Who Do You Want to Be? Exploring Personality Goal Motives

by

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Abstract

Personality research is studied with the foundational understanding that it is stable and consistent over the lifespan. However, psychologists can also agree that personality is subject toa great deal of change. Hudson and Roberts (2014) measured and validated the Change Big Five Inventory (C-BFI) to record people's goals to change themselves. The current study, with the goal of adopting a new perspective on personality, explored *why* people have goals to change who they are. In line with Hudson and Roberts (2014) work, results revealed that, on average, most people had goals to change in at least one trait on the Big Five. Additionally, it was found that goals to change were inversely related to scores of life satisfaction. When assessing the variability in approach motives for each personality trait, it was found that traits agreeableness, emotional stability, and openness are, on average, pursued for internal (or autonomous) reasons, whileextraversion is pursued for external (or controlled) reasons. Conscientiousness was pursued for both internal and external reasons. In determining if these reasons matter, regression analyses revealed that for *every trait,* students were more committed to their goal of changing the trait if they had stronger autonomous reasons to change it. By contrast, controlling reasons promoted commitment only to two trait change goals: Extraversion and conscientiousness. Hopefully, the results of this study will help individuals improve or change themselves in way that is both fulfilling and successful.

Who Do You Want to Be? Exploring Personality Goal Motives

Despite personality being generally understood as stable, psychologists also agree that personality is "much more than static individual differences in states" (Sheldon, Cheng, & Hilpert, 2011, as cited in Sheldon & Prentice, 2017, p. 1). Personality can also evolve and gradually change over time. The evidence confirms this. For example, social dominance (a facet of extraversion), conscientiousness, and emotional stability fluctuate over the lifetime, while social vitality (another facet of extraversion) and openness tend to increase in adolescence but decrease in old age (Roberts, Walton, & Viechtbauer, 2006).

Not only do traits change, but people actively desire to change their own traits. All humans have an innate need for growth (Maslow, 1968; Sheldon & Elliot, 1999). Consistent with this growth need, a relatively new area of personality research shows that most individuals desire to change at least one of their traits (Hudson & Fraley, 2016a, 2016b; Hudson & Roberts, 2014). However, little is known about why people want to change traits, or if their reasons influence their commitment to these personality change goals. That is the purpose of this thesis.

I will next briefly review evidence that people have goals to change their personality traits. Then I explore how their type of motivation to change these traits may influence their commitment to their change goal. I then introduce a study that assesses college students' personality change goals, their various motives to change, and their commitment to those goals.

Personality Change Goals

Hudson and Roberts (2014) developed and validated the Change Goals Big Five Inventory (C-BFI) to measure individuals' goals to increase (or decrease) in any of the big five personality dimensions. Specifically, participants were asked to rate the degree to which they want to change qualities within each trait (e.g., "I want to be someone who is more talkative")

from “much less than I currently am” to “much more than I currently am.” Their analysis found that most *desired* to increase on every big five personality trait to some degree. Furthermore, people wanted to increase in a trait more broadly (e.g., extraversion), as opposed to wanting only specific qualities related to the trait (e.g., I want to be someone who generates a lot of enthusiasm). What this means is that each of the Big Five trait change goals are measured through multiple items capturing specific qualities. Importantly, participants were consistent across the different specific qualities that make up a broader trait. For example, when a participant responded they wanted to be talkative more than they currently are (a quality of extraversion), they were also more likely to want to change another quality within extraversion, such as being more assertive. Even in older adults, who I would expect to have reached a higher state of self-acceptance and contentment, personality change goals were only slightly less prevalent (Hudson & Fraley, 2016).

Previous research proposes that personality change is often related to life satisfaction (Baumeister, 1994; Kiecolt, 1994). In essence, when an individual's life conditions are less than ideal, they are *more* motivated to change aspects of their personality, presumably in hopes that change would improve their life conditions. The study by Hudson and Roberts (2014) demonstrated this. In their study 1, life satisfaction, whether in general or in regard to specific domains of life (e.g., overall, school, money, family, health, sex, recreation, social life, religion, and emotions), was strongly correlated with certain personality change goals. Overall, low levels of life satisfaction were related to goals to increase in extraversion, conscientiousness and emotional stability. Viewing one’s area of life as “less ideal” was related to the degree to which someone had a goal to increase a personality trait.

Personality Change

While many have goals to change themselves, actual personality change does not follow without substantial effort (Roberts & DelVecchio, 2000; Terracciano, Costa, & McCrae, 2006; as cited in Hennecke et al., 2014). Hennecke, Bleidorn, Denissen, and Wood (2014) provided a framework for personality change. Their idea is that self-regulated behavioral change requires persistence and effort. For instance, if someone who is more introverted has a goal to become extraverted, they must engage in extraverted activities, such as socializing, to eventually achievethat desired change. Over a period of time, those behavioral changes should become habitual, leading to actual changes in one's traits.

That persistence and effort requires motivation, of course. Invoking classic Expectancy Value Theory (EVT; Wigfield, 1994), Hennecke et al.'s (2014) framework identifies two pre-conditions necessary for the motivation to begin self-regulated behavioral changes. First, individuals should see personality change as feasible to perform (expectancies). Second, they must view changing trait-related behaviors as desirable or necessary (value). According to EVT, individuals are only able to achieve their goals if they have high values and expectancies for them. Only then, Hennecke and colleagues assert, will individuals successfully change their personalities (Hennecke, Bleidorn, Denissen, & Wood, 2014). These two conditions sustain the commitment needed to facilitate trait change.

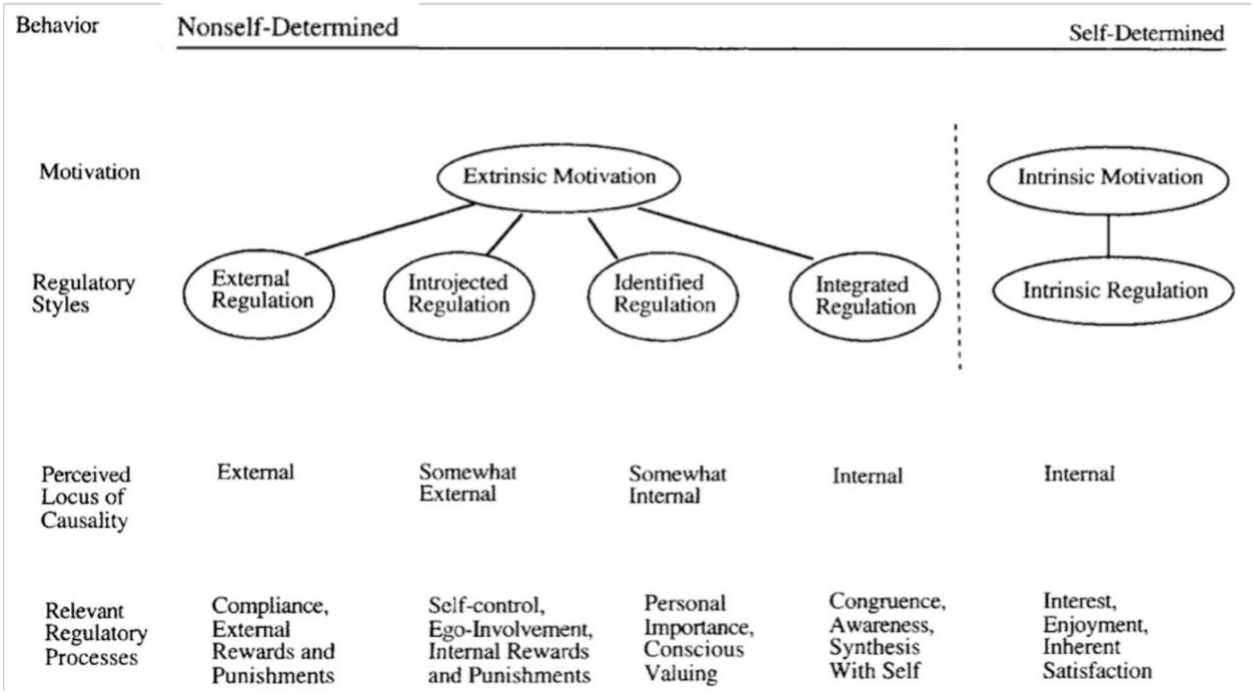
Types of Motivation to Change Personality Traits

In sum, personality researchers have shown that personality can change over the lifespan, that dissatisfied people crave personality change, and that deliberate efforts to change personality require that the individual not only strongly desire change but also feel confident that change can occur. What has not been considered thus far is *how* individuals approach their personality change goals. Drawing from Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2000), I propose

the reason for pursuing a trait change goal matters as much as having the goal. SDT posits that a behavior or goal can originate within or outside oneself, and that thesedifferences in origin predict the regulatory behavioral processes used to attain the desired behavior or goal. To elaborate, SDT classifies each goal in terms of its perceived locus of causality (PLoC), a term coined by Fritz Header (1958; as cited in Ryan & Connell, 1989), which can be understood as the attribution of cause to behavior. Internal perceived causality iswhen "the actor is perceived as an 'origin' of his or her behavior", while external causality is when "the actor is seen as a 'pawn' to heteronomous forces" (Ryan & Connell, 1989, p. 749). Both attributions are crucial for the study of motivation. Figure 1, taken from Ryan and Deci's(2000) seminal paper on SDT, illustrates aspects of each motive more clearly.

Figure 1

The Self Determination Continuum



Note. The continuum shows types of motivation with their Regulatory Styles, Loci of Causality, and Corresponding Processes

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The figure shows the Self Determination Continuum, which ranges from nonself- determined (or controlling) to self-determined (or autonomous). On the far-right end of the continuum is *Intrinsic motivation,* which occurs when an individual pursues a goal for sheer enjoyment and satisfaction. This motivational approach is the most self-determined (or autonomous) of all the motives, and represents a natural drive toward novelty and challenge, freefrom any external forces.

However, Ryan and Deci (2000) stress that not all goals are inherently intrinsic. People also pursue goals because they are normative and can provide a route to acceptance in our greater society. These goals capture *Extrinsic motivation,* a broad category that includes four subtypes shown on the continuum. According to SDT, these four subsets or regulatory styles vary in their degree of self-determination.

On one end is *external motivation*, where a goal is pursued in exchange for a reward, avoidance of punishment, or an act of compliance. The next subset is *introjected*, where a behavior is regulated by "ego-involvement" or self-control. Because goals often involve engaging in behavior individuals find undesirable, they have to regulate our behavior. In the case of introjected motivation, individuals do not fully accept the goal as their own and will sustain their goals with an internalized, pressuring voice. When they regulate their behavior, they will be motivated to perform in an effort to feel proud or to avoid guilt or shame. *Identified* motivation, a third subset of extrinsic motivation, is regulated by reminding oneself of the behavior's personal importance.

Closest to intrinsic motivation is *Integrated motivation*. At this point in the motivational continuum, identified regulations have been internalized with the self and brought into congruence with one's other values. Integrated motivated behaviors will show great similarity to intrinsic motivation, with the only difference being the continued pursuit of separable outcomes, as opposed to sheer pleasure or enjoyment. It is important to note that integrated motivation, unlike the other motives, is seldom measured in SDT research, presumably because it is quite difficult to capture successfully through self-report measures (Vansteenkiste et al., 2010). This could be due to the level of internalization an individual has reached at this point in the motivational continuum. The approach is no longer conscious, and arguably cannot be captured

explicitly through self-report. Accordingly, the present study will not measure the integrated motive or discuss it further.

Each of the four core motive regulations could apply to any of the trait change goals. For example, consider the extraversion goal. People might want to become more outgoing because they find the effort interesting and enjoyable (intrinsic), because they believe it will support their career ambitions (identified), because they hope to reduce the personal shame of being a wallflower (introjected), or because it will bring admiration from others (extrinsic).

SDT mainly operates under the assumption that intrinsic goals are better. The evidence supports this. When compared to those who approach goals externally, those who pursue goals from an internal perspective have been found to show greater interest, excitement, and confidence when approaching their goal, which often leads to enhanced performance, persistence, creativity, self-esteem and general well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000 as cited in Deci & Ryan, 1991, 1995; Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne, & Ilardi, 1997). Ryan and Connell (1989) tested this and found that externally regulated school children showed less interest, value and effort toward educational goals. They tended to blame others (e.g., teachers) for their failures andavoided taking responsibility. Introjectedly motivated students expended more effort, but also felt more anxiety and poorly coped with failures. Identified students showed more interest and engagement with their goals, had healthy coping styles when failure occurred and expended more effort when necessary. Overall, identified and intrinsically motivated students reaped

greater benefits from their goal approach when compared to their introjected and externally motivated counterparts (Ryan & Connell, 1989). The former two motives also have an internal PloC, while the latter two have an external PloC. Put another way, internal and identified motives are largely "autonomous" and self-determined motives, while introjected and external motives are "controlling" and non-self-determined.

Sheldon and Elliot (1999) took this idea a step further. They explain that self-determined goals are inherently better because they align with an individual's core self. The idea is that consistency, or *self-concordance*, between a person's core interests and personal goals plays a huge role in the goal-striving process. Sheldon and Elliot measured an individual's personal goals (e.g., health, academic, or life goals) and, for each goal, had them rate how much it was motivated by the SDT motives. They had then created two indices: external (or controlled) motivation comprising the extrinsic and introjected items, and internal (or autonomous) motivation comprising the identified and intrinsic items. Sheldon and Elliot ultimately came to the conclusion that "not all personal goals are personal" (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999, p. 484) and individuals often pursue goals without their core interests in mind. Ultimately, when goals are self-concordant, individuals will be likely to put more sustained effort and commitment into achieving those goals. Thus, when self-concordant goals are achieved, those individuals will reap greater well-being benefits from attainment.

As one can see, each motivational approach has implications for the individual and their goal. This should apply even to goals to change one's own personality. The present study will be the first to test this possibility. It will explore the reasons that people want to change their traits, if those reasons vary between the five main traits, and if those reasons influence people's strength of commitment to those change goals.

Present Study

The survey begins by first asking about personality change goals, mainly to ensure that change goals are present in the sample. If individuals indicate a desire to increase in a desired trait, a series of follow up questions proceed. Specifically, individuals were asked to express their reasons for having the particular goal and their level of commitment to that goal.

Main Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study tests several research questions and hypotheses. The first two are intended to establish acontext of replication and, therefore, have concrete hypotheses. The first is, do people *have* personality change goals (RQ1a)? And if so,which traits in particular (RQ1b)?

> **Hyp 1**: Based on prior work (Hudson & Roberts, 2014), I expect at least 50% of the sample to report a desire to increase in at least one trait on the big five. In terms of which goals are more prevalent, change goals for emotional stability and conscientiousness will be *most* prevalent in the sample. Extraversion is predicted to be next in line, followed by openness and agreeableness.

The second broad question is, do these personality change goals relate to low life satisfaction (RQ2)?

> **Hyp 2:** Based on prior research **(**Hudson & Roberts, 2014**)**, I expect that change goals for extraversion, conscientiousness, and emotional stability will be negatively related to life satisfaction.

The remaining questions are unique to this study. First, do the five traits' change goals vary, on average, in how much they are pursued for autonomous or controlled reasons (RQ3)?

Unlike the first two questions, RQ3 is more of an exploratory research question and does not have any concrete hypotheses, as there is no clear grounding in the past findings. It is unclear

which traits will be more autonomously motivated than others. Hudson and Roberts (2014) found that external life factors (low levels of life satisfaction) were associated with goals to increase in extraversion, conscientiousness, and emotional stability. So, one speculative possibility is that goals forextraversion, conscientiousness and emotional stability are often pursued for externally motivated reasons, while agreeableness and openness are pursued for internal reasons.

The last research question is grounded in Self-Determination Theory and has a concrete hypothesis. Does the reason for pursuing apersonality change goal predict commitment to the goal (RQ4)?

Hyp 3: Autonomously motivated personality change goals will be positively related to goal commitment. All evidence (Hennecke et al., 2014; Milyavskaya et al., 2015; Ryan & Deci, 2000) points to the idea that individuals are more committed to goals when they are autonomously motivated. In the present study, I expect to see the same in the context of personality change goals.

Method

Participants & Procedure

Using G*Power 3.1 software, a series of power analyses was utilized to predict the number of participants necessary for data analysis. Calculations with a power level of .80 (α =.05) and small effect size estimated sample size needs that ranged from 64 to 125, depending on the research question analysis. However, this estimate had to be reconsidered in light of the exclusion criteria for RQ3 and RQ4, as there are no clear grounds for estimating how many people will actually have change goals that allow them to be included in tests for these two research questions. In anticipation of any issues with sample sizes, the 125 participant criteria served as a minimum threshold.

A total of 243 participants ended up taking part in this study. Participants were recruited via the SUNY New Paltz psychology subject pool and campus-wide emails in exchange for credit. The sample consisted mostly of women (*n* = 163), followed by men (*n* = 58) and non-binary (*n* = 18). Age of participants was on average 21.18 years of age (*SD* = 4.63).

The survey was online, over one session, using Qualtrics. Participants first consented and were then instructed to complete all survey measures to the best of their ability. All participants completed life satisfaction and trait change goal measures. Then, survey logic was programmed to present measures of motivation and commitment only to those who *did* have trait change goals. The study concluded with a debrief about the purpose of the study.

Measures

Satisfaction with Life Scale

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SwLS: Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) is a 5-item measure of one's life satisfaction (α = .85) (See Appendix A). Participants responded on a 7-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Personality Change Goals

The C-BFI questionnaire consists of BFI items (John & Srivastava, 1999) adapted to "I want to…" with the intention of measuring personality change goals (Hudson & Roberts, 2014). The complete questionnaire consists of 44 items, with 8-9 items per personality trait (see Appendix B). Inter-item reliability was acceptable for each trait's items: extraversion (α = 0.78), agreeableness (α = 0.75), conscientiousness (α = 0.78), emotional stability (α = 0.8), and openness (α =.79). Participants are instructed to "rate the extent to which you want to change each trait" from much *less than I currently am* to *I do not desire to change in this trait* to *much more than I currently am*, with each mean value ranging from -2 to 0 to +2 on a 5-point scale.

Measures for Participants Possessing Change Goals

During the C-BFI measure, when a participant indicated a desire to increase or decrease on a trait, they were shown two sets (8 items total) of additional follow-up questions that assess their reasons for these goals and their commitment to the goals. To identify if they indeed desired to increase or decrease in a trait, I selected a focal item for each trait change goal. To that end, for each trait, I used a positively framed item that had the highest factor loading in study 1 of Hudson and Roberts (2014). These are bolded in Appendix A. Participants were reshown those focal items for the follow-up questions.

Perceived Locus of Causality. An individual's perceived locus of causality is measured based on prior work (Senko & Tropiano, 2016; Vansteenkiste, Smeets, Soenens, Lens, Matos, & Deci, 2010) and can be described as a set of items intended to measure PLoC. Participants are presented with a prompt for each trait goal. For the extraversion goal, for example, they read:

> "The previous page listed the goal: 'I want to be talkative'. You indicated that you wanted to be more or less than you currently are. Below are various reasons some might have goals to change themselves. In your case, what reasons below motivate you to pursue this goal?"

They were shown four items, one apiece tapping into each motive: intrinsic, identified, introjected, and extrinsic (See Appendix C). Pairs of items were then aggregated into Internal v. External motives. External (or controlled) motivation comprises the extrinsic and introjected items, and internal (or autonomous) motivation comprises the identified and intrinsic items. The internal reliabilities were decent for most PLoC measures: extraversion, internal ($\alpha = .80$) and external ($\alpha = .60$); agreeableness, internal ($\alpha = .52$) and external ($\alpha = .86$); conscientiousness, internal ($\alpha = .22$) and external ($\alpha = .86$); emotional stability, internal ($\alpha = .51$) and external ($\alpha =$

.77); and openness, internal (α = .57) and external (α = .72). Items were rated on a 5-point scale from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*.

Goal Commitment. The Goal Commitment measure is a 4-item unidimensional scale developed to measure commitment to a goal (Hollenbeck, Klein, O'Leary, & Wright, 1989). Participants are presented with a prompt for each trait goal: **"**Below are a series of statements about goal commitment. Keeping in mind the goal: 'I want to be talkative' please rate your agreement with the statements below:**"**. Reliability scores by trait were adequate: extraversion (α = .73), agreeableness (α = .65), conscientiousness (α = .63), emotional stability (α = .61), and openness (α = .57). Participants rated each from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree* on a 5-point scale.

To conclude the survey, participants are asked to report their race, age, and gender.

Results

I conducted separate analyses for each of the four research questions. They are covered separately below.

Do Students Have Trait Change Goals?

For research question one, I sought to replicate Hudson and Roberts (2014) study and determine the prevalence of personality change goals among the sample. This question was explored with descriptive statistics and five separate one-sample t-tests that compare the amount of increased trait versus no change; positive mean values signal a desire to increase in that goal. Table 1 provides the results.

Participants, on average, wanted to increase in each of the big five traits. In fact, the desire was so pervasive that each trait change goal was endorsed by 84% (agreeableness) to 98% (emotional stability) of the sample. To see which goals differed significantly, I then conducted a

one-way repeated measures ANOVA, which revealed an overall difference in the desirability of the trait change goals, $F(4,968) = 91.985$, $p < .001$. Holm Bonferroni post hoc tests ($\alpha = .05$) revealed that emotional stability was significantly more desirable, followed by conscientiousness, openness and agreeableness, with the latter two not differing significantly from extraversion.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and One-Sample T-tests for Each Trait Change Goal

Goal	*M*	*SD*	Skew	Kurtosis	% Increase	*t*(242)	Cohen's *d*
Extraversion	0.66_{cd}	0.55	-.06	-.03	85.6	103.26***	.55
Agreeableness	0.54_{d}	0.53	.23	.06	84.4	104.44***	.53
Conscientiousness	0.89_{b}	0.51	-.09	-.24	93.8	117.97***	.51
Emotional Stability	1.21_{a}	0.54	-.34	-.65	97.9	121.52***	.54
Openness	0.66_{c}	0.50	.29	-.12	90.1	114.01***	.50

Note. % Increase is the proportion of the sample with a goal to increase in the trait. One-sample t-tests compare a desired increased in the trait change vs. no desired change.

Trait means with unshared subscripts differ significantly ($p < .05$).

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

Does Current Life Satisfaction Predict the Adoption of Trait Change Goals?

For research question two, I sought to replicate Hudson & Roberts (2014), who found that life dissatisfaction predicted stronger desires for trait change. I tested this with zero-order correlations, which are provided in Table 2.

Table 2

Zero-Order Correlations for Change Goals and Satisfaction with Life

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.Satisfaction with Life	--	-.078	-.054	-.149*	-.285**	-.140*
2.Extraversion		--	.314**	.304**	.307**	.195**
3.Agreeableness			--	.428**	.373**	.303**
4.Conscientiousness				--	.490**	.302**
5.Emotional Stability					--	.319**
6.Openness						--

*p <.05, ** p <.01.

The correlations with satisfaction with life were negative for goals of emotional stability, conscientiousness, and openness. Interestingly, these relationships were weaker than what was found in Hudson and Roberts' (2014) original study. The correlations for extraversion and agreeableness, though not significant, were still negative. In sum, trait change goals are found to be inversely related to life satisfaction.

Furthermore, as shown in Table 2, all five trait goals are moderately, positively related to each other, ranging from .195 to .490. The more that people had of one change goal, the more likely they were to have other trait change goals as well.

Do People Pursue the Five Traits Change Goals for Autonomous or Controlled reasons?

For RQ3, I sought to explore how trait change goals vary in their motivational reasoning. Because this question has no previous literature behind it, the analysis is exploratory and has no concrete hypotheses.

Table 3 provides the results for the 5 separate paired samples t-tests. Samples sizes for each vary based on how many participants have the goal. Two things stand out. First, for each goal, internal and external reasons to change were both relatively common, judging by their means being above the scale's midpoint. Second, despite both motives being common, the strongest motive depended on the trait change goal. Specifically, individual's goals for agreeableness $t[140] = 3.50$, $p < .001$, emotional stability $t[217] = 7.52$, $p < .001$, and openness $t[131] = 5.69$, $p < .001$, were significantly more internally motivated than externally motivated. By contrast, extraversion, $t(158) = 3.87$, $p < .001$, was the only trait that was found to be more externally motivated. Motives for conscientiousness did not have a significance difference, so one can assume that individuals pursue conscientiousness for both internal and external reasons.

Table 3

Means and Paired-Samples t-Test Results for Each Trait Change Goal's Pair of Reasons

Trait Change Goal	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*n*
Extraversion			3.87***	159
Internal Motive	3.72	.99		
External Motive	4.00	.80		
Agreeableness			3.50***	141
Internal Motive	4.29	.72		
External Motive	4.00	1.01		
Conscientiousness			0.75	175
Internal Motive	4.07	.67		
External Motive	4.12	.96		
Emotional Stability			7.52***	218
Internal Motive	4.34	.82		
External Motive	3.84	.93		
Openness			5.69***	139
Internal Motive	4.13	.82		
External Motive	3.67	.97		

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Do Autonomous vs. Controlled Reason for Trait Change Goals Predict Commitment to the Goal?

For this last research question, my intention was to see how people's reasons for changing predict their commitment to it. Table 4 shows the results for each of the five separate regression analyses.

For *every trait,* students were more committed to their goal of changing the trait if they had stronger autonomous reasons to change it. In principle, this higher commitment should increase their odds of actually changing the trait.

By contrast, controlling reasons promoted commitment only to two trait change goals: Extraversion and conscientiousness. This fits nicely with RQ3 results, where both extraversion and conscientiousness were either externally motivated or motivated by both.

Table 4

Autonomous and Controlled Motive Effects on Each Trait Change Goal

	Outcome Variable				
Predictor Variables	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Emotional Stability	Openness
Autonomous Motive	.137*	.354*	.223**	.309***	.501***
Controlled Motive	.278***	.020	.110*	.024	.081

Notes: The regression model for each analysis included only the two types of motives. Values are unstandardized regression coefficients

* p <.05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

Discussion

The goal of this thesis was to explore the underlying motivations for personality change. Do people *have* personality goals? The answer is yes, most do have desires to change traits within themselves. Within our sample, up to 98% of those who participated had goals for at least

one trait on the Big Five. Are these goals related to people's current feelings about life? The answer is also yes. Changing qualities of yourself often has to do with general life satisfaction. Do people's reasons for pursuing a trait vary depending on the trait? Results confirmed that traits agreeableness, emotional stability, and openness are more often pursued for autonomous reasons, whileextraversion and conscientiousness are pursued for more controlled reasons. Do these varying reasons then predict commitment to the trait goal? Yes, for the most part they do. For every single trait, students were more committed to the goal if they had autonomous reasons for changing it. Only for extraversion and conscientiousness did controlling reasons also predict commitment to changing.

In effort to make sense of these findings, you can look at the qualities of each trait on the big five. Trait's extraversion and conscientiousness are different than traits openness, agreeableness, and emotional stability. Consider the nature of conscientiousness (competence, self- discipline, goal-driven), and how intertwined it is with academic or professional success. Qualities of extraversion (sociability, assertiveness, emotional expression) are also very socially driven. It seems that these two traits are the most socially rewarded traits in our culture. Thus, it would make sense that these two traits are more likely than the other traits to be motivated by external reasons, such as to impress others or to attain a reward. On the other hand, agreeableness, emotional stability, and openness are all traits that are more internal in nature. For example, aspiring to be more imaginative, a quality of openness, is probably more often than not influenced by the self than by others. The closest evidence I have to support this theory about reasons for changing are the results from study one of Hudson and Roberts (2016), where it was found that low life satisfaction inspired goals to increase in extraversion and conscientiousness. Here, I begin to enter a discussion of the idealized self and who we, as a collective, want to be.

And these aspirations so often have to do with culture, age, and gender. This will be fleshed out further in limitations and future directions

Limitations and Future Directions

The findings are limited to the sample, which consists mostly of college students. They are flush in the middle of emerging adulthood, a life phase characterized by tumultuous identity exploration (Arnett, 2000). Individuals in this phase of development are at the crossroads and little about the future has been decided. Goals to change oneself are often related to life satisfaction (Hudson and Roberts, 2014) and one cannot consider life satisfaction without considering age. Hudson and Fraley (2016) found evidence that goals for personality traits slightly decreased in prevalence over the lifespan. However, the researchers assert that this effect was small and goal prevalence still took up 70% of the sample, regardless of age (Hudson & Fraley, 2016a). However, it is still important to consider how age affects the current research. For example, would there be age differences in which personality traits are most desirable? One could hypothesize that in later adulthood, goals are more often motivated for autonomous reasons because, due to age and experience, values have been internalized and goals are more congruent with the self. In support of this notion, some studies find that life goals tend to become more autonomous through adulthood (e.g., Sheldon, Houser-Marko, & Kasser, 2006).

Another limitation to consider are broader cultural values of this sample. The findings of the current research might not generalize beyond western, individualistic cultures. In *Culture's Consequences* (1980), Hofstede explains the individualism vs. collectivism dichotomy, where cultures can be organized based on their integration into primary groups. Does the culture prioritize the needs and goals of the group, or the needs and goals of the individual? In collectivist cultures, greater emphasis is placed on common goals than individual desires or pursuits

(Hofstede, 1980). These value differences should then have great consequences for goalsto change oneself. In some cultures, individual development may not be as encouraged because it's not a significant cultural value. It would be interesting to conduct a cross-cultural study where individualist and collectivists trait change goals are compared. It may very well be that in collectivist cultures the idealized self is not as relevant and may not be as present in everyday life. Or the idealized self could still exist and matter, but the content of this idealized self is different (e.g., more group-oriented).

On the same note, it would amiss to not discuss the affect gender roles have on our idealized selves and who we want to be. Consider the differing expectations women vs. men have about how they should act, etc. In society, it is thought that women are expected to be emotionally stable, and agreeable, while men are expected to be assertive, confident, etc. These qualities came up often when measuring individual's goals to change themselves in the C-BFI. Importantly, the sample was mostly women. In the future, it would be interesting to compare genders regarding who they want to be. There may end up being stark differences.

Another limitation of the current research is the cross-sectional nature of the study. All data was recorded together at a specific point in time. This was the most convenient and ideal approach because data could be collected on several different variables at one time. Additionally, this type of observational research allows for quick data collection whereas a longitudinal approach would take much longer.

A longitudinal study can reveal whether change goals are stable over time in everyday life. Evidence supports the idea that change goals are not just these fleeting whims that come and go. In a longitudinal study, Hudson and Fraley (2016b) found consistency in change goals over an extended period of time. In future studies, a longitudinal approach could help reveal the

consequences of someone's reasons for changing. One could hypothesize that autonomous goals for changing are more stable, compared to controlled goals. Evidence for this hypothesis comes from Sheldon and Elliot (1999) research mentioned in the introduction, where people are more likely to put sustained effort when goals are self-concordant, or autonomously motivated. It would be safe to assume that, compared to controlled goals, autonomously motivated goals will be more stable across day-to-day life.

The reason for measuring goal commitment was to show tangible outcomes of motivational reasoning. Not only is it known that reasons vary by each trait, but also the consequences of these reasons. The whole point of having a goal is to achieve it, and commitment plays a big part in goal achievement.

Lastly, it would be an improvement to include the Basic Psychological Needs Scale (BPNS), specifically need for satisfaction in general in one's life (Deci, Ryan, Gagné, Leone, Usunov, & Kornazheva, 2001). Though I already measured life satisfaction, this specific scale is made to coincide with Self-Determination Theory and can shed some light on how someone's need satisfaction affects both their types of goals and their reasons for changing them. Self-Determination Theory explains that people's motivational approaches rely on their three psychological needs (Competence, autonomy, and relatedness). The idea is when people's needs are not being met, they are more likely to approach goals from a controlling perspective. This approach is less than ideal because controlling motives are not as motivating, when compared to autonomous goals (Ryan & Deci, 2000). With this additional measure, the current study would more closely be able to understand the context in which an individual is approaching their change goals.

In conclusion, this study found evidence that people have change goals, approach their

trait change goals for different reasons, and those reasons influence their commitment to the goals. Motivational theory has great potential for self-help because it provides a blueprint for *how* you should approach your goals so that you should achieve them in the best way possible. Hopefully, the results of this study will make it clear that, for the most part, goals for yourself should be pursued for yourself and not others. By approaching goals this way, you will be more likely to achieve them in a way that is both fulfilling and successful.

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Appendix A

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SwLS)

Below are five statements that you may agree or disagree with. Please be open and honest in your response.

1. In most ways my life is close to ideal.
2. The conditions in my life are excellent.
3. I am satisfied with my life.
4. So far I have gotten the important things out of life.
5. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

Appendix B

Change Goals Big Five Inventory (C-BFI)

Positively framed items with the highest factor loading are bolded. These items are important to the study because when participants indicate a desire to increase on that particular item, they will be given eight follow-up questions.

Instructions to participants:

How much do you want to change yourself?

Here are several personality traits that you may or may not want to change within yourself. Please rate the extent to which you want to change each trait.

Extraversion Change Goals

1. **I want to be talkative**
2. I want to be reserved (R)
3. I want to be someone who is full of energy
4. I want to be someone who generates a lot of enthusiasm
5. I want to be someone who tends to be quiet (R)
6. I want to be someone who has an assertive personality
7. I want to be sometimes shy, inhibited (R)
8. I want to be outgoing, sociable

Agreeableness Change Goals

9. I want to be someone who tends to find fault with others (R)
10. I want to be someone who is helpful and unselfish with others

11. I want to be someone who starts quarrels with others (R)
12. I want to be someone who has a forgiving nature
13. I want to be generally trusting
14. I want to be someone who can be cold and aloof (R)
15. **I want to be considerate and kind to almost everyone**
16. I want to be sometimes rude to others (R)
17. I want to be someone who likes to cooperate with others

Conscientiousness Change Goals

18. **I want to be someone who does a thorough job**
19. I want to be someone who can be somewhat careless (R)
20. I want to be a reliable worker
21. I want to be someone who tends to be disorganized (R)
22. I want to tend to be lazy (R)
23. I want to be someone who perseveres until the task is finished
24. I want to be someone who does things efficiently
25. I want to be someone who makes plans and follows through with them
26. I want to be someone who is easily distracted (R)

Emotional Stability Change Goals

27. I want to be someone who is depressed, blue (R)
28. **I want to be someone who is relaxed, handles stress well**
29. I want to be someone who can be tense (R)
30. I want to be someone who worries a lot (R)
31. I want to be emotionally stable, not easily upset

32. I want to be someone who can be moody (R)
33. I want to be someone who remains calm in tense situations
34. I want to be someone who gets nervous easily (R)

Openness Change Goals

35. I want to be someone who is original, comes up with new ideas
36. I want to be curious about many different things
37. I want to be ingenious, a deep thinker
38. I want to be someone who has an active imagination
39. I want to be inventive
40. **I want to be someone who values artistic, aesthetic experiences**
41. I want to be someone who prefers work that is routine (R)
42. I want to be someone who likes to reflect, play with ideas
43. I want to be someone who has artistic interests
44. I want to be sophisticated in art, music, or literature.

Appendix C

Perceived Locus of Causality (PLoC)

1. Changing this trait would be fun and enjoyable.
2. Changing this trait would be important to my personal life or potential career.
3. Changing this trait would impress others whose opinions I value.
4. Changing this trait would bring rewards from others.

(1) intrinsic, (2) identified, (3) introjected, and (4) extrinsic

Appendix D

Goal Commitment

1. It's hard to take this goal seriously.
2. It's unrealistic for me to expect to reach this goal.
3. It is quite likely that this goal may need to be revised, depending on how things go.
4. Quite frankly, I don't care if I achieve this goal or not.