Theories of Personality
Option #2
Psychobiography
Due Date: November 25th, 2008
Points Possible: 50

General Instructions:
For this project you will write a psychobiography of your own life. Based on what we have covered in class and what the text covers, you will focus on the influences that have shaped your personality. For example, you can use any combination of the following perspectives: trait, psychodynamic, psychosocial, biological, humanistic, cognitive, behavioral and social/cultural. This is NOT an autobiography (life story of events), but a psychobiography (analysis of your unique personality through the use of psychological theories and research). Having said that, you will be using autobiographical information, but your goal is to explain your personality by analyzing key events in your life based on personality perspectives. As an alternative to focusing on different perspectives, you may choose to write your psychobiography from one perspective (e.g. Psychoanalytic), chronologically (e.g. Erikson's developmental stages) or thematically (e.g. focus on one facet of your life, a mysterious question is analyzed).

Guidelines:
1. Piece together a number of autobiographical accounts of your life or if you choose one key facet, gather as much information on it. You may want to ask your parents or older siblings to make suggestions.
   a. You may want to look at reoccurring events (or situations) in your life
   b. You may want to look at significant life events (remember unique events are ones that most likely influence your personality)
2. Interpret your autobiographical data in light of preferred theories (or theory) of personality.
3. Extract information that is pertinent to your theoretical viewpoint (e.g., do not attempt a Psychoanalytic interpretation in absence of data concerning your early life experiences; trait interpretations should utilize information which may be illustrative of the Big Five traits)

Organization of your paper:
Your Psychobiography should include the following:
• Introduction
   • Introduce the importance of studying your key life events
   • Theoretical perspective. Include information concerning the theory (or theories) to be used in your Psychobiography.
   • Explanation
   • Implications
• Psychobiography
   • Interpret your life (or key life events) chronologically through the lens of your theoretical perspective.
   • Demonstrate how your behavior throughout your life so far can be explained theoretically. Reference theoretical underpinnings of major life events and everyday activities.
• Conclusion
• Tie up loose ends
• Reflect upon assignment (i.e., what did you learn about yourself)
• References
  • If you used only your text, include it here, but if you used other books, include them as well

Errors in writing psychobiographies:
1. Critical-period Fallacy: overemphasis of one "critical period" such as the first year of life or the "Oedipal period" while neglecting later influences.
2. Eventism: Explaining life trends in terms of one or two key or "traumatic" events.
3. Neglect of Social, Cultural and Historical Factors: Not taking the social, cultural and historical context into account.
4. Originology: Tracing everything to its origins in childhood. It is not altogether certain that personality is indeed consistent throughout life.
5. Overpathologizing: Don't reduce a life to a particular psychiatric syndrome or tendency. Evaluate in terms of weaknesses and strengths.
6. Reductionism: Not a search for a single cause of personality

Helpful websites about psychobiographies:
1. http://www.psychobiography.com

Additional information:
Your paper needs to be typed, double-spaced using 12 font. Your paper should be about five pages long, not including your reference sheet. This is a guideline, not a prerequisite. Please DO NOT put your paper in a folder. Part of your grade will depend on organization & mechanics (spelling & grammar). If you need help with any of this, I recommend you ask a classmate or friend or go to the Writing Center on campus to proofread your paper before turning it in. Projects are due on November 25th, 2008 in class. After November 25th, you will be marked down 10 points for every class day they are late.
## Psychobiography Grading Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description of Expectation</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Acceptable</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Introduces the importance of studying life events &amp; introduces theory(ies) to be used.</td>
<td>9-10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>1-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychobiography</td>
<td>Interprets life events in terms of the chosen theory(ies). Identifies key points of theory(ies).</td>
<td>27-30</td>
<td>24-26</td>
<td>21-23</td>
<td>1-20</td>
<td>1-20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>Briefly summarizes the paper. Reflects upon assignment.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>Clear, Complete with appropriate format.</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mechanics/Organization</td>
<td>Syntax (word order), effectiveness of word choice, punctuation, grammar and spelling. Uses transitions.</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1</td>
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