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<http://pages.wustl.edu/personality>

## **What does your research focus on?**

My research is in the field of personality development. In general, I am interested in examining how personality changes across the lifespan and what experiences shape personality. To answer these research questions, it is important to identify the most effective ways to measure personality and personality change. Given this, a large amount of my work also examines different methods of assessing personality, as well as the structure of personality. Ultimately, I hope to identify the processes that lead to personality stability and personality change.

## **What drew you to this line of research and why is it exciting to you?**

I have always been intrigued by people's life stories — how a person got to where they are — and the type of choices they made that ended up impacting their future. I did not realize the connection until recently, but I read quite a few biographies when I was younger, which are basically explanations for *how* someone becomes who they became. For whatever reason, I was always attuned to individual differences among people rather than the commonalities.

## **Who were/are your mentors or scientific influences?**

Although my career has only just begun, I have already had the privilege to work with a number of

phenomenal researchers. When I was at the University of Wisconsin during my undergraduate years, Jeremy Biesanz introduced me to the scientific study of personality and instilled in me a great appreciation for quantitative methods, while Avshalom Caspi taught me a great deal about how to conduct meaningful research. At the University of Illinois, I learned so many things from Brent Roberts that I believe I owe him royalties every time I write a paper. Also at Illinois, Chris Fraley provided me with sage advice on all things coffee related (coffee is to research as breathing is to living). At Washington University, Simine Vazire and Tom Oltmanns keep me on my toes every day.

### **What's your future research agenda?**

I want to continue to better understand the factors that influence stability and change in personality. Part of this line of research involves flipping the causal arrow and examining how changes in personality may influence important life domains, such as one's relationships and health.

### **What publication are you most proud of?**

Jackson, J. J., Thoemmes, F., Jonkmann, K., Lüdtke, O., & Trautwien, U. (2012). Military training and personality trait development: Does the military make the man or does the man make the military? *Psychological Science, 23*, 270–277.

This paper is important to me for two reasons. First, it is one of the first studies to identify experiences associated with personality change while attempting to control for selection bias, which is a pervasive problem in most passive longitudinal studies. Second, the paper is the result of a wonderful summer that I spent at the University of Tuebingen in Germany. In addition to postcard memories, the paper represents a time in my training in which I learned a great deal in a short period of time.