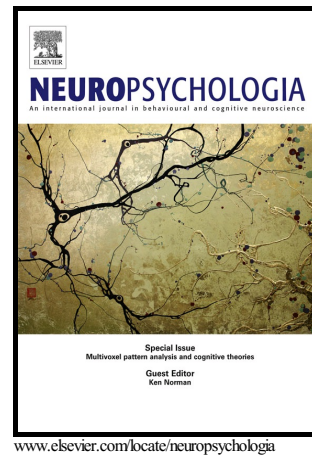


Author's Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S0028-3932(17)30093-3
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.neuropsychologia.2017.03.013>
Reference: NSY6294

To appear in: *Neuropsychologia*

Received date: 23 November 2016
Revised date: 6 March 2017
Accepted date: 9 March 2017

Cite this article as: Matthew D. Grilli, Aubrey A. Wank and Mieke Verfaellie, The Life Stories of Adults with Amnesia: Insights into the Contribution of the MTL to the Higher-Order Organization of Autobiographical Memory. *Neuropsychologia*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.neuropsychologia.2017.03.013>

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The Life Stories of Adults with Amnesia: Insights into the Contribution of the MTL to the Higher-Order Organization of Autobiographical Memory

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Abstract

Autobiographical memories are not stored in isolation but rather are organized into life chapters, higher-order knowledge structures that represent major themes conveying the arc of one's life. Neuropsychological studies have revealed that both episodic memory and some aspects of personal semantic memory are impaired in adults with medial temporal lobe (MTL) damage. However, whether such impairment compromises the retrieval and formation of life chapters is unknown. Therefore, we had 10 adults with MTL amnesia and 20 control participants narrate their life stories, and we extracted life chapters from these narratives using a novel scoring protocol. For the retrograde and anterograde time period separately, we evaluated the number of life chapters and assessed their quality, as indexed by measures of complexity and richness. Additionally, to investigate the idea that formation of life chapters occurs on a protracted time scale, we separated the amnesic participants into an early-life and a later-life onset subgroup.

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