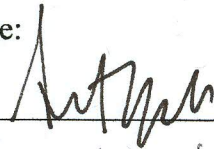


THE NARRATIVE APPROACH TO PERSONALITY
HOW NARRATIVES OF A PERSON, NATION, AND THE WORLD ARE TOLD
THROUGH EPISODES OF ROLE-PLAY, COMMON LANGUAGE, AND MEANING

by

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Committee:



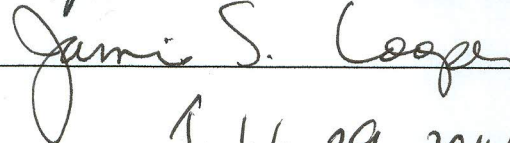
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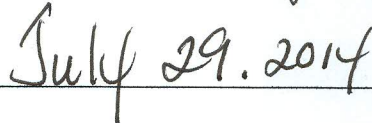


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A project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master
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ABSTRACT

THE NARRATIVE APPROACH TO PERSONALITY: HOW NARRATIVES OF A PERSON, NATION, AND THE WORLD ARE TOLD THROUGH EPISODES OF ROLE-PLAY, COMMON LANGUAGE, AND MEANING

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George Mason University, 2014

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In this project, a framework reviewing the multiple applications of an evaluation tool for assessing personality is presented. The process used by this evaluation would not only target the personality of an individual, but that of any environment consisting of a person or persons. The narrative approach is used to assess personality in a holistic manner. Because any narrative consists of multiple, interactive, and complicated components, this project aims to construct a proposed practical methodology for using the narrative approach by dividing its components into role-play, common language, and meaning.

BACKGROUND

In his 1987 paper, Benjamin Schneider described the ongoing debate between trait-oriented and situationist psychologists that began over 100 years ago, and discussed how new theories about personality and its dynamics emerged from this debate (Schneider, 1987). According to Schneider, Interactional Psychology, which he described as a “subfield of contemporary personality theory” was also developed as a result of this ongoing debate (Schneider, 1987). The debate reached its peak in the late 1960s and early 1970s following Mischel’s (1968) book *Personality and Assessment*, which ignited the argument between the situationists and the personologists (Schneider, 1987). Schneider considered the critiques of Mischel’s social learning perspective insubstantial until the perspective was challenged by Bowers’ (1973). He recognized Bowers’ work as the source that solved “the paucity of effective rebuttal” and that presented the interactionist perspective (P.439). In his paper, Bowers introduced the interactionist perspective, an intermediary between the extremes of the situationists and the personologists that recognizes the interactional cause-effect relationship between the person and the environment (Bowers, 1973).

Schneider introduced his thesis by also challenging the hypothesis of Kurt Lewin that considered behavior as a function of person and environment. He suggested that

environments are a function of the people acting within them (Schneider, 1987). So instead of $B = f(P, E)$, the equation should be $E = f(p, B)$ (p.438).

In my project, I hypothesize a conclusion similar to Benjamin Schneider's proposal that environments are a function of the people acting within them, but from a different perspective. I consider the personality of the person as an environment in-itself, where the function of the person and their behavior in certain situations (role-play of mother, wife, student, etc.), create the overall environment of that person and thus define their personality at certain periods of their life. Similarly, any environment consisting of a group of individuals would be defined by the function of those individuals and their behaviors (people in the medical field, a political party, military field, etc.) In other words, any environment that consists of a group of people would have its own personality consisting of the dominant behavior patterns of the people in that group. Schneider presented his perspective in the light of the organizational setting. In his paper, he wrote that "My main thesis is that the attributes of people, not the nature of the external environment, or organizational technology, or organizational structure, are the fundamental determinants of organizational behavior. I will try to persuade you that we have been blind to the role of person effects as causes of organizational behavior because the fields of I/O psychology and organizational behavior have been seduced into the belief that situations determine behavior."(Schneider, 1987, P. 437)

To present my perspective, I will provide multiple examples of different environments and demonstrate using the narrative as a tool to evaluate the personality

of an individual at certain periods of his/her life. The narrative of a female, for example, may consist of her childhood, adolescence, and motherhood environments. When exploring the life narrative of an individual, the environment of that person is divided into many sub-environments, which represent the roles he/she played during their lives' journeys (teenager, parent, professional, etc.), the common language (common behavior patterns of these role-plays), and the meanings they sought while playing these roles. This process will enable me to understand the internal holistic environment of the person in detail and thus allow me to evaluate their personality. I will extend this perspective to include not only the environment within the person, but any other environment that consists of people, such as the environment of the dominant socioeconomic and political groups of a certain nation. This may sound similar to how Schneider used it, in describing how the organization has its own behavior which is attributed to the behavior of the people within that organization. However, my argument differs from that of Schneider's due to my expansion through the idea of the common language. This idea consists of the common patterns inside and outside the environments/contexts of the evaluated subjects and will be described in detail further on.

Finally, one of the main factors that affected the background of this project is the nature of my program of interest (interdisciplinary studies/individualized concentration). Some of the courses I took in this program were in the fields of personality psychology, behavioral psychology, anthropology, and sociology. The personality (environment) of

this project is attributed to the interplay of themes derived from all the aforementioned fields.

1. A NEW APPROACH TO PERSONALITY

How do we define personality? Should we concentrate on evolutionary mechanisms and genetic architecture, or should we consider contextual and environmental aspects as well? How about values, beliefs, goals, motivations, and personal schemas and their role in the personality equation? This project aims to explore those questions using the narrative approach.

The life story of any given individual reveals his/her personality through episodes of role-play where his/her common language is construed and interrelated with the common language of the group or affiliation he/she belongs to, at certain times of life. The life story evolves throughout these episodes while conveying meaningful constructs that are represented in values, beliefs, goals, motives, and personal schemas.

The dispositional traits of personality represent one of the players on the life stage of an individual who passes through episodes of role-play where personality traits are demonstrated in different capacities to weave the life narrative. Mother, father, child, professional, husband, wife, politician, etc., are some of the roles that a given person may undertake during a life course. I will review and discuss how personality narratives could evoke meanings and derive common language through the course of each episode. The personality narrative consists of all the interactional dynamics that

occur inside and outside the environments of a person or a group of people. To navigate through the weaves of this interlaced concept I will use three resources to label its components (role-play, common language, and meaning). Diagram A represents a possible scenario of an individual's narrative.

By setting the stage through the above resources, I intend to unlock the observer in each of us by applying this kaleidoscopic tool to evaluate the personality of a person (self), and then briefly touch on its multiple uses in evaluating the personality of a group of people and that of a society, and how they all influence the personality of the world.

Significance of the Project

In addition to developing the sense of observation and thus reaching a higher level of awareness, mindfulness, and self-control for the person undergoing such an experience, using this kind of technique provides several other advantages. It will help in assessing personality using a holistic perspective unlike previous attempts that could not encompass the personality's environment as a whole due to the complexity of its inter-related and intra-related components. The actual applications of this tool in the methodology section of this project would reveal its ability to provide a mechanism that detects important details which are unique to each person's or group's environment. Because of the nature of this interdisciplinary approach, fields of psychology, anthropology, and sociology may benefit from using it as well as any other fields of interest.

Striving to reach ultimate wellbeing is part of today's common language. Through my anticipated future career as well being mediator and life coach, I aim to use this method in coaching my clients towards higher levels of awareness, enabling them to practice mindfulness and enhancing their sense of self-control in order to enjoy interactive and meaningful lives.

2. THE LITERATURE REVIEW

Why Narrative?

The first attempts of the psychology field in studying personality concentrated on dissecting the personality of an individual and dividing it into parts and pieces in an effort to understand the mechanism of how one's personality forms and how it evolves. Theorists and researchers in the personality field were overwhelmed with redundant but scattered personality scales, terms, and construct proposals, leading to efforts to reach consensus on the structure of personality. The Big Five traits taxonomy paved the way toward common areas of agreement in the field and provided starting points for further research. Since then, the field of personality psychology has grown substantially and moved from researching fragmented parts, concepts, and scales of personality into seeking an integrative science of the person (Mischel, 2004).

Walter Mischel posited the basic question of "How can one identify and understand the psychological invariance that distinctively characterizes an individual and that underlies the variations in the thoughts, feelings, and actions that occur across contexts and over time?" (Mischel, 2004). I argue that the answer lies inside the life stories of people. These stories may provide answers not just to personality psychologists, but to scientists of all fields who aim to study the person from a holistic perspective. The empirical study of personal narratives became a research method for

scientists in fields of cognitive science, developmental and clinical psychology, life course sociology, anthropology, communications studies and education (Singer, 2004; McAdams, 2008). Through narrative identity that is constructed during the person's young adulthood and evolves throughout the life course, people strive to make meaning out of their lives and draw inspiration from cultures and societies which they belong to (McAdams, 2006; Rosenwald, 1992).

Stories reflect episodes in a person's life that could be divided into themes according to their ages, from searching for identity and role-confusion during early adulthood, to intimacy in their 20s, and midlife generativity (McAdams, 2008). McAdams suggested six common principles for the narrative study of lives: The self is storied, stories integrate lives, stories are told in social relationships, stories change over time, stories are cultural texts, and some stories are better than others (McAdams, 2008). In the following review I concentrate on episodes of an individual's role-play (e.g., motherhood, marriage, and profession), the conceptualized meanings that people strive to make out of those stages of social roles, and their common language that may be anticipated and perceived through their interrelations and interactions with their societies.

The Common Language

My theory on the common language was inspired by Gramsci's concept of "cultural hegemony" discussed in T.J. Jackson Lears' article (Lears, 1985). The article described the mechanical process of "cultural hegemony," where "ruling groups impose

a direction on social life; subordinates are manipulatively persuaded to board the (dominant fundamental) express.” (P. 568). Gramsci explained that the process of cultural hegemony is not merely mechanical; it emerged through the circular interaction of an entire system. Jackson Lears described it as “the (spontaneous philosophy) which is proper to everybody. This philosophy is contained in: 1. Language itself, which is a totality of determined notions and concepts and not just of words grammatically devoid of content; 2. (common sense) [conventional wisdom] and (good sense) [empirical knowledge]; 3. Popular religion and, therefore, also in the entire system of beliefs, superstitions, opinions, ways of seeing things and of acting, which are collectively bundled together under the name of [folklore]” (P. 570). The article explored Gramsci’s realization that “every language contains the elements of a conception of the world” (P.569). In his analysis of this concept, Lears reached the conclusion that “the available vocabulary helps mark the boundaries of permissible discourse, discourages the clarification of social alternatives, and makes it difficult for the dispossessed to locate the source of their unease, let alone remedy it” (p.570).

Gramsci’s concept of the social group domination is feasible to apply to narratives of a variety of fields such as development, immigration, and military. Throughout their narratives, the common language of the groups within each of these fields could be revealed by following Gramsci’s vision of society that “involves not a mechanical model of base and structure but a complex interaction of relatively autonomous spheres (public and private; political, cultural and economic) within a

totality of attitude and practices.” (Lears, 1985). In this project I will discuss the socioeconomic and political system’s dominances and the common language they produce. My approach focuses on the common language associated with the dominant group’s ideology through exploring its narrative. It reveals how this language forms and the meanings it disseminates, as well as the evolving mechanism that gradually grows to emphasize the group’s cultural hegemony.

According to Lears’ (1985) article, ruling groups “do not maintain their hegemony merely by giving their domination an aura of moral authority through the creation and perpetuation of legitimating symbols; they must also seek to win the consent of subordinate groups to the existing social order.” (p.569). The common language’s terminology created and perpetuated by the dominant group through a given interactive system at a given time interprets its values, perceptions, beliefs, sentiments and prejudices (Lears, 1985). The interrelated dialogical challenges among dominant and subordinate groups would lead to shared themes as explained in Lears’ article: “Language is marked by a plurality of value-laden perspectives in challenging contact with one another. It is also by its very nature dialogical: each utterance implies a symbolic exchange with at least one other speaker. All these qualities are especially relevant to the language of hegemonic culture.” (p.591). The rising shared terminology becomes the content of the common language that the dominant group imposes on the subordinate groups within a given society at a given time. I named it “the common language” because I perceived its multiuse on the group and the individual levels.

An individual's common language is in turn influenced by the common language of their ecological surroundings, which is derived from the cultural, political, economical and social factors that are prominent during specified periods of history. One of the basic aims of a personality theory is to demonstrate an individual's patterns and tendencies of actions. Mischel (2004) explained a similar notion through his description of the "behavioral signatures of personality." He explained how "Individuals are characterized by stable, distinctive, and highly meaningful patterns of variability in their actions, thoughts, and feelings across different types of situations. These if...then...situation-behavior relationships provide a kind of behavioral signature of personality that identifies the individual and maps out to the impressions formed by observers about what they are like (Shoda, Mischel, & Wright, 1993, 1994)." (Mischel, 2004, p. 8).

Mischel (2004) noted that certain underlying psychological processes resulting in specific, distinctive patterns of behavior are not only related to broad, situation-free trait descriptors, but rather to more "situation-qualified characterizations of persons in contexts" (P.4). He considered the various ways the dispositional traits are expressed by a person to be strongly related to the surrounding situations and conditions. He also proclaimed that "personality psychology" should study the person as a whole, and that the distinctive and stable patterns that characterize his social, cognitive and emotional processes interplay with the social world (Mischel, 2004).

Dispositional traits and characteristic adaptation contribute to the life story in the way they integrate and interact with the other elements that construct the person's narrative, but the person cannot be reduced to merely traits and adaptations (McAdams, 2008). In his "Hierarchical Model of Personality and Situation" Roberts (2006) drew attention to the "top-down" and "bottom-up" approach to reflecting on personality traits. From top-down, broad traits were more like broader concepts than specific behaviors, thoughts and feelings. However, looking at the hierarchy from bottom-up reveals that behaviors constitute superordinate traits. He concluded that traits demonstrate the common variance among quintessential thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Roberts, 2006). Ozer & Benet-Martínez, (2006) suggested that the influence of personality traits is evident on two levels: a) narrower, cognitive, identity-relevant language (Pennebaker & King, 1999), autobiographical memories (Thorne & Klohnen, 1993), and self-concept clarity (Campbell et al., 1996), and b) the broad level of life story narratives (McAdams, 2001). The way the personality traits interplay and interrelate with thoughts, feelings and behaviors to produce motives, goals, values, beliefs and personal schemas demonstrates a unique characteristic adaptation throughout the life story of a given person, and thus represents the common language of this person.

The common language of a certain society at a certain time influences the life story of the person as an agent, and provides him with clues of what to base his actions on and how to morally evaluate them in relation to the society's norms. In his chapter about personal narratives and the life story, McAdams (2008) explained how through the

life story, human characters act as moral agents who base and evaluate their actions according to the values and norms of their societies (McAdams, 2008).

In an attempt to recapitulate the common-language's definition in a few words, I would describe it as the dominant, explicit and implicit behavior patterns of a person, a group of people, or any entity that involves or relates to people with a specific context and time span.

Role-Play, Meaning, and Sense of Control

In an effort to study and understand the person as a whole, personality psychologists attempted to grasp what is meaningful to the person and how this meaning is vital for growth and transcendence in people's lives (Ozer & Benet-Martínez, 2006). People strive to construct meaning out of their actions and events. The "imposition of meaning on life is the major end and primary condition of human existence" (Cervone, 2005, p. 408)

Personality traits change in response to contextual and environmental contingencies in social roles (Cervone, 2005). Social roles can be manifested through stages of developments. McAdams (1985) described Loewinger's stages of ego development in his book titled *Power, Intimacy, and the Life Story*. The first stage is called the "undifferentiated" stage of infancy when the infant-caregiver attachment bond forms; meaning at this stage is derived from these attachments. During the second stage, being "impulsive" or "self-protective", the world is perceived by the person as a means to satisfy his/her physical needs, and morality is understood through reward or

punishment for good or bad behaviors (Loevinger, 1976; McAdams, 1985). Meanings in the “conformist” stage are reflected through the individual’s shift from an egocentric frame into a frame where morality becomes defined by group norms and rules. At this stage the common language of the individual becomes a reflection of the common language of the group that he/she is affiliated with, whether it is parenting, professional, political, or social groups. When individuals reach the higher stages of “conscientious”, “autonomous”, and “integrated”, they reveal increasingly complex meanings of intellectuality, tolerance, and respect for the individuality of others (McAdams, 1985). Themes of people’s common language at these higher stages reflect labels such as “enduring suffering,” “taking a journey,” “engaging in a contest,” and/or “pursuing consummation.” (McAdams, 1985, p. 129).

The ongoing strife to attain a certain extent of internal and external control while pursuing meaningful experiences is embedded in every stage of human development. Satisfaction and well-being derived from the sense of being in-control are a shared aspiration among all the efforts to elicit meaning from any experience that people undergo. In his book *Man’s Search for Meaning*, psychiatric Victor E. Frankl explained how the meaning of life is not a general concept that can be easily defined; it differs from one person to another and from one moment in the person’s life to another. He further explained:

One should not search for an abstract meaning of life. Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life to carry out a concrete assignment which

demand fulfillment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated. Thus, everyone's task is as unique as is his specific opportunity to implement it (Frankl, 1992, P. 109).

Additionally, in this project I intend to touch on the relationship between the sense of control and meaning on the individual and group level, leaving the thorough discussion of such an important subject to further future research. The discussion of the sense of control in this project is not related to its several definitions and strategies that were thoroughly discussed throughout the large body of research available in psychology and other fields. The discussion will concentrate on its basic concept as it was defined in the introduction section of *Perceived Control, Motivation, and Coping* by Ellen E. Skinner:

People strive to experience control because humans have an innate need to be effective in interactions with the environment. The experience of control is joyful; the loss of control can be devastating. Individual's interpretations of these experiences are reflected cumulatively in their control beliefs, which constitute a major self-esteem process. The innate universal need gives power to people's beliefs. Beliefs about control do not consist of cold procedural knowledge about causes and effects; they are hot potent constructions, imbued with emotion and personal significance (Skinner, 1995).

I would like to use Skinner's introductory definition of the perceptions of control as a stepping stone to examine its relation to endorsing balance and meaning in

individuals' and groups' experiences. There are two questions I will be seeking an answer to through the featured applications of the narrative approach on individuals and groups. The first one is: How essential is the sense of perceived control in enabling us, human beings, to pursue meaningful life experiences? The second one is: what are the consequences, if the sense of perceived control becomes extremely high or extremely low, on the personality of the individuals or the groups and on their ability to pursue meaningful life goals?

The ability of people to extract the perceived meanings from any life experience depends greatly on the amount of actual and perceived control they are entitled to while undertaking such an experience. I will expand more on this issue in the methodology section of this project.

3. METHODOLOGY OUTLINES

In the next part of my project I plan to expand on applying the narrative approach and its reviewed evaluation tools to a specific person's narrative (self). The demonstration of this case study will lead to a better understanding of the proposed application, mechanism, and significance of such an evaluation tool in understanding the personality dynamics of an individual.

I will also apply this tool to groups of people in order to define the personality of the dominant socioeconomic and political groups in the United States during the Fordism era. I will then explain the transforming process that gradually changed the personality of American society, and affected the rest of the world as well by conforming its new common language, meanings and values towards Neoliberalism. The narrative of the two eras is depicted and analyzed in "*The Insecure American*" (Gusterson & Besteman, 2010), "*A Brief History of Neoliberalism*" (Harvey, 2005), and other resources. In his book, David Harvey stated that he aimed to fill the gap in the missing political-economic story that led to the global proliferation of Neoliberalism. Harvey described how Neoliberalism first emerged as "A theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by

strong private property rights, free markets, and free trades. The role of the state is to create and preserve and institutional framework appropriate to such practices.” (Harvey, 2005, P. 2).

By applying the proposed evaluation tools to both narratives, I aim to draw a conceptualization of the personality dynamics and evolution of the dominant societies in the United States during both eras. The consequences of this transformation not only affected the U. S. they encompassed the personality of the entire world (Harvey, 2005). The personality of the world will also be discussed and analyzed through the narrative of the “Shadow Elite”, which describes the new forms of power brokers that attenuate democracy, government, and the free market (Wedel, 2009).

To represent how the meaning of perceived control is pursued throughout the sections of this project, I would like to propose a continuum marked with numbers from one to seven, in order to convey the amount of perceived control from very high at seven, to very low at one. By applying the narrative evaluation tools over the course of this project to explore personalities in different settings, I suggest that a balanced control from three to five would positively contribute to a state of well-being in any setting. I hypothesize that in order to reach this state of well-being, individuals and groups should strive to pursue this median (3-5) whenever an extreme deviation is detected on either side of the continuum (1-2, 6-7), throughout the proposed personality evaluation. I call this process “In-Control Theory”.

4. PROJECT APPLICATIONS ON THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

The narrative approach will be applied in the following section in order to evaluate personality on the individual level. By exploring episodes of role-play, common language, and meanings through the following personal narrative, I aim to conduct a personality self-evaluation by using the narrative approach and its aforementioned tools.

An Individual's Journey

One of the callers on a National Public Radio (NPR) program exploring people's opinions about the benefits of personality questionnaires grasped my attention. The interviewer asked the caller, who has undertaken many personality questionnaires, about whether he thinks they were effective in analyzing his personality. The person replied that they did not provide any additional information to what he already recognized in himself. The interviewer then asked the same person, "So why do you think they appeal so much to you and to other people?" The person replied, "Because they are about me, they make me feel significant, worthwhile and unique." Using the narrative approach to evaluate personality would not only address this issue, it would also support the roles within an individual by providing them with the wisdom of the "observer" that enables them to deeply analyze, reflect on, understand, and then

improve their internal and external behaviors and the underlying contexts of their happenings. During our first session of Personality Theory psychology class, our professor asked us two questions: Does the personality of an individual change over time? And do people have more similarities in personalities or more differences? Through the following personal narrative I aspire to culminate adequate answers to these questions by rendering a live example of the personality in action.

Childhood and Young Adulthood

Parts of the common language of my childhood and young adulthood were courteous, considerate, devoted, spiritual, romantic, diverse, adventurous, artistic, and nosy. My narrative's plot is full of potential and actual actors with different roles, goals, and contexts. The book-worm, the enthusiastic artist, the day dreamer, the constrained adventurer, the loyal friend, the dedicated daughter, the protective sister, the loving life partner, the devoted mother, and the determined student were all active players on my personality stage. In this section, I will describe some of those roles along with their common languages and the meanings derived from them.

Coming from a diverse background, a Turkish grandfather & an Armenian grandmother on my father's side and a Kurdish grandfather & an Arab grandmother on my mother's side, has impacted my life in many positive ways with richness and distinctiveness. Vivid memories of my early childhood related to our time in Brussels, Belgium where my father was working on his second specialty in the medical field in public health after earning his first in surgery in France. The views of our small

apartment there, my first baby toy (that was almost my size!), the smell of the food, the friendly old neighbors at whose house I used to spend hours playing every day, the beautiful and yet gloomy nature of that country kept coming as flashbacks of a world that I always wanted to revisit. I started the first twenty years of my life in Damascus, the Jasmine city; I enjoyed its charming spirit that stays with anyone who breathes the air of one of the oldest living civilization in the world. My Syrian upbringing that was accented with diversified roots kept barging into my daydreams, whispering a perplex longing to fly like a legendary bird in a quest to uncover the secrets of God's kingdom.

The spiritual part of me was influenced by my grandmother and inspired by reflections from my readings in the Holy Quran. The term "Amana", which means trust, was a main concept that I adopted from my Quran readings. It regarded all the gifts that we enjoy during our life on Earth as sacred trusts made available to us by the Creator. The Creator had honored us, human beings, by allowing us to be in charge of those gifts that should be handled, kept, and enjoyed with moderation and piety, known as "Taqua", until we finish our life on Earth. I grew up watching my parents suffering difficulties that were beyond their control. A suffering that at times rose higher than a child my age could handle. It shadowed my childhood and adolescent years with background feelings of anguish accented with devotion and support for my parents. This dedication encompassed and restricted all the aspects of my life during that period of time. On the other hand, the accompanied suffering shaped my life in a positive way as well. It provided me with a stupendous tolerance, unlimited patience, early maturity,

and capability of enduring present and future difficulties. Nighttime was never a restful time for me. I used to stay awake and alert or wake up frightened from recurring nightmares to find my grandmother redeeming her distress by praying and pleading for God's mercy and forgiveness. The language of spirituality encompassed my common language as well and served as a means to secure inner peace and resolve existential issues. Further on, it became one of the main elements that affected my life plot and accented all the meaningful aspects in my life journey.

My book-worm appetite was ready to devour every possible book that ever existed on Earth. Its taste pods savored a wide spectrum of book genres from contemporary to classic, philosophy to war & peace, and adventure to romance. Translated versions of writers such as Ernest Hemingway, Colin Wilson, William Shakespeare, Tolstoy, Marquez, and Dostoevsky were among my favorites, in addition to Arabic books by prominent writers. Reading conveyed deep meanings into my early life experiences. It swept me away from the limits of my surroundings into an unbounded world of endless possibilities. Unleashed from reality, the adventurer in me was compensated by wild metaphysical exoduses throughout the persona of my books. Influenced by my diverse background, I related to a lot of the figures in my readings and resonated with common meaningful moments in their plotted realities.

My first epiphany was reached while reading a quote stating that all the happenings in our lives are simply related to our actions and reactions to what comes our way. The quote deemed a very small percentage of those happenings to what we

call destiny. This quote reminded me of a verse in the Quran that stated “Whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does atom's weight of evil will see it” (99:7, 8). This marked the first activation of the observer in me. I began to carefully monitor my actions and reactions and those of other people in my circle and then study the effects of those actions on our surroundings. My actual experience proved the accuracy of this quote. It revealed to me that even during the recurrence of circumstances that are beyond our control, the way we act on or react to these circumstances would make a huge difference. This realization encouraged me to carefully weigh my choices and drew my attention to map the space of my perceived control. I felt that my spiritual beliefs and practices had served as a means to balance, heal, and redeem my inner suffering and provided me with the support I needed to stay in control and away from breaking down.

My artistic talents were inspired through singing, dancing, painting and writing poetry. Through each of those experiences, parts of me were indulged in soul-replenishing, meaningful and serene moments that wouldn't care for an end. My drawings were repeatedly posted on the class wall by one of my favorite art teachers who used to encourage me and seemed amazed by my colorful and vivid art images. My grandmother used to listen to me during our “stay-up” nights in the kitchen where she would enjoy cooking her favorite “junk foods” that my mother wouldn't allow her to consume, fearing for her well-being. She used to call me her “Shahrourah” (a bird of sweet voice) asking me to sing again and again. Unfortunately, these artistic trends were

never able to cross the barriers of my given circumstances at that point of my life. They stayed boxed in, waiting to be unwrapped at some point in time.

My grandmother's intellectual presence enriched my milieu with moral and mental support, helped subsidize my feelings of self-confidence, balanced my sense of perceived control, and boosted my inner sphere with affection and creativity. Her morning exercise, her health news snippets from listening to London Radio station, where my brother and I made the guinea pigs of her experiments afterward, were all vividly engraved in my memory. I am still perplexed about the consequences of one of her experiments when she used to stuff our mouths with a spoon of minced garlic followed by a cup of water before we left to school. I still try to envisage the thoughts of my school friends that had to endure the invigorating breaths of my garlic perfume. From quenching our sugar thirst with sweetened fresh aloe drink to rubbing our skins with olive oil she kept instilling the roots of the health and organic food advocate that I became later in life.

My adolescent drift to romantic tendencies could have had gone wild if not constrained by an incident that subdued their exuberant streams. After sneaking out to go to a dance party earlier in my teenage years without the approval of my parents, I received the first and only slap in my life from my father. Followed by a long speech by my mother about the virtue of abstinence and how I should save my whole self until the arrival of my "Prince Charming," this party marked an end to my amorous venturousness for a while. On the other hand, it helped in strengthening the relationship between me

and my mother and enhanced its horizons. I always felt that I had to be the dedicated daughter that should do everything in her capacity to ease my mother's distress and to protect my younger brothers by keeping them away from experiencing any hardship. After this incident, a new friendship began forming between me and my mother and I learned a tremendous amount from her wisdom, useful life lessons, constructive criticism, and distinctive taste that was evident in her exceptional cooking recipes, fashionable wardrobe choices and intellectual decoration ideas. My father, whom I respect and cherish, was always the loving, dedicated father, and the one who was quietly, continuously and unconditionally willing to give to his family and his society. He dedicated his medical knowledge throughout his fifty years of work with the ministry of health and UNESCO to elevate the level of health awareness and lead the efforts to cure diseases in our country and around the world.

Finally, the nosy and analytic part of me was evident in my sincere and strong will to solve family members', friends', and the world's problems. Equipped by the ability of reading people, sensing their vulnerability and detecting patterns in their behaviors, I was continuously daydreaming of possible solutions accompanied by an abundance of adequate techniques to prevent drastic encounters or reverse tragic outcomes that may affect my family, friends and people of the world. Mingling with a few intellectual friends garnished my life with meaningful moments. Shared and cherished memories of insightful contemplations, deep analysis of life issues, and mutual understanding enriched our friendships and kept them alive and ongoing.

Picking up the pieces for a future vision set me into a deep reflection on past and future events. After dreaming of becoming a singer, painter or actress, I settled with a final aspiration to become a medical doctor to promote theories about healthy lifestyles, or a psychologist to satisfy my passion of healing the universe. I firmly decided on my life mission. I was not going to get married or have a family; my life would be devoted to traveling the world with humanitarian teams to aid helpless children and the pursuit of the true meaning of life. The first part of my plan was ruined due to technical issues. A visit to the morgue of the medical school in order to inspect one of the realms of my anticipated goals was the end of the medical doctor scenario. The aim to be a psychologist stayed open though, but was delayed after learning from friends in the field that it is better to pursue it abroad. I ended up enrolling along with my best friends in the college of commerce and economic science to proceed with Plan B. Later in my young adulthood, I finally met my other half through old family acquaintances and I decided to put my humanitarian mission on hold, got married a year later, and together agreed to continue our post-grad studies abroad. The second part of my plan culminated in an extremely different result. I became married and not only had three kids – in accordance with the agreement my husband and I first made – we actually ended up having six.

The Crib of Motherhood

After several unsuccessful engagement attempts, I finally met my Prince Charming through an arranged family gathering, a meeting that I was pushed to attend

by my beloved and concerned parents. Despite so many engagement requests, I was still in search for the mysterious figure that would sweep me off my feet and convince me to switch my predisposed future plans. My attitude when I first joined the planned gathering was obviously reflecting my arrogance and uneasiness, an attitude that soon shifted dramatically when my featured husband owned the small crowd by exhibiting dexterous conversational skills and revealing unique talents of versatile and sprightly story-telling. I wouldn't describe what happened that night as "love at first sight", but I would call it "fated enchantment". Since then, his presence was vital in my life. He embraced me with an unconditioned love, emboldened my aptitude with continuous support and encouragement, and enriched my social life with his exceptional communal skills and enthusiasm in celebrating people. We were both determined fighters and ambitious achievers.

My role-play as a mother totally consumed me and shooed away all the other players in my personality plot. The life partner, the employee, the knowledge seeker and all of the roles were either devoted to the new role or consumed by it. A combination of meaningful, interior and exterior, contextual factors affected my intense devotion into the world of motherhood. First of all, my deep faith in a Quranic term called "Maktoob", which meant "written," contributed to my submissiveness to what I regarded as God's will. He chose to honor me with the huge "Amana" (trust) of taking care of six children. A mission that carried unimaginative unfolding that I would have never anticipated, even among my wildest dreams. I regarded motherhood as a task of unlimited love, duties,

and sacrifices, which I decided to dedicate this part of my life to. The crib that stayed at my bedside for twenty years was a vital part of my motherly common language and main contributor to the meaningful moments of interactional attachment that I enjoyed with my beloved children during these years. Every two years one of my babies would grow out of the nursing and diapers stages to make room in my bedside crib for the next one.

To my surprise, I enjoyed diving into the motherly world. I had my first baby a year after I was married. Shortly after, we immigrated to the United States seeking to pursue our post-grad educations. My husband started immediately working on his, while mine had to wait for another twenty years. My work in foreign embassies was our only hope to change our expensive student visa status and move to another status that was given to local staff there. At that time it was the only legal means of work that I was allowed to pursue as an immigrant. I had to learn typing in Arabic and English in only a few months to become eligible to work full-time in accounting and student advising in the consulates of a couple of Arab embassies.

I spent long hours typing every day at a private translating business that accepted to temporarily hire me for a few dollars per hour with the help of my aunt. Life was very hard on us in the beginning and we had to endure a lot of struggles to earn a living, find adequate childcare for our kids, and adapt to the new environment in our new home. With no car at first, I had to take two buses with my two-year old to drop him off at daycare, another bus to the metro station, and then I had to walk for fifteen minutes to

reach my work downtown. I never had any complaints and I was always optimistic and enthusiastic about the future. My son and I used to sing during our bus trip chanting his favorite songs softly and trying to spend as much quality time together as we could.

I didn't feel any difficulties while nurturing my children through their early years of childhood. The tasks of breastfeeding, caring for and handling their early childhood needs came naturally to me and I felt totally in control. Episodes of tantrums, severe illnesses, clueless crying, and sleepless nights were stories that I used to hear from other parents but rarely ever experienced with any of my own kids. I felt blessed and supported by the Divine. I felt that as He destined me to have His gifts, He was also helping me and giving me the wisdom, strength, and patience to perfectly handle them. The first epiphany of causality I reached during my young adulthood came when I kept striving to set perfect-case scenarios in order to satisfy the needs of my children, attend to their body language, and be passionate with their enormous longing for love and affection. As they grew older, things started to get harder and more complicated.

With my growing children, I started adopting a common language that elaborated a mix of authoritative and authoritarian techniques in which the authoritarian part was dominant with my first three, due to novelty of tasks, lack of experience, and fear of being in a new culture. Agreeing with my husband on using more authoritarian rather than authoritative techniques served as a means to address the anxious calls that kept nagging us about the dangers that surrounded our children of giving in to peer-pressure, or Western tradition, to the exposure to drugs and alcohol.

With our busy life schedule and the short time available to spend with our kids, we regarded our parenting techniques as a shortcut to providing us with security and peace of mind in our first years of our immigration adventure.

My oldest child suffered the most from my nosiness and interference in every detail of his life. At the same time, he was exceptionally smart and talented and was chosen at 2nd grade to enroll in the gifted-and-talented program. I tried my best to equip him with self-confidence, morality, and spirituality. I took the advantage of being blessed with two rich cultures and strove to enable him to gain the best out of each of them. In high school though, he drove me crazy with all the girls that relentlessly chased him and affected his academic achievement. I still laugh at myself nowadays, remembering how I used to stalk him whenever he would sneak out for dates and how I used to handle any disturbances dramatically.

I kept using the same policy as my other two kids were growing older, especially after the struggle that I experienced with my first one. My second child was much easier to care for while growing up. It made things easier during a time when my husband had to travel to study in order to reinstate his American dental degree in another state. I felt that God was giving me a break as a single, full-time working mother, with two little children. During the second year of his traveling back and forth between the two cities, I became pregnant with our third child. We hoped she would be a girl since we planned that she would be our third and last. We projected that her arrival to our lives would come around the same time that my husband graduated and returned home. She always

brags that she was the only planned child in the family, I didn't know then what the future would hold for us. I was ready to proceed with my academic ambitions after my husband accomplished his, but other plans were written in the book of our lives.

Mother-Immigrant Interactions

By the time my husband started working in his field, I was planning to go back to school. I started working on improving my English, which was the third language that I casually acquired before immigrating to the US. Throughout my school years I was learning French as a second language, and then shortly before getting married I began studying the British English language in a private linguistic institute. When we first moved to the US I found difficulties in understanding the American accent, and then slowly I became more accustomed to the spoken language. The happy feeling of beginning my first steps toward academic achievement was mixed with feelings of worry about many other issues. The huge amount of debt that we needed to work to pay back after my husband finished school had kept me working to help make ends meet. The long hours of work and school took up all of our time and filled us with concerns about the well-being of our kids.

We were blessed with our parents' support that often came to our aid when our kids were young. Later on we were blessed to also meet some wonderful people that helped us to care for our children. We started to establish what ended up being profoundly exceptional friendships with couples that shared many similarities with us. Coming from many Arab-American backgrounds, we felt that being together would

benefit us and our children in many ways, culturally and socially. It was a diverse mix of friends that consisted of newly married and unmarried people whom we met when we first came to the US. Our friendships evolved and all of them eventually married, and most of their kids were born at the same time as ours so we were very close knit, basically a huge family.

We had a mix of surprise and happy feelings when my husband and I learned that I was carrying our fourth child. When I informed my mother overseas about the good news she didn't seem as happy and informed me that she was feeling tired and may not be able to help me this time. A few days later she passed away from a sudden heart attack. Her death was a shock to me and I suffered feelings of deep loss and guilt that I left my parents and went to live across the ocean. My father passed away from a stroke three years later, at the same time that I was delivering my fifth baby through a cesarean section. By that time there had been many new developments in our lives.

I quit my work at the embassy after delivering my fourth baby and helped my husband start his own dental office. Then by the time I delivered my fifth baby we were ready to move to our first house after living in many rented apartments. The simultaneous burdens of the birth of my fifth child and the pain of the C-section, the death of my father, and moving to our new house all added up and brought symptoms of deep clinical depression that lasted almost a year. It was a very difficult time of my life where I couldn't enjoy my kids, my husband, my new house, or my new and promising life. It came like a curse that encompassed my life with a gloomy atmosphere.

Prayer and spirituality helped me profoundly throughout this hardship. I felt that the unbearable pain that was ripping my heart apart must come to an end and the enthusiastic me would definitely return soon. The non-degree college courses in the field of psychology that I was intermittently attending at that time helped me to understand my situation and that I had to be patient about it. My family doctor advised me to start taking medicine to regain functionality in meeting my life obligations. We agreed to delay taking the medicine until I finished my breastfeeding term with my baby. By the time she was a year old and I started the weaning process, the dark clouds surrounding me slowly began to fade away.

During those twenty years of my life, the role-play of the mother encompassed my common language and buried away all the other parts of me. The bookworm was occasionally fed by reading magazine articles while waiting at doctors' offices. The humanitarian advocate was trying to accomplish small endeavors by volunteering in humanitarian organizations. The nosy self kept interfering with the humanitarian's attempts to save the world, roving the streets individually or with friends, and holding signs to protest the invasion of human rights occurred at different times and contexts around the world, a process that gave me a little relief from my guilt at not being able to be more active in such matters. The artist's relentless thirst was replenished with nature's marvelous on-sight paintings that always surprised me while driving to-and-from errands, sweeping me away from my earthly body and taking me through soul-surfing dance trips in the skies while listening to accompanying celestial music. All of

the other roles briefly fluctuated on-and-off with their appearances, like co-stars revolving in the orbit of the main one.

My second revelation arose while watching my son play “Age of Empires”, a high-profile video game that enables the player to build kingdoms equipped with intellectual details from organizing and commanding armies in virtual wars, to customizing the kingdom’s infrastructure and handling its economic and political affairs. I started thinking about my life since I immigrated to a whole new world of surroundings, from my marriage, to having kids, to living in a new country, interacting with and integrating through a new common language. This common language gradually evolved through encounters that occurred in environments where all the factors at play were continuously effecting and reshaping one another. From carefully monitoring my behaviors and weighing the effects of my actions and reactions resulting from my first epiphany, I moved to a further realization that led me into a higher level of awareness. Just like the new wave of virtual-reality games, I could be more productive in self improvement by being an active agent, designing her life-plan instead of merely participating in it. The process of planning for future achievements on many levels initiated critical questions that came to mind: *When should I start working on my academic achievement and other future goals? How can I start working on current issues such as improving the way I raise, feed, and interact with my kids? How can I improve my relationship with my husband? How can we all enjoy a healthy level of control*

around important aspects of our lives? The positive results of my new attempts soon became evident in the many gains achieved on different levels.

Student-Mother Equation

By the time I sent my sixth child to kindergarten, I decided to officially apply for my Master's degree. That decision became more fruitful after a few on-and-off sessions of academic pursuit that started with English enhancement and ended up with non-degree courses in developmental psychology. This process not only enhanced my academic preparedness but also reformed my parenting skills. Through self-education about the differences between processed and organic food, our family underwent a total transformation in our grocery shopping habits and food choices. My kids were at first resistant to the change, but then they gradually became accustomed to our new healthy lifestyle through continuous encouragement, information and education about this important subject. Additionally, we all agreed to incorporate sports and exercise into our daily routines on top of the other recreational activities that we always provided our children. My husband and I were already setting a good example for our kids by disciplining ourselves to a three-times-a-week gym schedule that we kept for years and treated as a priority. It was a priority that I never missed when I was young and it helped me maintain my balance of body and soul. This was a gift instilled in me by my grandmother and by my mother that I, in turn, hoped to instill in my children.

The non-degree courses in developmental psychology expanded my knowledge about many parenting issues and enhanced the practical experience that I previously

acquired with new approaches. I started looking at my kids through different lenses, regarding them as free souls whose biggest need is love and compassion to thrive. I felt that I am finally living up to a quote by one of my favorite writers, Khalil Gibran that has echoed in the back of my mind ever since I was a teenager and read his book *The*

Prophet:

Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself. They come through you but not from you, and though they are with you yet they belong not to you. You may give them your love but not your thoughts, for they have their own thoughts. You may house their bodies but not their souls, for their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams. You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you. For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.

My relationship with my husband soared into higher levels of mutual understanding and rewarding maturity when we worked together on prioritizing, addressing, and improving compelling issues that affected our lives.

My academic learning experience marks the peak of my accomplishments that I have reached so far in my life. During the first courses of my graduate program's concentration in multicultural education, I wrote three papers that paved the way to my third enlightening insight. The first paper was about reflective personal development, in which I assimilated a personal autobiography. The second one titled "Bridging the Divide Project" discussed the diversity in our community, and the third was about my

philosophy of teaching statement. My work on those three subjects, the research I did to provide the scholarship materials and the way I reflected on these three experiences ultimately strengthened the observer in me. It acted as an eye-opener, helping me to evaluate unvisited presumptions, prejudices, and taken-for-granted beliefs. The observer became the latest and most important addition to the roles of my personality's plot. She took the background stage and helped improve the performance of the agent by gradually reinstating the missing parts of all of the other roles.

My journey toward my academic achievement ignited waves of self-growth, soul-enlightenment, and mindfulness. The diversity of subjects I had the privilege to enjoy as part of my interdisciplinary program of study introduced me to the fields of multicultural education, anthropology, sociology and nutrition, and upgraded my knowledge in the field of positive psychology. On a personal level, the bookworm was back as a main player on the stage with an energetic group of ladies in a book club that cultivated informative, powerful, and entertaining discussions. The insightful awareness that resulted from my resurgence on many levels was akin to pieces of a mysterious puzzle that re-emerged into my life. My sincere commitment to continuously integrating compassion, conscious awareness, and mindfulness into my daily routines led me back to the basis, searching for the origins of my beliefs and reconsidering personal schemas. This process embraced my common language with a total transformation encompassed by a holistic understanding of the roots of our existence. I started viewing myself as a citizen of the world, carrying her unique "Amanas" (trusts) to act with wisdom,

moderation, and affection during her short stay on this planet, and keeping in mind that in every new present-moment she is offered the chance to make a fresh start.

Striving toward my academic goals was not without its difficulties, on many levels. Despite my efforts to balance my family commitments, social life and academic engagement by taking only one class per semester, I was still faced with difficult obstacles. The more I engaged with my academic role, the more I felt detached and even extracted from being fully present in my other roles. My academic devotion consumed my mind when attending to family needs, mingling with friends, and even when engaging in other unrelated issues. When comparing my struggle to write a paper or engage in scholarly research to other students of native English language, I felt I was exerting triple their effort just to achieve the same task. I have never felt satisfied with my English writing in comparison to my mastery of Arabic writing. The fact that I learned English later in life made it harder for me to translate and inscribe my ideas on paper. From my multicultural education classes, I learned that having good writing skills in your mother tongue would automatically position you to become a good writer in your second language. Nevertheless, I feel I lack the wealth of vocabulary, the flexibility of manipulating expressions to fit my intended meanings, and I feel I sometimes fall into the trap of thinking in Arabic while writing in English. My endurance of the hardships of academic fulfillment started to fade with my growing amount of obligations and delayed tasks. The amazing encouragement and support that I received from my husband kept me going and elevated my spirit during times that I was very close to giving up.

Nowadays, I feel that the gains I have experienced through my learning journey have far outweighed any losses I suffered. As a vigilant observer I continuously strive to reach higher states of awareness, compassion, and mindfulness in all things. This resourceful practice has elevated my intellectual and spiritual coherence and accented my common language with meaningful characteristics of self-worth, humbleness, and conscientiousness. The mother in me greatly benefited from her active interaction with the student, and then the developed observer. As a mother I became more open to the creativity that my children brought into my life. I started paying more attention to the details of their whereabouts, sharing their dreams, learning from their unconventionality, and trying to understand their young aspirations and worries. I worked on lessening my inclinations to exert large amounts of control into my relationships with them. I rooted this predilection to my fears for their safety and wellbeing. When questioning these fears I was able to fathom their dimensions and contain their influence on my behavior. My new philosophy in dealing with my kids is offering a lot of love and friendship, complimented with partly advising & interfering, and mostly modeling & mentoring. In her *Learning and Personality Development*, developmental psychologist Barbara Biber crafted a wonderful image of likening the learning experience to personality development:

There is a very important and fundamental relation between learning and personality development...The two interact in a "circular process." Thus, mastery of symbol systems (letters, words, numbers), reasoning, judging, problem-

solving, acquiring and organizing information and all such intellectual functions are fed by and feed into varied aspects of the personality—feelings about oneself, identity, potential for relatedness, autonomy, creativity, and integration.

(Biber, 1961)

I currently feel as if I've traveled through a time machine, back to twenty years ago. I am ready now to pick up the pieces that left scattered more than twenty years ago at the door of my young adulthood. My body is older nowadays but my soul still carries its childish vivacity, which will keep it forever young. I am now ready to ride all the carts of my life train; I vividly visualize the way they are lined up at my current life's station in accordance with one of my favorite quotes by Paulo Coelho:

Our life is a constant journey. The landscape changes, the people change, our needs change, but the train keeps moving. Life is the train not the station.

(Coelho, 2012)

I can't wait to continue fulfilling, enriching, and expanding while riding each of these carts to satisfy each of my active and inactive roles. I am excited about what the future will bring me - as a mother, an anticipated artist, an enthusiastic adventurer, an intellectual friend, a humanitarian advocate and an energetic and loving life partner. In my future endeavors I aim to invest my knowledge and experience in helping others enjoy higher levels of awareness and mindfulness by activating their own observers and coaching them into life agency while reflecting on the narratives of their own personalities.

5. PROJECT APPLICATIONS ON THE GROUP LEVEL

In the following section I will explore the application of the narrative approach on the group level through evaluating the personality of the American society during two different eras, Fordism and Neoliberalism. This evaluation will also reveal how the consequences of Neoliberalism affected the personality of the entire world.

The Narrative of Socioeconomic and Political Groups During Fordism and Neoliberalism

This narrative will demonstrate the roles that Fordism and Neoliberalism played in orchestrating the American society's common language into creating, systematizing, and then disguising the American Dream.

In their book *The Insecure American* (2010) Gusterson and Besteman reviewed the narratives of the main events that contributed to shaping the culture hegemony of American society between the year 1914 and the 1970s. The Fordist Compact of Prosperity set the foundations for the common language that dominated American society during this period. The Fordist Compact offered 40-hour workweeks and high wages for workers and expected high levels of productivity in return. The meanings that were derived from such a deal promised employees and employers stable employment with good benefits if they maintained this high productivity and shared responsibility

(Gusterson & Besteman, 2010). The government joined this employer-employee agreement and turned its meaning into a three-way understanding, one in which the government offers Keynesian fiscal policy (the policy of maintaining high employment and controlling inflation by varying the interest rate, tax rate and public expenditures), subsidies for education, tax breaks for housing and secured retirement (Gusterson & Besteman, 2010). Meanings of such joined efforts led to the public expectations for equal growth rates for the average worker's wage, the executive's wage and the investor's profit (Gusterson & Besteman, 2010).

Fordism introduced a new approach to the production process where large numbers of identical goods are produced at lower prices (Gusterson & Besteman, 2010). Henry Ford (1863-1947) understood the importance of building good relationships between workers and employers to reach higher profits. The broad lines of the common language continued to form under the influence of key events that took place during this period. President Roosevelt's New Deal (1933 – 1936) introduced the "Three Rs" to fight the economic depression. He set their meanings as follows: "Relief" for the unemployed and poor, "Recovery" of the economy, and "Reform" of the financial system (Gusterson & Besteman, 2010). President Johnson (1963 – 1969) backed the New Deal with his "Great Society" proposal, where he declared a war on poverty and promoted civil rights. He also drew plans to support education and introduced Medicare and Medicaid. Those policies were later supported by Presidents Nixon (1969 – 1974) and Ford (1974 – 1977) who complimented them by adding the GI bill, tax deduction for

mortgage payments, employer-subsidized health insurance and Social Security (Gusterson & Besteman, 2010).

These policies helped shape American society and prepared it for the adoption of a common language known as “The American Dream” that contained vocabulary themes representing the hegemonic values that contributed to influencing the main events of the time. The schemes and meanings of this vocabulary were evident in expressions such as “shared economic risks”, “rising standards of living”, “standardized and specialized production lines”, “secure retirement”, “equal opportunities”, “embracing civil rights” and “providing support to achieve higher standards of education.” (Gusterson & Besteman, 2010)

The bright picture of the social and economic enlightenment that created the common language of the American dream began deteriorating with the arrival of the first waves of Neoliberalism. The first calls for Neoliberalism were embraced by Margaret Thatcher (1979 – 1990) and President Reagan (1981 – 1989) when they called for market deregulation (Gusterson & Besteman, 2010). Their calls came as the cold war ended and the bargaining power of labor unions began to decline in the face of deindustrialization and off-shoring (Gusterson & Besteman, 2010). Market deregulation left the door open for a variety of financial institutions and giant corporations to form unity deals based on shared interests that aimed to gain the most possible profit. The goal of seeking reasonable profit based on shared economic risks and equal growth expectations for workers and executives began to diminish as the engine of greed was

set free to drive executives' wages to shocking and unrealistic heights, leading the income of the richest one percent to grow by 200 percent (Gusterson & Besteman, 1985).

The hegemony of the American Dream period and thus its society's common language entered a new era through a process of gradual transformation. This progressive conversion led to the emergence of a different cultural hegemony that embedded some of the common language of the previous one and witnessed the development of a new and more aggressive one. A good example of a culture hegemony transformation process is "The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790" in the Jackson Lears article that described "how a traditional culture sanctioning deference and display gave ground before a popular evangelical ethos promoting contractual social relations, ascetic self-denial, and domestic privacy. The process was gradual, halting, and never complete. Vestiges of the old culture survived in the new. Yet a new historical bloc emerged, successfully challenged traditional sources of authority, and promoted more democratic and bourgeois forms of cultural hegemony." (P. 587). Similarly, during the Fordism - Neoliberalism transition, some of the common language of the previous cultural hegemony remained on the surface; however, the newly emerging hegemony deprived this common language from its meaningful inputs with the progression of Neoliberalism.

The propagation of Neoliberalism was facilitated by employing the society's prior construction of Gramsci's "Common Sense," which is deeply rooted in regional or national traditions, as stated in Harvey's *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*:

An open project around the restoration of economic power to small elite would probably not gain much popular support. But a programmatic attempt to advance the cause of individual freedoms could appeal to a mass base and so disguise the drive to restore class power. (Harvey, 2005, P. 40)

According to Harvey, Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan excelled in using the Neoliberal tools of persuasion, co-optation, bribery, and even threat to obtain the needed compliance to their imposed policies. The use of military force as in Chile or financial coercion through the IMF operations in Mozambique and the Philippines were a few examples of the ways Neoliberals forced their own ethics into the world (Harvey, 2005). The common language of Neoliberals regarded businesses and corporations as individuals who should operate in the framework of free market and trade.

Technological change and innovation should be protected (through patents for example), privatization and deregulation should stand against bureaucratic red tape, increased efficiency and productivity with reduced costs should be pursued, and free mobility of capital between sectors and countries should be regarded as crucial (Harvey, 2005).

Harvey explained about the paradox that emerged from the Neoliberal State's fear of democratic governance when it is forced to intervene repressively using its governing elites and experts to guard against some of its greatest fears. This means of intervention

denies the ultimate freedom that the Neoliberal State is supposed to uphold (Harvey, 2005). The rules of power and wealth disseminated the common language of the US and the world with meanings that celebrate consumerism, globalization, off-shoring, deindustrialization, and commoditizing most aspects of life (Gusterson & Besteman, 2010).

The following quotes from *The Insecure American* by Gusterson and Besteman elucidates eloquent sceneries of the role players, common language, and meanings of Neoliberalism.

In describing globalization, Gusterson & Besteman revealed how “The computer revolution made it easier to automate a certain kind of work, to move billions of dollars across the world in thirty seconds, to outsource work to other countries, to build new kinds of delivery systems for manufactured products, and to create new kinds of financial instruments that brought extraordinary wealth to a burgeoning class of analysts and brokers to reward them for devising cunning new ways of squeezing liquidities over the fabulously complex flows of capital that undergirded globalized capitalism.”(Gusterson & Besteman, 2010, P. 8)

Additionally, Gusterson & Besteman indicated the overwhelming transformation in American society over the past three decades where inequality reached an alarming rate, in the following quote. (“Money is chocking democracy to death” warns Bill Moyers in a speech about the dangers of a political system where wealth buys political influence and the consolidation of corporate control of the media has changed the

media industry “From one of independently owned operators into something akin to a chain store”, stifling critical reporting and instituting an informational culture of blandness. Moyers repeats the much-quoted former supreme court Justice Louis Brandeis’s admonishment that “You can have wealth concentrated in the hand of a few, or democracy, but you cannot have both.” (Gusterson & Besteman, 2010, p. 10). They also described the escalation of the debt trap that resulted in the 2006 crash as a “collective pyramid scheme”, when it became harder to qualify for a mortgage, “deregulated lenders accommodated developers, realtors, and buyers by relaxing their lending standards and allowing home buyers to borrow hundreds of thousands of dollars with no money down, no verification of their income, and much higher debt loads or lower income than would have been thought safe ten years earlier.” (p. 7)

Gusterson and Besteman drew attention in their book to the sky-rocketing profits flowing to the health care industry and to the pharmaceutical companies in particular as they reported astounding profits “\$10 billion by Jonson and Johnson, \$8 billion by Pfizer in 2005, for example.”(P. 12). They criticized how “commoditizing everything intensifies the consumerism that is the engine of economic profit and growth, pushing us toward a system in which we are encouraged to believe that the market, for a price, can meet all our needs and desires.” (P.12). They described the process of commoditizing childhood in Juliet Schor’s revealing chapter describing how “advertising companies are increasingly directing advertisements at children, the

members of society least able to resist them, to develop a new and increasingly powerful subpopulation of consumers.” (Gusterson & Besteman, 2010, P. 12)

Another devastating example of commodity is the prison complex that - according to Roger Lancaster’s chapter in Gusterson & Baseman’s book - is now often run by private contractors. Moreover, Americans are turning to pharmaceuticals more and more these days to solve psychological problems, resulting in increased demand for street drugs when pharmaceuticals are found to be unobtainable. At the same time addiction treatment resources are being cut and addicts are instead finding themselves being incarcerated (Gusterson & Besteman, 2010). Gusterson & Baseman revealed shocking facts in their book relating to this issue in the following quote from *The Insecure American*:

In the meantime, even as our society encourages consumers to get hooked on the drugs produced by pharmaceutical companies, it has cut treatment resources for those struggling with addictions to street drugs—one of the great sources of our time, as the essays by Luhrmann and bourgeois make clear.

Instead of the kind of resources for treatment one finds in many other industrialized countries, the United States now offers mandatory minimum jail sentences. Perversely as Eric Schlosser shows in his book *Reefer Madness*, these sentences often fall disproportionately on petty dealers and users, since they have little information to trade with prosecutors in turn for a reduced sentence.

The result is that the number of Americans incarcerated for drug offences has

risen from forty thousand in 1980 to half a million today. And those incarcerated are disproportionately poor and black. The United States also incarcerate people for petty offenses that would not draw a prison sentence in most other countries, giving it the highest incarceration rate of any country in the world—higher even than China. With 2.3 million of its citizens behind bars, the United States accounts for 25 percent of the world’s prisoners but only 5 percent of the world’s population.” (P. 12 - 13). Gusterson & Besteman described Roger Lancaster’s argument in their book, noting “That a justice system that has created a felon class of thirteen million that has devastated the African American population, that has redirected millions of dollars from schools to prisons, and that locks up more children for life than any other country on earth makes a mockery of democracy.” (p. 13).

Group Conditioning and the Emergence of a New World Order

The question that should be asked is this: Why is it Americans are not paying attention to drastic changes that are rapidly affecting the common language of the American dream? According to “The Insecure American,” the answer lies in the era of large bureaucratic corporations that created a lifestyle increasingly dominated by comfortable conformism and produced a kind of social herd driven by excessive consumerism. Commoditization controlled all areas of life from health care and medicine to media and politics and even reached prisons, where private contractors monopolized the supplementations of prisons. Another inhabitant of the common

awareness is the process of social atomization that leads to apathy, drives Americans to treat relationships the same way they treat commercial contracts, and eviscerates communities. Additionally, individualism that undermines the social contract causes Americans to place self-actualization above their duties toward family, work and community (Gusterson & Besteman, 1985).

In her book *"Shadow Elite"*, Janine R. Wedel drew attention to the emergence of a new, worldwide system of power and influence. The new system consists of "players" of various backgrounds and multiple interests that create networks of power and influence to serve their own agendas. Wedel explains that traditional terms (previous terms of the common language) that were long used to describe power and influence and identify the players-in-action are now all insufficient to explain the current trends. Terms such as "lobbyists," "interest groups," "conflict of interest," and "corruption" have been rendered inadequate because they describe certain, easy-to-define groups or subjects, while the new system consists of ambiguous, interrelated, yet deviated elements (Wedel, 2009).

The new system that Wedel discussed in her book produced new, tailored-to-needs common language. The vocabulary themes of this new language depend on the current needs of the target event created by the players. These players that Wedel described as "movers" and "shakers" serve simultaneously as business consultants, think-tankers, television pundits, and government advisors, and their time and loyalties

are often flexible. They fabricate their own truth that Wedel defined as “truthiness” in today’s terms.

The creation of “truthiness” or what Wedel described as the “idea of reality” based on branding the truth in a way that serves the interest of a particular group at a given time, requires the administration of what I call “group conditioning”. One of the famous principles of learning theory is conditioning an individual person or animal by pairing unconditioned stimuli (naturally occurring) and conditioned (learned) stimuli to elicit the target behavior (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2010). The movers and shakers apply the same concept of conditioning to a group of people by taking advantage of the 24-hour news media to introduce a new “idea of reality”. They repeatedly air assortments of news segments bolstered with appearances by business consultants, think tanks, and pundits to improvise their own version of truth by pairing it with current and familiar common-language-related terms, in order to come up with their own final product. This final product is the new term that they want to introduce and use to serve their current agenda, and they aim to condition people to acclimate to this final product until it becomes part of their “common sense”. According to Wedel, “Flexians”, she calls the players in a world of flexibility, “are expert at detecting what the public will find convincing. As jugglers of roles and representations, they are skilled at manipulating appearances—at showing up in different guises to achieve their ends, and flexing whichever of their roles gives them the most credibility at the moment” (p.44).

The practice of group conditioning allows today's players to exercise power and influence and to impose their own culture hegemony not just on the local level, but with the help of today's complex technology, they can spread their "ideas of reality" to the entire world.

In today's world, the common language is able to carry global aspects that are encompassed by flexibility and that pertain to the momentum of global needs. Due to the rapid changes of events in today's societies and the flexible nature of these events, the emergence of common language is following a different path. Jackson Lears pointed out the flexibility of Gramsci's concept of hegemony that becomes clarified by imagining "the hegemonic cultures placed anywhere on a continuum from (closed) to (open). In the closed version, subordinate groups lack the language necessary even to conceive concerted resistance; in the open version, the capability for resistance flourishes and may lead to the creation of counter hegemonic alternatives. The place of a culture on the continuum depends on specific circumstances at a particular historical moment." (p. 573-574).

In the wake of today's globalization and the emergence of Wedel's "Flex nets", the mechanism of the open version of cultural hegemony has been changed dramatically. The boundaries between the dominant and subordinate groups became ambiguous and Wedel's idea of "truthiness" diminished the ultimate truth under a cover of interests-created-spectacles that fabricate their own versions of truth. In *the Latino Threat*, Leo R. Chavez expanded the concept of globalization to include more than just

the movement of capital or the search for cheap labor. He added that “it is also the movement of people, ideas, material culture, and commodities (e.g., movies, music, traditional Chinese medicine), and a whole host of flows unmoored from fixed nation-states” (Chavez, 2008, P. 10). All of the above participate in producing something similar to “symbolic universes”.

This concept was explained in the Jackson Lears’ article where he states that individuals often create their own symbolic universes in order to better understand their lives and make them more tolerable. However, over the course of generations, when these symbolic universes spread from the individual level to the group level and take root within a society, they can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. For example, a subordinate group’s self –created symbolic universe can eventually result in that group furthering their own domination and becoming partly responsible for their own victimization (Lears, 1985). These symbolic universes are the meaningful content of today’s deregulated common language, straining at the mercy of the engine of greed where the creation and destruction of these symbols becomes relatively fast and flexible, and relying on the dynamics of the current moment and the devoted interests that are involved.

The deregulation of the market led to deregulation in all life matters. In her book *Gender and the Media*, Rosalind Gill drew attention to the postfeminist shift in the media that portrays women as “entirely free agents” who are willing to go through drastic beauty makeovers just to “please themselves”. On the other hand, she raised the

question: “ Why if women are just pleasing themselves and following their own autonomously generated desires, the resulting valued ‘look’ is so similar – hairless body, slim waist, firm buttocks, etc.” (Gill, 2007, P. 13). She was struck by the similarity between the media’s autonomous postfeminist discourse and “the psychological subject demanded by Neoliberalism” which consecrated the “choice biography” upheld by neoliberals to disguise their true hidden interests (Gill, 2007). The following quote from a piece by Lauren Martin - a young girl from Generation Y – describing the difference between “hot” and “beautiful” is discussing this subject. I feel that her piece related well to Rosalinda Gill’s postfeminist argument about the media culture’s obsession with the body and how femininity nowadays has become another commodity defined often as a mere “bodily property”. A “sexy body” is presented these days as the main source of a woman’s identity and power, requiring constant maintenance and that vast supplies of resources be invested toward its upkeep (Gill, 2007).

There’s been a loss of respect when it comes to admiring women, shifting towards describing us as objects, rather than people. Men look at women as pieces of tail, “things” to be conquered, rather than appreciating women for their individuality.

Hot is admired from afar; beauty is to be held.

Hot is perception; beauty is appreciation.

Hot is smoky-eyed; beautiful is bare-faced.

Hot is an appearance; beautiful is more than skin deep.

Hot is the way she moans; beautiful is the way she speaks.

Hot is a strong appeal; beautiful is strong mind.

Hot is youthful; beautiful is ageless.

Hot is conventional; beauty is unique.

Hot is a one-night stand; beautiful is sleepless nights.

Hot is a state of being; beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

Hot is devious; beautiful is innocent.

Hot is bending her over; beautiful is baking her blueberry pancakes.

Hot is sultry; beautiful is wholesome.

Hot is her curves; beauty is her nerves.

Hot is a text message; beautiful is a love letter.

Hot is a facade; beautiful is a woman. (Martin, 2014)

The Twilight of Equality -- Lisa Duggan's carefully and passionately argued book about the far-reaching effects of Neoliberalism -- revealed the neoliberals' common language that ostensibly supported multicultural neutrality while gender and racial inequalities pervaded its underpinning discourse. Duggan argued in her book that a progressive change toward ending the devastating consequences of Neoliberalism would only be accomplished through adopting a holistic approach that upholds sustainability and accountability (Duggan, 2004). The lack of accountability resulting from the deregulation on many levels set the horse of freedom on an unidentified mission that is subject to the interests of the current moment. In Harvey's "Brief History

of Neoliberalism” I came across one of my favorite quotes about freedom that I will conclude this section with: “Freedom is a very good horse to ride, but to ride somewhere” (p.6).

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Human beings are unique and intellectual creatures; our stories weave the threads of our personalities and make us who we are. Once we become able to explore those stories in detail by identifying our many roles and exploring our common languages and their meaningful connotations, we can start an awakening journey toward finding our uniqueness and practicing our intellectuality as exceptional creatures. Doing so will also help us reach a deeper understanding and higher level of awareness of the concept of who we are, what we represent, and how we can grow and improve. My ambition is to introduce this evaluation tool as a basic platform for analyzing the complicated - and yet unique – concept of personality.

Navigating through my life narrative awakened the observer in me and afforded me the opportunity to contemplate forgotten, blocked, and long-unvisited areas of my inner self. It helped me draw a detailed delineation of the roles I took on and how my related common language effected and became affected by the common language of my internal and external environments. In my role as a parent for example, I first developed a common language that was conveyed through the interaction of my personality traits, and my beliefs about and goals of parenting, with the common language of parenthood in my group context. The narrative of my parenthood portrayed

the dynamics in which my common language developed and changed throughout the parenting domain to accommodate the unraveling circumstances that continuously evolved in my inner and outer environments. Similarly, my narrative revealed how I portrayed different dynamics and behavioral tendencies when experiencing other roles, as a student for example. The parenting narrative reveals the changes that occurred along the levels of perceived control as well. I demonstrated how I practiced a higher amount of control in my relationships with my older children in comparison with the control I implemented in my relationships with my younger ones. Going through my narrative helped me realize that the amount of perceived control that I demonstrated in general falls between levels 4-5 in accordance with the perceived control continuum that I proposed earlier in this project. During the periods when this level became higher, 6-7 (early parenthood) or lower, 1-2 (mother-student struggle), the outcomes were not as fruitful as they were when this level was orchestrated around moderation. I briefly touch on this issue here, and hope to examine it further in future research.

Daniel Cervone (2005) pointed out the importance of distinguishing between the “having” and “doing” when it comes to studying the personality of the individual. “Between-individual” taxonomic traits may not be interpreted as qualities a person can “have”. The systems through which people construe meaning from their contexts and plan methods of actions may represent the qualities that they “have”. Conversely, the dispositional constructs may actually indicate the average tendency of people’s “doing” (Cervone, 2005). The “having” represents the personality structure while the “doing”

pertains to the personality dynamic (Cervone, 2005). Through the demonstration of self-evaluation I elucidated the roles and their internal and external interactions with their contexts through interchanging common language related to meaningful relevancies. The “having” consisted of my personality structure of existing and developed roles, their common language, and the meanings this common language conveys through each role. The “doing” parts were indicated in the dynamic interplays between my interior and exterior environments; my common language may be inferred through the “doing” of my inner dynamics in conjunction with the cultural, social, economical and political circumstances within the dominant contexts during the time where my narrative was taking place. Through my navigations in this personal journey I was able to answer our professor’s questions. Yes, my personality did change over time, and yes, people’s personalities differ greatly, because the “having” and the “doing” of each of us human beings are unique and can’t be duplicated.

The above discussion leads me back to my argument in the background section of this project about how environments are not only the function of persons behaving in them; they are the function of the interaction between the micro-environment of an individual or a group and the macro-environment of that person or group. In my self-evaluation for example, I demonstrated how my personality carried an internal contextual entity of its own (the interactions between her roles, the way she behaved during each of them, and the extent in which each of those roles dominated her micro-environment), in addition to her macro-environmental contexts at certain times and

places. Schneider proposed that environments are a function of persons behaving in them, $E = f(p, B)$ (Schneider, 1987); I propose that the personality's environments of a person or a group of people are a function of the ongoing interactions between their micro-environments and macro-environments, $E(P, G) = f(MIE, MAE)$.

Nations' personalities also effect, and are affected by, the common languages of their ruling systems that represent, in turn, the dominant group's common language in each nation. This is evident in the demonstration of how culture and self are mutually-constituted (Heine, Buchtel, & Norenzayan, 2008). For example, people of a given nation come to shape their culture norms through what they perceive as reflecting their general conscientiousness (Heine et al., 2008).

Nowadays, the majority of research that aims to investigate the best approaches toward human well-being is targeting the person as a whole entity. McAdams & Pals (2006, p. 212) provided a definition which best matches the recent trends of personality psychology:

Personality is an individual's unique variation on the general evolutionary design for human nature, expressed as a developing pattern of dispositional traits, characteristic adaptations, and integrative life stories, complexly and differentially situated in culture.

In the above definition McAdams and Pals (2006) pointed out three levels of personality: traits, characteristic adaptations, and life stories (DeYoung, 2010). In this project, I introduced my visualization on how to capture the personality of the person,

group, nation, and the world through its unique narratives at a given time and place.

This narrative may be portrayed through stories revealing episodes of role-play (McAdams & Pals' characteristic adaptations) that convey a common language (Mischel's behavioral signature of the traits in the context of the dominant cultural trends, and Lears' cultural hegemony). Through the common language, meanings are construed to represent values, goals, motives, beliefs, and personal schemas.

I visualize future research using this evaluation tool in evaluating the personalities of varieties of concepts that are related to a person or group of people. The field of education is an example of a place where this tool could be used to evaluate the personality. The common language of today's no-child-left-behind genre currently dominating the personality of the education field is represented by standardized learning methods and assessments that kill creativity and consecrate a prevalent state of stress and apathy among teachers and students (Dowrkin & Tobe, 2014). Teachers, students, and policymakers representing the players on the field convey different meanings through their roles pertaining to and reflecting the environment of each group's area of interest. The high level of control placed on the field by the policymakers is a main factor that should also be discussed and evaluated.

To touch on the subject of groups' perceived-control that I suggested earlier by proposing a perceived control continuum from (1 – 7), I will retrieve a quote of Jackson Lears that I previously enlisted in another part of this project. In it, he pointed out the flexibility of Gramsci's concept of hegemony by demonstrating his hegemonic cultures

continuum. Lears explained Gramsci's concept by imagining "the hegemonic cultures placed anywhere on a continuum from (closed) to (open). In the closed version, subordinate groups lack the language necessary even to conceive concerted resistance; in the open version, the capability for resistance flourishes and may lead to the creation of counter hegemonic alternatives. The place of a culture on the continuum depends on specific circumstances at a particular historical moment." (p. 573-574). I relate the closed version of Gramsci's hegemonic cultures' continuum to the lack of control scores of (1-2) on the control continuum that I proposed earlier in this project, while the open version represents the ultimate control of (6-7) on my proposed control continuum.

As I suggested earlier, I propose that a balanced-control-median of 3-5 would manifest a perfect proportion among the leading or dominant groups in any given field or society. To reach this balanced median, an observer should be activated on the group level similar to the one that was elicited on the individual level. In the case of Neoliberalism, a deregulation without the boundaries of responsibility and accountability would result in group deviations along the extreme ends of the control continuum. This deviation represents the extreme perceived control of the elites that comprise money and power on one end of the continuum (1-2), while the other end (6-7) would depict the loss of control evident in the learned helplessness that is taking place among the rest of the population. Sustainable and objective acts of evaluation and accountability projected from embracing the observer would lead to balanced control,

which in turn would result in prevailing welfare. This proposal would require further future research to address its components in a detailed manner.

On an individual level and as a dual citizen of two beautiful countries, Syria - for which I still carry love in my heart - and the US - where I immigrated to with the anticipation of living the American-dream - I feel that I am currently experiencing a loss of control. I feel that loss of control while walking in the shopping mall with my ten-year-old son and he questions me about the giant posters of the practically naked bodies of beautiful girls filling store windows with blatant sexual imagery. I feel completely clueless about how to respond to him regarding those images, and how to explain to him that marketing nowadays has gone too far in trying to make a dollar. I feel I am losing control when searching for excuses to prevent my kids from mingling with some of their friends after they tell me I have to "get used to the fact that everyone drinks and smokes weed, but don't worry we're not doing it" yet. I feel the loss of control when I watch the deterioration encompassing all aspects of life from education to politics, healthcare, sports, social values and development projects. Even our government is being affected these days, shaped by super-PACs where everything has become merely a commodity in the market of profit and greed. I feel the loss of control when I see the disturbing images of innocent people left unprotected and brutally killed or forced to become refugees by decaying dictators who have basically been granted immunity. I feel the loss of control when I listen to new-age expressions, songs, and media outlets that deform and commodify our culture.

However, my feelings of loss of control are balanced with many gains on the other end of the control continuum. I've come to a broader realization of the concept of citizenship, and now I've expanded my boundaries to include the entire world. My multicultural roots and my journey of immigration, along with my academic and reading experiences, have led me to become a citizen of the world. My journey to reach the horizons of compassion and mindfulness have also resulted in a personal spiritual transformation, opening my mind and teaching me to respect the messages of all of religions inspired by the Divine. I have come to understand that religion should be a means of unity and mutual understanding between the people of the world. My efforts to free myself from unjust discriminations, unjustified prejudices and enrooted presumptions have brought me to a higher state of inner control, and have unleashed me from the chains of fear and negativity. Watching my kids grow among a generation full of promising and vigilant young minds thriving in a world of unlimited possibilities has brought me optimism and hope for a better future, one where justice and peace prevail.

I hope that the individual and group applications presented here will serve as examples for future applications of this evaluation tool for assessing the personality of any subject involving individuals or groups. There were several candidates available for the narrative-approach personality evaluation before I eventually narrowed the choices down to the ones discussed in this project. Some of the candidates that were considered included the personality of the immigration system, development projects,

and the military. The narratives for these subjects were derived from *The Latino Threat* by Leo R. Chavez, *The Anti-Politics Machine* by James Ferguson, *The will to improve* by Tania Murray, *Conservation is our Government Now* by Paige West, and *Fallen Elites* by Andrew Bickford. Identifying the role players in each of the aforementioned subjects, their common languages, and the meanings they strive to pursue, will result in thorough and holistic personality evaluation. These evaluations will develop the observer, which in turn will help in identifying their areas of weakness and estimating their amount of control, thus developing adequate plans to address deficiencies.

The “personality” of this project may first appear to be broad and complicated but it actually follows the demanding and interlaced nature of the discussed subject. As I explained through this project, in order to thoroughly examine and evaluate a challenging concept such as personality, the obligation to adopt a holistic approach becomes an essential need. In the same manner, to come to a full understanding of this project, is to treat it as a holistic entity and to delve into its entire content in order to grasp its common language and conceptualize its meanings.

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BIOGRAPHY

Rouda Ramzi received her Bachelor Degree in economics from the University of Damascus in 1983. She immigrated to the United States in 1988 and continued her education in 1997, enrolling in English and Developmental Psychology courses at Northern Virginia Community College. Later she applied to a non-degree program at George Mason University, completing courses in Development Psychology between the years 2001 - 2002. In 2008 she applied to the Master Degree program of Curriculum and Instruction in Multilingual/Multicultural Education. Having completed 15 credits in Multicultural Education, she discussed alternative choices with her program advisor who suggested she look into the Master of Arts program in Interdisciplinary Studies because it might better suit her academic needs. In 2011 she was accepted into the Master of Interdisciplinary Studies/Individualized Concentration program, integrating the 15 credits she earned from the previous program into the new one. As of the date this was written she is finishing her Master Degree program in Interdisciplinary Studies/Individualized concentration.