

Manual for Coding Events in Self-Defining Memories

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Overview: Types of Events in Self-Defining Memories

Event categories were developed by sorting a sample of 600 written self-defining memory narratives. About 80% of the narratives came from white college students (ages 18-22); about 5% came from older adults (ages 40-88). Our questionnaire for collecting self-defining memories can be found at the end this manual. Note that we request a caption for each memory, which can be useful in coding for type of event. Practice narratives precede the questionnaire.

The event categories reflect the primary concern that is emphasized in the narrative. The categories were developed to be mutually exclusive; each narrative is coded into only one category. Of course some narratives reflect multiple concerns, but so far we have found few of these (see the "not classifiable" category).

Life-threatening events should be coded into subcategories. We have not developed subcategories for the remaining events.

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EVENT TYPES: DEFINITIONS AND EXAMPLES

1. LIFE-THREATENING EVENT

Examples: deaths, accidents, assaults, severe episodes of physical or mental illness.

Events in which issues of life and death, or physical well-being, structure the narrative, so that the narrative is built around the life-threatening event. Mortality concerns may not be emphasized, but if the description of the event indicates the plausibility of severe physical injury or death, the event qualifies as life-threatening. The event may involve risk to oneself, or the death or injury of someone else. If emotions are mentioned, the emotions are usually fear (for events threatening oneself) or sadness (in response to someone's death).

In classifying narratives into event categories, it is important to imagine what the event would have felt like. Would it have been scary, given the situations and the age of the person? In the following narrative, the reporter seems to have been very terrified, even though as adults, we know that the event should not have been scary. We therefore coded this event as an LTE. (in the "accident" category).

[Age 6]: My family (mom, dad, brother) and I were at the Grand Canyon with our neighbors. I was running and I fell and I was by myself and I went crying to my mom, she left me with my dad to go find band-aids, because I had scraped my knee really badly. So I was sitting next to my dad and I saw these huge butterflies flying around and I asked my dad why they were so big and he said because they were man eating butterflies and they could smell my blood, and they wanted to eat me. So I ran again screaming trying to get away from them. I could hear my dad laughing.

In the following narrative, the reference to "intense love for my parents" would suggest that the narrative concerns a relationship event; however, because the story is built around the event of her father's surgery, the narrative should be coded as a life-threatening event:

I have a vivid memory of seeing my father in a S.F. hospital recovery room after bypass heart surgery in the early 1980's. I walked into the room with my mother. I remember many emotions all at once: Relief that he was alive, shocked and afraid that he looked so near death, and intense love for my parents.

Please code each life-threatening events into one of the following subcategories, or "LTEtypes". With the exception of the first category, all of the LTEtypes center on events that threaten oneself rather than another person.

Life-Threatening Event Subtypes:

11. Death or serious illness/injury of someone else (person or animal)

Examples: Death of a family member, friend suffers from AIDs, friend seriously injured in car accident, suicide of a rock star (Kurt Cobain)

Sample narratives:

My friend Juan killed himself with a gunshot through the heart. I remember getting the phone call that he had died, my hands went numb and all I could hear was my heart beating like mad."

My mom, brother, and I were in Salt Lake City and we were crossing the street when a car came flying through the red into the intersection. It slammed on its brakes but it was too late. My brother was struck, full force and thrown across the pavement. The car just sped off. My mom and I ran to him, he was still breathing, called 911. He was in the hospital for six weeks, three broken ribs, a fractured leg bone, and bruises everywhere.

12. Serious accidents or illnesses (to oneself)

Events in which one's own physical well-being is at risk, although others may also be at risk.

Examples: car wrecks, near-drownings, serious biking accidents, severe physical or mental illness, serious surgeries, suicide attempts, severe anxiety attacks with somatic symptoms.

Sample narratives:

[Car accident]: It was the first day of Christmas break. My friend and I were driving to get breakfast. We were going down a hill when a deer ran out. My friend lost control of the car and we spun out of control until we rolled three times."

[Near-drowning]: When I was 15 I played High School water polo. Everyday after practices we had to cover the pool with these heavy blue tarps which helped to keep the pool heated. One night in late fall I was pulling the last tarp. Everyone else had already got out of the pool. I had to make sure one of the tarps was properly attached to the wall. To do this I needed to swim under one of the tarps that was already secured. A friend pulled back a corner of the tarp so that I'd have a little opening to come out at. Just as I dove under the water and began to swim the lights in the pool went out. Because it was dark out anyways and the pool was completely covered it was pitch black under water. I panicked and tried to pop up for air, but when I surfaced there was a heavy tarp over me. I began swimming underwater feeling for the opening. I began to run out of air, so I pushed with all my might and managed to lift the tarp a little. This created an air pocket

where I could breath. I had to stay there treading water alone in the dark until my friend could get the lifeguards to turn the light back on. It was a painfully terrifying experience."

13. **Physical assaults (to oneself)**. Note: Does not include sexual abuse.

Events in which physical aggression is directed at oneself (also possibly others), or could plausibly be felt to be directed at oneself. Perpetrator is usually a parent or peer. Narrative is organized around the aggression and its consequences, which might ultimately be positive or negative. Childhood events involving aggression may seem less severe, but if narrative explicitly refers to feeling afraid, or crying in the face of aggression, the narrative can probably be classified into this category.

Sample narratives:

[Getting beaten up]: In the 9th grade I was eating lunch with my friends when all of a sudden 6 guys entered the building. They began to randomly beat people up, starting with me.

[Domestic violence]: When I was 5, I remember my parents fighting, something about money and a trip to Hawaii. Heard something rip in the kitchen and mom got in the car and drove away. Dad came down the hall very angry and kicked the wall hard and made a hole. I was five and Jenny was two and we cried so hard. Dad hugged both of us and went to the garage and got something to fix the wall. He came in and fixed it and we stopped crying. I remember being lost and terrified. *[Presumably, the kids were terrified when dad came down the hall; they presumably did not know what he was going to do next].*

Marginal case, but counted as an assault:

[Thrown in the water, crying]: When I was 10, we had rented a boat and skis to go water-skiing and we got to the lake and had everything set up, but me and my sisters didn't want to get into the water because it was too cold. My dad got angry since we all wanted to go in the beginning and now we were backing out. So my dad picks me up and threw me in the water crying and made me put on the skis and learn how to water-ski. All the time I was mad, but I learned how to ski and I ended up loving it. This image pops up when I think about my dad and it makes me laugh because I was so pissed that I wouldn't admit that I had fun while I was out there. Even though my dad knew since we ended up buying a boat and everything later on. It makes me think how my parents pushed me to try different things and I appreciate that a lot because I think it made me a more complete person.

At the moment of being thrown in the water, the reporter seemed to have been terrified. The event is now viewed as a growth experience, but at the moment, it was not considered to be one.

Marginal case, but counted as an assault:

[Tickled to the point of sobbing:] When I was growing up, my uncle was always present in our family functions, and still is. He could be considered a "jokester". He loved to tickle my sister and I. It was fun until the time he pinned me down and left me

with no control of the situation, tickling me, ignoring my pleas to let me up. Then it wasn't funny, but scary (that I had a lack of control over the situation) and I was sobbing. Nobody really understood my feelings and looked down upon me for being a baby about the ordeal.

[Tickling may not seem life-threatening, but the fear and sobbing due to the tickling seemed sufficient to code as a n assault. Note that we did not code as a sexual assault because reporter did not define it as such].

14. Rape, attempted rape, or sexual abuse (to oneself); others may also be injured

Such narratives are not frequent in our sample, but are events that are important in clinical literature. For that reason, we wanted to be able to tag these special cases.

Narrative must indicate that sexual abuse was involved, e.g., uses terms such as "molested," "raped".

Sample narrative:

[molested]: "I'm finally pretty comfortable telling people about this event. It happened when I was in fourth grade—living in Tokyo, Japan where my dad had been transferred by his job (for the state) I didn't know much Japanese at the time—though I had been living there for nearly two years (I stayed for four) I walked to the park by myself and when I got there—a Japanese man showed me a map and rattled off in Japanese asking for directions. He seemed to need my help. He asked me where the Library was—and I told him that I didn't know. He insisted that I find it with him. I felt strange about the situation—and considered trying to duck away behind a bush as we walked deeper into the park. When we got to a bridge he knelt down to rest the map on his knees and take a closer look—but with one hand—he touched my vagina. I stepped back from him thinking that he had done it by accident—and he scooted forward. I stepped back again and he stood up and reached for me again. He continued to ask me for directions. I wanted to scream "tatsukete" (help) but could not remember the Japanese word for it. Instead I just ran away yelling "wakarimasen" (I don't understand)."

19. LTE not classifiable: life-threatening event does not fit into any of the above categories.

We did not find any unclassifiable LTE narratives in this sample.

Events that are not Life-Threatening:

2. RECREATION / EXPLORATION

Examples: riding a cow, a lively cake fight, being mischievous for the fun of it, running naked in a field of flowers; a lovely hiking trip, shooting a gun, discovering the pleasures of reading, catching a fish, breaking a toe en route to Hawaii; first time stoned; sneaking into a concert, experiencing skydiving or bungee jumping, experiencing an unexpected spiritual moment, or peak experience.

Narratives center on recreational activities, such as hobbies, parties, dances, traveling, vacationing, or sports. Emphasis is on recreation, play, or exploration, rather than achievement striving, or concerns for safety, or concerns about relationships. If an attempt at recreation is obstructed, can also count as a recreational event so long as the obstruction is not life-threatening (see Hawaii example, below). Spiritual moments that are framed as moments in themselves, and not framed as a decision to redirect one's life, count as recreation/exploration, not as achievement.

Note: If serious injury or fear for safety dominates the narrative, code as life-threatening event.

Sample narrative:

[Graduation party:] Last day of school we all had our graduation party at a fraternity house at UC Berkeley. Everyone was drunk, happy, dancing. It was so much fun and I won't ever forget it. everyone got along, no grudges!

[Obstructed trip to Hawaii]: I walked out of my front door and somehow managed to step on the outer left side of my left foot. I fell, but got up and limped inside. I had just turned 18 and was 1 day away from going to a concert, and 3 days away from going on a trip to Maui (a B-day gift from mom). My mom said "You didn't go and break your foot right before our trip did you?" Of course within minutes I was hysterical and I knew that I would have to go to Maui on crutches.

Note: Do not code as life-threatening event. The primary concern is not the broken foot, but the impingement on enjoyment of the vacation.

[Sneaking in to a Dave Mathews concert]: We had to trek through bushes to find a hole in a fence. Eventually we found it, then we hopped a fence, crossed a stream where somehow only one foot got soaking wet, then we hopped another fence on which I got caught and ripped a whole in my pants, then we hiked up a hill and eventually reached the last fence. Ted and Al jumped over-I followed and got in just as a security guard came. I ran and hid. We lost Sue and Andy -but they got in later and found us.

Note: Do not code as guilt/shame (no such emphasis); do not code as relationship (focus is on the adventure, not on relationships, which are not the focus of this narrative; fun and mischief is the focus).

[Great horned owl] I was on a trail below my house (parents) taking an enjoyable walk alone. While passing a tree which my family and I always call "the big oak tree" I suddenly jerked my head upward—meeting eyes with this owl. My immediate reaction was one of amazement and then appreciation. Its eyes were locked with mine—an intense gaze that is hard to describe. A raw, honest, soulful feeling emanated from the owl's eyes. There was nothing fake or

misleading in its eyes and that was what was so refreshing but also alien. I felt lucky, and I wanted to tell someone about it.

[Spiritual moment] I was 13. We were in a McDonald's on the way to a work project in Mexico. Ben and I sat with an old lady (Anne) to read her comics while we breakfast. She talked to us about what we were doing, she spoke of being lonely and eating in McDonald's just to see the people. She then said that she wanted to tell us her wisdom because she had no children to pass it on to. She said that people will laugh at you and criticize you, they will put you down and hurt you but you have to smile because your smile is your armor and that's what Jesus did. We all cried.

[Peak experience] I was hiking in New Mexico for 2 weeks with a large group of my friends. One night I walked out alone on the edge of a large mesa and stared over a huge rocky valley for what seemed like hours. While I was there I gained a new appreciation for nature and began to wonder about my creation. I never believed in religion after that experience.

3. RELATIONSHIP EVENT

Examples: first love, breakup, parents' divorce, reconciliation, intimacy, separation, interpersonal conflict

Events in which a particular interpersonal relationship is emphasized, usually one with a parent or a peer. The relationship should have some history or at least some emotional investment in the other person. Themes in such narratives might emphasize moving toward, away, or against another person(s). Conflict may or may not be present.

Sample narratives:

[parents' divorce:] We had just moved to Monterey and my father away in Korea (army) had just been restationed after Vietnam. My father was due to return home soon, after years of being gone. When he returned he wasn't very close to any of us. My parents argued a lot. And so my mom tells me, I asked my mom "why doesn't dad love me anymore?" Shortly after, my parents were divorced.

Note: Focus is on dad's not loving him anymore.

[dad retaliates; age 8]: I as playing with my dad at some family friends' house and while he was talking to his buddy, I smacked him on the ass really hard and ran away giggling. As I was running upstairs, he grabbed me by the shirt and spanked me. I was scared of him and his reaction.

Not coded as LTE because not sufficiently severe.

[communing with boyfriend]: My boyfriend and I fell asleep together one night at my house. We were curled up facing each other I fell asleep looking at his face. I had a dream that night where I was falling. One of those dreams where you sort of jerk awake. Well I jerked and woke up and he did too. I looked into his eyes and I knew that we were having the same dream. We immediately hugged each other and we both knew what had just happened simply by looking in each others eyes. Then we just sort

of fell asleep.

[leaving mom]: It was the first day of kindergarten. I had remembered driving by the school before and my mom telling me that that was where I'd be soon. The school seemed so vast and forbidding. On the first day, I clung to my mother like a virus. I would not let go of her. Eventually all the other mothers and fathers left and the children sat tentatively listening to a story. I still would not let go. Eventually she left and I had so much fun I didn't want to leave. The next day there was a picture of me in the paper by a reporter who was taking "first day" pictures for fillers. I think I was wearing plaid pants. I remember seeing the back of Nancy Miller's head as she listened to a story that day. She had short straight dark hair that curled under. I remember the intense discomfort and fear. Leaving my mom was like getting out of bed early in the morning.

[leaving my high school friends] We were in the parking lot of a coffee shop. The next day everyone was getting on an airplane to go away to college for the first time. It was down to two friends and we just lingered. It was like we knew that one phase of our life was over and when we saw each other again, things would be different. There was a deep appreciation of the past.

Marginal case follows: coded as relationship memory--reporter captioned the memory as "getting in trouble for making a mess," and her making messes with Melanie is also featured as a family story.

["getting in trouble with parents for making a mess"] I was 7 and staying at my friend Melanie's house for the night. The next morning we were up at 6:00 am and decided we wanted to make French toast before cartoons came on. We made a total mess in her kitchen. We had practically no clue to what we were doing, nor had we realized what a mess we had made. The smell of the first trial ones burning was enough to wake up her dad. He was enraged when he saw the kitchen, us standing on chairs above the gas stove and the smoke of the burning toast. We were banished from the kitchen until we could reach the stove without chairs and were able to read cookbooks. Until then we were to wake him up when we were hungry! Melanie's dad told my mom, I remember that! To this day my mom teases me when I make French toast and asks if we should call Melanie to help me make more of a mess!

Note: The following is not a relationship memory, but rather a recreational memory: The relationship with this particular stranger has no significance].

[Kissed by stranger in Paris] I arrived in Paris with a good friend of mine. While sitting in a park a French man approached me, he spoke no words of English to me and planted a kiss on my lips. I was shocked and pushed him off of me as my friend sat there in amazement. He insisted that I was now his girlfriend through his French, and my friend and I tried to explain to him that this doesn't happen in America. My friend brought up the story to her mother and I was asked to share it. I told them exactly as I told it here. She couldn't stop laughing and couldn't believe this actually happened to me. My reaction was laughter as well.

Tough call: Coded as relationship event because does not concern reporter's own achievement, but rather her love and admiration for her mother.

["How influential my mother has been in my life, Age 10:] My mother who worked full-time, came home from work (with dad who also worked) one night and I remember meeting her in the kitchen and hugging her so hard. I only was tall enough to be belly-button-high with her. She always wore beautiful business suits to work—she was an executive at IBM. My mother demonstrated to me that women can be professionals, be mothers and be role models. Thanks to my mother, I grew up never doubting that women could be as powerful in this world as men.

4. ACHIEVEMENT EVENT

Examples: winning a competition, learning to ride a bicycle or drive a car, passing, failing, or struggling with an important exam; getting into college, reclaiming one's ethnic heritage by climbing the Great Wall of China; laborious but not life-threatening childbirth; embracing a new religion or deciding to live a life of spirituality, mastering the urge to eat (control over body); struggling to be popular; finally getting one's braces off; realizing one wants to have children; pledging a sorority; establishing a new life when the family immigrated

Events that emphasize one's own or group/family effortful attempts at mastery or accomplishment with regard to physical, material, social, or spiritual goals, regardless of the outcome. Event must involve effortful striving to achieve a goal, skill, or direction in life (vocational or spiritual). Commitment to a new way of life counts as an achievement event.

Sample narratives:

[Baseball triumph] Baseball field. If we win this game, we go to state championships. Team relies on me. I pitch real good and get taken for pinch hitter in last inning with coach not realizing I would not be able to pitch final inning. Pitcher after me give up game losing grand slam and everybody's hating it. Everybody had lots of praise for me and I felt really happy about my performance but really sorry for our coach. It was both one of the highest and one of the most humble moments of my life.

[Committing myself to Christ]: I was at my mom's work family conference in Northern California. It was during the time of the highschool/college group meeting and we were given some time for reflection. It was during this conference that I started to feel a conviction that I needed to change things in my life and while I was sitting on some grass looking out onto the ocean I recommitted my life to Christ and God.

["After 14 years dance training I decided to quit"] I was a professional dancer and I hated it. I went to my instructor's condo with my boyfriend because my family would not support me in my decision. I told my instructor (who was battling cancer) that I was extremely unhappy and I could not go on in this business. I was crying consumed with feelings of guilt and relief. She was surprisingly understanding and I felt like a free person for the first time without the trappings of the complex dynamics of a dance studio (e.g. eating, dressing, acting...)

[Getting into college]: I had just gotten my mail, jumped in my car drove to my boyfriend's house. I was already late to meet him and his parents who had just flown into town. I ran in the door in tears screaming "I got accepted, I got accepted." Everyone was really happy for me. I felt so proud and could tell my boyfriend was really happy for me.

Compare above narrative with this one, which counts as a relationship, not achievement event, because the focus is on the mom, not the admission to college.

[My selfish mom]: I was at work talking on the phone to my mom telling her I wanted to go to UC Santa Cruz. she revoked her offer of paying for school because she didn't want me to go to UCSC. So I told her to have a nice life and hung up on her. I was terribly shaken up. I called my boyfriend to tell him about my mom and how she wasn't going to help with school anymore. I remember how mad and upset I was about the whole thing. My boyfriend's reaction was expected. He was not surprised at the continuously selfish act of my mother.

[Mastery of body]: I was on a scale in my dad's girlfriend's bathroom and the red numbers came up 98 lbs. I was 5'5 and I had decided to take control of my life through not eating. When I saw that I was almost triple digits, I decided I would never let myself weigh over 100 lbs. I would stop eating and never grow up, get fat, develop. All of my stubbornness was resolved to a goal for the next few years I played sports I ate a powerbar every few days I wouldn't pass out and I said I was never hungry. I was so good—nobody ever had any idea. The red numbers on the scale decided how I was going to live my life for the next two years—in fear of being fat. I never wanted to grow up I thought if I was skinny I could be a child forever.

[Deciding to become a performer]: I was performing in a production of "Fiddler on the Roof" at Woodminster Ampitheater, a semi-professional theater in Oakland. We were performing one night. It's an outdoor theater and it was cold as the fog had come in already. We were doing the song "Anaterka" about leaving our home in the time of war. I was really emotional. I started sobbing because I was so thoroughly upset with the situation, the loss, the pain. Once I stepped offstage I realized there were other actors looking at me. One gave me a hug and asked if I was okay. He was concerned. I realized then that theater is what I wanted to do because it lets me connect with people in a powerful way. I loved the thrill of performance and I emotion I draw out of others.

[Deciding to become a writer]: My first relationship was one with a girl named Trinity. Through the course of our times, she sparked inside of me a writing style I never hope to lose. She had folders and folders of writings, of short stories, poems, haikus, screenplays. I had never seen so many writings in one place before, and I was quite enthralled. Naturally, it rubbed off onto me, this inspiration, and ever since then I have aspired to be a writer equal to her.

[Getting a sense of direction, literally!] I was in the back seat of the family car with my mom driving. We were on our way home from kindergarten. I was laying down and looking out the window at the clouds and the trees. I suddenly felt understanding of a greater world than my own. I knew direction, and remembered the road to school and which way home was. I felt greater understanding.

This one is a tough call. We decided to code as achievement event because the focus is on adjusting to going off to college. Seems like a peak experience [recreation], but the moment is strived for. Not a relationship memory because leaving dad is not prominently featured, nor is a relationship with a particular friend]:

I remember quite vividly my first hours here at UCSC. My stepdad dropped me off at the East Field house with all my backpacking and college supplies. We hugged, said goodbye, and he drove off. I was totally alone. I knew no one. I was about to start college, and the sun was high in the sky on a beautiful Santa Cruz day. Eventually some other students waiting for Wilderness Orientation to begin, like myself, began arriving or coming back from downtown. I met my first college friends and we walked around campus, went downtown for some food, then came back up to campus and slept under the stars on a pleasantly chilly Santa Cruz night. It was a wonderful time. I remember feeling alive, ecstatic, hopeful, glad to be alive. I felt in tune with the universe like I was where I was supposed to be. I had no worries.

5. Guilt/Shame; Doing right vs. wrong

Examples: Guilt about getting pregnant, about lying, about hurting someone. Deciding not to steal something, or stealing something and feeling remorse. Making a moral or ethical decision to do the right thing in the present, or on future occasions.

Events in which the issue of one's doing right or wrong is emphasized more so than any of the prior concerns; there is an explicit contrast between what one feels is right vs. wrong. Narrative may explicitly uses the term "guilt," "shame," or "ashamed," or in some way clearly convey remorse for one's own actions. Alternately, the narrative may emphasize having chosen to do the right thing, when one could have done the wrong thing. The focus in the narrative is on one's own responsibility for having done right or wrong. Sometimes the reporter resolves to be a better person as a result. The offense may not seem severe to the coder, but the reporter's perspective should be the basis on which the narrative is coded. Note: Embarrassment is usually too mild an emotion to count in this category (see unclassified events). Childhood pranks in which guilt or shame is not emphasized also do not count in this category, because the issue of morality is not central (such events might count as recreation, or relationship).

Sample narratives:

[The abortion]: One year age over Thanksgiving break I got pregnant by a guy who I had been seeing for a year and a half. Upon finding out I was not only scared but I was shocked because that was the only time in my life I had ever had unprotected sex. I had always been the responsible, caring friend that took someone else to get tested and gave them a mild lecture on protecting themselves. I was devastated and ashamed and basically became an emotional mess for about six weeks (I had an abortion that x-mas break). My boyfriend freaked out and basically ditched me, and I was afraid of telling my family because I didn't want them to worry about me. Also, I felt like this was something I had done on my own and I needed to take responsibility for my actions instead of leaning on my parents. My close friends were great. They took care of me and

supported me 100%. I still am trying to figure out why this happened to me and how exactly it changed me. I do know that this experience has given me strength and made me more aware of my actions.

[The above narrativet might seem to be about her relationship--with boyfriend, parents, close friends--or about a life-threatening event--death of the fetus. However, the narrative emphasizes her shame and personal responsibility. One clue that the narrative is not about relationships is that so many relationships are mentioned -- the event is really about her own struggles with herself, with learning to take responsibility for her actions.]

[Lying on a resume]: I once lied about my qualifications on a resume. I said that I had a B driver license when I didn't. I didn't think it would matter. The place of employment even asked me if my license was current and I said it was. The interesting memory bit is the part about when they wanted me to use the license and I had to admit to not actually having one. I was really scared and figured they would fire me immediately (which they should have done perhaps). I was so embarrassed as I had never lied about anything before. It was the most humiliating experience of my life. I didn't lose my job facing my co-worker was really tough. By not having this license I really screwed up the things at work. Telling the truth was terrifying. I tell a lot of folks about this event and this memory because I learned a lot from it. I don't lie anymore ever. I am really honest about why I don't lie too. I feel pretty worthless when I tell the story. It was really lame thing to do.

[Flipping the bird]: When I was 7 I had one older brother and my neighbors had two boys as well. Being the youngest (and female) I was always trying to win their approval. One day we were playing handball against the house and the UPS truck pulled up. Since it didn't have any windows in back we figured the driver couldn't see behind him (we didn't know about rear view mirrors then). Anyways, they all dared me to flip him the bird. I remember getting that adrenaline rush, the one you get when you're just about to do something your not supposed to. I flipped him off and ran away giggling. All of a sudden the drivers side door opened and the UPS guy got out. The hairs on my back bristled as he walked over toward me. I was so scared. He never told my mom but for months after, every time he pulled in our driveway I hid...After this happened I told my two best friends at school. I told them because I was really ashamed of what I had done and I wanted to know if they thought I would be in any permanent trouble. (When you're a kid you worry about doing jail time for stuff like this).

[Hitting sister with a rock]: At my old house, we had a big yard and a lot of it was fields. My dad kept having us mow the field and clean it up so we could have a bigger yard-expanding the yard. In order to mow the field, we had to go through and pick out rocks and he had us just throw them in a sticker patch on the property to get them out of the way since we weren't doing anything with the sticker bushes. Well, one day I was going around throwing the rocks into the pile and my little sister was outside too bugging me. I told her to go away so I would finish doing the rocks and she wouldn't go away. Of course me with my big mouth I told her to go away or I wouldn't be responsible, if the rocks hit her. She didn't listen and without even trying, I ended up throwing a rock that landed right on top of her head and she had to get stitches. It made

me feel really guilty and people didn't believe that I really didn't mean to hit her. My friends usually respond with disbelief and laughter
[May not seem like a capital offense, but the reporter says she felt guilty].

[Unwarranted aggression]: All of us were out in front of the school. I was sitting down when my former friend said something to me, I got up. We started pushing each other. I pushed my former friend and his new friend while my friend watched. I don't even know what I was thinking. It was like I was watching myself act stupid and I couldn't do anything. I'm not a violent person. The whole thing made me sick. This really was a self-defining moment. It changed my life. I never want anything like that to happen again. A whole bunch of other incidents led up to this occurrence. I see my prior faults and I've tried to become a better person.
[Doesn't explicitly use the term 'guilt' or 'shame,' but resolves to be a better person; feels remorse.]

[Returning money that was not one's own]: For as long as I can remember my father has participated in the local Farmer's Market, which I too attend frequently. On one such occasion I found a \$20 bill on the ground between our stand and that of our neighbors (closer to ours). I was thrilled. My mom said I could keep it. My dad told me it was probably our neighbor's but had been blown off the table. He left the decision up to me as to what I did with the money. After hours of contemplation (about 1 1/2 to 2) of what I could do with that much money I decided to give it to the farmer. I felt better that way. He was quite impressed and gave me a bag full of peaches (my personal favorite). To this day I have a fairly personal friendship with that farmer.

Tough call: The following narrative refers to his family feeling shamed," but the event centers on his failure at achievement.

I was in the university when I received my first "F." my strongest subject is math. I placed into a higher division class and was excited. But the class hit me extremely hard and I failed it. Nobody knows about it except for the proper officials, I can not show it to anyone in my family because it would shame them.

6. DRUG, ALCOHOL, TOBACCO USE

Examples: First time smoking cigarettes or pot, taking psychedelics or speed, getting extremely drunk, overdosing on pills, getting busted for buying drugs.

Events that center on the use drugs, alcohol, or tobacco for recreational, thrill, or possibly suicidal purposes. The event may have a positive or negative outcome. Although the event may be classified into prior categories, e.g., LTE or recreation, we code such events separately the purposes of another project that we are developing.

Sample narratives:

[enjoying psychedelics]: Great America Amusement park, took about an eighth of shrooms [mushrooms], reacted as if we were having the time of our lives. All of us there, peaking off shrooms, excellent trip—I was telling her (best friend) with enthusiasm the excitement of the day the things that

happened. The visuals I had etc. She reacted shocked, excited and wanted to hear more. Initially she thought I was crazy.

[busted while purchasing marijuana]: I was buying some weed and the guy I was getting it from said he didn't have it on him so we had to drive to the "spot" to get it. He has one of his female friends who had three kids with her drive. The care overheated and we had to pullover to the sidewalk. We were in the projects at the time. A police car drove up and two cops came out. An old cop told us to put our hands on the hood of the car while the young cop pointed a 12 gauge shot gun at us. After a body search, continuous assaults, and a computerized police record search, they let us go. I told them that a couple of bitch-ass cops were fucking with me, but I didn't have any shit on me at the time, so they had to let me go. My friends were concerned for my safety. I was still pissed off.

[puking on grain alcohol]: I was at a frat house and I got really drunk from all the fruit punch mixed with grain alcohol. They were playing some stupid-ass music that I don't care to recall. After walking around for a while, I became really nauseous. I went to the back yard. Two people were sitting on the steps. I think it was a frat boy hitting on some chick. I walked halfway down the stairs and all of a sudden I stopped and puked right in front of them. At first they ignored me. I unconsciously I was pissed off. So I stood where I was and repeated puked in front of them. After a while they became disgusted and walked away. I got the reaction I wanted. God, do I hate frat boys.

[first time smoking a cigar]: I was at these soccer fields by my house with all my old soccer buddies. One of them had stolen a cigar from his dad and we were acting older. We stood in a circle in our uniforms and smoked 1/4 of the cigar. We kinda got sick of being grown up. We tossed. I was nervous about the peer pressure to smoke.

[trying to overdose on pills]: I was standing in my bathroom after school looking at my self in the mirror. My friends were in the other room talking and listening to music I remember standing there with a handful of aspirin (12 or so) debating if I should take them. I hadn't eaten all day long and I had practice in two hours. I was just standing there over my sink daring myself to take them. Completely daring myself. I told myself I was a coward if I didn't do it. I said "what the hell" and took them. Earlier in the day I had taken two Alive and two prosac. I did it. I went out of the bathroom and my friends asked me what I was doing. They knew I had a problem with pills and they started yelling at me when I told them. They sat me down on my bed and just kept asking why. I didn't know what to say. I didn't know. I really just wanted to see if I could do it. I didn't want to die. I told my mom later that night when I started feeling sick. She called the poison control and they said I had to do some stuff, but I would be fine.

99. EVENT UNCLASSIFIABLE. Narrative does not fit well into any of the event categories.

Recreation? Relationship? 108.3

I was at softball practice after school on the baseball. One of the girls hit a ball over a chain wire fence that faced a major street near the school. I ran to get the ball and started climbing over the fence. I fell but the foot slipped and my shirt got caught on the top of the fence. I fell but the front of my shirt was hooked. I ended up hanging with my bare chest (I was only 11 and did not yet require a bra) facing the street. I couldn't get down

by myself and eventually a couple of my teammates had to come and unhook me. I was so embarrassed I wanted to die.

Recreation? Relationship? Achievement? 113.3

[Befriending animals]. Age 5: I was camping with my family and was feeding a deer by hand and my other had had food in it. A chipmunk came and started eating out of the other hand. My mom took a picture. I was very content and pleased with myself for being calm, patient, and making friends. ..The only people I've told is probably those who saw the picture, or have commented that I've got a knack with animals.

Recreation? Life-threatening event? 114.3

"Fell asleep at the wheel": When I was 16, my best friend and I drove to Mexico without telling our parents. I drove all the way home while my friend was asleep. I fell asleep at the wheel. The next thing I remember was pulling my friend out of the car and throwing our sleeping bags onto the lawn of a truck stop where we both fell asleep. I don't remember driving to the truck stop.

Guilt/Shame? Relationship? 133.2

["I farted in my fourth grade class—my most embarrassing moment", involved classmates.]

I was in my fourth grade class, we were taking a test so the room was silent. I farted and was embarrassment because I was sitting next to a boy I had a crush on Ryan Perry. Everyone was looking around wondering who did it cause it was so loud. I wanted to shrink into my seat. So people laughed.

Early memories tend to be difficult to code into events: too cryptic. Not coded as an LTE, because narrative does not indicate possibility of severe injury . 105.1

When I was 4, we were making sugar cookies when the neighbor came to the door. She told my mother the house was on fire and we had to leave. I had bought two pairs of socks the day before with my grandmother, and I asked my mom to let me take them with me. We went outside and watched the neighbor's house burn.We [boyfriend and acquaintance] were talking about remembering childhood. They both said they could not remember far back, maybe only to 10 years old. I was telling them all the things I remembered from being in pre-school. They were surprised I remembered so much, and mostly random things.

Early memory: exploration? Relationship? 167.1

[age 5: "typing in great room"]: I spent a lot of time at my grandparents' when I was very small. My grandmother had a desk set up in their seemingly vast living room. On it was a vintage typewriter. I coveted my time at that typewriter. I could not read or write, but everything I typed, anything on that paper was intensely significant to me. I remember looking at the page I had "written" feeling such pride in my accomplishment, presiding at the "helm" over this immense room, typing up important documents. I felt self-sufficient and creative. My grandmother used these times to dissertate philosophically about life. She played a pivotal role in facilitating this proudly creative time. ...When I was 24, I told my therapist this memory during a session as I was explaining the dynamics of my father's family. And that while my relationship with my

father was predominately negative, this frequent time with my Nana shone nostalgically amidst the gloom. This was last year. my therapist expressed his relief/delight that I had had such a potent and positive experience. I felt proud for my creativity and grateful to my grandmother it made me miss her deeply.

Relationship? Lack of all relationships is emphasized. 223.3

I remember coming to Santa Cruz with my car filled with everything I owned packed and unpacked everything from my car to my apartment. I was the only one there. I had never moved in my life. I live in the same house all of my life. It was scary to be in an unfamiliar place that I had to call my home. It was so empty even with all of my things. I cried myself to sleep driven by fear and anxiety. It was so scary to be in a new place.

Early memory: Recreation? Relationship? 306.3

On my 4th birthday party I received as a present a small, stuffed Papa smurf doll. I was so happy with my gift that I ran outside to play with my neighbors. Usually, my birthday party included only family members and family friends. My neighborhood friends recognized my relatives, especially my uncle, who always had a serious and somewhat scary expression on his face. At that time, my uncle worked in a department regarding national security. He often carried a gun, as it was part of his duties. The particular event occurred as I was playing with the other children. Out of pride, I began to brag about my uncle and how he carries a gun. I got everyone's attention. Everyone begged me to see my uncle's gun. I knew that my uncle would not let me handle his gun, so I led my friends to the front door of our apartment, which was surrounded by glass rectangles. Through which the inside of the apartment could be seen. I remember crowding around one the rectangles and peering through at my uncle and the bulge of the gun on his side. I felt proud having an uncle in such a dangerous employment.

PRACTICE NARRATIVES

1. [123.1] We took off to Mexico during finals week and stayed for three crazy days. It was raining and ugly in Mexico, but nevertheless, we stocked up on beer and started to drink in the hotel. After drinking, my boyfriend and I didn't want to go out, but the others did. We ended up falling asleep only to be awakened by one of our friends running into the room to say the other person had been caught by the police. We ended up spending hours looking for him. He ended up escaping from the police and bribing them to let him go. It was a really great adventure.

2. [132.3] I was riding my bike along the sidewalk, I entered the intersection and WHAM!! I got hit by a car running a red light. I got knocked out. I thought I was going to die.

3. [165.3] Seeing Michelangelo's David for the first time. I couldn't believe it. I had studied and read about this statue. Seen many pictures and replicas. But the real thing was so much better than anything. I was in awe. He was huge. My eye level was with his feet. The detail of his face and hands were amazing, each little vein and muscle was well defined. I went back a couple of times and each time the wonder was still the same. [Note: does not mention any greater significance to this event in terms of life goals].

4. [210.3] All through life I've been made fun of but when I got to high school, I was still naïve enough to think it would stop. Well, it didn't, at least not in P.E. This guy Tony Arnold used to always call me "man-chick" cause I was such a tomboy. We as a class had to play softball one time. It was my turn up but I didn't want to bat. Coach called me and that's when Tony starts up calling me names. I get up there ready to hit a home run, but totally whiff instead on the first pitch. I was so mad, but really embarrassed because he starts really making cracks then, and the whole class was just watching. So the second pitch comes and I smack it good. A line drive right at his head. He drops to the floor, flat on the floor in the dirt. I could have easily made it to third base but I stopped at second where he was. He was wiping the dirt off of the front of his body like he was so damn cool. I just stood there looking down at him with the biggest smile I've ever had. I was so proud and I'll always remember the sudden look of fear on his face when he realized that big ass softball was coming right at him. I would pay a million dollars to see that look again, to have a picture of it. I consider a triumph, the turning point in my life where I just stop taking everyone's crap because I was too shy not to.

5. [307.3] I was at home in Chico, CA one afternoon after school. I was alone, waiting for my roommates to return from school when a young man knocked on my door asking for one of my roommates. I said he wasn't home but would be shortly. He left. About 5 min. later there came a second knock at the door. This time I saw three young men standing in front of me. The same one asked for my roommate again, and then proceeded to enter my house, friends behind him. When I told him to get the fuck out of my house, they said, "It's better if you don't fight us." So, naturally, I fought back and lost. I was beaten and thrown around and told how "cute" I was. Fortunately they did nothing to me. They robbed my roommate and left, but not before threatening my life. This experience has definitely made me more aware. I no longer have blind faith in people and I do not succumb to the false sense of security your home can give you.

6. [333.2] My friends and I were at Joe's house for a party. We were playing water-basketball and being very flirtatious toward each other. Then I went to rinse off the chlorine in a shower and John came in. a few words were exchanged and then he leaned in and kissed me. The kiss seemed magical-or chemical like an explosive reaction taking place. I had no idea how he felt though. I left the party soon after. That night I kept replaying in my mind the scene; feeling the rush of adrenaline each time. That was our first kiss. We've been together almost two years.

7. [344.2] I was in the market in Nairobi and I saw a necklace that I like so I started to bargain for it with the shop owner. It got the point where we were divided up by twenty shillings and he did not want to lower the price anymore. It was then that I thought to myself, "what am I doing", this was because I was arguing over 30

or so cents when that 30 cents would make a difference in the shopkeeper's life. So I gave him his requested price.

8. [297.1] The suicide of one of my good friends in high school, probably the event itself would be the moment I found out and the day after. I was in my room and had just finished watching the movie "Hook". I was talking on the phone and got a call through. It was my friend who had also been very close to this boy. She was crying and told me Dan had shot himself in the head. I accused her of lying for a full five minutes but it sunk in. At this point we still had some hope because he hadn't died yet, but he did the next morning. I got to a point where I felt as if I absolutely couldn't deal. Wasn't interested in talking to anyone including my boyfriend. I did return to normal shortly but with a new realization about life. Finally realized we are very very fragile. He was my first boyfriend, my first kiss, an awesome friend and I still miss him everyday of my life.

9. [244.1]: When I was 7 years old, my family and I moved from the Philippines to the U.S. It was a very difficult decision because my parents were already "established" in the Philippines; my mother was a high-paying professor while my father was assistant principle of a high school. Although I had relatives in San Diego, leaving "home" to start a new life meant starting over, or starting from scratch if you will. I was only 7 years old so I had no idea what was going on. But when we arrived in California, everyone was very hospitable. They helped us get back on our feet and gave my family a place to stay. Eventually my parents' hard work paid off and we were able to get a house of our own. My brother is now a stockbroker, my younger brother is an engineer, and my parents are high school foreign language teachers. Financially, my family is currently well-off. I always wonder what it would be like if we were still in the Philippines. It is only now that I realize that my parents moved not for themselves, but for the future of their children.

10. [245.3]: I was on a vintage car rally with my friend Dick Weston in Port Townsend Washington. We were driving a 1969 MGC that was fully restored and loaned to us by a good friend. After the 2 day rally we were running low on cash and wanted to get home. We couldn't really afford to stop in Oregon, but people were telling us we would be crazy to try and drive home in a day. People said it would take 16-18 hours but we thought it was feasible. So we hopped in the little red British convertible and tore off down the road. The speedometer rarely dropped below 95 MPH, and we only stopped for gas and at one BK Lounge where we were offered french fry sauce, blasting salsa music, with our shirts off, through rain and shine, we made it to Oakland in 31/2 hours.

11. [342.1] I met my two brothers for the first time (half-brothers, we actually met them in Santa Cruz, though I am not from here) you could say in eighth grade. (they hadn't been around since I was a toddler so I didn't remember them.) It was a very emotional day for me. We went out to lunch and they talked about old times. That was one of the happiest days for me and I have thought about it numerous times over the years. (I only keep in touch with one of them still) I don't think it meant, or means, as much to my sister, as to me. I could be wrong, but I get that feeling.

12. [250.3] The night that I tried cocaine for the first time. How unknowing I was what the repercussions would be. I thought it was kinda cool. It was me and my friend (later to become my coke buddy) up in his room, watching a movie. He had just made me a big dinner. He said I could try it, (he had and is still doing it). We sat there for hours just smoking cigarettes and talking. He had always been one of my close friends, but now we were so close. Nobody had that bond that we did. The room, that wall, the chill in the night, the way we talked, he got me a blanket, we were all cozy. It was the perfect night.

Self-Defining Memory Questionnaire

Adapted from Singer & Moffitt (1991-1992), p. 242

A self-defining memory is a personal memory that has the following attributes:

1. It is at least one year old.
2. It is a memory of a specific event¹ in your life that you remember very clearly and that still feels important to you even as you think about it now.
3. It is a memory that helps you to understand who you are as an individual and might be the memory you would tell someone else if you wanted that person to understand you in a more profound way.
4. It may be a memory that is positive or negative, or both, in how it makes you feel. The only important aspect is that it leads to strong feelings.
5. It is a memory that you have thought about many times. It should be familiar to you like a picture you have studied or a song (happy or sad) you have learned by heart.

To understand best what a self-defining memory is, imagine you have just met someone you like very much and are going for a long walk together. Each of you is very committed to helping the other get to know the "Real You." . . . In the course of conversation, you describe several memories that you feel convey powerfully how you have come to be the person you currently are. It is precisely these memories that constitute self-defining memories.

Task

On the next 3 pages, please jot down a caption or one-sentence summary for each of three self-defining memories that come to mind. Then describe each memory with enough detail to help your imagined friend see and feel as you did. Although these memories are anonymous and will only be identified by code name, please do not reveal memories that are so painful as to make you feel uncomfortable describing them.

¹ Singer & Moffitt used the term "memory from your life". Request at the bottom of each page to describe the past history of telling the event, and for describing a specific episode of having told the event (the "telling narrative") have also been added.

Gender _____ Current Age _____ Ethnicity _____

Memory #1

Caption _____

(a brief sentence to identify the event)

My age at the time of the original event _____

Other person/persons involved in the event _____

Description of the event: where you were, whom you were with, what happened, how you and others reacted. Include details that will help an imagined friend see and feel as you did.

With about how many different people have you shared the above event, or memory? _____

If you have a specific memory of telling someone about the above event:

1. To whom did you describe the event? _____

2. About how long after the event did you tell them about it? _____

Please vividly describe the story of the telling. What led you to tell it, and how did you and the listener(s) react to the telling?

Memory #2

Caption _____
(a brief sentence to identify the event)

My age at the time of the original event _____

Other person/persons involved in the event _____

Description of the event: where you were, whom you were with, what happened, how you and others reacted. Include details that will help an imagined friend see and feel as you did.

With about how many different people have you shared the above event, or memory? _____

If you have a specific memory of telling someone about the above event:

1. To whom did you describe the event? _____

2. About how long after the event did you tell them about it? _____

Please vividly describe the story of the telling. What led you to tell it, and how did you and listener(s) react to the telling?

Memory #3

Caption _____
(a brief sentence to identify the event)

My age at the time of the original event _____

Other person/persons involved in the event _____

Description of the event: where you were, whom you were with, what happened, how you and others reacted. Include details that will help an imagined friend see and feel as you did.

With about how many different people have you shared the above event, or memory? _____

If you have a specific memory of telling someone about the above event:

1. To whom did you describe the event? _____

2. About how long after the event did you tell them about it? _____

Please vividly describe the story of the telling. What led you to tell it, and how did you and the listener(s) react to the telling?