Identity and Career: An Analysis of Emerging Meteorologists’ Narratives

Zoey Rosen

Colorado State University, Fort Collins, Colorado

Corresponding author: Zoey Rosen, zoey.rosen@colostate.edu
ABSTRACT

The narratives of emerging adults, such as university students, can reveal aspects of their professional and academic identities that explain their career paths. While narrative has been studied as a tool in the meteorological classroom, narrative has not been used to study why students choose to become meteorologists. This study aims to identify the narrative features about what draws students to pursue meteorology as a career, and reflect upon how the telling of these narratives can help career counselors and other stakeholders, like universities, to understand this discipline of students. This study is a qualitative textual analysis of N = 34 video clips of meteorology students from around the United States submitted for the 2020 AMS Student Conference welcome video, #MyFieldMyStory campaign. The findings show that formative experiences like early childhood memories, mediated experiences with the weather, and family interactions were major life themes in the students’ stories. Other reasons students chose this career path were concerns over local climatic effects, a desire to control their course of study, curiosity stemming from internships and research opportunities, confidence from their personal math/science propensity in school, and a commitment to do work that can mitigate the effects of severe weather or inform people of impending threats. The students’ narratives also showed optimism around future jobs and graduate school, as well as an exploration of their identity through finding their passion in this career path. This study is an interesting initial delve into narratively analyzing stories from emerging meteorologists.

CAPSULE

An analysis of student narratives about what drew them to a meteorology career.

1. Introduction

The careers we pursue can say as much about our identities as do our personal experiences. When discussing identity, narrative theory often arises as we construct our identities through story to boost meaning-making (McAdams and McLean 2013). Narrative, identity, and career have been studied together; in general, adults form and share their careers through the construction of self-narratives, finding a sense of identity through the work they do (McAdams and McLean 2013; Knez 2016; Gini 1998; Bujold 2004). Narrative has been studied across a wide range of occupations (e.g., Duffy et al. 2014; Knez 2016), but narrative has been studied only briefly in the meteorology domain. Meteorologists work in private,
public, and academic sectors. Operational forecasting and broadcast are prominent career paths in the field, though researchers who collect, interpret, and model various climatic data are also a major portion of this discipline. Broadcast meteorologists have been studied in the narrative context surrounding on-air reporting around issues such as climate change (Meldrum et al. 2017). Additionally, meteorology and physics students have been studied in a narrative context, though the studies are limited to how narrative storytelling can be used in the classroom (Knox and Croft 1998) or how the identity of being a physics student conflicts with wanting to pursue meteorology, where being a meteorologist means being a less of a classical physicist (Strandberg Östman 2016). However, narrative has not been used to study why people choose to become meteorologists. The following textual analysis examines video clip narratives of meteorology students from around the United States from the #MyFieldMyStory campaign for the 2020 AMS Student Conference welcome video to learn more about what drives students to pursue a meteorological career.

Career Construction Theory (CCT) is a theory that centers around how individuals’ subjective experiences can come together through narrative to elaborate on the self-development within one’s career and work environment (Del Corso and Rehfuss 2011). Meta-competencies, which are the ability to learn and apply more specific skills within a domain, are important facets of CCT (Savickas 2015). The two meta-competencies in CCT are identity and adaptability, which are foundational elements to an individual’s life story. Especially as identity is often centered around success in the workplace in industrialized, Western cultures (Knez 2016; Gini 1998), having a theory that explores the facets of identity and adaptability in a career’s roles and responsibilities can reveal an interesting view into the narrative elements that structure the workplace.

Emerging adults (18-to-29-year-olds) are a unique population segment in industrialized societies with distinctive developmental characteristics (Arnett 2004; Arnett et al. 2014). This age group is different from previous characterizations of young adults, as they are often found to be trying out different experiences, eventually finding a fulfilling career rather than just obtaining a job quickly after adolescence (Arnett 2007; Arnett et al. 2014). Emerging adults are entering university and staying students for longer periods of life (Arnett 2007; Arnett et al. 2014). In the narratives of emerging adults, therefore, the opportunity arises to learn about what life story constructs are apparent in their educational and career path, which may reveal facets of professional identity previously undiscovered. This study aims to
identify the narrative features about what draws students to pursue meteorology as a career, and reflect upon how the telling of these narratives can help stakeholders, such as academic advisors or internship mentors, to understand this discipline of students.

2. Literature Review

a. Narrative Identity

Narrative identity is a reconstruction of one’s autobiographical past with their imagined future (McAdams and McLean 2013). When narrative identity is told through story, the produced life story strings together episodic events within a person’s life that provide details describing how they perceive their personal evolution over time. Narrative identity communicates how people see their present selves, how their identities were informed by the past, and where they may end up in the future (McAdams and McLean 2013). Identity is formed from positive and negative experiences, as well as from within oneself and from their surrounding community (McAdams and McLean 2013; Del Corso and Rehfuss 2011).

The stories that form our identities are extremely contextual, meaning that the cultural influence on the language and content of a narrative reflect as much about the surrounding culture as they do about the individual themselves (Bruner 2004). Despite these influences, the resulting autobiographical narrative becomes a structure for organizing one’s life events and creating meaning from the experiences over time. The stories that form one’s narrative identity show how an individual structures time, influenced by their personal experience as well as who taught them how to tell stories in the first place, like their family or their occupational cultures (Bruner 2004; Knez 2016).

b. Career Construction Theory

Narratives surrounding one’s work identity are a fundamental component within Career Construction Theory (CCT). CCT addresses the ‘what’, ‘how’, and ‘why’ that form a person’s work identity (Savickas 2005). When discussed through narrative, people relay what their career choices are (what they do) based on their life themes that motivate them (why they do what they do), as well as their adaptability in their career path over time (how they do what they do) (Del Corso and Rehfuss 2011). According to CCT, individuals often are motivated to construct their careers by seeking work that enables them to experience a sense of significance and importance (Savickas 2005). What individuals determine to be important
and motivating to them is often a stable facet of their identity, known as a life theme (Del Corso and Rehfuss 2011). Life themes suggest what early memories or critical moments help push an individual towards a certain career (Del Corso and Rehfuss 2011).

When telling the story of their career path, individuals draw on how they have had to adapt to the demands of their work. There are five “Cs” of Career Construction Theory (CCT) that describe adaptability: concern, control, curiosity, confidence, and commitment (Savickas et al. 2009). Concern speaks to one’s predisposition to address their apprehensions by pushing themselves to make a positive change. Control articulates the advantage that comes from the ability to self-regulate within different settings, as well as display a sense of agency. Curiosity describes one’s interest in what possible selves and opportunities could arise based on if they accept a new role or responsibility. Confidence involves one’s ability to support their own goals, despite obstacles or barriers. Lastly, commitment refers to one’s life projects rather than one’s particular job (Savickas et al. 2009). This means that commitment aims to describe that while career indecision may on the surface seem noncommittal, the individual is overwhelmingly compelled to find opportunities or positions that contribute to meeting their professional goals. When told in narrative, these five “Cs” can relay the nuanced attributes that describe how people adapt to a shifting work identity, which often has common attributes amongst certain career paths.

c. Emerging Adulthood

Career Construction Theory has been narratively analyzed in different populations, such as emerging adults (Savickas 2015). Emerging adulthood describes the age period of people that are in their late teens through the mid-to-late 20s, roughly ages 18–29 (Arnett 2007; Arnett et al. 2014). Five features have been identified that make emerging adulthood distinct from other age classifications: (1) identity exploration, (2) instability, (3) accepted self-focused behavior, (4) a feeling of being ‘in-between’, and (5) countless possibilities (Arnett 2004). While these can be features of any age group, they are most common in this time-period, as they are socially recognized features of what people ages 18–29 are permitted to experience. Adults are expected to have learned how to accept responsibility for oneself, make independent decisions, and become financially independent after the emerging adulthood period (Arnett 2007; Arnett et al. 2014).

As emerging adults, individuals begin to author their life stories, finessing their narrative identities by conveying what is meaningful to them (Savickas 2015). Especially within
industrialized societies, young people are spending more time in postsecondary education and training (Arnett 2007). Going to university for education and career training is one of the expectations for emerging adults, markedly within Western cultures (Arnett et al. 2014; Arnett 2007). There is a culturally-added pressure to find happiness from work, which places stress onto this population to not just accept a job, but to obtain a career that is an enjoyable expression of their identity (Arnett 2007). By studying the narratives of how this population constructs their identities as students, we have the unique opportunity to gain insight into what drives younger people to specialize their training for specific careers, such as meteorology.

3. Study Goals

The purpose of this study is to analyze the narratives meteorology students tell when explaining why they pursued this academic and career path. Understanding some of the narrative features that construct future meteorologists’ identities and life stories could provide an important insight into what experiences drive people to seek this career. With this knowledge, academic advisors and mentors could support this emerging adult population as they begin their education and help with facilitating recommendations for students considering entering the meteorological discipline. The guiding research questions for this study are as follows:

RQ1: What Career Construction Theory (CCT) features are present in future meteorologists’ narratives?

RQ2: How do emerging adults discuss adaptations in their narratives?

4. Method

This study is a qualitative textual analysis, which is a method that focuses on the variations between the subject and the context of pieces of text (Graneheim et al. 2017). Textual analysis provides a unique opportunity to examine the latent meaning within a text, such as the patterns and assumptions that come with what is explicitly stated (Fürsich 2009). Data analysis took an inductive approach, where both manifest and latent themes arose from the text. Examples of abstraction and interpretation were offered with the themes revealed in the findings as a method of maintaining the credibility and authenticity of the findings (Graneheim et al. 2017). Additionally, this textual analysis took more of a directed approach.
(Hsieh and Shannon 2005), as it used *a priori* codes, meaning codes from the guiding theories were used as a starting point for analysis; for example, the five “Cs” from Career Construction Theory were used as initial codes.

*a. Data Collection*

The texts under study are video clips submitted to the American Meteorological Society Student Conference Planning Committee (AMS SCPC) for the 2020 Annual Conference. Each year, the social media subcommittee puts together a welcome video to open the conference. The 2020 conference video asked students to submit videos on what piqued their interest in meteorology and talk about their future in a social media campaign named #MyFieldMyStory. Initially posted on Twitter by the student conference committee account, video clips were sourced from students from June 15, 2019 to November 15, 2019. The prompt read, “The theme for this year’s welcome video will focus on what made YOU interested in meteorology, atmospheric sciences, and/or earth sciences and your future plans. Use the hashtag #MyFieldMyStory!” (@AMSStudentConf 2019).

There were 34 video submissions from students \((M = 35 \text{ seconds}; \text{min: } 21 \text{ seconds, max: } 1 \text{ minute and } 19 \text{ seconds})\) for the #MyFieldMyStory campaign, which was edited and amassed into a full video published on YouTube named “My Field, My Story” (American Meteorological Society 2020). The raw video clip submissions were analyzed in this study to capture more of the narratives, though the final, edited video does include many of the submissions. As the videos under study were submitted for public use and have gone on to be published on YouTube, this secondary data has been determined as non-human subjects research through Institutional Review. A composite of screenshots from the published YouTube video are shown in Fig. 1.
Fig. 1. Composite image of students in YouTube video of the #MyFieldMyStory campaign (American Meteorological Society 2020).

While the call for videos was sent over AMS Student Conference social media accounts and emailed to university departments to send to students, a majority of the video clips (85%) were submitted by student conference committee members. It is important to note that students on this committee could be considered to be highly motivated to participate in the field compared to a random sample of students, as they apply and volunteer to be a part of the committee. The students’ years of study included undergraduates (n = 10) and graduate students (n = 24). The sample included n = 19 men (55.9%) and n = 15 women (44.1%). While age was not directly mentioned in the video clips themselves, students did provide their name and university and their ages were reconstructed at the time of the videos, confirming that they were in the emerging adulthood age range. Students that mentioned being an age outside of this range, for example, stating that they have over twenty years of forecasting experience before returning to school, were excluded from analysis and not included in the final count of video submissions. To protect privacy, pseudonyms (e.g., Student 1) are used for direct quotes and examples in the findings.

Data was coded by hand. After comparing the codes from the guiding theories with other emergent codes, the data started to form collective categories within each topic area of concentration. The categories were compared with the theoretical underpinnings of Career Construction Theory, narrative identity, and emerging adulthood to confirm the face validity of these delineations. Finding that these categories were consistent with their theoretical framework, they were demarcated as themes (Glaser and Strauss 1967). The findings section
elaborates on the categories that arose from the text, while the discussion details the thematic connections to theory.

5. Findings

The first research question (RQ1) asked what CCT features are present in future meteorologists’ narratives, and the second research question (RQ2) asked how emerging adults discussed adaptations in their narratives. Each research question is addressed below, using evidence from the text as support for the theoretical claims. In answering RQ1, the life theme that arose in these narratives was early memories centered around experienced storms during childhood. Additionally, of the five “Cs” of adaptability in CCT, the most common features in the narratives were concern for local climatic effects, control over program of study, curiosity influenced by internships and research opportunities, confidence in math/science propensity in school, and commitment to do work that can mitigate the effects of severe weather or inform people of the impending threat. In answering RQ2, the most common themes that emerged from the narratives were around possibilities in a future line of work, as well as identity exploration around finding passion along their career paths. Examples for each finding are detailed more fully below, and the words most frequently mentioned within the narratives are shown in Fig. 2.

Fig. 2. Word cloud of most frequently used words in student narratives.

a. Childhood Memories of Storms

Early memories can be foundational facets of one’s identity. Expression of these memories through narrative to help describe why one sought a particular career can elaborate
greatly on what initially motivated meteorologists to begin to study the weather. In the videos, 32% (11 of 34) the entries referenced a particular storm as a critical moment that inspired them to want to learn more about how weather worked. For example, “My interest in meteorology started when I was little in 2003 when Hurricane Isabel hit my hometown and flooded my whole town” (Student 8). Both severe weather and more routine weather events, like blizzards or thunderstorms, were referenced from childhood (roughly ages 4 to 8) that sparked a curiosity in the students about what was happening outside; a breakdown of these inciting storms are shown in Fig. 3.

![Fig. 3. Types of storms referenced by students when talking about what initially got them interested in meteorology.](image)

Memories of watching on-air broadcast meteorologists on the local news or The Weather Channel were also referred to as critical foundational moments. For some students, watching the weather on television was one of the only channels they had access to (e.g., Students 17 and 24). There was a familial component to watching the weather forecasts nightly, as they distinctly recall watching the segments with parents or grandparents. This would translate into their stories as well: “My parents actually have a video of me doing a pretend weather forecast when I was two” (Student 22). These moments were referenced by students interested in broadcast meteorology, as well as students interested in research, fieldwork, and computerized modeling of meteorological phenomena.

In addition to television, movies were also referenced as an early memory that piqued students’ interest in meteorology. Specifically, the movie *Twister* was directly mentioned by 3 students (9% of the sample). The intense tornadoes and storm chasing behaviors displayed in the film served as an inspiration point for these students. As Student 27 states, “…see the movie *Twister*…. From then on, I was that kid that was obsessed with tornadoes and severe weather.” Direct experience in a severe weather event or watching news coverage or movies
about severe weather in early childhood are some of the most referred-to early memories that constructed the students’ narrative identities around meteorology.

b. Adaptability

1) Concern

In their narratives for why they began to study meteorology or atmospheric sciences, the students often mentioned a concern over local climatic effects they were observing. Students mentioned seeing the air quality change in their hometowns or witnessing changes to the landscape after natural disasters like hurricanes (e.g., Students 2, 4, 8, 21). Students also mentioned adapting their areas of focus after these events, especially if they decided on their majors in later high school, because they were concerned about who would fix these environmental issues unless they sought to join the field themselves. For example:

My interest in hurricanes stems from growing up in Houston, Texas, where I saw the impact that hurricanes Ike and Harvey had on my local community. This transformed into a passion to try to mitigate the impacts of the storm (Student 21).

Some narratives revealed a narrowing of research area of interest in order to directly work on problems that they were concerned about, such as studying hurricane formation and predictability in order to improve warning lead times and community resilience after they experienced a rapidly intensifying hurricane (Students 32 and 33).

2) Control

Students mentioned a sense of control over their courses of study as examples of how their academic career path changed. In 4 videos (11.8% of the sample), students mentioned enrolling in an introduction to meteorology course as a critical moment that inspired them to change majors. For example, “My interest in weather started pretty late when I took an intro to meteorology class to fulfill a Gen Ed requirement at my community college. I ended up absolutely loving it changing my major” (Student 14). Many universities require one class in a physical science as part of the common core education. While students can choose to take anything (e.g., biology, chemistry, anatomy, etc.), the students in this study opted to enroll in meteorology. While having entered into university for other fields such as business or environmental policy (e.g., Students 10 and 11), the choice to enroll in meteorology to fill a general science requirement led them to feel a sense of agency over their classes and a desire
to change majors in order to engage with more meteorology courses at higher levels. While some alluded to taking these courses as happening by chance (e.g., Students 12 and 14), the formal changing of major to adapt their career paths was a purposeful decision that requires a great deal of control or agency over their undergraduate schedule and desired futures.

3) CURIOSITY

One life theme from the narratives in this study was that students’ decisions to pursue weather as a career were influenced by curiosity that stemmed from internships and research opportunities. Students reference research experiences for undergraduate (REU) programs that inspired them to want to do meteorological research on their own as a career (e.g., Students 11 and 13). Additionally, internships with the National Weather Service or through NOAA’s Ernest F. Hollings scholarship program were cited as experiences that sparked a curiosity in an unanticipated field of research that the students would not have been aware of at their home universities, like studying supercells in Oklahoma in a summer internship, though their home university has expertise in tropical convection (Student 30). The students’ narratives elaborate on how influential internships and research experiences were on their career path, as becoming curious about these different weather phenomena inspired them to apply for graduate school in different areas of the United States to further expand their knowledge and expertise.

4) CONFIDENCE

One of the common reasons for initially deciding to study meteorology was a propensity for math and science in secondary school (4 students, 11.7% of the sample). Students’ narratives elaborate on how they knew they were good at math and science in high school, giving them initial confidence in their success which pushed them to seek careers where they could use both disciplines. For example:

Unlike many people, my love for meteorology didn't start until later in life. In high school, however, I was a big fan of math and physics. When I started studying meteorology as an undergraduate, I learned that it was an elegant application of both (Student 15).

Some of the students allude to the difficult classes they did not anticipate when originally deciding to study meteorology, e.g., differential equations or thermodynamics (Students 10 and 11). However, these students used these classes as examples to explain that despite these challenges, getting through the coursework to learn about how weather worked inspired them
further to continue into the career path. A confidence stemming from excelling in and 
learning from challenging coursework, even while considering themselves already to be math 
and science-inclined, is apparent throughout the video narratives. In some cases, these 
challenges pushed students to unlock their “true passion” in the field, making them confident 
that they would succeed in a career in meteorology after graduation (Students 11 and 29).

5) COMMITMENT

Lastly under adaptability, the students’ narratives displayed a commitment to do work 
that can mitigate the effects of severe weather or inform people of impending threats. The 
meteorology students’ stories display a commitment to the work of meteorology. This 
statement means that students’ stories about why they want to go into careers in weather is 
because they want to make a difference in how severe weather can be predicted to keep 
people safe (e.g., Students 23, 32, and 33). When students referenced what they hoped to do 
in the future, the mention of school was used to explain how they planned on meeting their 
scientific goals, not as the end-goal itself; for example, “I hope to go to graduate school to 
learn more about hydroclimatic modeling so that we can learn how to make our cities more 
resilient” (Student 19). Through narrative, the students were relaying a commitment to 
improving science and improving the environment, in addition to a commitment to improving 
their personal development through this career path.

c. Students’ Career Plans

The video narratives revealed a couple of aspects of emerging adulthood, such as multiple 
possibilities and identity exploration. Students referenced future job possibilities that they 
could see themselves working in, such as the National Weather Service, the private sector, a 
research institution such as the National Center for Atmospheric Research, or academia (e.g., 
Students 13, 17, 19, 25). Students were aware that they did not know exactly what job they 
would get after graduation or when, showing a brief moment of instability; e.g., “I have at 
least a few more years until I finish here” (Student 22). However, their stories revealed a 
determination for working in the weather enterprise. For example, Student 19 stated “No 
matter what I do, I know I will work to inspire future generations of meteorologists”, or 
Student 26 said, “I can't wait to see where my studies in this field will take me in the future.” 
Identity exploration was expressed in stories around finding passion through the students’ 
career paths. Ten students referenced that studying the weather was their true passion that
they wanted to maintain in their careers (29.4% of the sample). While early into their careers, senior undergraduates and graduate students are well on their way to working in weather prediction. Despite the challenges that come from learning the foundational material to become a meteorologist, these emerging adults’ stories reveal that the motivational drivers for why they chose to study weather have continued to push them throughout school and will keep them passionate to continue their careers in the weather sector as they find their role in the field.

6. Discussion and Application for Academic Advisors and Mentors

This study sought to analyze students’ narratives explaining what piqued their interest in the meteorological academic and career path. Using theories from the literature on narrative identity, career construction, and emerging adulthood as a guide, this textual analysis analyzed video submissions from students in the atmospheric sciences for the #MyFieldMyStory campaign in 2020 for the 19th Annual American Meteorological Society (AMS) Student Conference. In their recorded stories, students explained what got them interested in the field, as well as where they hope to be in the future. With insights into what inspired them to enter the field, as well as their current reflections on their adaptability within school as they prepare for a career, this study had the unique opportunity to see how students’ professional identities and aspirations formed around weather.

In answering RQ1, asking what CCT features are present in future meteorologists’ narratives, it was found that early childhood memories of weather were a major life theme in the students’ stories. Experiences with severe weather, like tornadoes or hurricanes, were predominant, though routine events, such as thunderstorms or blizzards were present as well. Mediated experiences with the weather through broadcast television segments or movies such as *Twister* were also influential moments in the students’ memories. In some cases, family interaction with these mediated forecasts were also important for shaping how the students became initially interested in learning about weather. These formative experiences helped to influence the students’ professional and academic identities, as they began to pair an interest in weather early in their lives with their academic and career paths. Early memories in childhood have been studied as an avenue for understanding how individuals turn preoccupation into occupation (Del Corso and Rehfuss 2011; Savickas 2005). With understanding how influential direct experience and mediated experience with storms can be
on students, academic advisors or mentors could ask their students to tell their weather stories to potentially assist them in making their decision on what academic or career path to pursue.

The narratives from the students revealed that there were elements of adaptability as they worked in school to gain the foundational skills needed to become meteorologists. Of the five “Cs” of adaptability in Career Construction Theory (CCT), the most common features in the narratives were concern for local climatic effects, control over course of study, curiosity influenced by internships and research opportunities, confidence in their personal math and science propensity in school, and commitment to do work that can mitigate the effects of severe weather or inform people of impending threats. Students’ narratives showed that while they had been met with challenges as they hustled to obtain their degrees in the atmospheric sciences, their decision to pursue meteorology or switch into the major was influenced by their formative experiences with weather, their desire to improve the scientific understanding of certain phenomena, and an overall desire to contribute to their larger communities. When asked to tell the story of one’s career, CCT’s framework provides a possible intervention for increasing the one’s adaptability (Savickas et al. 2009). Used as an intervention, identifying the five “Cs” with a mentee can work to increase adaptive responses to occupational transitions or developmental tasks, like training for how to become competent at a job (Savickas et al. 2009). Being a student is the beginning of a career full of occupational transitions, as university is one of the first areas where individuals are learning the introductory principles to succeed in their field. Especially as emerging adults are characterized as a group by their common experience of being in a transitionary period of life (Arnett 2004, 2007), it is important for academic advisors or mentors to recognize this group’s intrinsic adaptability because it could help with guiding students to consider what experiences, backgrounds, and ambitions compel them as they navigate their personal career development.

In answering RQ2, asking how do emerging adults discuss adaptations in their narratives, the most common themes that emerged from the narratives were around possibilities in a future line of work, as well as identity exploration around finding passion in their career paths. Students were particularly optimistic when talking about their future job prospects and graduate school, showing the characteristic of emerging adulthood where countless possibilities are salient within this life stage (Arnett et al. 2014; Arnett 2004). While some early memories of storms have shaped students’ initial professional identities,
their narratives show that their continued desire to study and work in the meteorological field shows a strengthening of identity connected to weather over time. This identity exploration, undertaken through schoolwork, internships, or research experiences, left the impression from the narratives to have solidified the students’ professional aspirations and identities in meteorology, often labeled as their “true passion.” The identification of passion or purpose can be extremely valuable to career counselors, academic advisors, or mentors (Del Corso and Rehfuss 2011). As narratives can be told through discussion, asking students about what makes a field appealing can enable an advisor to encourage their students to choose work roles or careers that speak to what matters to them.

7. Future Work, Limitations, and Conclusion

While this qualitative study analyzed short video submissions about students’ interest in the meteorological field and projected futures, more extensive interviews could provide more information about what identity characteristics are present in the narratives of future meteorologists as they work to construct their careers. A larger study with a random sample of meteorology students across the United States may also yield more generalizable findings. Additionally, as this study analyzed videos submitted by the students, there may be a social desirability effect, which is the tendency for respondents to answer questions in a manner that will be viewed favorably by others. Lastly, this current study included students in both the Millennial (Y) and Generation Z cohorts. Generation Z is showing to have different workplace values than Millennials (Gaidhani et al. 2019), so future studies on emerging adults should consider this generational shift.

Studying the narratives of emerging and current meteorologists is an important avenue of work, as this population of scholars holds unique roles in society. Working in high-stakes prediction for powerful hazards that affect many populations and industries provides a unique workforce that are worthy of study. Meteorologists in the broadcast, academic, and private operational sectors have been analyzed psychologically, finding that the personalities in this domain had a more pronounced tendency for conscientiousness, meaning dependability and regard for duty, and empathy, meaning the ability to identify another’s emotional state and respond appropriately, than engineers or physicists (Bolton et al. 2018). Higher levels of conscientiousness and empathy in this group could have serious mental health implications, as meteorologists forecast devastating natural disasters, which can have a
severe, secondary impact on this population, even if they are not in direct danger. Thus, understanding what motivates this population to pursue this career in their early adulthood could inform career counselors, academic advisors, or mentors on strategies or interventions to better support this emergent workforce. This study is an interesting first delve into narratively analyzing the stories from emerging meteorologists, and future avenues of research should continue to examine their narratives for insights into why people enter this career path.

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Data Availability Statement.

Non-digital data supporting this study are stored by the corresponding author at Colorado State University; details of how to access these data can be provided by contacting the author.

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