
A Study of Personality Stability and Change in Autobiographical Narratives

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ABSTRACT - Differences between 12 Nonchangers, young adults who remain much the same over time, and 12 Changers, those characterized more by change, were assessed using the California Adult Q-Sort (CAQ; 1978) to rate authors' personalities reflected in free-style autobiographies written at two points in their young to middle adulthood. Thirty-eight traits in early adulthood, and 34 traits at the second writing, significantly distinguished Changers from Nonchangers. For both time periods, Nonchangers were rated as more salient in desirable characteristics (e.g., dependable, warm and compassionate) and less salient in unfavorable characteristics (e.g., thin-skinned, defensive, irritable) than Changers. Autobiographies were also rated using the Adjective Checklist (ACL; Gough and Heilbrun, 1983). A similar pattern of significant differences on 6 of the eleven scored scales was observed. Qualitative analysis of cases is used to illustrate patterns of stability and change.

The pathway from young adult personality to later adult personality is actively researched and debated (e.g., Helson, Kwan, John, & Jones, 2002; McCrae, Costa, Ostendorf, Angleitner, Hrebickova, Avia, Sanz, Sanchez-Bernardos, Kusdil, Woodfield, Saunders, & Smith, 2000; Srivastava, John, Gosling, & Potter, 2003) with much of the discussion devoted to whether and how adult personality changes over time. There is compelling evidence for both stability (Block, 1971; Conley, 1984; Costa & McCrae, 1998; Fiske & Chiriboga, 1990; George & Okun, 1979, Ozer & Gjerde, 1993; Weinberger, 1994) and change

(e.g., Helson & Stewart, 1994; Mischel, 1968; Ross & Nisbett, 1991), particularly with respect to the mean-level or normative stability of traits (Helson, Kwan, John, & Jones, 2002) in adult personality. Discussion about stability and change in personality has mainly focused on the relative ordering of individuals in a sample across time, or the normative or mean level stability of traits in adulthood. Few studies, however, have looked at systematic individual differences in change or the personality characteristics in young adulthood that foretell stability or change in personality in later adulthood.

Block's 1971 longitudinal study is one of the few studies that have addressed the hypothesis that certain personality constructions are more likely to change than others in adulthood. Block identified the most and least salient characteristics of adolescent and young adults who change appreciably over time, *Changers*, versus those that characterize individuals who remain much the same, *Nonchangers*. Block compared rank order and mean CAQ correlations for his sample over two time intervals, Junior High School to Senior High School (3 years), and Senior High School to mid-adulthood for patterns of stability and change in personality characteristics. For some of the subjects the adolescent personality descriptions were almost completely predictive of the way they were independently evaluated a generation later, for others, there was no, or even a reversed relationship between their character organization at the two widely separated assessment periods.

Self-Narratives as Data

The present study contributes to this discussion by evaluating stability and change in personality trait structure over time as expressed in autobiographical narratives. The use of autobiographies and other personal documents in the study of lives has a long history in psychology (e.g., Alexander, 1988; Allport, 1942; Baldwin 1942; Murray, 1938; White, 1966). Social scientists have traditionally linked narrative-based research with qualitative less structured methods and quantitative research with more vigorous and replicable methods of study. Healy and Stewart (1991), however, argue convincingly that the strengths of quantitative and qualitative approaches may complement and supplement each other in the study of personality. There are many examples of quantitative analysis of narratives (e.g., Helson, et al, 1995; Sears, Lapidus, & Cozzens, 1978; Stewart, Franz, & Layton, 1988; Winter and Carlson, 1988).

The methods of measurement used in the present study belie clear-cut distinctions between qualitative and quantitative methods. Application of the California Adult Q-Sort (CAQ, Block, 1978) and Adjective Checklist (ACL, Gough & Heilbrun, 1983) measures to score autobiographies yield quantitative data. Ratings on these two measures capitalize first on individual raters' subjective impressions of the rich autobiographical data, and second on the objective agreement among raters as to saliency and presence of personality characteristics.

The purpose of this study is to quantitatively evaluate autobiographical narratives from authors at two periods in their adult lives. It attempts to identify personality features that differentiate individuals with extremely stable personality features from individuals who are far less stable over time. Descriptive illustrations of findings are used to illuminate quantitative findings.

Method

Participants

This study makes use of an extant archive of 47 autobiographies. The autobiographies had originally been obtained for use in Irving Alexander's graduate seminar on personality assessment (for a thorough description of the seminar and assessment process, see Alexander, 1990).

Thirty-nine authors were able to be identified and located. These individuals were contacted in writing and offered one hundred dollars to write a second autobiography dating back to the time that they graduated from college. Thirty-five agreed, initially, to participate. Of these 35, 24 (13 females and 11 males) completed the second autobiography. At the time that the first autobiography was written, subjects were of mean age 20.5 ($SD = .51$). At the time that the second autobiography was written subjects mean age was 36.13 ($SD = 7.28$). The time lapse between subjects' first and second involvement with this project ranged from 5 to 27 years. An a priori comparison group was created to address the matter of how longer intervals of time may affect stability and change in personality. Using the median time interval between Time 1 and Time 2 (16.5 years), short interval and long interval groups were created consisting of the 12 subjects with time lapse less than 16.5 years and greater than 16.5 years, respectively.

The Data Source

The first set of autobiographies is collectively referred to as Time 1. Although the actual date autobiographies were written varies by author, all were written when subjects were undergraduate seniors, hired to provide material for Alexander's graduate seminar. Subjects were instructed to write a freestyle autobiography describing the important events and relationships in the person's life and what these experiences were like. Instructions for the second set of autobiographies were similar to the first. The mean length of autobiographies at Time 1 was 20.4 double spaced pages, at Time 2 it was 27.8 pages.

Measuring Traits

Descriptive personality traits were measured using the standard vocabulary of the CAQ. The CAQ procedure is a set of technical rules for scaling a group of 100 descriptive statements about personality, cognitive, and social functioning

vis-à-vis a particular individual. The validity and usefulness of Q-sort personality descriptions has been frequently demonstrated (see Ozer, 1993).

Q-sort Judges' and Ratings.

Members of the Duke University undergraduate psychology subject pool received 1 and ½ hour of credit towards their research participation requirement to read an autobiography (one per undergraduate) and perform a Q-sort on the author. Subject pool students working privately in groups of 10 or less were provided written and verbal instructions on the Q-Sort procedure. Each autobiography was initially read and Q-sorted by 4-6 subject pool judges. No subject pool judge performed a Q-sort on more than one autobiography author. There was no overlap in judges for any of the authors at either of the two time periods under investigation.

CAQ Reliabilities

The average reliability estimate between judges was .78 at Time 1 and Time 2. Average trait reliability across both time periods was .66. The 4-6 Q-sort descriptions available for the author of each autobiography were summed across each item then re-arrayed into the fixed Q-sort distribution to form a composite score for subsequent analyses.

Creating Nonchanger/Changer Comparison Groups

Scores yielded by across-time correlations between Time 1 and Time 2 Q-sort configurations for the full sample were used to compose two subgroups of participants for further analyses. Twelve participants above the median correlation were assigned to the "Nonchangers" group and the twelve below the median were assigned to the "Changers" group. The mean across time correlation for Nonchangers was .71, for Changers, .31.

Adjective Checklist

The ACL was also used to evaluate autobiographies. The ACL yields normative standard scores on 37 trait-derived scales. The ACL consists of 300 common adjectives that may be used to describe oneself, others, or a prototype. The eleven scales used for this study are: number of favorable items, number of unfavorable items, personal adjustment, achievement, affiliation, self-confidence, nurturance, aggression, succorance, abasement, and intraception.

ACL Judges' and Ratings

Five judges read each autobiography. As with the CAQ procedure, judges were members of the undergraduate psychology subject pool. No subject pool judge rated more than one autobiography. There was no overlap between CAQ judges and ACL judges. A composite rating was then derived for every autobiography author by including all adjectives that were checked off as

descriptive of the author by at least 3 of the 5 judges. The raw scores obtained for each scale were then converted to standard scores using the ACL guidelines that standardize raw scale scores for men and women against separate same-sex norms.

Results

Stability and Change in Individual Personality Configurations Across Time

To evaluate consistency and change in individuals the composite orderings of the 100 CAQ attributes at Time 1 and Time 2 were compared for each subject.

With a mean of .52 and standard deviation of .23 the overall across-time correlations suggests personality is fairly stable over time. However, with a range in across-time correlations of .04 to .82, there is considerable variation among individuals. To address the question of whether or not the length of the interval affects the extent to which personality remains the same or changes, across-time correlations were also computed separately for each Interval Group (see Figure 1). The two distributions are similar in mean and standard deviation (Short Interval mean = .54, $SD = .20$, Long Interval mean = .52, $SD = .26$). The absence of differences between the two groups suggests that the span of years between 31 and 43 affected little change on personality over and above change that occurred when subjects were in their twenties.

Comparison of Nonchangers and Changers on CAQ and ACL

The Nonchangers were compared with the Changers at both time periods on each of the 100 Q-sort items by means of separate t-tests. Mean ratings on each of the Time 1 CAQ items are reported in Table 1. Thirty-six items differ beyond the .05 significance level. At Time 1, the results portray an obvious pattern. Wherever there is a significant difference between the two groups, the more culturally valued attributes (e.g., dependable, personally charming, apt to arouse liking and acceptance, warm and compassionate, internally consistent, insightful) characterize the Nonchangers, and the less valued attributes (e.g., uncomfortable with uncertainty, concerned with bodily symptoms, projecting blame, hostile, brittle coping system, avoiding of close relationships, self-pitying, moody) characterize the Changers.

CAQ Comparisons at Time 2

The trend in differences seen at Time 1 continue to be seen at Time 2. Thirty-four items at Time 2 distinguish Changers from their Nonchanger counterparts (see Table 1). Nonchangers continue to manifest relative strengths (e.g., more dependable, protective of close ones, candid, cheerful, socially poised, productive, warm and compassionate, interesting, insightful, relaxed in manner) and Changers, as a group tend to manifest relative deficits (e.g., more critical of others, uncomfortable with uncertainty, thin-skinned, self-defensive, irritable,

reluctant to commit, concerned with personal adequacy, distrustful of others, self-defeating, anxious, preoccupied, and moody).

Table 1
Mean Scores for CAQ Items

	<i>Time 1</i>		<i>Time 2</i>	
	NC	C	NC	C
1. Is critical, skeptical	4.17	5.25	3.42	5.33**
2. Is genuinely dependable	8.17	6.50	8.25	6.67**
3. Has a wide range of interests	7.75	6.75	7.25	5.92
4. Is a talkative individual	6.42	4.58**	5.83	5.75
5. Behaves in a giving way	6.25	5.58	7.42	6.58
6. Is fastidious; meticulous.	5.91	5.41	5.00	5.00
7. Favors conservative values	5.33	5.67	4.92	4.75
8. High intellectual capacity	8.25	8.17	8.17	7.83
9. Uncomfortable with uncertainty	4.83	6.25**	4.00	5.92**
10. Bodily symptoms of anxiety	4.08	5.75**	4.50	6.00
11. Is protective of close ones	6.75	6.17	7.50	6.08*
12. Tends to be self-defensive	3.83	5.08*	3.25	5.58**
13. Is thin-skinned	3.92	5.00	3.75	5.25**
14. Is genuinely submissive	3.33	3.92	3.75	3.67
15. Skilled in pretending and humor	4.50	4.17	5.58	4.25**
16. Is introspective	5.92	6.75	6.25	6.58
17. Is sympathetic and considerate	6.92	5.92	7.25	6.33
18. Initiates humor	4.83	3.75*	5.25	4.25
19. Seeks reassurance from others	4.92	6.50*	4.83	5.17
20. Has a rapid personal tempo	5.42	5.17	5.33	4.50
21. Arouses nurturant feelings	5.08	4.50	5.58	4.75
22. Feels lack of personal meaning	2.50	5.58**	2.33	4.33*
23. Tends to project blame	2.25	4.58**	2.75	3.75
24. Prides self on being objective	6.50	5.67	6.00	5.25
25. Delays gratification	3.67	4.08	3.67	4.00
26. Is productive; gets things done	7.83	6.83	7.42	5.92*
27. Is condescending	2.83	4.33	2.75	3.00
28. Arouses liking in people	7.17	4.17**	7.25	5.50**
29. Turned to for reassurance	5.42	4.17**	6.92	5.00*
30. Gives up in the face adversity	2.58	3.17	2.50	3.92
31. Regards self as attractive	5.58	4.17**	5.25	4.92
32. Aware of impression on others	6.67	6.33	6.08	5.58
33. Is calm, relaxed in manner	6.50	4.25**	6.83	4.42**
34. Is over-reactive and irritable	3.25	4.42	2.83	4.30**
35. Has warmth; is compassionate	7.75	5.92**	8.58	6.50*
36. Is subtly negativistic	1.83	3.50*	1.91	3.25
37. Is guileful and opportunistic	1.67	2.00	1.83	1.50
38. Has hostility toward others	2.17	4.58**	1.67	3.83**
39. Has unconventional thought	3.38	5.33**	3.75	4.25
40. Is generally fearful	3.00	4.25	3.42	4.17
41. Is moralistic	6.41	5.42	6.42	5.83
42. Is reluctant to commit self	3.17	4.08	3.25	4.83*
43. Is facially expressive	5.17	4.42*	5.00	4.92
44. Evaluates motivation of others	5.75	6.33	5.50	6.08
45. Has a brittle coping system	2.50	4.45*	2.67	5.33**
46. Engages fictional speculations	4.17	5.75**	4.17	4.08
47. Has a readiness to feel guilt	4.25	4.58	4.7	5.5
48. Avoids close relationships	2.50	4.50**	1.83	4.33**
49. Is distrustful of people	2.83	4.33*	2.75	4.17*
50. Is unpredictable/ changeable	3.08	4.50*	4.08	4.75

Table 1 cont...

51. Values intellectual matters	7.83	7.75	7.50	7.00
52. Behaves in an assertive manner	5.91	5.41	6.17	4.75
53. Is unable to delay gratification	3.58	3.67	3.58	3.67
54. Is gregarious and outgoing	7.17	4.20**	7.58	4.83**
55. Is self-defeating	1.83	3.42**	2.17	4.08*
56. Responds to humor	5.33	4.75	5.67	5.58
57. Is an interesting person	6.59	5.83	7.00	5.58*
58. Enjoys sensuous experiences	5.59	5.75	5.75	5.08
59. Concerned with adequacy body	5.58	5.33	5.17	5.58
60. Has insight into own motives	7.00	6.67	6.67	6.58
61. Exploits dependency in people	3.25	3.50	3.42	3.17
62. Is rebellious, non-conforming	3.42	4.83	3.42	3.50
63. Judges in conventional terms	5.25	5.17	4.42	4.42
64. Perceptive of interpersonal cues	6.00	4.75**	6.33	5.00*
65. Pushes to stretch limits	3.42	4.00	3.58	3.75
66. Enjoys aesthetic impressions	5.08	5.42	5.83	5.42
67. Is self-indulgent	4.25	4.08	3.58	4.00
68. Is basically anxious	3.58	5.00*	3.50	5.17*
69. Is sensitive to demands	4.75	5.00	4.33	5.42
70. Is ethically consistent	7.08	5.67	7.17	6.75
71. Has high aspiration level	7.92	6.75	6.92	5.42
72. Concerned with own adequacy	6.58	5.91	5.50	7.42**
73. Perceives in sexual terms	2.33	2.58	2.91	2.50
74. Feels satisfied with self	6.17	4.58*	6.75	4.17**
75. Has consistent personality	7.00	4.17**	6.83	5.58
76. Projects feelings/motivations	4.67	4.92	4.50	4.67
77. Is straightforward and candid	6.75	5.50	7.00	5.58**
78. Feels cheated/victimized by life	1.50	4.08**	2.08	3.83
79. Has preoccupying thoughts	4.92	6.08*	4.17	6.25**
80. Is interested in opposite sex	7.50	6.75	6.08	6.92
81. Is physically attractive	5.83	4.08**	5.33	4.92
82. Has fluctuating moods	4.33	6.75**	4.25	6.00**
83. Sees to the heart of problems	6.17	4.83*	6.58	5.25**
84. Is cheerful	6.50	3.33**	6.92	4.33**
85. Communicates through action	4.75	5.33	5.00	4.42
86. Tends to repress or deny anxiety	3.25	3.67	3.00	4.17*
87. Complicates clear-cut situations	3.58	4.00	3.42	4.33
88. Is personally charming	6.08	3.67*	6.42	4.42**
89. Compares self to others	5.58	6.67*	4.83	5.92
90. Concerned religion/philosophy	6.33	5.67	6.42	5.83
91. Values power in self and others	4.42	4.75	4.33	3.75
92. Has social poise and presence	6.83	3.25**	7.17	4.83**
93. Female—feminine in manner	5.67	4.33	5.83	5.17
Male—masculine in manner				
94. Expresses hostility directly	3.00	3.50	2.67	3.25
95. Proffers or extends advice	4.67	4.08	6.08	5.58
96. Values independence	7.08	7.17	6.42	6.67
97. Emotionally bland	3.25	4.00	2.25	3.17
98. Verbally fluent	6.92	6.75	7.67	7.00
99. Is self-dramatizing	4.00	4.58	4.08	5.33
100. Relates to everyone the same	4.25	3.67	4.58	4.50

Nonchangers = NC; Changers = C

* Differs from Nonchangers, $p < .05$. ** Differs from Nonchangers, $p < .01$

ACL Comparisons at Time 1

To further evaluate important personality differences Nonchangers were

compared with the Changers at Time 1 and Time 2 on 11 ACL scales by means of separate t-tests. The mean ratings on each CAQ item at Time 1 and Time 2 are reported for Nonchangers and Changers in Table 2. The means between the groups at Time 1 differ beyond the .05 significance level on 6 of the 11 scales. ACL findings echo those of the CAQ ratings, relative to the Changers, the Nonchangers at Time 1 are rated significantly more favorably. The two groups differ widely on two scales in particular, Personal Adjustment and Affiliation. On both scales the Nonchangers' mean score is above the mean of the normative group and the Changers' mean score is well-below the normative mean.

Table 2
Mean Scores for ACL Scales

	<i>Time 1</i>		<i>Time 2</i>	
	NC	C	NC	C
Number of Favorable Items	52	42*	58	41**
Number of Unfavorable Items	46	58*	44	62**
Personal Adjustment	53	39**	58	36**
Achievement	55	52	58	51
Affiliation	54	39**	59	38**
Self-Confidence	58	50*	58	48*
Nurturance	51	38*	58	36**
Aggression	51	53	49	57
Succorance	42	48	47	58*
Abasement	43	50	46	54
Intracception	49	45	56	42*

NC = Nonchangers; C = Changers

* Differs from Nonchangers, $p < .05$. ** Differs from Nonchangers, $p < .01$

ACL Comparisons at Time 2

The means between the Nonchangers and Changers on the ACL at Time 2 differ beyond the .05 significance level on 8 of the 11 scales. The trends in differences between Nonchangers and Changers on the ACL scales evidenced at Time 1 have continued and increased as subjects matured into later adulthood.

Illustrative Cases

To illustrate differences between Nonchangers and Changers in this sample, selected CAQ and ACL ratings and autobiographical information are summarized and highlighted by direct quotes from the autobiographies of four subjects. A Nonchanger and a Changer from each interval group are compared.

Lynn's and Julia's Cases

Lynn and Julia (the names are fictional) are two women who are similar in age, one 27 years old, the other 28 and were graduated 7 and 6 years, respectively, at the time of their second involvement with this project. Both women graduated from a highly competitive university, aspired to attain

professions in highly coveted fields and were accepted at prestigious universities to obtain their professional degrees. At Time 2 neither woman was married or involved in a serious romantic relationship and neither had children.

The across time correlation coefficients of Lynn’s and Julia’s personality configurations are .69 and .29, respectively. As such, Lynn was assigned to the Nonchanger comparison group and Julia was assigned to the Changer group. In Tables 3 and 4 selected data from each woman’s CAQ composites and ACL scales from Time 1 and Time 2 are presented. For each woman, the most salient 13 CAQ items (items sorted into the highest two CAQ categories) at Time 1 and Time 2 are listed side by side followed by the Affiliation and Personal Adjustment ACL scores that the women received at each time period.

Table 3
Lynn’s Most Salient CAQ Characteristics and Selected ACL Scores

<i>Time 1</i>	<i>Time 2</i>
Is dependable	Is dependable
Has a wide range of interests	Has a wide range of interests
Is intelligent	Is intelligent
Is productive	Is productive
Has a high aspiration level	Has a high aspiration level
Has social poise and presence	Has social poise and presence
Values own independence	Values own independence
Is verbally fluent	Is verbally fluent
Is giving towards others	Values intellectual matters
Is sympathetic and considerate	Is assertive
Arouses liking and acceptance	Responds to humor
Has personal warmth	Is ethically consistent
Sees to heart of important problems	Is straightforward and candid
ACL Affiliation	
57	59
ACL Personal Adjustment	
69	69

The two women do not differ so much in the number of items that remain in the most salient categories over time, as the degree of change that many items evidence over time. In *Lynn’s* case 8 of the 13 items remain in the most salient categories. At Time 1 the set of most salient attributes describe Lynn as an individual who from childhood through her undergraduate years demonstrated numerous strengths ranging from excellent cognitive abilities to effective relational skills. Especially notable at Time 1 is the abundance of positive interpersonal attributes. Though Lynn valued her independence, excelled in academics and took pride in her successes, the most memorable challenges and episodes of her youth and undergraduate years seemed to have involved close personal relationships. These qualities are apparent in her portrayal of her older

sister's teenage struggle to overcome cancer. Lynn writes:

I never understood what was going on in her head, aside from an obstinate desire to succeed ALONE. I knew that if it had been me with the cancer, and I often wished it had been, I would have reacted totally different—I'm independent and self-motivated, but I need other people around for comfort, support and criticism.

Table 4
Julia's Most Salient CAQ Characteristics and Selected ACL Scores

<i>Time 1</i>	<i>Time 2</i>
Uncomfortable with uncertainties	Uncomfortable with uncertainties
Anxiety in physical symptoms	Anxiety in physical symptoms
Keeps people at a distance	Keeps people at a distance
Is rebellious	Is rebellious
Values own independence	Values own independence
Is dependable	Has hostility toward others
Is introspective	Has a brittle ego-defense system
Prides self on being rational	Is changeable in behavior and attitudes
Is productive	Is intelligent
Aware of impression on others	Gives up in the face of adversity
Values intellectual matters	Is sensitive to demands
Has high aspiration level	Is concerned with own adequacy as a person
Has preoccupying thoughts	Expresses hostile feelings directly
ACL Affiliation	
12	13
ACL Personal Adjustment	
42	4

At Time 2, as reflected in the across time stability of Lynn's high ACL Affiliation score (.57 at Time 1 and .59 at Time 2), positive relationships continue to be a very important aspect of Lynn's life. However, attributes and attitudes most conducive to facilitating Lynn's career have come to the fore. Lynn seems to maintain a high level of personal adjustment by summoning the resources from her arsenal of personal strengths that are best suited to successfully negotiate the challenges and goals of her stage of life. At Time 2 these goals appear to primarily involve establishing a personally rewarding career, a path that at times put her at odds with her father. In Lynn's words, in describing her disagreement with her father about work, she writes:

I guess he is just more traditional than I am, believing that work is work and a person should look for happiness in family and friends. He thinks I

am idealistic and chasing windmills. He may be right, but I don't want to settle for anything less at this point in my life.

In Julia's case, although 5 of the 13 CAQ items remain in the most salient categories, many of the changes in Julia's CAQ composite are large, jumping from low salience categories to high salience categories and vice versa. At Time 1, though she was described as anxious, isolated and internally focused, Julia also appears to have been highly motivated and productive. At Time 2, Julia is still viewed as anxious and distant, however, she is no longer viewed as productive or aspiring. Rather, her most salient characteristics suggest that she is poorly adapting to a personal crisis.

Most notable among the changes evidenced on the CAQ is the movement of the items "has a brittle ego-defense system" and "withdraws in the face of adversity". These items were rated among Julia's least salient characteristics at Time 1; she was viewed as woman with fortitude and resiliency. To illustrate, Julia describes her efforts to distance herself in a constructive way from an unsupportive and chaotic family life during her elementary school years:

I met people who lived nowhere near the housing projects in which we then lived. There were bright, non-violent children who were very nice to me and teachers who took me on field trips to places as far away as Charlotte, NC. I found there were perks in doing well in school. I had all sorts of special privileges and chances to be in charge.

She had grown up in an unstable, poor and at times violent family. She coped by focusing on academic achievement, isolating herself from her family and escaping into a world of fantasy. She attributed her loneliness to being superior and misunderstood.

These coping strategies, however, did not hold up to the challenges of establishing a career and close relationships that Julia faced during the period covered by her Time 2 autobiography. During her post-undergraduate years Julia's attempts at establishing friendships and romantic ties were demeaning. Moreover, she felt demoralized by her experiences in medical school. She describes herself at that time as:

just scraping by because I didn't want to study. It got to the point that I hated thinking about it. I was so disappointed after the first couple months there that every time I thought about staying I would just get depressed and then I wouldn't study and then I wouldn't do well on a test and then I'd have to go back and retake the test and I'd get more depressed.

Julia's behavior became maladaptive and self-destructive as she attempted to withdraw. This portrait of change is further supported by Julia's ACL scales. At both Time 1 and Time 2 her Affiliation scores (12 at Time 1, 13 at Time 2) are very low reflecting a stable across time tendency to avoid close relationships. A dramatic shift, however, is seen in her Personal Adjustment scores (42 at Time 1, 4 at Time 2). At Time 1, Julia was seen as adjusting somewhat below average, demonstrating at least a modest ability to deal effectively with life's exigencies. At Time 2, however, her Personal Adjustment score plummeted reflecting almost a complete absence of effective coping abilities.

Mike's and David's Cases

Mike and David at Time 2 are 48 years old and 46 years old, respectively. Twenty-seven years has lapsed since Mike's first involvement with this project, 26 years since David's first involvement. Both men are Married at Time 2, never divorced, and have 2 college-age children. Both men went through several job changes before settling into the jobs that they currently hold. Despite their many similarities, a very high across time CAQ correlation coefficient of .76 suggests that Mike's personality has remained much the same over the almost 3 decades since writing his first autobiography. Mike was assigned to the Nonchanger comparison group. In contrast, David's personality ($r = .20$) appears to have undergone substantial change; thus David was assigned to the Changer group. Tables 5 and 6 summarize the 13 most salient CAQ items and ACL Affiliation and Personal Adjustment scores for Mike and David at Time 1 and Time 2.

Table 5
Mike's Most Salient Characteristics

<i>Time 1</i>	<i>Time 2</i>
Is dependable	Is dependable
Is protective of those close to him	Is protective of those close to him
Is sympathetic and considerate	Is sympathetic and considerate
Has personal warmth,	Has personal warmth
Emphasizes being with others	Emphasizes being with others
Has a consistent personality	Has a consistent personality
Arouses liking and acceptance	Arouses liking and acceptance
Is moralistic	Behaves in an ethically consistent manner
Judges in conventional terms	Is giving toward others
Is interested in opposite sex	Is productive
Is personally charming	Is satisfied with self
Behaves in masculine manner	Is turned to for advice and reassurance
Is verbally fluent	Values intellectual matters
ACL Affiliation	
54	62
ACL Personal Adjustment	
52	69

Table 6
David's Most Salient Characteristics

<i>Time 1</i>	<i>Time 2</i>
Is very intelligent	Is very intelligent
Values intellectual matters	Values intellectual matters
Uncomfortable with uncertainties	Has a wide range of interests
Is introspective	Is protective of people close to him
Feels a lack of personal meaning	Is sympathetic and considerate
Aware of impression on others	Is giving towards others
Is changeable and unpredictable	Prides self on being rational
Enjoys sensuous experiences	Is productive
Concerned with own adequacy	Arouses liking and acceptance
Is interested in the opposite sex	Is calm and relaxed
Has fluctuating moods	Is an interesting person
Concerned with philosophical issues	Has insight into his own behavior
Values own independence	Has an internally consistent personality
ACL Affiliation 41	49
ACL Personal Adjustment 38	54

For Mike, 7 of the 13 most salient CAQ items remain in the highest categories at Time 2. There are no dramatic shifts, the items move between moderate and high salience categories. At both Time 1 and Time 2, Mike, above all else, emphasizes the importance of close relationships in his life.

At Time 1, although Mike was high achieving and intelligent, college studies were not pursued rigorously—perhaps due to the unsettling influence of the active draft for the Viet Nam War. Mike did not support the United States' involvement in the war, but he still felt strong sense of duty and obligation. Despite being thrust into this very unsettling position, Mike was able to come to some resolution on his own course of action. In his autobiography he states:

I am of mixed emotions concerning military service—I feel that I am no exception in the line of young men chosen to serve, however I'll readily admit that I neither want to serve nor support our involvement in Vietnam. Nonetheless, I encounter some confusion in attempting to plan a coherent future when the draft poses constant "ifs" for every alternative other than dental school. I believe much of my worry stems from the knowledge that I must also attempt to think of Sharon, my Mother, and their needs. If single, I probably wouldn't worry—and probably shouldn't worry now, for if drafted, there is no alternative but to serve.

Instead of focusing on career goals, Mike concentrated on establishing strong relationships including marriage to his present wife during his junior year. The

Time 2 list of most salient CAQ characteristics shows stability in Mike's relational skills and social orientation as he continues to derive satisfaction from his involvement with people—especially where he is in a capacity of being helpful or nurturing. Family is a central concern for Mike. He takes great care in describing his (now young adult) children's personalities and joys, frustrations, and mundane observations on parenting:

Looking back on these years, I can see that we somehow remained involved with our kids' lives. The most significant things I can attribute that to are family vacations and, believe it or not, family dinners...Even today, our children tell us that that was unique among their friends and that they enjoy being able to talk with us about virtually anything.

The changes in the most salient CAQ items at Time 2 seem to reflect general maturation as Mike became more generative and secure with himself and his position in society. These changes are reflected in the increase in Mike's ACL Personal Adjustment score from slightly above average at Time 1 to well-above average at Time 2 (52 at Time 1, 69 at Time 2). Near the end of his fifth decade Mike has established a satisfying career and has handled change and adversity with composure.

Of the 13 most salient CAQ characteristics identified for *David* at Time 1, only 2 remain in the most salient categories at Time 2. At Time 1 David was struggling with a number of issues common to late adolescence. David's high school and college years were a period of growth in introspection, restlessness, dissatisfaction with major life issues, and questioning meaning in life. Gifted intellectually, David managed to excel in academics with a minimum of effort. He had only brief periods of contentment, and many superficial and temporarily satisfying relationships. Describing this period of his life, David writes that a college friend classified him as,

"frustration in mediocrity". I think his opinion was quite accurate. I was searching for something more than what I had, and since I was not finding this elusive item, I was frustrated.

At the time when he writing his second autobiography, as reflected in the list of most salient Time 2 CAQ attributes and the substantial increase in his Personal Adjustment score (38 at Time 1 versus 54 at Time 2), David is feeling far more content with life. He appears to derive satisfaction from both family and work life. Relationships during the latter part of his life to date are depicted with warmth and sincerity. His stable and happy marriage and home life appear to be central his overall feeling of well being. Whereas inconsistencies were detected by readers at the time of David's earlier writing with respect to his indulged upbringing and his then burgeoning social consciousness, at the second writing,

the author appears far more internally consistent. He appears to be much more at ease with social issues that previously plagued him. His reflections on life are related with humor and candor. He summarizes his personal growth in these words:

Although it was a long gradual process, I believe I eventually was able to mature into an adult individual comfortable with his position in our society, due in large part to my happy home life and enjoyment from outside interests. While I probably am not living the life I might have predicted when I graduated from college, I have no regrets about what I have become. Rather, I think I have been able to sustain my personal ideals and still function as a productive member of society.

Discussion

This study found, on average, moderately high stability in personality characteristics and individual personalities, which supports the general trend in the literature (Costa & McCrae, 1997; Pervin, 1994; Roberts and DelVecchio, 2000). Though, subjects' personalities, on average, were moderately stable, there were considerable individual differences. For some subjects, personality stabilized by their senior year in college, for others, personality transformed markedly during the years after college. In contrast to expectations (Pervin, 1994; Roberts, Helson, & Klohnen, 2002), no relationship was found between amount of time lapsed from Time 1 to Time 2 and stability/change in personality.

A remarkable number of CAQ characteristics and ACL scales differed significantly between Nonchangers and Changers both at Time 1 and Time 2. Nonchangers, who were generally rated as better psychologically adjusted than Changers at Time 1, showed even greater improvement at Time 2. Similar findings have been made by other researchers. Block found similar differences between Nonchangers and Changers in his 1971 study, particularly for the males in his sample. Block's female and male Changers were considerably less well adjusted than Nonchangers at the time they were assessed in senior high school year. Two decades later the male Nonchangers had matured further while the male Changers continued to appear immature and poorly adjusted.

Jones and Meredith (2000) found in their longitudinal study that, although adolescents with less psychological health improved somewhat in later life, adolescents with greater psychological health showed a more positive acceleration of psychological health in adulthood. Cramer (2003) found the use of immature coping strategies or defense mechanisms in early adulthood predictive of negative changes in personality traits in middle and late middle adulthood.

It stands to reason that there are factors not measured by the present study such as social roles and life events (Haan, Millsap, & Harka, 1986; Srivastava et al., 2003; Vaidya, Gray, Haig, & Watson, 2002) that promoted stability in some subjects and change in others. It is also possible that the explanation for the striking differences found between Nonchangers and Changers lies, in part, within personality, with endogenous characteristics with intrinsic developmental paths (McCrae, 2002).

Several other aspects of this study deserve comment. The generalizability of the results reported here is limited to some extent by the small size of the sample and the methods by which the sample was obtained. The subjects at Time 1, as students at a highly competitive university, were exceptionally capable and accomplished as compared to the general population of people their age. This factor is reflected in the high saliency of cognitive characteristics on the CAQ for all of the subjects at Time 1 and Time 2.

The subjects were, in a sense, self-selected in that they responded to a "help wanted" advertisement to write their life story at Time 1 and agreed to participate and followed through at Time 2, demonstrating a strong commitment to the project. A final consideration concerns the use of undergraduate raters to assess personality features. The hundreds of undergraduates who scored a single autobiography by either the CAQ or ACL procedure were untrained in the subtleties of clinical personality assessment. However, high overall level of agreement between raters as to the presence of personality traits and the configuration of traits according to saliency (on the ACL and CAQ, respectively) speaks to uniformity in impressions cast by each autobiography.

The four cases illustrate the different trends for Nonchangers and Changers found in the data. Like Lynn and Mike, Nonchangers demonstrate substantial stability in personality characteristics over the years. They appear at Time 1 to be a fairly homogeneous group of well adjusted individuals, equipped psychologically, socially, and cognitively to deal with most facets of life. Nonchangers, however, do change in the sense that they mature and adapt to their current life circumstances and the challenges of each stage of life.

The Changers appear to be a more diverse group. In general, at Time 1 Changers were considerably less well adjusted than their Nonchanger counterparts with less positive emotion and fewer rewarding relationships. When comparing means (between Time 1 and Time 2 Personal Adjustment scores), Changers are as poorly adjusted at Time 2 as they were at Time 1. This finding, however, belies the great diversity in the direction of personality change among the Changer group. Some Changers' personal adjustment, like David's, improved greatly, to look very much like the average Nonchanger at Time 2. Other Changers' personality adjustment, such as Julia's, declined in the same proportion. As noted by Nesselroade and Boker (1994), it is probably more realistic and advantageous to consider the two processes of change and stability together, rather than in isolation from each other. In particular, a closer look at

the dynamics of change and stability within individuals can add to the understanding of mean change in stability in personality characteristics over time.

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