

New Directions in Aging Research

# Personality Reconsidered: A New Agenda for Aging Research

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**The purpose of this article is to introduce a newly emerging model of personality that integrates structures and processes within a levels-of-analysis framework. This model, labeled the *six foci of personality*, includes traits, personal action constructs, and life stories as structural components, and it includes states, self-regulation, and self-narration as the parallel process constructs. Conceptual and methodological issues are discussed in relation to this model, and each of the six foci is reviewed for its relevance to personality and aging. It is argued that the model provides a framework so that the research base in each of the six focal areas can be nurtured, solidified, and organized—ultimately contributing to a more integrative, comprehensive understanding of personality and its importance over the life span.**

MUCH of what we know about optimal aging has focused on the lifelong importance of health-related behaviors such as exercise, eating and drinking in moderation, not smoking, being actively engaged in life, and having a strong social network. Other known predictors of late life adaptation include education level, socioeconomic status, and social structural variables serving as “risk factors” such as gender and race. Surprisingly little is known about the *person* in whom these risk factors cohere. In fact, personality is arguably the driving force behind all antecedents of successful aging, except of course the structural ones. What type of person you are, how reliably you can be counted on, your approach to people—all are crucial for understanding social support, coping strategies, stress, and other health-related behaviors. However, we think personality in later life is rarely examined in this way because limited conceptions of personality have kept it from receiving the empirical attention it deserves. Personality in adulthood is often seen as rigidly stable, not as a construct open for intervention and change. This is true despite a focus in mainstream personality research (e.g., Heatherton & Weinberger, 1994) and developmental research (e.g., Lachman, 1989) on the extent to which personality changes or remains stable over the life span.

There has also been a long-standing split between social-cognitive processing and structural trait approaches to personality that has made a unified science of personality elusive (Fleeson, 2001; Mischel, 1999), despite the presence of developmentalists who have included both approaches in their work (e.g., Labouvie-Vief & Diehl, 1999). The trait framework that rose to dominance in gerontology may have been so well received because it clarified and simplified the field of personality in adulthood—personality was seen as stable. Additionally, this stability is often viewed positively, as personality is proclaimed to be one domain in later life that will not decline, as opposed to the physical and cognitive domains. But this conception of personality as stable has made it difficult to conceive of a developmental, dynamic approach to personality in adulthood.

Here we introduce a newly emerging model, the *six foci of personality*, which integrates processes and structures within a levels-of-analysis framework and captures the exciting

directions in which current personality research is being conducted. This model addresses the full complexity of personality while providing a framework for incorporating the well-known trait and social-cognitive approaches, enabling researchers to examine stability and change, structure and process. Because aspects of this model have been introduced in our previous work (Hooker, 2002; McAdams, 1995), here we describe it briefly, pose new questions, and invite researchers in aging to consider how their work could contribute to continued development of this comprehensive model.

The model’s assumptions are grounded in developmental systems theory (Ford & Lerner, 1992), which emphasizes the plasticity, multidirectionality, and organizing properties of the person. Recently formulated personality models (Mischel & Shoda, 1998) have many similarities but without the explicitly developmental perspective. The embeddedness of the individual in nested multilevel contexts (e.g., day-to-day living situations, life-course temporal frame, and sociohistorical time) and the dynamic transactions between individuals and context necessarily affect personality (e.g., see Mroczek & Spiro, 2003). Theorizing in life-span developmental psychology (Baltes, Lindenberger, & Staudinger, 1998; Schulz & Heckhausen, 1996) with emphases on understanding ontogenetic and evolutionary processes is consistent with the more general developmental systems theory.

## *An Elaborated “Triarchic” Model: The Six Foci of Personality*

The three levels of personality originally explicated by McAdams (1995) are structural in nature (Hooker, 2002). McAdams’s triarchic model of personality can be expanded by adding necessary *process constructs* to each of the three levels (see Figure 1).

Briefly, the first level is that of *traits*. Traits are like a dispositional signature and account for broad consistencies in behavior across situations and over time. The parallel process construct is that of *states*. States are intraindividual processes that connote dynamic change or the constant possibility of change. Constructs that have typically been studied in a state framework



Figure 1. Six foci of personality. PACs = personal action constructs.

include processes known to be transient and involving short-term change, such as moods, fatigue, hunger, and anxiety. However, when constructs typically thought of as stable, such as temperament and traits, are examined in ways that allow for change, ordered change patterns are evident (e.g., Fleeson, 2001; Hooker, Nesselroade, Nesselroade, & Lerner, 1987). Nesselroade argued (e.g., 1987, 1991) that the inherent lability of state constructs requires methodological approaches that differ from traditional trait measures in which stability is expected and change over time is considered to be unreliable “error.” States may be uniquely suited to capturing intraindividual personality processes in situ—surely an intriguing challenge for developmentalists.

Personality structures in the second level have been called personal concerns and characteristic adaptations; we are choosing to use Little’s (1983) phrase, *personal action constructs* (PACs), because it more accurately reflects the dynamic goal orientation of these constructs. PACs include goals, developmental tasks, and motivations, that is, the “doing” (Cantor, 1990) side of personality, and they are contextualized in time, place, and social role. Compared with traits, they are less broad and more contingent. Across different life stages this level of personality shows considerable changes (e.g., young adults have more career-oriented goals than retired adults), as one negotiates normative transitions and experiences positive and negative life events.

PACs have their parallel in *self-regulatory processes* in service of an individual’s goals. These processes, such as self-efficacy and outcome expectancy, are usually discussed in relation to specific domains (Bandura, 1997). For example, one can feel highly efficacious in meeting one’s personal family goals but may feel very little efficacy in the realm of work. Sense of control, a construct related to self-efficacy, has long been of interest to aging researchers (e.g., Langer & Rodin, 1976; Rodin & Langer, 1978; Schulz, 1976) and is domain specific (Lachman, 1986; Lachman & Weaver, 1998).

The third level of personality is the *life story*. This is the person’s narrative understanding of the self. People create life stories that reconstruct the past and anticipate the future in order

to provide their lives with some sense of meaning, unity, and purpose. These internalized and evolving stories—or narrative identities—contain plots, characters, images, themes, and scenes that are central to a person’s understanding of who he or she is, was, and may be in the future. Life stories continually evolve over the life course as new themes and relationships are woven into the plot and as life settings change.

The life story has its process counterparts in social-cognitive activities related to recounting life narratives, such as *remembering*, *reminiscence*, and *storytelling*. We know, for example, that the audience (social context) makes a difference in storytelling (Adams, Smith, Pasupathi, & Vitolo, 2002; Bartlett, 1932; Fiese, Hooker, Kotary, Schwagler, & Rimmer, 1995) and that what one remembers and tells about one’s personal history changes to align with current realities (Ross & Wilson, 2003). These processes, when related to one’s own life story, can be called *self-narration*.

In sum, six foci are encompassed by this integrative model of personality (see Figure 1). Three foci are the levels, all structural in nature; and three are processes that parallel the structures at each level. This model is not hierarchical in the sense that the second and third levels “build” on the first level. However, developmentally, traits and states are manifested as early as infancy (see the discussion of temperament in the paragraphs that follow), whereas goals and life stories develop later in childhood and adolescence.

*Advantages of the six-foci model.*—The attractiveness of this framework is that the full richness of personality can be conceptually addressed. Few studies would be expected to include measures of personality at each level, but researchers could speak a common language and thus nurture and solidify a relatively unified science of personality in adulthood.

The model also finesses two methodological and conceptual conundrums for personality theorists. The first, the stability versus change dichotomy, simply dissolves when all levels of personality are considered. Both change and stability are expected, operate to produce personality coherence, and are important for the discriminative facility needed to handle both moment-to-moment changes in circumstance and the capacity for adaptation over a lifetime. A conceptual framework that elucidates these twin perspectives will be helpful for further development of the field.

The second methodological and conceptual conundrum is whether personality is better understood idiographically or nomothetically (e.g., Allport, 1942). This issue has heightened salience for researchers interested in aging because of increasing differences between individuals later as compared with earlier in the life span. Explanations for this increased heterogeneity in adult personality require discussion of circular feedback functions (Schneirla, 1957), such as amplification of initial differences through processes of cumulative and interactional continuity (Caspi, 2000; Caspi, Bem, & Elder, 1989; Light, Grigsby, & Bligh, 1996) and “niche-picking” through evocative genotype–environment correlations (Scarr & McCartney, 1983). The “idiotetic” (Lamiell, 1981) resolution combines the idiographic task of tracing individual trajectories with the nomothetic task of seeing if these generalize across persons.

Although Nesselroade and colleagues (1990, 1991; Nesselroade & Ford, 1985) have written persuasively about the

necessity of taking this “N-of-one-at-a-time” approach for understanding how intraindividual change is the mechanism for producing individual differences over time, recognition of the merits of this approach has not resulted in much empirical work (Kim & Nesselrode, 2003). Along these lines, our model allows researchers to address patterns of diverse lives while seeing themes of uniformity across lives. The oft-quoted Murray and Kluckhohn (1953) adage that “Every man [sic] is in certain respects (a) like all other men, (b) like some other men, (c) like no other man” (p. 53) parallels the levels identified in our model (cf. Runyan, 1983). That is, all people fall on a continuum of a relatively universal set of traits (Level I); particular goals and developmental tasks are relevant to some, but not all people (Level II); and one’s life story (Level III) is uniquely created. Thus, again, the idiographic versus nomothetic approach is shown to be a false dichotomy under our personality framework. What follows is a brief sketch of the research base in each of the focus areas and ideas for future research in adult development and aging.

## LEVEL I

### *Traits*

The research by Costa and McCrae (e.g., Costa & McCrae, 1980, 1988; McCrae & Costa, 1990) and others (Digman, 1990; Goldberg, 1993; John, 1990) in establishing the well-known five-factor model of personality has been enormously influential. The NEO or OCEAN model encompassing the traits of Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to Experience, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness, known by the moniker, “the Big Five,” is a powerful framework for understanding people. Additionally, a half-century of methodological work has resulted in a wide arsenal of well established, psychometrically sound trait measures from which to choose.

Generally, the prodigious longitudinal research on traits shows moderate to substantial rank order (normative) stability over periods as long as decades, depending on length of time between measurements, with briefer intervals resulting in higher correlations. Evidence is mixed, however, with regard to mean level changes, with some studies showing almost no change (e.g., Costa & McCrae, 1978; Siegler, George, & Okun, 1979) over time and others showing both significant mean-level changes (e.g., Block & Haan, 1971; Haan, Millsap, & Hartka, 1986; Helson & Wink, 1992; Jones & Meredith, 1996) and intraindividual changes in trajectories (Helson, Jones, & Kwan, 2002). The research by Helson and colleagues on mean-level changes gives evidence across samples, cohorts, and personality inventories that scores on traits related to conscientiousness, agreeableness, and norm adherence tend to increase with age in adulthood, whereas traits related to social vitality tend to decrease (Helson, Kwan, John, & Jones, 2002). These authors acknowledge the complexity of these changes, show that there are individual differences in trajectories, and argue that the associations of personality change with age are often nonlinear. For example, independence appears to increase throughout early adulthood, peak between ages 50 and 60, and then decline between ages 60 and 80 (Helson et al., 2002).

Less is known about personality in very late life. However, results from cross-sectional studies (Field & Millsap, 1991;

Schaie & Willis 1991; J. Smith & Baltes, 1999) suggest that changes might be more negative (e.g., increased behavioral rigidity; less extraversion, openness, positive affect, and life investment; and more external control and loneliness) than changes from early to middle adulthood.

Studies have shown traits in later life to be predictive of important outcomes such as social support, psychological well-being, self-rated health, and functional status (e.g., Duberstein et al., 2003; Hooker, Monahan, Bowman, Frazier, & Shifren, 1998; Siegler & Brummett, 2000). Personality is linked to mental and physical health (T. W. Smith & Gallo, 2001), and trait measures could be useful as indicators in health screenings of older adults who may need social services, be at risk for depression, or have poor physical health. As longitudinal results accrue, researchers are able to address more sophisticated questions about personality–health associations. For example, a recent study showed that *change* in hostility over the period from late adolescence (college) to middle age, especially showing an increase in hostility rather than the normative decline, is predictive of risk factor status for cardiovascular disease at midlife (Siegler et al., in press). Researchers have the opportunity to increase studies of the *linkages*, to more process-oriented aspects of personality or other psychosocial constructs (e.g., T. W. Smith & Spiro, 2002), to help embed traits more firmly in a developmental framework for later life.

Two broad trait-level questions to move the field of personality and aging forward are as follows: First, by what *mechanisms* are traits maintained or changed? Second, how do traits shape person–context interactions?

Possible candidates for change mechanisms are historical events and life events. Evidence suggests that historical time period (i.e., cohort) has some effect on personality (Mroczek & Spiro, 2003; Schaie & Willis, 1991), suggesting that social factors can cause individual changes. A priority for research is to go beyond labeling historical trends as “cohort effects” and to seek evidence of proximal sociohistorical causes to explain the differences. For example, attitudes toward women working outside the home could be hypothesized to be a mechanism driving some cohort effects in the past century.

Similarly, if there are signature life events, such as becoming a parent, facing retirement, or getting divorced, that almost inevitably change one’s personality traits in predictable ways, then it is important to explore mechanisms for these changes. Recent research with young adults (Roberts, Caspi, & Moffitt, 2003) shows that work experiences can modify personality traits; it would be interesting to see if transition out of work experiences (retirement) also triggers trait changes.

Genetics might be a mechanism for the maintenance of stability in traits. Individual differences in behavioral style, or temperament, show continuity from childhood to adulthood (e.g., Caspi, 2000; McCrae et al., 2000), and some individual differences have genetic origins (Plomin & Caspi, 1999). In later adulthood, heritable traits might show more stability (Lachman, 1989), though such an invocation requires caveats regarding bidirectional influences of genes and environments (e.g., Light et al., 1996).

The process by which traits shape person–context processes could be fruitfully addressed. Why is it that people high in neuroticism experience different life events, interpret them

more negatively, and are more negatively affected by chronic stress than people low in neuroticism (e.g., Aldwin, Levenson, Spiro, & Bosse, 1989; Bolger & Schilling, 1991)? A possible explanation is that those with high neuroticism lack the stress-buffering resources of social support. It is not difficult to construe a hypothetical scenario for why that would be: The person is easily angered, somewhat hostile, quick to blame others for problems, and thus would be less likely to have supportive relationships than someone who is not high in neuroticism. In later life, for example after becoming widowed, this person would be more likely to be socially isolated from friends and family and health could suffer by direct physiological means or because one's adult children do not advocate for healthy behaviors. This cumulative process, labeled *interactional continuity* (Caspi et al., 1989), may well be the heart of the association of neuroticism and health. To examine this hypothesized process in situ would require experience sampling or daily diary methods (see Bolger, Davis, & Rafeali, 2003, for a review). An examination of processes by definition requires multiple measurements, and thus the study of trait-environment interactions leads to the next focus of personality in our six-foci model.

### States

State processes are transient, short-term, within-person changes and include constructs such as emotions, moods, hunger, fatigue, and anxiousness. Lability is the defining quality of a state. Nesselrode (1991) argued that understanding state processes, in addition to trait structures, will provide a rich conceptualization of person in context and enable us to predict outcomes more accurately. For prediction at the individual level, information on state processes is just as important as information on trait structure. Intraindividual variability in and of itself may be important for predicting outcomes, as shown by a study in which *variability* in control predicted mortality, whereas *mean level* of control did not (Eizenman, Nesselrode, Featherman, & Rowe, 1997).

Studies regarding the relationship between state fluctuations, or "steady-state variability," and true change are needed. When does a trait structure influence state processes? Can states eventually nudge traits up or down in their continuum? Understanding distinctions between temporary change within normal limits, or steady-state variability, and enduring change requires measurement of intraindividual change processes. For this purpose, Nesselrode and Boker (1994) advocate for designs with short-term but intensive "bursts of measurement" nested within longer intervals that will capture intraindividual variability and differentiate it from longer-term intraindividual change patterns as well as interindividual differences in change patterns. Such studies require a high level of expertise in longitudinal methods such as multilevel modeling (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992) and structural equation modeling (e.g., McArdle & Anderson, 1990).

## LEVEL II

### *Personal Action Constructs*

Level II includes the part of personality in which the dynamic person-in-context is evident through PACs—forward-looking features of personality that, by definition, are

personally relevant. Although varying by level of abstraction (general to quite specific) and temporal frame (currently, in the next week or month, or in the future), PACs have in common a goal orientation and include such constructs as personal strivings (Emmons, 1986), possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986), personal projects (Little 1983), life tasks (Cantor & Kihlstrom, 1987), and current concerns (Klinger, 1975).

Growth and development are possible in these domains of personality even into advanced old age when people can select domains for which they still seek challenges (Hooker & Siegler, 1993). Possible selves may be the PAC most often studied with older adults (Frazier, Cotrell, & Hooker, 2003; Hooker 1992, 1999; Hooker & Kaus 1992, 1994; J. Smith & Freund, 2002). Consistent with the idea that selection is a universal developmental process (Baltes, 1997), studies have shown possible selves exist in fewer domains in later life than in young adulthood (Cross & Markus 1991; Hooker, 1992), but older adults devote more resources to support functioning in those domains. Possible selves in later life show much continuity yet remain dynamic with additions of hoped-for and feared selves, even into advanced old age (Frazier, Hooker, Johnson, & Kaus, 2000; J. Smith & Freund, 2002).

Although studies of goals in later life are not new (e.g., Maehr & Kleiber, 1981; Pressey & Kuhlen, 1957), we still have sparse data that can inform us about evolution of goals over a span of time. Future research should focus more on how PACs are linked with well-being in later life (e.g., Diehl, 2001; Holahan & Chapman 2002; Lawton, Moss, Winter, & Hoffman, 2002). Additionally, researchers should come to some consensus on standardized ways of measuring PACs and mapping out relationships between PACs at different levels of abstractions to establish a taxonomy of PACs. Doing so will require a systematic program of psychometric research similar in scope to the establishment of the five-factor model for traits.

### *Self-Regulatory Processes*

Level II PACs have their parallel in *self-regulatory processes* in service of an individual's goals. Research on control processes, specifically the transition from primary to secondary control (Schulz & Heckhausen, 1996), and shifts in coping strategies from assimilative persistence to accommodative flexibility address ongoing dynamic processes (Brandtstädter, Rotherman, & Schmitz, 1998). Heckhausen (1999) has described in detail how primary and secondary control processes are related to developmental regulation across the life span.

Realistic assessments of changes in self-perceived skills lessen their diagnostic value for assessing one's overall competence in domains important to the self (Greve & Wentura, 2003). This self-regulatory process allows for the sense of continuity in self at a global level while at the same time showing how changes in underlying processes may be necessary to maintain continuity. For example, a colleague who struggles with name recall could retain the global perception of himself as someone with a "good memory" by discounting the importance of name recall and focusing instead on things he remembers. This process, called *self-concept immunization*, shows how changes may take place to promote continuity in self.

At some point, however, skill changes in important goal domains may require major shifts, for which self-regulatory processes can no longer maintain domain stability. *When* these

shifts take place, what triggers them, and whether aging allows for these shifts to be more socially acceptable (e.g., a 75-year-old physician may be admired for still practicing medicine at all, even if she no longer does surgery) are empirical questions. For example, focusing energy and time on family and close friends, and pruning more peripheral social contacts from one's network, is normative and adaptive in late life (Carstensen, Isaacowitz, & Charles, 1999) but may be maladaptive earlier in the life span.

People need to recalibrate their goals in later life to maintain satisfaction (Brandstädter & Wentura 1995; Brim, 1992). The process by which one goes from "tenacious goal pursuit" (TGP) to "flexible goal adjustment" (FGA; Brandstädter & Greve, 1994; Brandstädter & Renner, 1990) without a sense of failure—indeed, with meaningfulness being maintained or even enhanced—is a question that deserves to be addressed (see Wrosch, Scheier, Carver, & Schulz, 2003).

### LEVEL III

#### *Life Story*

One's life story is the internalized and evolving self-narrative a person works on over the course of life. In making sense of their lives in narrative terms, people selectively reconstruct the past and imagine the future in ways that provide their lives with meaning and purpose. Life stories function as narrative identities, explaining to the self and others how a person has come to be and what a person's life means over time. Despite a resurgence of interest in life stories (e.g., Bruner, 1990; Cohler, 1991; Habermas & Bluck, 2000; McAdams, 1993, 1996; Polkinghorne, 1988; Runyan, 1982), there remains a lacuna of life story methods or data represented in the major psychological aging journals.

Knowledge at this third level provides deeply personal and wholly unique understanding into what is meaningful and "core" to a person's life, yet people's stories are necessarily grounded in their particular culture and in the ongoing stream of history. Trajectories of lives are affected by sociohistorical events (Elder 1974) such that, ironically, at the most unique level of personality analysis the link to society is most evident. Furthermore, people borrow and appropriate cultural scripts and narratives for their own life stories, such that any narrative identity reflects both psychological and cultural issues (Josselson, Lieblich, & McAdams, 2003; McAdams, 1996).

The "structure" of a life story can be evaluated in terms of qualities such as coherence, linguistic complexity, sequencing (beginning, middle, and end), narrative tone, cultural acceptability, and so on (e.g., Cohler, 1991; McAdams, 1993). For example, Habermas and Bluck (2000) identified four types of coherence in life stories (temporal, biographical, causal, and thematic) and, discussing the development of each, showed that the life story emerges as a useful construct in adolescence. In later life, research on life stories could, perhaps, flesh out what is meant by Erikson's (1950) eighth ego challenge: integrity versus despair and disgust. Embedding one's life experience in a story is a way of making sense of life experiences, and this may indicate integration and optimal mental health.

Although the use of autobiographical materials in therapeutic settings has received some attention (e.g., Gergen, 1996; Kunert, 1997), we should explore the extent to which structural

aspects of one's life story are related to mental health and well-being. Researchers are beginning to examine the narrative structure of psychotherapy and other psychological interventions in relation to how stories may be related to mental health (Lieblich, McAdams, & Josselson, in press).

Although each life story is unique, common themes may emerge that elucidate the aging process (Kaufman, 1986; McAdams, 1996). For example, Berman (1994) studied the lives of older adults through their literary writings, identifying a common theme of "stock-taking" or a refining, honing, and personal liberation through eliminating the unnecessary. Kaufman's (1986) description of life-story interviews has taught us that older adults perceive meaning in continuing to be themselves in old age, not in aging processes per se.

#### *Processes of Self-Narrating*

The life story has its process counterparts in social-cognitive activities related to recounting life narratives, such as *remembering*, *reminiscence*, and *storytelling*. What one remembers and tells about one's personal history is a process shaped by current situations as well as anticipated events (Ross, 1989; Vaillant, 2002). Autobiographical memory is a new area of research elucidating processes of self-construction. People usually feel they are improving over time relative to their peers. Temporal comparisons of current self with a previous self are likely to hinge on whether the previous self was perceived as more negative, in which case temporal distancing is likely, or more positive, in which case subjectively the past self seems closer in time to the present (see Ross & Wilson, 2003, for a review).

A life story told to a particular person is necessarily a joint product—a transaction between storyteller and listener. Pasupathi (2001) examined conversations in which experiences are shared, called *conversational recounting*, as a mechanism by which people socially reconstruct their past and their identities. She identified the principles of coconstruction (speakers' and contexts' influence on reconstructions of past events) and consistency (the effect of conversational reconstruction on memory about past events) as processes that operate together to account for how life stories are constructed.

Adams and her colleagues (Adams et al., 2002) demonstrated that older adults show discriminative facility in storytelling; they are adept at pitching the narrative to the audience's developmental level. Similarly, Fiese and colleagues (1995) found that parents told stories about themselves with different themes based on child's gender—the themes were more communal for girls and more autonomous for boys. These self-narrating processes (Whitbourne, 1985) are central in organizing life stories as well as negotiating goals, and they are potentially shaped by trait tendencies.

To add to our understanding of self-narrative processes, personality researchers could examine questions such as whether there is a time in late life when one's life story is virtually finished and how conversational recounting with people who shared in the events being remembered differs from telling stories to listeners who did not share in those events. By late life, people have often lost family members and peers who "were there," so to speak, and this loss likely has consequences for identity and for the emotion created when telling stories relevant to one's own life.

Table 1. Bivariate Linkages Between Structural and Process Components of the Six-Foci Model of Personality:  
Examples of Hypothetical Research Questions

Processes	Structures		
	Traits	PACs	Life Stories
States	Can changes in the frequency of experiencing state anxiety affect the level of trait anxiety?	Do people with goals in the realm of health experience positive affect more frequently?	Is energy level or fatigue related to coherence in life stories?
Self-regulation	Do people with higher levels of conscientiousness have stronger self-efficacy in work domains?	Is outcome expectancy for success of a marital goal related to the presence (vs. absence) of a parenting goal?	Are control processes related to willingness and ability to construct and communicate one's life story?
Self-narration	Are those with high neuroticism more likely to engage in biased self-presentations (e.g., self-enhancement)?	Are people with work-related goals more likely to engage in coconstructive processes with peers from work settings?	Is living alone (fewer chances for reminiscing) associated with less elaborated life stories?

*Notes:* There are 15 possible bivariate linkages in the six-foci model; 9 are explicated in this table. In addition, there are 3 bivariate linkages within structural components and 3 bivariate linkages within process components of the model. PACs = personal action constructs.

### Linking Foci

The complexity this model allows for is evident when linkages between constructs are considered. An obvious direction for future research is to understand linkages between these foci. For illustration, one might study states (first-level process construct) in concert with self-regulation (second-level process construct)—for example, examining relationships between mood and self-efficacy related to a goal, such as exercising. Interesting research has been conducted linking traits and strategies of goal pursuit (Diehl, 2001; Little, Lecci, & Watkinson, 1992; Roberts & Robins, 2000). As another example, traits have been examined as predictors of the self-narrative process of reminiscence (e.g., Cappeliez & O'Rourke, 2002). Pasupathi (2001) reviews evidence that PACs such as goals can influence social cognitive processes of coconstruction and consistency associated with life stories.

As shown in Table 1, the six-foci model affords examination of 15 unique pairings. Nine of the bivariate relationships are shown in the cells of Table 1 simply by crossing structures with processes (e.g., going across the first row the linkages are states with traits, states with PACS, and states with life stories). Examples of research questions in each of the nine cells demonstrate that thinking explicitly about linkages leads to interesting possibilities for research in aging. Going beyond simple pairings results in numerous possibilities for mapping the contours of personality.

### Dynamics of the Model

Can each process foci be thought of as the "engine" producing the structure it parallels? Consideration of how these structures develop leads us to endorse this view. Nesselroade and Ford (1985) argued that traits are markers of what must have been prior processes. There is evidence that traits may be conceptualized as density distributions of states (Fleeson, 2001). That is, individual differences in traits correspond to the frequency with which corresponding states are enacted. Recent studies utilizing experience sampling methods (Fleeson, Malanos, & Achille, 2002) showed that the within-person frequency of acting extraverted is highly related to between-individual differences in extraversion. Thus, a reasonable idea to test in work with older adults is that day-to-day behaviors relating to Big Five personality traits are isomorphic with differences between individuals on those traits. More impor-

tantly, links to well-being associated with traits such as extraversion and neuroticism may be mediated on a daily basis by these states. Fleeson and colleagues (2002) showed that more time behaving in an extraverted manner corresponds to increased positive affect. This knowledge obviously has implications for intervention for late life mental health outcomes.

Where do goals come from? How are they met? Goal repertoires change over the life span. As we succeed at some goals and fail in others, we build knowledge bases of "what one is good at doing," setting up circular feedback functions so that one tends to behave in ways that support self-relevant goals (Carver & Scheier, 1998). These self-regulatory processes happen in day-to-day moments of enacting behaviors that affirm these possible selves or goals. Successful self-regulation results in feelings of self-efficacy and greater outcome expectancy. These processes lead to greater goal achievement (Karoly, 1993). Brand new goals require considerable environmental scaffolding. For example, in learning to play a musical instrument, one typically gets support from significant others, takes lessons, and spends many hours practicing new skills. Whether this new goal becomes an entrenched part of the self depends on self-regulatory processes (can you make enough time in your schedule to practice?) and on successes ("you're sounding great!") or failures (no progress) along the way. In this way, we conceptualize self-regulatory processes in service of goals as proactively helping to produce and maintain goals. Maintenance is perhaps even more important in later adulthood, as primary goal orientation shifts from acquisition to maintenance (e.g., Heckhausen, 1999; Maehr & Kleiber, 1981).

The clearest affirmation for the idea that process foci produce structure foci exists at Level III. Life stories cannot be manifested without the underlying cognitive processes involved in remembering and recounting that produce the stories. Insights into motivational underpinnings of memory have long been of interest to psychologists, and the study of mechanisms underlying storytelling is an active area of research (e.g., Adams et al., 2002; McAdams, 1996, 2001; Pasupathi, 2001; Pasupathi, Henry, & Carstensen, 2002; Pasupathi, Stallworth, & Murdoch, 1998). Reminiscence is especially relevant to understanding late life stories and may be related to emotion regulation, self-concept maintenance, and interpersonal functions (Cappeliez & O'Rourke, 2002). Additionally, reminiscence is

important for the generation of life meaning (e.g., Kenyon, Ruth, & Mader, 1999).

### Conclusions

The six-foci approach to understanding personality provides a useful model for fully articulating the complexity we study. By incorporating multiple foci of personality in our studies, we can begin to map links between personality structures and processes. Increased collaboration will likely be necessary because no single researcher will be methodologically equipped to study all six foci.

Although the model's complexity can seem overwhelming, the framework should allow researchers to communicate and articulate, clearly, how their research adds to the knowledge base. We are optimistic that late life provides the clearest palette on which to understand personality, as lives become more divergent from one another over long periods of time. As expressed by the late Bernice Neugarten (1964), founder of the field of personality and aging, "As individuals age they become increasingly like themselves . . . the personality structure stands more clearly revealed in an old than in a younger person" (p. 198). If one takes seriously the notion that personality as a whole encompasses all of the six foci, then the domain of interest for personality scientists is most readily accessible toward the end, rather than beginning, of the life span.

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