

ONLINE APPENDIX 3: USING PSYCHOBIOGRAPHICAL METHOD TO REPRESENT THE SAMPLE

SELECTION OF REPRESENTATIVE LIVES

I selected the participants whose psychobiographical sketches appear in the book as, foremost, representatives of points on the college and adult Scales of Intrapyschic Brightness and Darkness and representatives of the types of longitudinal trajectories in the sample. To illustrate the broad applicability of concepts, and to give the reader a multidimensional understanding of lives in the sample, I also sought to include variety in the demographic and personal backgrounds of the college sample and in the career, family lives, and other circumstances of the adult sample.

In Chapter 2, for example, William Hovanec and David Martin represent intrapsychic brightness and darkness and relative longitudinal stability while illustrating divergent backgrounds on arriving to college and in their adult circumstances. Martin's privileged socioeconomic background, his preparation at a boarding school, his father's education and occupation, and his intellectual abilities represent a traditional background for a Harvard student in the sample and the era. By contrast, Hovanec attended a public school, was a star athlete, was less scholastically inclined than many students, and came from a rural region of North America. He was an outsider to Harvard's culture and a nontraditional student in the college sample.

As adults, Hovanec and Martin pursued the field of business, held roles in several business organizations, and then owned their own businesses—one of the common career trajectories in the adult sample. Their careers share characteristics with the careers of sample members in professions such as law and medicine and are less like the careers of participants in academia and service and other fields. Participants in these other fields, for example Joseph Fisher, Lawrence Hoyt, Robert Payne, and Louis

Russo, and participants with career trajectories less linear than Hovanec and Martin's, for example Lawrence Hoyt and Vincent Costa, were selected to show core concepts in the book's argument while illustrating variety in these other dimensions of the sample.

Hovanec and Martin also illustrate patterns of adult family formation in the sample: Hovanec of a long-term marriage with children and Martin of a long-term marriage without children. A third pattern, participants unmarried without children, is represented by Joseph Fisher and the CEO described in Chapter 8. Hovanec and Martin further illustrate rural and suburban geographies shared by other participants in the sample. Other primary exemplars like Hovanec and Martin (whose lives are summarized in book appendix 1) and more briefly presented exemplars were selected to show variety in secondary dimensions of the sample while illustrating core constructs.

In selecting exemplars of core concepts and secondary dimensions, I took care to identify individuals who were not eccentric or outliers. Use of extreme cases can facilitate illustration but such cases are less accurate representations of patterns in the sample.

THE WRITING OF PSYCHOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

A psychobiographical sketch (Alexander, 1990; Elms, 1994) is evocative; it shows a life rather than explaining it using impersonal concepts. But its writing presents choices about content, tone, and perspective. I resolved these choices in writing sketches in the book by seeking to provide a balanced picture of experiences and aspects of an exemplar's life as observed by the research team using the clinical life history assessment procedure described in chapter 4. When a dimension, such as career success, does not appear to figure centrally in a participant's psychobiographical sketch, it is because he did not present his life that way. When writing about the college or adult era, I portrayed what was known then, not carrying over from assessment of the life history carried out in another era.

I was significantly constrained in writing about participants by concern for protecting anonymity and confidentiality, given prominence locally, regionally, and nationally of members of the sample. In selecting exemplars for illustration of patterns, I excluded participants whose identities were too difficult to protect while writing an accurate life history. Study findings nonetheless apply equally to these members of the sample not used as exemplars. I also wrote the psychobiographical sketches at some remove from certain details and experiences and used other techniques to protect identities. Senior social science colleagues and a writing consultant helped me make these decisions. I also consulted the Social and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board at the University of Chicago, which approved this research.

These reasons and significant space constraints explain why I wrote sketches to convey only as much insight as needed to portray core concepts and to give a feel for the participant, the trajectory of his life, and dimensions of the sample. I received significant input into the writing of sketches from social science colleagues with extensive publication records in human development to ensure they fulfilled these goals.