am a 23-year-old man, banker, and father)(Keith & Bracken, 1996). Later studies (i.e., Smollar & Youniss, 1985; Harter & Monsour, 1992) asked follow up probe questions in order to gain information about issues such as self-esteem (e.g., "Do you feel uncomfortable when you act differently with other people?") (Harter & Monsour, 1992, p. 255). Early core inventories, most notably Gordon's (1968) Identity Classification Scheme (coding procedure that has eight major categories and 30 subcategories) and the Twenty Statements Test (write down 20 statements about yourself) were also used regularly. However, there were actually a plethora of instruments created for self-knowledge assessment (i.e., semantic differentials, adjective checklists, Q-sorts), but these were extremely transient; often only appearing once in the literature (Keith & Bracken, 1996).

Early models regarding people's concepts about themselves (e.g., Kihlstrom & Cantor, 1984) generally portrayed hierarchies of self-relevant knowledge with self being the unitary processor at the top of the hierarchy. One of the questions that came from conceptualizing self-knowledge in hierarchical (tree diagram) form was, "How much knowledge does one have about the self?" Linville (1985, 1987) attempted to answer this question by trying to determine the degree of ones' self-knowledge complexity or simplicity. Linville (1987) used a card-sorting task to measure self-complexity. The cards contained trait terms (e.g., lazy, outgoing, conscientious) and participants grouped the cards that described self in various settings (e.g., alone, with friends, at school). A high degree of complexity was seen via self-descriptors being in many groups (associated with a person thinking about self in many different ways) and with little overlap between groups (one descriptor per setting). Linville's findings did show variances in complexity and he argued that higher complexity, or a greater quantity of self-understanding, is beneficial as self is more distributed and thus not overly reliant on mastery in one situation. Later studies (e.g., Donahue, Robins, Roberts & John,1993; Woolfolk, Novalany, Gara, Allen, & Polino, 1995) partly supported Linville's findings. They found variations in complexity (termed self-concept differentiation) but they did not find evidence that high complexity is necessarily beneficial for healthy development.

Another question that arose from viewing self-knowledge in hierarchical form was, "What type of self-relevant knowledge do persons attend to and process?"

Studies have revealed that the type of self-knowledge we attend to is knowledge concerning our preconceived conceptions about self. Markus (1977) coined the term self-schema to convey a system by which self-information can be clustered and classified. In her 1977 study, Markus identified adults who were schematic with respect to the trait independence – either believing self very independent or dependent, or aschematic because independence is not relevant. Findings revealed that schematics process and remember more life examples for words that were related to independence/dependence (e.g., words such as freedom, autonomy). Similarly, Sentis and Markus (1979) confirmed these same results when they asked participants to respond with "me" or "not me" to a series of adjectives.

As many self-knowledge studies collected trait terms, or adjective descriptions, in order to gain information about self-understanding, it soon became evident that there are many trait terms in use (although in practice most persons only use about thirty words to characterize self or others, Ross, 1992). However, factor analyses have greatly reduced the number of core traits, although there remains some degree of debate concerning traits that are considered "core". Nonetheless, one of the most widely accepted "core" trait profiles is McCrae and Costa's (1987) "Big Five" (i.e., neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness). McCrae and Costa posited these five traits as innate and although innate claims may be disputed, many trait theorists do agree that the "Big Five" delivers a sufficient description index. However, participant's responses were also revealed that self-knowledge, as well as self-behavior, were not static since they changed in accordance with situations and/or relationships.

Theorists and researchers such as Gergen (1968), Mischel (1979, 1986), and Vallacher (1980) argued that self-understanding knowledge studies must take into account person's multiple roles and situations. Simultaneously, open-ended interviews with adolescents and adults using self-concept inventories revealed that persons, beginning as early as middle childhood, used different concepts and evaluated themselves differently depending upon what role and/or situation they find themselves in. Thus, interviews began to focus on having participants talk about how they understood self in different hypothetical roles and/or situations. For example, a participant might be asked the following: <a> to talk about herself in her role as mother and then in her role as CEO, <b> to rate how important she found those particular roles, <c> to provide trait terms about herself, and <d> to describe herself in different hypothetical situations. Subsequently, a participant might name the trait term friendly and then be asked how friendly they would be, <a> at a party or <b> when they were meeting strangers. Considering different roles and situations actually did much to augment research as self was no longer conceptualized as being socially isolated and decontextualized.

Studies using trait inventories that were conducted with children and adolescents revealed that self is evaluated quite differently across roles and situations beginning in middle childhood (Berndt & Burgey, 1996; Harter, 1983; 1997). Further, a closer developmental analysis revealed that understanding self in different roles and/or situations begins to create distress in mid-adolescence (Harter & Monsour, 1992). During later adolescence this situation was shown to reverse itself since having different role selves becomes accepted as normal and beneficial. For example, comments such as “It wouldn’t be normal to act the same way with everyone; you act one way with your friends and a different way with your parents…” (p. 253) were found to be fairly common (Harter & Monsour, 1992). Similarly, interviews with adults showed that they also believed consistency in knowledge or behavior would not necessarily be expected or desired across relationships or domains; in fact, it had the potential to be damaging.

In short, this research on roles and situations transformed the conception of one self into an understanding that there were many role selves. Further, gaining an understanding of self across different roles and situations was shown to be adaptive and beneficial. Yet, perhaps more importantly, this research also brought self into the social world, which, in turn, facilitated a conceptualization of self with other(s).

Self-Understanding Through Others

Knowledge oriented self-understanding studies that focused on processing self relevant knowledge, or one’s amount of knowledge (i.e., complexity), or the content of one’s knowledge (trait terms) rarely included a social component in considering a person’s self-conceptions. When roles and situations were introduced, this asocial (or minimally social representation of self) changed and the effects of others’ judgments and evaluations on self became fodder for research. Interestingly, this conceptualization of self in light of others’ opinions lead to a focus on significant others and how much others affect our understanding of self. In general, much of the research on understanding self through others bears hallmarks and tenets from the school of symbolic interactionism which postulated a reciprocal, dynamic and indivisible relation between self and society as both were believed to be created, maintained, and changed by one other. Further, the classical theories of scholars such as Baldwin (1902), Cooley (1902), and Mead (1934) which share the premise that self is a social construction, are seen to resonate through research self conceptualizations and theoretical explanations.

Studies on social self-understanding with children have provided a great deal of evidence that one's abilities and actions were viewed in light of others' reactions. Livesley and Bromley's (1973) research on self-descriptions revealed that, at around age 7, children began to triple their use of comparative notions in self-descriptions. Similarly, in analyzing children's free responses to questions about self, Secord and Peevers (1974) found that children make social comparisons to one another as early as third grade. Furthermore, when children were given a difficult task and then given feedback about their own and someone else's performance, it was found that, starting around 7 years, children tripled how often they used social comparisons (Ruble, 1983).

Research on social self-understanding also showed that adults do not stop using social comparisons in understanding self. In fact, adults' social comparisons were categorized into two basic types; superior/inferior or same/different (Rosenberg, 1979). The first group of comparisons marked individuals as superior or inferior to one another in terms of some criterion of excellence, merit, or virtue (e.g., smarter or dumber, weaker or stronger). The second type of social comparison was normative since it referred primarily to conforming or not conforming (e.g., an adolescent who pierces their nose may be given a hard time from parents, but be applauded by friends). This type of normative comparison also illustrated another important consideration in social understanding – the reference group.

Reference groups were shown to greatly affect one's understanding of self because they acted as a gauge or standard by which one measured self. Although there was evidence that people compared self with people similar to them (Woods, 1989) there was also evidence that this might not always be the case. For example, while adults often compared self with those who were slightly better off (upward comparison), sometimes adults compared self with those who were slightly worse off (downward comparison) (Collins, 1996; Taylor & Lobel, 1989).

Cooley's looking glass theory posited that persons imagine how they appear to others and then imagine how that person is evaluating or judging them. In turn, the person forms an opinion according to what they imagine others think of them. This type of internalization of others' evaluations and judgments eventually led researchers to examine self and others' appraisals. Interestingly, this line of research illuminated how important interpretation is in self-understanding since it showed how self-understanding is not just dependent upon what others' believe, but what we believe others believe.

The majority of studies on self/other appraisals were conducted in laboratory settings and used some type of survey instrument that allowed participants to document and rate self appraisals and judge's appraisals (Feldman, 1994). Although the heavy reliance on lab settings and surveys has been problematic (see Ilgen & Favero, 1985), it was consistently found that self-appraisals and appraisals by others (including, but not limited to, significant others) were often quite disparate. Further, a host of studies (e.g., Greenwald & Pratkins, 1984; Taylor & Brown, 1988; Srull & Wyer, 1989) found that appraisals by others greatly affect self-appraisals, it was the individual's perception of another's appraisal, termed reflected appraisal (Felson, 1993), that most influenced one's self-understanding. Hence, studies on appraisals showed that one's understanding of self was highly influenced by one's understanding of what they believed to be others' perceptions.

In short, research with social interactionist underpinnings greatly augmented the study of self-understanding because it highlighted how an understanding of self did not emerge from a social vacuum. Self-understanding was merged with an understanding of others and the sociocultural world in general. As these studies showed, beginning in childhood we understand and evaluate self in comparison to others and our interpretation of others' perspectives is integrated into one's self-understanding. However, others appraisals are not often the same as our reflected appraisals. Thus, it is our interpretation of others' opinions and evaluations, rather than their actual opinions and evaluations, which colors our understanding of self.

Self-Understanding Discrepancies

As research focusing on self-knowledge came to incorporate roles and situations, in the same way research focusing on how one understands self through others revealed multiple perspectives. Given multiple perspectives, it might be easy to see how self-understanding discrepancies ensued since varied conceptions can lead to doubt and confusion. To illustrate, if one believes that they act one way with their employer and another way with their friends, this can lead one to wonder about their sense of self-consistency. Similarly, if one wants to believe that they are an honest person but believes that mom thinks they are dishonest, self-doubt and conflict can ensue.

One of the liabilities that stemmed from social self-understanding was that persons could develop a sense of a real or a false self. Although this concept was previously explored by psychoanalytical theorists in relation to mental illness, as well as social psychologists interested in self-image particulars (i.e., self-monitoring, Snyder, 1987), self-understanding studies have shown that false self perceptions and behaviors were normative.

In interviewing adolescents, Broughton (1981) and Selman (1980) noted that adolescents frequently referred to engaging in certain behaviors that made them feel false or phony. Likewise, Harter's (1999a, 1999b) work on the development of self-representations also clearly revealed that there was a drastic increase in feeling one is engaging in false self behaviors beginning in mid-adolescence.

To investigate real and false self perceptions during mid-adolescence, Harter, Marold and Whitesell (1991) devised protocols in which adolescents were asked to describe themselves in multiple roles (i.e., with mom and then with friends). They showed that understanding self as false was quite common in mid-adolescence. Adolescents often made comments such as "the real (or phony) me", "saying what you really think, vs. saying what you think others want to hear" (Harter, 1999; Harter, Marold & Whitesell, 1991). Likewise, adolescents also reported reasons for engaging in false behaviors. When adolescents were asked to choose either, "acting in ways that reflect the real me or my true self" or "acting in ways that are not the real me or my true self" (p. 696) gender differences were found. In particular, significantly more females than males reported false self behaviors (Harter, Marold, Whitesell & Cobbs, 1996). Hence, it appears that occasionally feeling and acting false is not an uncommon phenomenon, but it is one that is particularly acute during mid-adolescence (Harter, Waters, & Whitesell, 1997) and one that is more prevalent with females (Gilligan, Lyons & Hammer, 1989).

Understanding self as false or real was not the only self-discrepancy that persons reported experiencing. Other hypothetical self-conceptions, or what Higgins terms self-guides, were those of ideal and ought selves (Higgins, Van Hook, & Dorfman, 1988). Higgins et al. (1988) contend that an ideal self is the representation of the attributes that someone (self or other) would like the person to possess, where an ought self represents attributes someone (self or other) believes the person should possess. Tykocinski, Higgins and Chaiken (1994) identified college students as strongly being guided by actual/ideal or actual/ought discrepancies and found that those guided by actual/ideal discrepancies were more responsive to negative messages, whereas those guided by actual/ought discrepancies were more responsive to positive messages.

Although ideal and ought selves brought forth problems when an individual believed they were not living up to expectations, ideal and ought selves were also found to provide motivation. Higgins (1991) found that adults were not bothered by (relatively realistic) ideal or ought self-expectancies if they felt that they could fulfill their expectations (Higgins termed expectation fulfillment the "can-self"). Therefore, research on self-discrepancies revealed how hypothetical selves had both positive and negative influences on self-understanding.

In a similar vein, Markus and Nurius (1986) discerned hypothetical motivational self manifestations with goals, aspirations and fears that they termed possible selves. Possible selves addressed motivational issues since they encompassed visions of desired or undesired states. Possible selves, like false, ideal and ought selves, seemed to be highly influenced by significant others. For example, one could strive to be like their parent or dread the prospect of becoming like their own parent.

Oosterwegel and Oppenheimer (1992) were interested in how and when real and possible selves developed. Hence, they conducted a study with 6-18 year olds and found that participants between the ages of 6-12 believed that there was a sizable gap between their real self and their possible self. In addition, when participants' parents were asked their perceptions of their child's real and possible selves, findings revealed that parents' perceived an even larger gap between their child's real and possible self than what the children had. Thus, this study revealed how children's perceptions about their possible and real selves fluctuate over time, as well as illuminating parental perceptions about their children's real and possible selves.

In sum, possible selves, like false, ideal, and ought selves, provided a great deal of support for Mead's theory that internalizing significant other's opinions is a normative part of self-understanding development. These research findings on self-discrepancies provided a great deal of evidence that, regardless of negative or positive outcomes, hypothetical selves are created in unison with others, most notably significant others, and that hypothetical selves a great deal of influence on self-understanding development, maintenance, and potential.

Developmental Trajectories in Self-Understanding

Although the reviews in previous sections have referred to developmental issues, this section takes developmental changes in children and adolescent self-understanding as its central focus. A well-documented finding regarding self-understanding change during adolescence has been that younger to mid adolescents predominately describe self using social terms, whereas later in adolescence self is described using more abstract terms. Specifically, findings often converge on the following trajectory: <a>young children describe self with physical characteristics (i.e., Selman, 1980), <b> older children describe self via actions (i.e. Ruble, 1983), <c> young and mid-adolescents use social memberships and social personality traits (i.e., Livesley & Bromley, 1973), and <d> older adolescents use abstract/psychological and moral and belief system references (Montemayor & Eisen, 1977; Secord & Peevers, 1974).

In a study oriented toward discerning children's "naïve epistemologies", or children's spontaneous ideas about the world, Broughton (1978) asked children open-ended questions about the self. For example, he asked, "What is the self?" or "What is the mind?" and followed this up with probes. Results indicated that young children conceived self in physical terms, older children (beginning age 8) in volitional and mentalistic terms, early adolescents in terms of knowing one's own thoughts but not one's unique mental qualities, and lastly, late in adolescence in understanding one's thoughts as both unique and rule bound. Broughton's findings elaborate on the basic trajectory just outlined since they show how there is an increase in volition (agency) and a more elaborate understanding of one's own thought process over time.

Similarly, when children in grades 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12 were asked, "Who are You?", researchers found qualitatively different responses as a function of age (Montemayor & Eisen, 1979). Results again verified a general self-understanding trend that goes from concrete to an abstract mode of representation, but in addition the content of responses, particularly 12th graders responses, revealed more about the content and characteristics of psychological or abstract thought. In particular, adolescents used significantly more occupational role, self-determining, interpersonal, individuating, existential, and ideological and belief system references.

In a study using hypothetical social dilemmas with children from age 7 to 15, Selman (1980) investigated the developmental trajectory in self-awareness. Like many others, Selman also found that young children develop a physical self-conception. By age 6 there was a distinction between physical and psychological experience and these experiences were seen to be consistent with one another. However, by age 8 children were able to separate outer appearance and inner experience. In early adolescence, one understands that they can monitor their own experience, hence adolescents experienced an increase in self-consciousness and sense of agency. Finally, in later adolescence there was increased self-reflection but now there was also an understanding of being an active controller of one's experience but with recognition that there were limits to awareness and control. These findings show that as children age they become more aware of their thoughts and experiences, but as control over self develops there is also an understanding that self-awareness is limited.

Selman's 1980 work on self-awareness showed many parallels to his findings regarding interpersonal understanding (Selman & Selman, 1979) since his results indicated that self-awareness and other awareness follow approximately the same progression. Using hypothetical scenarios Selman showed how interpersonal understanding was conceptualized with individuals (e.g., conceptions about personality changes in self or other), with close friendships (e.g., formation, trust, termination), with peer group organization (rules and norms, leadership), and with parent-child relations (love and punishment). Thus, taken together, Selman's 1979 and 1980 results seem to point out that the development of self and other awareness are interdependent and instrumental in developing self and relationship contentment.

The research of Harter and her colleagues' (e.g., Harter, 1990; Harter, 1996; Harter & Bresnick, 1996) has shed a great deal of light on specific developmental trajectories in self-understanding. Much of this research brings forth an explanation of self-understanding change because it relates behavior to cognition within a Piagetian framework. By asking children and adolescents to describe themselves, Harter (1999b) has delineated how the content and the organization of self-representations interact and become the impetus for self-representation change. Further, Harter's work did explore more experiential aspects of self-understanding, although she did so by investigating self-esteem and clinical issues (topics beyond the scope of this paper).

Harter's compiled findings (1999a) revealed that in very early childhood (ages 3-4), children described concrete, observable characteristics, such as possessions or abilities. The structure of the representation was isolated, thus explaining the all-or-none thinking used during this time. In early to mid-childhood (ages 5-7) there was an elaborated attribute description with focus on specific competencies. There are rudimentary links between representations, although all-or-none thinking persisted. In mid to late childhood (ages 8-11) ability, interpersonal and social comparative descriptions were prevalent. When representations have higher-order generalizations that subsume several behaviors (e.g., being popular subsumes being nice, helpful, etc.). Further, during this period there was an integration of opposing attributes (e.g., feeling smart in Math class, dumb in English class). Interestingly, this is the age period when the internalization of others' opinions and standards begin to function as self-guides (as discussed in the self-discrepancies section).

Adolescence (defined by grade rather than by age) brings forth drastic physical and emotional changes, as well as advances in social cognitive capabilities. In early adolescence descriptions were laden with talk of social interactions, skills and general social appeal. There was also a differentiation of attributes according to roles such that one described self with differing characteristics (e.g., being quiet with parents and talkative with friends). Likewise in the structure of representations there was an intercoordination of traits labels into singles abstractions (e.g., talkative and friendly subsumed by extroversion) yet abstractions were compartmentalized. Further, the young adolescent did not detect or integrate opposites, thus again all-or-none thinking resurfaced. To illustrate, an early adolescent might describe self as totally extroverted with friends and introverted with teachers but never integrate these qualities across roles. In fact, there was a lack of concern for different, or seemingly contradictory, behaviors in different roles, but this changed in mid-adolescence.

In mid-adolescence there was a differentiation of attributes associated with different roles and representations were organized so that opposing attributes were detected. In fact, this is when erratic behavior is rather common and is believed attributable to the conflict caused by seemingly contradictory characteristics (e.g., wondering, "How can I be both an extrovert and introvert?"). Hence, it became comprehensible that there was a concern over false self behavior (discussed in self-discrepancy section) as the recognition of positive and negative attributes led to confusion and concern over the "real me". Finally, in late adolescence much of this seeming conflict was resolved as there was a normalization of different role-related attributes. Attributes now reflect personal beliefs, values, and morals and there was an interest in future selves. The organization of representations is such that higher-order abstractions are meaningfully integrated which, in turn, brought about the resolution of inconstancies. Hence, in normative development persons entered young adulthood with a more balanced stable, belief/value guided understanding of self.

Harter's developmental research conveys how cognitive and social growth creates qualitative self-understanding changes. Further, Harter provided an explanation for thoughts and behaviors, such as all-or-none thinking and acting out during mid-adolescence, by relating self-descriptions to the structure and organization of self-representations. By giving children and adolescents an opportunity to express self freely, Harter has created a portrait of development that reveals a greater amount of information regarding physical to psychological changes in self-understanding due to delineating and integrating self-understanding changes via considering the dynamic relationship between cognition and socialization.

AN INTEGRATIVE MODEL OF SELF-UNDERSTANDING

Damon and Hart (1988) created a developmental model specific to children and adolescent's self-understanding based on William James' (1892) theory of self. Damon and Hart put James postulate that the more subjective, experiential "I" self, with the aspects of continuity, distinctiveness, and agency and the more objective "me" self, with the aspects of physical, active, social, and abstract/ psychological into practice. First, like James, their conceptualization of self is that of having dynamic and interacting "I" and "me" self-aspects and thus their ensuing logic is that self-understanding develops via gaining a greater sophistication of self in *all* the "I" and "me" areas (i.e., physical, active, social, psychological, continuity, distinctness and agency). This was different from other research theories and models because less sophisticated aspects coexisted with currently employed self-aspects. That is, social self-conceptions of mid adolescence now coexist with abstract thoughts in later adolescence. Second, Damon and Hart's clinical interview and coding manual were designed to capture both "I" and "me" self-aspects. Third, their developmental model showed how the general organizing principles that comprise the "I" and "me" changed according to general age level.

Damon and Hart used clinical interviews with seven core items, four of these core items explore aspects of the "me" self and three explore "I" self-aspects. Each item consisted of a question or set of questions that were followed by probe questions. For example, a question regarding self-description is, "What are you like?" is followed by the probe, "What does that say about you?" (Damon & Hart, 1988, p.81). A question regarding continuity (an "I" aspect) is, "Do you change at all from year to year" might be followed by the probe, "In what ways do you stay the same?" (p.72). Interviews that were "properly probed" took from 35-60 minutes and were given to participants age 4-18. Interview responses were coded from a manual constructed by Damon and Hart.

Results from interviews have led to the construction of a systematic multidimensional model of development in children and adolescents' self-understanding. The rationale for using a multidimensional model is that of attempting to explain how the "me" and "I" continually interact and to examine how "I" changes were manifested in "me" characteristics. For example, findings revealed that during early adolescence the "I" aspect of agency increased such that communication and reciprocal interaction were important, thus leading to social sensitivity and communication competence in the psychological realm of the "me" self. Hence, in this example, a young adolescent might ask out someone whom he or she is attracted to and this action would reflect increased agency and his or her understanding of self as a social being. Prior research had shown young adolescents' self-descriptions used more social terms (e.g., Livesley & Bromley, 1973), showed concern over role selves and false selves (e.g., Harter & Monsour, 1992), and spent more time with peer groups (e.g., Selman, 1979). Hence, the argument was made that these changes were, in part, initiated by increases in the "I" aspects of agency that were directed toward communication and reciprocal interaction.

The structure of the model was such that there were four developmental levels, early childhood, middle & late childhood, early adolescence and late adolescence. The generalizing principles for each of these respective developmental levels were categorical identifications, comparative assessments, inter-personal implications and systematic beliefs and plans. Correspondingly, each developmental level and organizing principle was structured with particular characteristics that reflected one of the following: physical, active, social, psychological, continuity, distinctness, or agency. To illustrate, in early childhood the organizing principle was categorical identifications and in the physical self this was seen as bodily properties, in the realm of agency categorical identifications were external, uncontrollable factors determining self. Hence, there were 28 descriptions given for self since there were four developmental levels and seven combined "me" and "I" components.

Damon and Hart's (1988) developmental model of self-understanding integrated more aspects of the "me" self (physical, active, social and psychological) than most models and included the "I" components of continuity, distinctness and agency. Thus, this model used previous research findings but it also allowed for greater differentiation of the physical, active, social and psychological self-aspects and delineated how the experiences of continuity, distinctness and agency influence transitions in thoughts and behaviors. Yet, as Damon and Hart (1988) pointed out, the more subjective and experiential "I" aspects of self were actually "conceptions of the self-as-subject" (p. 69). Hence, information about the experience of self remains somewhat abstract and difficult to imagine how it applies in real life situations. For example, early adolescence brings forth increases in agency such that communication and reciprocal interaction influence self. Yet, this statement seems to beg questions such as "Who is included in communications?" or, "Are there common concerns and issues that are apparent in these communications? or, "Are some situations more salient and prevalent in reciprocal interaction?" or, "Do all early adolescents use the same type of relational styles when engaging in reciprocal interactions?" Although one model cannot be expected to relay specific structural and content information about every stage of development, there was a distinctive lack of information about how self understands self from an interpretive and experiential stance.

Even though a complete understanding of someone else's experience may be impossible, capturing more of the interpretive aspects of one's subjective experiential way of being may be achievable. Damon and Hart set out to do this but they may not have captured as many of the interpretive and experiential aspects as possible due to restrictions imposed by their methodology. First, the interview has seven core questions, with probes, that were devised by the researchers, rather than being chosen by the participants. Although pre-established questioning helps to direct the interview, having pre-established questions can impose a set of constructs or categories that deliver a "research oriented interpretation" of the interview, rather than analyzing the participants interpretive understanding of self. Thus, there were methodological limitations because participants were not portrayed via their own terms, particularly since they do not get to choose what they want to talk about or how they wish to express or present self. Second, self was often presented as a decontextualized being since self-presentation is not (necessarily) grounded in the active, ever-changing sociocultural worlds in which life experiences actual take place. In describing self through responses to interview questions, even when one was prompted to talk about social activities, there was a certain detached accounting of self in the world, rather than a portrayal of self interacting within the world. If we accept the symbolic interactionist premise that understanding self simultaneously requires understanding the sociocultural world, a portrayal and interpretation of self by self that actively portrays how one is living within their own sociocultural world would seem a more appropriate means to investigate self-understanding. Finally, in asking an individual to describe self in an interview with a pre-established format it is much more difficult to enact one's experience of self. Although capturing pure enactment may only be possible by live interaction, there may be a type of quasi-enactment that is possible when self is expressed through symbolic actions and interactions. More specifically, if persons convey how they understand self via creating and portraying self as an active agent who is interpreting, evaluating, and experiencing the past, present, and/or future chapters of their life, the interpretive, socially active, and more experiential aspects of self may be better expressed.

NARRATIVE: AN INTERPRETIVE AND SOCIOCULTURAL APPROACH TO SELF-UNDERSTANDING

To gain more information on how one understands self, a methodology must be employed that allows one to portray who they are as a volitional being who is actively living in a pre-existing sociocultural world. Hermans and Kemper (1993) contend that studies concerning self need to place self within the world and thus include, "The activities, procedures, methods, discourses, behaviours, nonbehaviours, doings, makings, thinkings, speakings, and so on, in terms of which we come to be as we are…"(p. 27). Yet how to capture one's understanding of life experiences in all their splendor? What methodology can possibly portray an understanding of self with self being woven into the very fabric of life? Freeman (1997) answers these particular questions by saying, "narrative is the basic medium in which human beings speak, think, grow into selves, and understand others" (p. 175). Further, Freeman contends that a narrative methodology illuminates patterns of growth and development by using a more idiographic and qualitative tool that allows generalizations but not at the cost of silencing or diluting person's interpretations.

It was suggested that using a narrative methodology to examine the development of self-understanding in adolescents would augment traditional methods such as hypothetical scenarios, social psychology laboratory experiments, and/or any questioning that employs a set of apriori categories or constructs that dominate and constrain responses because it will allow for a social presentation and self-interpretation. Specifically, it was argued that narrative could provide an interpretive and sociocultural approach to the study of self-understanding. Ergo, the interpretive and sociocultural aspects of narrative are discussed in turn.

A narrative approach is interpretive in two senses. First, portraying an understanding of how one understand self, naturally and, arguably, undeniably, is in essence an interpretive process. The interpretive process is also a reflective process that allows one to express the meaning that they confer onto their experience. Taylor (1985a, 1985b) calls this process "self-interpretive" in an effort to convey how interpretation expresses an individual's evaluations, values, and meanings that are simultaneously derived from and continually forming one's sociocultural world. Although a narrative representation of how one understands self, others, and the world may not be a direct experience of self within the world, narrative representation is an interpretive form of "symbolic action" that gives meaning to experience (see Macintyre, 1981; Polkinghorne, 1988). Likewise, narrative provides a language by which to express an interpretive reflection of one's experiences in the world.

Ricoeur (1986) argued that "to narrate a story is already to reflect upon the event narrated" (p. 58) and this form of retrospective reflection is, ultimately, a process of interpretation as one continually references their own perspective. In narrative, as in life, it is impossible to not take a perspective as a person shapes their own understanding based on expectations, preconceptions, biases, and assumptions that rest, fundamentally, on life-style, life-experiences, culture, and tradition (Packer & Addison, 1989c; Heidegger, 1927/1962). Finally, this language of narrative, or our ability to "narrativize" the world, is believed a natural process that occurs with ease. As Bruner succinctly states, "[narrative] is an instrument of mind in the construction of reality"(1992, pp. 233). Hence, narrative is a natural instrument of interpretation, a symbolic act in and of itself, that can bring forth a greater understanding of self-understanding because it is a basic means by which we already "deal[s] with the vicissitudes of human intentions" (Bruner, 1992, p. 16).

The second sense in which narrative is interpretive is from the stance of the researcher. Dilthey (1910/1977) used the term "Verstenhen" or understanding to refer to the "the process by which the interpreter grasps or gains access to the "mind" or "spirit" (Geist) of the other person (Palmer, 1969). Further, Dilthey argues interpretation is a process based on common sense as there is "a special connection between [the expression of lived experience], the life from which it sprang, and the understanding which it brings about" (Dilthey, 1910/1977, p. 124). Likewise, Tappan (1990) states, "the meaning of a particular text can not be determined from some objective, value-neutral, Archimedian point...the interpreter must also acknowledge his own perspective...then, and only then, can the reciprocal dynamics of interpretation proceed" (p. 248). Hence, there is a reciprocal interpretive process, but it is one that is comprehensible to all via the virtue of being human. Yet, this interpretative process happens in a research paradigm and thus certain aspects of self-understanding can be systematically coded and analyzed without imposing a "research interpretation" or disintegrating the meaning that the participant intended to convey. In constructing a narrative, persons create meaningful texts and if and when these texts are analyzed carefully and systematically, it is possible to reveal how one understands self via expressing self as an embodied agent who is actively engaging in experiences within the sociocultural world.

A narrative methodology is also useful because it provides the option to employ a sociocultural approach, thus allowing for a conceptualization and study of self that is not dissected or socially isolated. Just as isolating and dissecting cognition, emotion, and action in order to understand persons creates artificial self-representations, so does extracting persons from the sociocultural world in which they do all of their living. A common adage in western culture is that we learn from experience. Since much of our experience is socially experiential, we must look at our actions and interactions within the sociocultural world to see how we come to understand self and life in general.

Cultural psychologists Markus, Mullally and Kitayama (1997) have coined the term "selfways", or "patterns or orientations, including ways of thinking, feeling, wanting, and doing, that arise from living one's life in a particular sociocultural context structured by certain meanings, practices, and institutions" (p. 52) to illuminate the indivisible relationship between self and the sociocultural world. Narrative provides a means by which to examine "selfways" because one has the opportunity to place self in the sociocultural world, in a particular setting, with or without particular others, and at a particular time. Further, one's chosen mode of presentation, their actions, the particular setting, their interactional style, and other self practices are evident in narrative. However, just because one makes choices in a narrative presentation of self there is no danger of only understanding persons through their idiosyncratic differences because self is social being who communicates via shared sociocultural meanings and customary practices. Thus, narrative provides the opportunity to portray self in sociocultural setting via virtue of portraying how self understands self through their experiences with, and meanings about, the world.

Narrative: Systematic Self Studies

Nicolopoulou writes, "Narrative is, [moreover], a vehicle for the formation, assertion, maintenance, exploration, and redefinition of identity-both individual and collective identity and the interplay between them (1997; p. 201). Narrative is a powerful vehicle in two senses. First, it is an ideal and very natural means of expressing self-understanding. Second, it is also a powerful methodological tool. As a methodological tool narrative provides a means by which to analyze text (spoken or written) via developing coding categories that capture the phenomena under study without stripping the interpretive meaning and sociocultural experience one is attempting to convey.

Ely, Melzi, Hadge and McCabe (1998) analyzed the personal narratives of children between the ages of 4 and 9 in an effort to examine how children use the themes of agency and communion. The researchers devised a coding system in order to specify, identify, and recognize agentic and communal themes within the narratives. Agency was coded with the following categories: <a> physical or psychological strength, <b>impact, <c>dynamic action, and <d> prestige. Communion was coded with the following categories: <a> positive interpersonal experience, <b> positive reciprocal communication, <c>help, <d> making special for, and <e> affectionate contact. Results showed that agency was used more than communion, and even more by older children. Correspondingly, communion was cited less than agency but more than twice as much by girls than by boys (with no significant multivariate effect of age or interactional between age and gender). Hence, by analyzing the personal narratives of young children, the researchers were able to see that agency increased with age but that communion was theme that appears much more important to girls than to boys.

A systematic analysis of young children's stories and the narrative activity of telling stories (voluntarily) to one another also sheds light on how young 3 and 4 year olds conceive of self and other (Nicolopoulou, Scales & Weintraub, 1994). The participants in this study were children who attended a middle class egalitarian preschool in which part of the curriculum was that of telling and acting out stories. An analysis of the narrative stories revealed that preschoolers had two distinctively gender specific narrative styles. Specifically, girls' stories showed a straining toward order and harmony. Girls' stories had coherent plots, stable characters, and were most commonly centered around family and home. On the other hand, boys' stories had an intense strain toward disorder; they had vague or amorphous settings, action that was frequently violent, novelty, excess, startling images, fighting and destruction. Likewise, Nicolopoulou (1997b) found that some children became consciously aware that boys and girls have different gender narrative styles and that these gender styles become more distinctive over time. Hence, in analyzing both story telling and acting practices, the researchers were able to understand how children, at a very early age, began to develop very different gender images of self, others, and their shared sociocultural world.

Fox (1991) also examined narratives of children ages 9, 11 and 13 in order to investigate how children develop an awareness of mind. Fox (1991), like other researchers (i.e., Broughton, 1981; Harter 1990; Selma, 1980) found that social cognitive changes usher in new ways of understanding self. In analyzing the narrative characters of children, Fox found that only 11- year-olds were able to consistently portray characters that were able to express and evaluate their internal states. Similarly, Richer and Nicolopoulou (2001) examined 30 preschooler's narratives to examine how very young children portrayed characters. They found that perceptions of persons begin early and that person perceptions are gender distinct. Girls constructed socially embedded and interdependent persons who become more individuated and responsible, whereas boys created separate and agonistic persons who became more stable, autonomous and self-conscious. Although these two studies found differences in when person perceptions developed, they both showed how systematic analyses of narratives could illuminate developmental changes and gender variations through character portrayals.

Adolescent and adult narratives have also delivered a wide array of interesting information. In a study designed to examine the morality of "justice"(determining principles of fairness), and "care", (creating and sustaining human connection) (Gilligan, Lyons & Hanmer, 1989), "interview narratives" were used to explore how adolescents understood self as a moral being (Brown, Tappan, Gilligan, Miller & Arguers, 1990). The "interview narratives" consisted of asking participants to divulge real life situations when they were faced with a moral conflict and were unsure of what to do. To glean information that was specific to a real event, the "interview narratives" contained follow-up questions that asked participants to recount actual dialogue from the situation in order that participants "become more elaborate storytellers" (p. 163). Findings showed that moral choices were highly influenced by relationships and contexts and that moral voice is too complex an issue to simply be dichotomized and generalized. Similarly, in looking at narratives of females whose lives were in transition, Plunkett (2001) also concluded that there was a great deal of complexity regarding women's choices and relationship concerns. However, she also found that women's narratives revealed that transitional struggles frequently brought forth a greater sense of autonomous self-understanding.

Hermans (1997) investigated the ordering of self-relevant experiences in narrative structure in adolescents (15-years and older) and adult "interview narratives". The self-confrontation method was used to examine where value lie for a person and how important (via rating affect) a particular value was to a person. Participants were asked open-ended "interview narrative questions" about what they find important (e.g., "Was there something in your past that has been of major importance or significance for your life and which still plays an important part today?") (Hermans, 1997, p. 247). It was found that personal narratives of the past, present, and future are meaningfully ordered in a coherent story and that self-narratives are often "multivoiced and dialogic" (Hermans, 1997, p. 260).

In analyzing the oral personal narratives of adolescents and adults, McAdams (1993) has distinguished several features of narrative that contribute to an analysis of how persons understand their lives. In particular, McAdams analyzed narratives for tone, imagery, theme, ideological setting, and characters ("imagos", or archetypal personifications, and agentic and communal characters). However, McAdams did not simply do a structural analysis of personal narratives but combined all the narrative features in order to analyze how one interprets life events and, thus, understands self. McAdams has participants break their lives into chapters in order to provide them with an organizing narrative framework. McAdam's narrative analyses (1988; 1993) showed how narrative provides an excellent means of detecting developmental changes across the life span while also respecting the individuality that reflects each person's unique way of being. Further, McAdams argued that it was not until adolescence that participants begin to construct the ideological settings that reveal our leaning toward either the theme of agency or communion. In sum, McAdam's work (i.e., 1988, 1993) showed that narrative is a powerful vehicle by which to express self and using narrative as a methodological vehicle brought forth an illumination of developmental changes, important life events and an understanding of how one understands self as an active agent operating in a particular sociocultural world.

THE CURRENT STUDY: EMPLOYING A NARRATIVE METHODOLOGY TO EXAMINE ADOLESCENT SELF-UNDERSTANDING

The overarching goal of this study was to assess whether or not a narrative methodology, in this case responding to a written narrative task, would deliver more knowledge than traditional self-understanding methodologies regarding the development of adolescent self-understanding. The narrative task asked participants to write a story, to create a character that is similar to self and to put this character in a scene. Participants were asked to create a character similar to self in order that they might not be self-conscious (the character could be fictional or non-fictional). In addition, it was believed that a self-protagonist character would allow participants to portray how they understood self and their actions in the world via interpreting, reflecting and evaluating self and actions. Similarly, in asking participants to write a story it was possible to examine whether or not this type of narrative task could be completed successfully and, if so, how well participants would actually portray an understanding of self. The last request, creating a scene, was devised with the intent of putting self-protagonists into a sociocultural world in order that interactions would be displayed. Further, as there were variations in children's settings (see Nicolopoulou et al., 1994) it was of special interest to see what types of scenes would be used by male and female adolescents.

Although the narrative task asked participants to create a character (self-protagonist), story and scene, these were the only guidelines. Thus, participants were placed in the position of making choices about how they wanted to present self through character (fictional, non-fictional, concrete abstract, interactive, etc.) and story (content, other characters, temporality, etc.) and coding categories were developed to capture the more salient and prevalent aspects of their responses.

Two general hypotheses are set forth that are based on findings from developmental and narrative literature. The first hypothesis, regarding self-understanding development, had two parts. Part one predicted that older adolescents' self-understanding would revolve around more abstract and belief and/or moral system concerns than would younger adolescents. This part of the hypothesis was based on the well-established childhood to adolescence self-understanding developmental trajectory that has shown a progression of self-understanding going from physical to active to social to belief systems (e.g., Damon & Hart, 1988; Livesley & Bromley, 1973; Montemayor & Eisen, 1977). However, since a novel narrative task was employed the second part of the developmental hypothesis predicted that this study would evince more information concerning the content of adolescents' social and abstract (belief and moral system) self-understanding.

The second hypothesis was that there would be gender variations in self-understanding. Since gender differences were found in narrative research with young children (Ely et al. 1998, Nicolopoulou, 2002, Richner & Nicolopoulou, 2001), in self-understanding research regarding females prevalence of false self-discrepancies (Harter, Marold, Whitesell &Cobbs, 1996), in research on gender and morality (Brown et. al., 1990; Gilligan, 1982) and adult narrative research (McAdams, 1993; Plunkett, 2001; Martin & Rubble, 1997), gender variations were also expected to be seen in this study.

METHOD

Participants

Thirty high school and 30 college students (15 males and 15 females in each group) participated in this study. High school participants ranged from 15 to 18 years (mean age = 16 years) and college participants ranged from 18 to 25 years (mean age = 20 years). Ninety-three percent of high school participants and 87% of college participants were from white middle class backgrounds.

Materials

A questionnaire package with three subsequently ordered sections was provided to each participant. The **first section** consisted of demographic questions. The **second section** was comprised of four narrative tasks. The first and central narrative task asked participants to provide a narrative expression of self. The remaining three narrative tasks were devised as follow-up probe questions. These probes asked respondents to elaborate, justify, and express an idealized self-image in relation to their responses to the central narrative task. The **third and final section** contained questions regarding hobby and activity interests. (The entire questionnaire package is included in Appendix A.)

Procedure

All participants were asked to complete the questionnaire in subsequent order, rather than skipping around to different sections. High school participants were given a 60-minute class period to completed the questionnaire. They were told that more time could be provided if needed, but no one requested a time extension. College participants completed the questionnaires in small groups and were told that they could take as much time as they needed. With very few exceptions, college participants took between 45-60 minutes.

This study analyzed responses to the central narrative task, which asked participants to "***Write about yourself as if you were a character in a story and describe a scene that captures who you are. (This can be fictional or non-fictional.)***"

Coding

The following five coding dimensions were developed to capture responses to the central narrative task: **<a> Type of Response, <b> Type of Setting, <c> Mode of Self-Portrayal, <d> Exclusion/Inclusion of Other Character(s), <e> Sociorelational Interactional styles and levels.**

Type of response

This code captured whether participants' responses were narrative or non-narrative.

Narrative Response. This was defined using Toolan's (1998) minimal criteria of a narrative as being, "a perceived sequence of non-randomly connected events"(p.17). A perceived sequence allowed for the inclusion of a subjective perspective and non-random events assured a meaningful, logical order. Further, narrative responses provided the opportunity to create self as a protagonist (self-protagonist). A self-protagonist character was an interactive agent through which one was able to portray perceptions about self, others, and the world. The following is an example of a narrative response:

> ***"He was strolling through the park one day, as he often loves to do. While on his stroll he came across a group of younger boys." (High School Male, 18 years)***

Non-Narrative Response. This type of response provided physical and/or psychological descriptions about the self, but they did not offer perceptions about non-random events or the creation of a self-protagonist. The following is an example of a non-narrative response:

> ***"I have blue eyes, blond hair, and am very friendly" (High School Female, 16 years)***

Both narrative and non-narrative responses were considered in all of the remaining coding categories.

Type of Setting

As the task asked participants to "describe a scene", this code captured what type of settings were in the responses. Responses included no setting, routine, or non-routine settings.

No Setting. There was an absence of a setting.

Routine Setting. These settings were categorized as habitual, familiar, or everyday, such as home and school. For example, ***"While sitting in my bedroom" or "in the school cafeteria".***

Non-routine Setting. These settings were regarded as being unusual and unfamiliar. For example, ***"the Amazon jungle"*** or ***"on top of a New York skyscraper."***

Mode of Self-Portrayal

This coding scheme revealed how much of the self was portrayed and how self was portrayed. Since how much of self and how self are portrayed are interrelated concepts, codings for modes of self-portrayal consisted of levels that were defined by self-portrayal content. There were four levels and six corresponding content categories (levels 3 and 4 have two content sub-types). To make the modes of self-portrayal mutually exclusive, responses that included more than one type of self-portrayal were coded at the highest level. (See Table 1.)

Level 1: Descriptive Accountings. No storied self-protagonist was portrayed in these responses; rather there was a description of self through a listing of physical (i.e., **thin**) and/or psychological (i.e., **friendly**) characteristics.

Level 2: Events. These responses focused on engagement in activities and it is thorough event choice and participation in the events that self was portrayed. Hence, event narratives produced self-protagonists of action. However, action, when not combined with description or reflection, gave little information about self, hence these responses did not provided great amounts of information regarding self-understanding. The following is an example of an event narrative:

> ***"She wakes up and walks sleepily downstairs where she eats her breakfast slowly. Going back upstairs she dresses and does her hair for school...After school is finished, she and her friends ride down to the middle school for their 2 our soccer practice...Then the long night of boring homework begins." (High School Female, 16 years)***

Level 3: Single or Multiple Self-Aspects. These responses portrayed information concerning personality traits, or self-aspects, through events and experiences. Thus, self-aspects revealed more about self than either descriptions or events because they portrayed one or more self-aspect within the context of the story. The following is an example of a single self-aspect:

> ***"There's a boy named Tim and all he ever cares about is having things perfect…Tim always does his homework, cleans his room, and studies all the time. Sometimes he wishes he could just let loose and not care about anything, but it is too hard for him…". (High School Male, 17 years)***

The next example was coded under multiple self-aspects because the participant reveals two self-aspects, that of being a jock and an actor.

> ***"Before 11th grade I was a jock. The only thing I did was sports, but when I moved to NY I was convinced (by a cute girl) to act in the school musical. And from that point on I fell in love with theatre." (College Male, 19 years)***

Level 4: Socially Situated or Non-Socially SituatedReflective Understanding. Responses with reflective understanding provided interpretation, insight, and/or beliefs or ethical perspective on particular experiences or life in general. More of self is shown since introspection goes beyond conceptions about one's own self-aspects and includes some existential contemplation about self, others, and life. When socially situated reflected understanding was used, the self-protagonist was placed in a social context (e.g., college campus) and their understanding of self and life was portrayed via framing them within specific interactions and situations. The following is an example of socially situated reflective understanding.

> ***"College was the first time I had ever really left home. The first month of school seemed never ending with the constant crying and feeling of homesickness. Sure, everyone felt the same way but it seemed that I was experiencing the worst of it…No one knew who I was so I had to earn that recognition all over again… In retrospect…it was easier to find someone new than to be upset all the time…I do not regret breaking up with my old boyfriend but I wish I did not start dating just to help me with my pain." (College Female, 20 years)***

Non-socially situated reflective understanding provided the same subjective interpretation and contemplation about self and life, but no concrete social situation is provided. Society is an abstract concept and moral responsibilities/perceptions are presented in a stream of consciousness type of writing. The following is an example of non-socially situated reflective understanding:

> ***"I am young and old at the same time. Having seen so many things has made me who I am and wiser for that matter. As everyone ages we sometimes lose touch with who we are, and who we are living for, but not me, I live for me. We can't go into the world thinking, even for a second, that we should satisfy something else. I understand sometimes we must sacrifice certain things, but it should never be our happiness, our dreams, or our souls. It makes me sick sometimes to look around and knowing people aren't what they want to be. Instead they are brainwashed into thinking they are doing the right thing by not being themselves…" (College Male, 21 years)***

Exclusion/Inclusion of Other Character(s)

Responses either presented the self-protagonist alone (exclusion of other character) or included one or more other characters in addition to the self-protagonist. This coding examined what type of other characters were included, either physical or mental agents.

Alone. There is no mention of other(s). .

Physical agents. Other character(s) are mentioned (e.g., I get along with my family) or they interact with the self-protagonist of another via engaging in actions. For example, **"my friends and I went to the mall."**

Mental agents. Others characters are agents that are given mental and/or emotional expressions. For example, **"Murray loved Sarah."**

Types of Sociorelational Interactional Styles

This code was designed to capture how the self-protagonist interacts with, and/or positions self, in relation to others. Two overall sociorelational interactional styles were discerned <a> autonomous self-reliance and, <b> socially embedded, with each style having four levels. (See Table 2.)

Autonomous Self-Reliance. The self-protagonist is portrayed as being, or attempting to be, self-supporting/governing and their idiosyncratic differences from others are illuminated and/or acclaimed. Correspondingly, similarities to others are disregarded and/or conveyed as negatives. The autonomous self-reliance style has four successive levels: <a> being without others, <b> contrast from others, <c> independent control, and <d> confident command.

Level 1. Being without Others. The self or self-protagonist is portrayed alone or others are simply referred to (as if they were objects) but there are never any interactions. For example, ***"I sat on the beach and watched as people flocked to the shore..." (High School Female, 17 years)***

Level 2. Contrast from Others. The self-protagonist's idiosyncratic, and/or unique, and/or special qualities are emphasized with the result that the self-protagonist's differences cause them to stand out from others. For example, ***"I knew that I could do this because I have special skills." (College Male, 22 years)***

Level 3: Striving to Gain Independent Control. The self-protagonist is presented as an independent thinker, and/or a non-conformist, and/or a pro-active agent who strives to rectify perceived misunderstandings and/or wrongs. When faced with adversity or disagreement, the self-protagonist tries to retain, gain, or regain an influential/powerful stance. For example:

> ***"I knew it was up to me to go over to those bullies and stop them from picking on those kids." (College Male, 20 years)***

Level 4: Confident Command. The self-protagonist is portrayed as a self-assured governing agent. He or she confidently proclaims and/or shows independence and competency in achieving goals, making decisions, settling disputes, overcoming obstacles, planning/initiating activities, and/or managing the personal or professional relationships of self or others. For example:

> ***"I told them that they needed to listen to me or else they wouldn't be able to get the job done." (College Female, 20 years)***

Social Embeddedness. The self-protagonist is portrayed as being, or striving to be, connected to other(s) and their shared similarities with others are illuminated and/or acclaimed. Correspondingly, differences from others are disregarded and/or conveyed as negatives. The socially embedded style has four levels: <a> being with others, <b>similitude to other(s), <c>accord with others, <d> belongingness.

Level 1: Being with Others. The self-protagonist engages in interactions and is an integral dyad or group member. For example:

> ***"A high school student is practicing baseball with his friends." (High School Male, 16 years)***

Level 2: Similitude to Others. Qualities that the self-protagonist shares with others, such as interests, preferences, shared/supported feelings, and mutual interactions are emphasized with the result that similarities with others are illuminated. For example:

"She made friends that were easier to be around and who she could share her humor with." (College Female, 18 years)

Level 3: Striving to Gain Self/Other Accord. The self-protagonist strives to understand self in relation to getting along with other(s). When faced with adversity or disagreement, the self-protagonist expresses concern over relationship strife. For example:

"I felt so torn leaving my friends and family…" (College Female, 20 years)

Level 4: Belongingness. The self-protagonist is portrayed as feeling good about self due to gaining a sense of harmony (finding their place) with others.

"After meeting so many others, I finally know that this group of friends are the people that I belong with…" (College Female, 21 years)

RESULTS

Percentages and frequencies of "Type of Response", "Type of Setting", "Modes of Self-Portrayal", "Exclusion/Inclusion of Other Characters", and "Sociorelational Interactional" styles and levels are presented in Tables 3-7.

Age Differences. The age difference hypothesis, which stated that older adolescents would have more advanced and abstract self-understanding narratives, was not supported in the category of "Type of Response". However, although most participants in this study successfully completed the task and wrote narratives, high school students wrote 6 of the 7 non-narratives. Thus, "Type of Response" showed a developmental trend because older adolescents wrote narratives more often than younger adolescents, but this difference in high school participants writing more non-narratives only approached significance (X^2 (1, N = 60) = 3.58, p., > .05).

The age difference hypothesis was not supported in "Type of Setting". However, age differences were found in the "Mode of Self-Portrayal" category, specifically within the two sub-categories of "Descriptive Accountings" and "Reflective Understanding" (see Table 5). Only high school participants (27%) used the most basic self-portrayal mode, "Descriptive Accounting". College participants used the most sophisticated self-portrayal mode, "Reflective Understanding" (combining both "Situational" and "Non-Situational") significantly more than high school participants (X^2 [(9, N = 13)] = 6.23, p., < .05).

The age difference hypothesis was not supported in "Exclusion/Inclusion of Other Characters", but it was supported in the "Sociorelational Interactional" coding scheme (see Table 7). Only high school participants (29%) used the most basic

"Autonomous Self-Reliance" level, "Being without Others", and only college participants (18%) used the most sophisticated "Autonomous Self-Reliance" level, "Confidant Command". Similarly, in the other main "Sociorelational Interactional" style, "Socially Embedded", only high school students (31%) used the most basic level, "Being with Others". The most sophisticated "Socially Embedded" level, "Belongingness", was predominately used by college participants (31%), however one high school participant used "Belongingess".

In sum, the categories of "Mode of Self-Portrayal" and "Sociorelatinal Interactional" supported the age hypothesis because younger adolescents only used the basic category levels, whereas older adolescents used the more advanced levels in these categories.

Gender Differences. The gender hypothesis, which stated that there would be gender variations in self-understanding, was not supported in "Type of Response". However, the gender hypothesis was supported in "Type of Setting" (see Table 4). Although no gender differences were found in "No Setting" (exclusion of a setting), there were significant differences in "Routine" and "Non-Routine" settings. Females used "Routine" settings much more than males, X^2 (2, N = 15) = 8.06, p,.< .01, and males used "Non-Routine" settings much more than females, X^2 (2, N = 30) = 4.80, p,.< .05.

Gender differences were not found in the category "Exclusion/Inclusion of Other Characters", however they were found in the "Modes of Self-Portrayal", specifically in the two mid-level modes of "Events" and "Self-Aspects". Females used the "Event" self-portrayal mode significantly more than males, " X^2 (12, N = 14)

= 4.57, p., < .05, and males used the "Self-Aspects" mode significantly more than females, " X^2 (12, N = 26) = 6.76, p., < .01.

Gender differences were not found in "Exclusion/Inclusion of Other Characters", but they were found in the "Sociorelational Interactional" styles and categories. The two general "Sociorelational Interactional" styles, "Socially Embedded" and "Autonomous Self-Reliance", both showed gender differences. Females preferred the "Socially Embedded Style" X^2 (1, N = 30) = 9.97, p., < .01, whereas males preferred the "Autonomous Self-Reliance" style, X^2 (1, N = 30) = 9.3, p., < .01. In the "Socially Embedded" style only females (20%) used the "Similitude to Others" category and the category "Accord with Others" was used significantly more by females than by males X^2 (3, N = 15) = 4.65, p., < .05. In the "Autonomous Self-Reliance" style, males preferred the two mid-levels, "Contrast from Others" and "Independent Control". Males used both the "Contrast from Others" level, X^2 (3, N = 11) = 4.45, p., < .05, and the "Independent Control" level, X^2 (3, N = 13) = 4.65, p., < .05, significantly more than females.

In sum, support for the gender hypothesis was provided in the categories of "Type of Setting", "Modes of Self-Portrayal", and "Sociorelational Interactional". In "Types of Setting" females preferred "Routine" settings, whereas males preferred "Non-Routine" settings. In "Modes of Self-Portrayal" females preferred "Events" whereas males preferred "Self-Aspects". In "Sociorelational Interactional Styles", females preferred the "Socially Embedded" style, specifically "Accord with Others" and males preferred the "Autonomous Self-Reliance" style, in particular "Contrast from Others" and "Independent Control".

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The query driving this thesis was whether or not a narrative methodology would capture more of the experiential, subjective "I" aspects of self and thus provide a more comprehensive picture of adolescent self-understanding. The answer to this query: yes and no. This task did offer participants the opportunity to portray self actively engaging and interacting in the social world. In addition, this task allowed participants to choose the experiences that *they* best believed portrayed an understanding of self. Further, this narrative task gave participants the opportunity to interpret how they experienced the vicissitudes of their lives, as well as to convey how they understood self, others, and their sociocultural world.

Most responses revealed that participants took advantage of these opportunities and thus did portray a more in-depth understanding of self than what had been conveyed when using more traditional methods. However, this was not always the case. Some younger adolescents did not write narratives (20%), they chose instead to provide a description of self. As descriptive non-narrative responses never allowed for the creation of, or contemplations about, a self-protagonist these responses portrayed little information about the more experiential and subjective aspects of self-understanding. Similarly, as descriptive non-narrative responses usually did not include others or provide a setting, there was no portrayal of an interactive self engaging in a sociocultural world. In fact, this study showed that the more traditional (non-narrative) self-understanding studies do a better job of collecting information on descriptions since those studies often encourage participants to generate more trait terms in order to describe self. Thus, a narrative task is not a useful tool when trait description collection is the research objective.

On the other hand, this study also showed that the majority of participants, especially older participants, did very well with this task. Only one college student wrote a non-narrative, hence the majority of older adolescents did create a self-protagonist. By far, most participants also created settings and included other characters. Similarly, many participants (especially college participants) portrayed self in a manner that expressed an interpretative understanding of self, others, and the sociocultural world, albeit to a lesser or greater degree. Thus, from a global stance, a narrative methodology was useful in capturing more information about the development of adolescent self-understanding since most adolescents created a story with a social self-protagonist who effectively portrayed how one understood self, others, and the social world.

Similarly, this study also confirmed the finding that older adolescents use more abstract and/or belief/moral system self references. Yet, more importantly, the results of this study also provided more information about older adolescents' abstract and belief/moral system concerns. Responses showed that older adolescents used the most sophisticated "Mode of Self-Portrayal", "Reflective Understanding", significantly more than younger adolescents. In addition, "Reflective Understanding" showed how adolescents contemplated who they were in relation to how they fit into the bigger scheme of things – life.

Further, "Reflective Understanding" showed that older adolescents often explored, disputed, and/or accepted societal doctrine and standards. When

"Situational Reflective Understanding" was used, ideas were compared to those of others or to those of a particular community (e.g., college campus). However, if "Non-Situational Reflective Understanding" was used, there was a type of stream of consciousness expression of how one understood self. In addition, there was no discrete person(s) or community that allowed one to evaluate or to gauge their own beliefs. Hence, "Situational Reflective Understanding" portrayed a more coherent sense of self-understanding as self was connected to others, whereas "Non-Situational Self-Understanding" portrayed a more fragmented and disparaging sense of self-understanding. Both forms of "Reflective Understanding" showed content similarities as all grappled with abstract, existential issues and accepting, rejecting, or devising belief/moral systems. Yet, this study illuminated how content intersected with form since type of "Reflective Understanding", either "Situational" or "Non-Situational", was shown to be an important variable in how older adolescents understood self through abstract and belief/moral system concerns.

In addition to showing more experiential self-aspects and abstract and belief/moral system concerns, this study also illuminated how influential gender is in adolescent self-understanding. A closer examination of adolescent males' self-portrayals, sociorelational interactions, and setting choices illuminated distinctive patterns in how male adolescents interpret self, others, and the sociocultural world. Males portrayed themselves as being different form others through their prevalent use of the sociorelational interaction of placing self in "Contrast from Others". Further, the other Sociorelational Interactional" level, "Independent Control" that was preferred by males, revealed that adolescent males interact with others by establishing, or at least trying to establish, themselves as self-sufficient control agents. "Independent Control" was occasionally directed at self (self-control), but more frequently "Independent Control" was directed toward vulnerable others and/or precarious situations. Thus, "Independent Control" often had an altruistic orientation, as many times the self-protagonist would be helping, protecting, and/or rescuing others who were in a dangerous situation. However, regardless of who or what was the subject or object of control, males portrayed the sense that they were responsible for the welfare of self and/or others and rectifying troublesome situations.

Adolescent males not only drew attention to their differences by using "Contrast from Others", but also by using the "Self-Aspects" mode of portrayal. Since a "Self-Aspect" portrayal allowed for both show (actions) and tell (descriptions), males used this form of portrayal to tell about their special attributes, thus contrasting self from others, and to display (or lament) how these special self-aspects granted them (or denied them) control within the world. Hence, taken together, findings from "Sociorelational Interactional" and "Mode of Self-Portrayal" revealed that adolescent males frequently sought to understand self as active, unique, independent and powerful agents who were obligated to take charge of others and the unruly situations that erupted in the sociocultural world.

We also learned more about adolescent males' developing understanding of self through examining their choices of settings. Males overwhelmingly chose "Non-Routine" settings. Although the "Non-Routine" settings males chose varied considerably, all "Non-Routine" settings bore the hallmarks of being unusual and exciting. In fact, many of the settings actually acted as catalysts for adventure since they usually contained some sort of impending doom that required immediate resolution. Immediate resolution, in turn, allowed for one to use their unique self-aspects and to take responsibility for controlling unruly situations. Thus, males prevalence in choosing "Non-Routine" settings often corroborated their "Self-Aspects" portrayal and the sociorelational interactions of "Contrast from Others" and "Independent Control".

Female responses also showed a dynamic interplay between self-understanding development and gender. Females tended to portray self through "Events", a level of portrayal that expressed self through involvement. An "Event" portrayal did not allow for a description of one's individualistic attributes, instead attributes were only discerned via extracting, or inferring, them from one's actions. This shadowing of individual attributes appeared to express a desire to give oneself over to circumstances larger than self. Likewise, as events frequently consisted of hurried and rushed activities, this further supported the speculation that these adolescent females did not understand self via their attributes as much as they understood self via their contributions to the group and/or activity.

The "Sociorelational Interactional" style used most by females was that of "Accord with Others". "Accord with Others" revealed that many adolescent females portrayed self as getting along, or of having the goal of getting along, by achieving harmony with others. Responses indicated that females were pleased when all was well in their relationships, but they become highly distressed when there was relationship friction or disagreement. Although these responses showed that females asserted their own wills, the consequence of using personal volition was always considered in regard to how it affected others and the relationship(s) in general. Hence, many adolescent female responses revealed how self-understanding develops through establishing and maintaining relational accord.

Both “Events” and “Accord with Others” created a situation wherein the self-protagonist was an active agent, but not an active agent who was highlighting their attributes and asserting their will upon the world, but rather one who was integrating, or attempting to integrate, self within the world. Taken together, the portrayal mode of “Events” and the “Socially Embedded” level of “Accord with Others” indicated that many adolescent females are not trying to mark self off from others, but to blend in with others. Likewise, concern for others or altruistic tendencies tended to be in the form of giving of oneself to the group event or working toward harmonious relations, as opposed to protecting, taking charge, and/or resolving problems.

Adolescent females choice of “Routine” settings also reflected how they understood self within the sociocultural world. Routine settings, predominately home and school, postulated an orderly, familiar and predictable world. As female adolescents tended to portray self through “Events” and in “Accord with Others”, it may have been that cooperation and harmonious accord were possible because a stable world allowed for, or possibly facilitated, equitable agreement. Likewise, engaging in everyday events within a stable world brought forth a steadfast consistency that is conducive to cooperation and agreement. Further, it is possible that when friction or disputes did arise there was less need to powerfully assert one’s will in order to establish order from chaos because mutual cooperation between persons is believed to rectify disputes since a relational problematic, rather than a situational problematic, was presented.

Results from this study, using this particular narrative task, bear some similarity to Nicolopoulou and collaborators (1994) finding that young boys created narrative worlds of disorder and young girls created orderly narrative worlds. One of the strengths of that study, and similar follow up studies (e.g., Nicolopoulou 2002), was that narratives were told to and for other members of the preschool classroom. By examining young persons' narratives, it became more apparent how children appropriated particular sociocultural resources and used them to create, and often recreate, shared meanings regarding the functioning of self, others, and the world. Similarly, in a study that examined oral narratives of participants who were members of Alcoholics Anonymous, it was also shown that socially and interactively creating, recreating, and practicing new shared meanings about self, others, and the world led to a new and augmented understanding of self (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain, 1998).

As this task only required a written response that attempted to encourage the writing of a narrative, rather than looking at the actual social interactions within narrative sharing, there were limitations put forth by this particular task. In particular, this task revealed less about how adolescents influenced one another and interacted together to experientially understand, choose and/or recreate their self-portrayals, sociorelational interactional styles and sociocultural worlds. Nonetheless, this written task did capture and illuminate some existing self-portrayals, sociorelational interactional, and interpretations about the world that appear to be integral to the development of adolescent self-understanding. Further, this study also provided support for the contention that adolescent self-understanding is best studied via considering the interpretive, experiential, and sociocultural dimensions of self as self-understanding development can not be divorced from our experiences with, and our interpretations about, others and the sharing of our lives within particular sociocultural worlds.

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Table 1.

Modes of Self-Portrayal and Corresponding Developmental Trajectories

Name and Content of Self-Portrayal Mode	**Progressive Levels**
Descriptive Accounting: Physical and/or psychological description.	Level 1
Events: Engagement in Activity Sequences	Level 2
3a) Single Self-Aspects: One personality trait is described and actively portrayed in the response **3b) Multiple Self-Aspects:** More than one personality trait is described and actively portrayed in the response	Level 3
4a: Socially Situated Reflective Understanding: Contemplation about specific experiences, persons, places and situations **4b. Non-Socially Situated Reflective Understanding:** Contemplation about general, vague, and abstract experiences, persons, places and situations.	Level 4

Table 2.

Sociorelational Interactional Styles and Corresponding Developmental Levels

Autonomous Self-Reliance The self-protagonist's differences are illuminated/acclaimed; Similarities are disregarded or conveyed as negatives	**Social Embeddedness** The self-protagonist's similarities are illuminated/acclaimed; Differences are disregarded or conveyed as negatives
Level 1: Being without others. No interactional with other(s).	**Level 1: Being with others.** Interactional with other(s).
Level 2: Contrast from others. Highlighting idiosyncratic and special qualities.	**Level 2: Similitude to others.** Highlighting shared qualities, activities, thoughts, and/or feelings.
Level 3: Independent Control. Gaining, or attempting to gain, control over self, others, and/or a situation. .	**Level 3: Accord with Others.** Getting along with, or striving to get along with, others.
Level 4: Confident Command. Self-assured, pro-active agent.	**Level 4: Belongingness.** Finding one's place with others.

Table 3.

Percentages (frequencies) of Non-Narrative and Narrative Responses by Age and Gender

	High School Males	High School Females	College Males	College Females
Non-Narratives	20% (3)	20% (3)	7% (1)	0% (0)
Narratives	80% (12)	80% (12)	93% (14)	100% (15)
	N=15	N=15	N=15	N=15

Table 4.

Percentage (frequencies) of Settings and Types of Settings by Age and Gender

	High School Males	**High School Females**	**College Males**	**College Females**
No Setting	27% (4)	33% (5)	20% (3)	20% (3)
Routine	7% (1)	40% (6)	7% (1)	47% (7)
Non-Routine	66% (10)	27% (4)	73% (11)	33% (5)
	N=15	N=15	N=15	N=15

Table 5.

Percentages (frequencies) of Modes of Self-Portrayal by Age and Gender

	High School Males	High School Females	College Males	College Females
Descriptive Accountings	27% (4)	27% (4)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Events	13% (2)	47% (7)	7% (1)	27% (4)
Single and Multiple Self-Aspects	60% (9)	13% (2)	67% (10)	27% (4)
Socially-Situated Reflective Understanding	0% (0)	0% (0)	13% (2)	13% (2)
Non-Socially Situated Reflective Understanding	0% (0)	13% (2)	13% (2)	33% (5)
	N=15	N=15	N=15	N=15

Table 6.

Percentages (frequencies) of Other Characters and Types of Other Characters Presented with the Self-Protagonist by Age and Gender

Other Characters presented with the Self-Protagonist	High School Males	High School Females	College Males	College Females
No Other Characters	20% (3)	7% (1)	13% (2)	13% (2)
Physical Agents	33% (5)	53% (7)	27% (4)	13% (2)
Mental Agents	40% (7)	47% (7)	33% (9)	33% (11)
	N=15	N=15	N=15	N=15

Table 7.

Percentages (frequencies) of Autonomous Self-Reliance and Socially Embedded Sociorelational Interactional Styles by Age and Gender

Autonomous Self-Reliance Style	**High School Males**	**High School Females**	**College Males**	**College Females**
Being without others	13% (2)	13% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Contrast from Others	27% (4)	7% (1)	33% (5)	7% (1)
Independent Control	33% (5)	0% (0)	47% (7)	7% (1)
Confident Command	0% (0)	0% (0)	7% (1)	13% (2)
Socially Embedded Style				
Being with Others	13% (2)	20% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Similitude to Others	0% (0)	13% (2)	0% (0)	13% (2)
Accord with Others	7% (1)	47% (7)	7% (1)	40% (6)
Belongingness	7% (1)	0% (0)	7% (1)	20% (3)
	N=15	N=15	N=15	N=15

APPENDIX

*****DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON ANY PART OF THIS QUESTIONNAIRE*****

There are three parts to the questionnaire.

- Part one asks you some general questions.
- Part two is a creative writing exercise. Use as much paper as you need. **THIS PART OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE WILL MOST LIKELY TAKE THE MAJORITY OF YOUR TIME. THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS.**
- Part three asks you about favorite activities and hobbies.

You do not need to worry about spelling or grammar.

Please raise your hand if you have a question or need extra paper.

Take as long as you need to complete this questionnaire.

Thank you for your time and participation.

- **PLEASE ANSWER EACH QUESTION IN ORDER. DO NOT TURN TO THE NEXT QUESTION UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED THE PREVIOUS ONE.**

DO NOT PUT YOUR NAME ON THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

Please circle or fill in the appropriate answers:

Age: ____________________ *Ethnicity:* ______________________

Sex: Male Female **Major:** _________________________

Current Year: Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior

Father's level of completed education:

Less than 12th High school 2 year College 4 Year College Graduate School

Mother's level of completed education:

Less than 12th High school 2 year College 4 Year College Graduate School

Father's occupation: ____

Mother's occupation: ____

Do you have siblings? Yes No

How many? 1 2 3 4 5 or more

How many people do you consider yourself very close to?

1 2 3 4 5 6 or more

Who are the people you consider yourself very close to? Please identify by role – i.e., brother, girlfriend, neighbor, mom, etc..

What occupation do you think you will most likely go into?

How sure are you that you will enter this occupation?

Very sure Somewhat sure Unsure Very unsure

Do you believe, left to their own devices, people will behave:

Selfishly Unselfishly

Do you find growing older:

Frightening Pleasurable

This study only includes responses to task #1.

1) **Write about yourself as if you were a character in a story and describe a scene that captures who you are. (This can be fictional or non-fictional).**
2) Why do you think this character captures who you are?
3) Are there aspects or characteristics of yourself that this character or scene does not capture?

If so, please describe these and explain them the best you can.

4) Can this character do things that you normally can not, or would not, do?

If so, please explain.

*****Participants were given stapled questionnaire booklets that included a blank sheet of paper between each question. The blank paper served two functions: (1) To prevent seeing the subsequent question, and (2) extra space for responses.**

VITA

Deborah L. Ferrara

Birth:	30 July 1956
Parents:	Daniel and Marilyn White
Children:	Jesse F., Deborah M., & Dejan D. Ferrara

Education:

1992-1994	Bucks County Community College
1994-1996	Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA B.A. Psychology 1996
1996-1998	Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA M.Ed Counseling Psychology with Secondary School Certification
1998-date:	Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA

Professional Experience

1994-1996:	Pearl S. Buck Foundation, Dublin, PA Sponsorship Coordinator (Thailand/Vietnam/Korea)
1996-1998:	United Health and Human Services (Subsidiary of Northwestern Mental Health) Human Resource Administrator
1997-1998:	Southern Lehigh High School Guidance Counselor Practicum Director of Guidance: Joseph Tacker
1996-date	Lehigh University Course Instructor: Personality & Introduction to Psychology
1996-date	Teaching Assistant and/or Recitation Instructor: Personality, Introduction to Psychology, Mind & Brain, Adulthood and Aging, Child Development, Experimental Research Methods and Lab
Publication:	Spokane, A.R. & Ferrara, D. (2001). Samuel H. Osipow's contributions to occupational mental health and the assessment of stress inventory. In F.T.Leong & A. Barak (Eds.) *Contemporary models in vocational psychology*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

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