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Joshua Perlin April 10, 2018

To view pain as wondrous: A multi-method investigation into narrative redemption, identity formation, and psychological well-being

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An abstract of
a thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
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Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Psychology

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Abstract

To view pain as wondrous: A multi-method investigation into narrative redemption, identity formation, and psychological well-being

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This study examined the identity formation processes in redemptive narratives of personal challenge in relation to psychological well-being. Open-ended narratives of challenging experiences were collected from college emerging adults. These narratives were coded for redemption based upon a newly devised coding scheme which brought to light several levels of redemption. Narratives were also coded for identity, and redemption and identity were assessed for main and interaction effects on psychological well-being. Redemption and identity were significantly associated with personal growth, marginally associated with global psychological well-being, and interacted on purpose in life. From this quantitative analysis emerged a qualitative investigation into the nuances of identity development in emerging adults' redemptive narratives. Through qualitative deep readings of narratives, a model of identity expression was developed which includes four domains, all of which are present in thematically different manifestations in the qualitative data corpus. The importance of the mixed-method approach for comprehensive science is discussed, as well as the implications for how narrative researchers understand redemption in the context of psychosocial development and psychological well-being.

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Acknowledgements

I wish to express my deepest appreciation to my advisor, Dr. Robyn Fivush, for her extraordinary dedication to supervising me throughout this honors project. She is the kind of scholar—passionate, sharp, caring, and socio-politically engaged—I one day hope to emulate. She has challenged me intellectually and invested in me personally, and I have grown immeasurably from her mentorship. I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to my committee members—Dr. Robyn Fivush, Dr. Philippe Rochat, and Dr. Pamela Hall—for taking the time to read and critique my work, and in the process making me a stronger academic. To Dr. Rochat, thank you for teaching me to not lose sight of the forest through the trees. In every class I have taken with you, you have always challenged me to think about the 'big picture'—to ask what philosophical implications we can take away from the work. To Dr. Hall, thank you for exemplifying that scholarship—and in turn the ideas to which we subscribe and consequently enact in our lives—is part and parcel of everyday goodness. Thank you for demonstrating that education is as much about edifying the soul as it is the mind. Additionally, I would like to thank Dr. Jordan Booker, a post-doctoral fellow in the Family Narratives lab, as well as Matthew Graci, a graduate student in this lab. Both have helped me grow tremendously as a student of psychology, and they have provided invaluable guidance for my academic and professional trajectory. I would also like to thank my family and friends, who served as incredible interlocutors for ideas and who have been founts of support and encouragement. Finally, I would like to thank the individuals who shared their challenging experiences with me; I have always maintained that it is a privilege and honor to hear and be impacted by their narratives.

Table of Contents

To view pain as wondrous: A multi-method investigation into narrative redemption, identity formation, and psychological well-being

"Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding...And could you keep your heart in wonder at the daily miracles of your life, your pain would not seem less wondrous than your joy." – Khalil Gibran, The Prophet

The human experience is rife with personal challenges, ranging from the mundane to the traumatic. Human beings experience loss, failure, criticism, and hurdles in extraordinary quantity and degree. In narrating these events, individuals render their experiences with evaluative content, often involving the personal meaning that can emerge from challenging events. One evaluative feature that has been identified as important for meaning-making is redemption (McLean & Pratt, 2006). Redemption is formally defined as the storytelling sequence of negative experiences leading to some positive outcome. This sequencing is often instrumental in creating a temporally extended and thematically unified *narrative identity* (McAdams, Diamond, de St Aubin, & Mansfield, 1997). Truly, redemption is part and parcel of a healthy narrative identity, as redemption is an advanced method of autobiographical reasoning, or making autobiographical connections between the self and one's experiences (McLean & Fournier, 2008). Still, there are individual differences in the degree to which people generate redemptive narratives and include autobiographical connections. These differences have practical significance by providing insight into outcomes on a variety of well-being measures (see Adler et al., 2015 for a review).

Redemption has been discussed extensively in the narrative identity literature for 20 years (e.g., McAdams et al., 1997; McAdams, Reynolds, Lewis, Patten, & Bowman, 2001; McAdams, 2006; McAdams, 2008; Dunlop & Tracy, 2013a; Liao, Bluck, & Cheng, 2015). However,

redemption is often conceptualized in wholesale terms; existing coding schemes define a narrative as either redemptive or non-redemptive (McAdams et al., 1997; McAdams et al., 2001; for exceptions, see Weston, Cox, Condon, & Jackson, 2016; McLean & Pratt, 2006). There is insufficient research to date on the exact forms and styles that redemption takes, on the nuances of redemptive sequences, or the potential identity work therein. The primary aim of this project, then, is to engage deeply with questions about the qualitative features of a redemptive story and how these narrative characteristics relate to psychological well-being. To achieve this, I conducted a mixed-method quantitative and qualitative analysis of open-ended, personal challenge narratives collected from a sample of Emory University undergraduate students.

I begin this paper by reviewing extant theory regarding redemption, and how current understandings are positioned historically in the context of narrative theory more broadly. I then turn to questions of practical application by examining research on the relation between redemption and psychological well-being. Furthermore, redemption cannot be understood without recourse to theories of identity development; therefore, I provide an account of how narrative theory is brought to bear on theories of identity formation, specifically in terms of personal challenge and positive self-transformation. I conclude by summarizing the aims and approaches of the current research undertaking, demonstrating how this project will address gaps in the narrative literature.

Conceptualizations of Narrative Redemption

Narrative is a *culturally-dependent* linguistic form through which the individual *situates* and *evaluates* their experiences according to broader sociocultural mores (Bruner, 2004; Hammack, 2008; McAdams, 2006; McAdams, 2008; McAdams & McLean, 2013). Therefore, attending to personal narratives uniquely grants researchers access to three layers of

psychological information: 1) The cultural panorama of ideologies, expectations, and norms imposed upon the individual's narrative; 2) The individual's position in accepting or pushing against those prescribed cultural narratives; and 3) The individual's phenomenological perspective on their experiences.

To the first two points, personal narrative identity assimilates into and is imbued with meaning through collective narratives. For example, Adler and Poulin (2009) assessed redemption within narrative accounts of the September 11th terrorist attacks. They found that redemptive sequences were positively associated with a composite measure of subjective well-being, including positive affect and life satisfaction, only when those accounts emphasized collective growth of the nation as opposed to personal growth. This observed pattern, Adler and Poulin (2009) theorized, could be explained by the sense of connection to a community larger than oneself. Thus, storying national tragedy in redemptive terms may serve to bolster the social nexus between oneself and the broader community. On this point, in cases where individuals were not personally impacted that day, threats to the self were experienced via threats to the cultural identity of being American. Indeed, cultural identity is scripted by *master narratives*, which are culturally salient and preferred modes of conveying personal experience (Hammack, 2008; Thorne & McLean, 2003). For example, Baddeley and Singer (2008) found that listeners preferred redemptive sequences in bereavement narratives to contaminated sequences. This suggests that redemptive narratives are embraced with greater social acceptance, indicating that there is a culturally hegemonic narrative structuring of challenge. McAdams (2008; 2013) outlines four culturally canonical redemptive forms, arguing that the American redemptive archetype is scaffolded by a master narrative of manifest destiny. In this master narrative, the protagonist is guided by clear values to ameliorate problems of a sometimes unnecessarily harsh

and cruel world. McAdams et al. (1997) consider this master narrative vis-à-vis a larger matrix of what Tomkins (as cited in McAdams et al., 1997) labels the commitment script, which includes redemptive sequences of life scenes. McAdams and colleagues then tie this canonical plotline to cultural mythology, expanding and acknowledging the vast disciplinary scope of the study of redemption. By connecting redemption to mythology, one can understand how redemption is culturally-informed.

For example, in literary theory, Joseph Campbell (1949/2008) identified an archetypal heroic journey known as the monomyth that pervades mythologies and cultural narratives throughout history. In this conceptualization, the hero is called upon to exit the world of comfort and familiarity to begin a 'quest,' wherein they must overcome increasingly demanding challenges before reaching an ultimate challenge—the abyss. The successful conquering of the abyss often provides the hero with new insights into both the world and themselves. Thus, the hero, much like redemptive narrators, are uprooted from normal life, thrown into highly challenging circumstances, and emerge with a bounty of self-knowledge and newfound wisdom. The notion of the heroic quest resonates in the sociological literature. Arthur Frank (1994) posits that illness narratives—defined as subjective, nonfictional, episodic accounts of an individual experiencing disease—can be classified into three different typologies: a) chaos; b) restitution; and c) quest. In the *chaos* narrative, the ill person is incapable of coherently storying their pain or making meaning out of it. *Restitution* narratives are marked by a restoration of homeostasis—they depict illness as disruptive, but not transformative; once the illness has resolved the person returns to what appears to be normal life. *Quest* narratives, the most culturally favored narrative of illness in Western industrialized cultures, borrow elements from the monomyth just described—the individual struggles with illness, and in the process grapples with the identity

challenges it poses. In quest narratives, the ill person emerges from their struggles with an integrated understanding of their identity and a gained perspective on the world.

The identity considerations that arise through redeeming personal challenges brings us to the third methodological advantage of narrative: Narratives are a markedly *idiographic* method, meaning that they focus on contextualizing the individual person's understanding of their own experience. Indeed, narratives are internal modes of representing and reconstructing events. Narratives are *operative* landscapes in which people imbue their lives with meaning—where they enact and negotiate their identities. Narratives, then, are not only representative of one's perception of reality but also *constructive* of that reality; they enable people to actively unify and evaluate the past, present, and future to create a temporally continuous and thematically cohesive identity (McAdams, 1993). In the process, past events are reconstructed, take on new flavors, and are saturated with personal meaning. Narrative meaning-making, which is closely tied to redemption, is a distinctly agentic project through which people actively make sense of challenge (McLean & Pratt, 2006; Bluck & Gluck, 2004; Brockmeier, 2009). Therefore, studying differences in how individuals narrate redemption of personal challenges provides contextualized, phenomenological, and personological information that self-report questionnaires or observational measures cannot.

A frequently used metric for studying narrative redemption has been McAdams' (1985) life story interview. This method involves eliciting eight narrative scenes, each of which focuses on a different facet of lived experience: high point; low point; turning point; earliest memory; important childhood scene; important adolescent scene; important adult scene; and "other" important scene. In studies using the life story paradigm (e.g., McAdams et al., 1997, McAdams et al., 2001; McAdams & Bowman, 2001) narratives are coded dichotomously as either

redemptive or non-redemptive, and then bonus points can be added to each narrative based on the expression of particular traits (i.e., enhanced agency, enhanced communion, and ultimate concerns). Then, researchers total the number of key events among the eight that exhibit redemptive sequencing. If the majority of those narratives are redemptive, the person's life is considered as such.

Therefore, narrative researchers have drawn empirical conclusions about redemptive *life stories*, as opposed to redemptive narrative arcs themselves. In other words, current narrative redemption research describes the redemptive *life*, as opposed to what might be called the redemptive *story*. Weston, Cox, Condon, and Jackson (2016) do examine redemption in a more dimensional manner by scaling redemption as 0, 0.5, or 1, as do McLean and Pratt (2006) on a scale of 1-3. These scales are implemented precisely because the authors only examine one key scene from the life story interview, and thus dichotomous coding would have been too blunt to accurately detect statistical difference. Still, these schemes only reflect variation in the relative quantity of positive to negative imagery, not the quality of that imagery. The qualitative forms and subtypes of the redemptive story have largely been ignored in empirical examinations.

To be sure, dichotomously investigating the redemptive life underscores that some individuals have predominantly redemptive orientations across many types of episodic narratives. This can provide insight into what life narrative themes are productive for well-being and the accomplishment of psychosocial tasks. However, understanding the *redemptive story* can supplement and complement these insights. This knowledge can determine what narrative characteristics are at work in producing redemptive sequences, what the culturally canonical redemptive typologies are, and if some typologies are more related to well-being and psychosocial development than others.

Narrative Redemption and The Good Life

Thus far, I have provided a broad overview of what comprises redemption and why narratives provide valuable information for studying it. However, the question remains: So what? It is theoretically and empirically significant that individuals are *capable* of sequencing life events so that the negative becomes positive. Still, one might wonder to what degree this redemptive sequencing is practically meaningful; in other words, are individuals who exhibit redemption more likely to enjoy greater psychological benefits than those who do not?

There is a large and growing corpus of research to substantiate that redeeming negative life events is associated with increased well-being on a battery of different measures. This work has its origins in research on posttraumatic growth (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004), a phenomenon where some individuals experience increased well-being in several domains after trauma or extreme challenge. Scholars in this line of research show that those who find benefits in the wake of tragedy are more likely to report deepened qualities of self (e.g., self-understanding, self-dependence, and self-disclosure), new life philosophies, improved relationships, novel opportunities, and an enhanced appreciation for life (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996; Calhoun, Tedeschi, Cann, & Hanks, 2010).

In terms of direct examinations of redemption and well-being, measures of composite well-being, including scales assessing life satisfaction and self-esteem, were associated with redemption within samples of both generative American midlife adults and within a sample of college undergraduates (McAdams et al., 2001). Therefore, the psychological benefits of redemptive sequences are enjoyed across a wide span of developmental periods—by both midlife adults and emerging adults. Building on this point, redemption predicts longitudinal outcomes. Adler et al. (2015) found that redemptive sequences partially predicted participants' mental

health four years later. Pals (2006) further demonstrates that *coherent positive resolution*—theoretically related to redemption by combining the constructs of narrative coherence and positive closure—at age 21 predicted life satisfaction at age 61.

Still, there are considerations beyond positive affect, self-esteem, and subjective well-being. In order to have a complete account of psychological well-being, it is necessary to consider those elements that belong to the construct of *eudaimonic well-being*. Eudaimonia is a philosophical concept introduced in Aristotle's (trans. 2009) *Nicomachean Ethics*. Eudaimonia is often equated with humanistic ideas such as self-actualization and moral striving (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Ryff & Singer, 2006). This conceptualization of the good life includes themes such as virtue, maturity, and positive self-development—qualities beyond hedonic satisfaction. Studies of well-being in psychology have increasingly become rooted in eudaimonia with the advent of positive psychology, which empirically investigates positive human potential and flourishing (e.g, Waterman, 1993; Seligman, 2004; Keyes, Shmotkin, & Ryff, 2002; Keyes & Annas, 2009).

Redemption incorporates many themes and narrative processes that might be conducive to eudaimonic well-being in addition to hedonic well-being. For example, Bauer, McAdams, and Pals (2008) posit that eudaimonic well-being, personal growth, and redemptive sequences about gained self-understanding are all positively intercorrelated. In order to more deeply examine these relations, the authors further distinguish among different kinds of growth in narrative: intrinsic, agentic, communal, and integrative. Each of these is uniquely positively associated with psychological well-being using Ryff and Keyes' (1995) Scale of Psychological Well-Being (PWB), which is meant to capture six eudaimonic dimensions of well-being. Intrinsic growth represents self-development predicated on internally motivated concerns, and has shown direct association with higher levels of PWB. Agentic and communal growth are two life story themes,

with agency broadly relating to mastery and independence and communion relating to intimacy and relationships. These two themes have been shown to relate to PWB via intrinsic growth. Finally, integrative growth is concerned with exploration of self-understanding and perspectives on life (Bauer & McAdams, 2004; Bauer, McAdams, & Pals, 2008). Integrative growth is positively related to the facets of PWB that measure ego development, which in turn measures the capacity for meaning-making (King et al., 2000). Meaning-making is measured by two of the six subscales of PWB (purpose in life and personal growth; Ryff & Keyes, 1995) and, as has been suggested, is a key component of redemption. What's more, the incorporation of integrative, exploratory, and accommodative elements into narration of challenge predicted personal growth two years following (King et al., 2000). Those narratives which incorporated both intrinsic *and* integrative growth demonstrated high levels of both PWB and ego development. Therefore, positive resolutions that emphasize internal, self-motivated issues as well as reflective self-exploration possess the greatest eudaimonic value.

Interestingly, these results are not replicated among narratives of positive experiences; thus, the manner in which one narrates highly challenging events may be especially essential for proximate and longitudinal trajectories of mental health. For example, Adler et al. (2015) found that the presence of redemption in narratives of low-point experiences were positively correlated with mental health, while this was not significantly related to mental health in narratives of peak experiences and turning points. Furthermore, redemption predicted longitudinal mental health outcomes only among participants with impaired physical health as opposed to healthy controls. Lilgendahl and McAdams (2011) delved deeper empirically into this observed relation between personal growth from negative events in particular and well-being. They did so by delineating two patterns of autobiographical reasoning operative in growth sequences—*differentiated*

processing and *positive processing*—and assessing their respective associations with well-being among both positive and negative events. The latter assesses the degree to which narrators, on average, evaluate past events as positive and promotive of growth, while the former examines the range of different growth themes present in the narrative. They demonstrated that the presence of both differentiated and positive processing was associated with optimal well-being for negative events; however, differentiated processing did not show this relation with well-being for positive events. This has special relevance to the construct of redemption, as it suggests that engaging in interpretive exploration with a multiplicity of growth themes is especially critical for negative events. Further, in order for redemptive sequences of challenging experiences to be productive for well-being, they must include not only the turn of negative to positive, but also an array of redemptive *types* and *themes*.

This final point raises several unanswered questions regarding the relation between the nuanced types and themes that redemption can take and psychological well-being. For example, are changes *in the self* practically and empirically different from changes in *relationships* or *life philosophies*? To this point, there is psychological theory spanning back to William James—widely considered the pioneer of American academic psychology—that suggests that devotion to a particular identity is significant for psychological well-being. James (1892/1984) declared that "the seeker of his truest, strongest, deepest self must review the list carefully, and pick out the one on which to stake his salvation" (p. 167). James implied a transcendent and self-actualizing quality to identity formation**.** Therefore, in order to capture the full scope of the redemptive arc and its significance for mental health, it is necessary to document the ways in which narrative redemption shapes identity development and vice versa, a task to which I now turn.

Identity Development and the Narrative Mode

The psychological study of identity development has an extensive history and impressive corpus of research behind it. Still, the construct of identity[1] appears elusive and obscure, and defining it in precise conceptual and operational terms is difficult. I will not be able to provide an exhaustive historical account of identity development research in this section; however, I can sufficiently summarize the subfields and existing theories which are directly applicable to the current project.

To begin, William James theorized frequently about the ontology and ontogeny of identity. James (1890/2013) developed a theory of identity which emphasized essentialist, interior, continuous, and stable self-attributions (Hammack, 2015). This required a distinction between the self that knows and the self that is known. The latter, called the empirical self, is the "me" about which the "I"—called the epistemological self—can make attributions (Habermas & Kober, 2015). In other words, the me is the I's capacity to objectify and perceive itself through the mode of self-reflection (however, social cognitive theorists view self-reflection as an agentic activity, and thus reject agent-object dualism; for this alternative perspective, see Bandura, 2001). The empirical me is further divided into three selves—the material, the social, and the spiritual. The material self is the aggregate of tangibles that a person might possess, ranging from our own corporeal selves to our families and our material wealth. The social self consists of the ways in which human beings exist relationally; that is, the varied types of communion experienced, such as friendship, romantic love, and the multiplicity of personas that we enact in different group settings. Finally, the spiritual self is the constellation of features which we take to

[1] The terms "self" and "identity" are used interchangeably in the existing literature (e.g., *The Oxford Handbook of Identity Development*, *Handbook of Self and Identity*). I offer the potential for a distinction in the qualitative analysis; however, for the purposes of the introduction I will rely on the way these constructs have been discussed, however conflated, historically.

be our essential and enduring values, those which are deeply and intimately interwoven with who we are as human beings. Understanding our spiritual selves, James argues, requires introspection of our truest, most authentic nature. The capacity for introspection is possessed by the I—the knower—which is conceived of as the "pure ego," able to unify the reconstructed past with the present self and the anticipated future (James, 2013/1890; McAdams, 1993).

Out of this conceptual tradition emerged several key figures in identity research. The first, Erik Erikson, is often considered the father of modern identity studies in psychology. Erikson is famed for his conception of eight psychosocial stages of development. The fifth stage, *Ego Identity vs. Role Confusion*, is the primary ontogenetic conflict of adolescence. In this stage, adolescents explore possible features of identity and develop commitments to particular identities in the domains of vocation, love, and ideology. Additionally, the identity-committed adolescent should develop *fidelity* to these various qualities so as to fully integrate them into their *ego identity*—the enduring, internalized quality that provides the self with a sense of personal continuity (Erikson, 1968/1994). In order to bring some empirical and theoretical order to the Eriksonian framework, James Marcia (1966) codified four distinct statuses in ego identity development. The four statuses—foreclosure, diffusion, moratorium, and achievement—are best explained orthogonally along paired dimensions of exploration and commitment, wherein an individual surveys a number of different identity possibilities and devotes themselves to a particular collection of features which form a cohesive identity. *Identity moratorium* involves high exploration and low commitment; *identity foreclosure* involves low exploration and high commitment; *identity diffusion* involves low exploration and low commitment; and *identity achievement* involves high exploration and high commitment. Redemption and related constructs are among those identity concerns measured against identity status. For example, meaning-

making, or developing insights from one's experiences and integrating them into oneself, is modestly correlated with redemption. In one study, meaning-making predicted an individual's identity status, with low exploration statuses (diffusion and foreclosure) negatively associated with meaning-making. Furthermore, identity status not only proximately predicted meaning-making capacity, but identity statuses in late adolescence were also linked with meaning-making four years later (McLean & Pratt, 2006). Relating these concepts back to well-being, identity status has been shown to be linked with different dimensions of well-being, including subjective, psychological, and eudaimonic well-being among college undergraduates. Identity achievement and identity diffusion show polar relations along all dimensions of well-being, especially with regard to PWB; achievement is linked to enhanced PWB, while diffusion is linked with diminished PWB. Interestingly, moratorium and foreclosure were both negatively associated with PWB, although effects were not as great as with diffusion. This implies that exploration without lasting fidelity, and commitment without autonomous exploration, are not sufficient to promote the holistic and eudaimonic features of well-being which PWB captures (Waterman, 2007).

Clearly, Marcia's (1966) identity status model has inspired decades of research in identity development, and the model has enabled researchers to classify and categorize with ease in order to find systematic patterns among identity statuses and associated constructs. However, this has also distanced identity research from its Eriksonian psychoanalytic and phenomenological roots (Josselson & Flum, 2015). Indeed, in an effort to restore idiographic modes of inquiry to identity research, Dan McAdams (1993) developed the concept of *narrative identity*, simultaneously positioning identity theory in a new theoretical context while also alluding to its historical origins. Narrative identity is a rapidly bourgeoning field in a variety of sub-disciplines, ranging

from psychosocial development to gender studies to ethnic identity research. McAdams synthesized Eriksonian ego identity with Bruner's (1991) hypothesis that narrative is one of the two primary life modes. Narrative is the mode through which people become *autobiographical authors*—the most developmentally-advanced identity construction (McAdams, 2015). This is also where James's philosophies of identity reemerge in modern identity studies: Through narrative, people unify a temporally extended empirical "me" by means of an epistemological "I". The I is capable of achieving this level of identity by ascribing enduring values, goals, and perspectives to the Me. Even fourth and fifth-graders are capable of acting in accord with goals and valuing some goals over others, indicating that they are *social actors* and *motivated agents*, the two other levels of identity that developmentally precede autobiographical authorship (McAdams & Zapata-Gietl, 2015). Nonetheless, processes of self-making are limited because they cannot yet make explicit the integrative values, perspectives, and morally foundational aspects of themselves—in a word, their identities—which motivate those goals.

This unified identity emerges in late adolescence as motivated agents with particular goals become capable of authoring an organized and coherent story of their lives (McAdams, 1985; McAdams, 2013). At this developmental stage, people begin to demonstrate advanced socio-cognitive capacities like interpretive retrospection and mature integration of events into self via autobiographical reasoning (Habermas & Bluck, 2000). However, psychosocial development as such dynamically interacts with sociocultural demands; therefore, this developmental period is more fluid in the modern era than when Erikson was writing. Thus, Arnett (2000) problematizes previous conceptions of ontogenetic adolescent development by arguing for a new period which he calls *emerging adulthood*, focusing on the ages 18-25. Arnett describes these years as follows:

> Emerging adulthood is distinguished by relative independence from social roles and from normative expectations. Having left the dependency of childhood and adolescence, and having not yet entered the enduring responsibilities that are normative in adulthood, emerging adults often explore a variety of possible life directions in love, work, and worldviews. Emerging adulthood is a time of life when…the scope of independent exploration of life's possibilities is greater for most people than it will be at any other period of the life course. (Arnett, 2000, p. 469)

Based on this conceptualization of emerging adulthood, this period in life would be ripe for the kind of psychosocial moratorium—or broad exploration—that Erikson (1959/1994) characterized as being essential for development of a robust ego identity. Thus, it is also a transformative period in the development of a narrative identity.

It is out of the narrative identity research that the construct of redemption emerges. McAdams and colleagues tie redemption back to Eriksonian psychosocial development by demonstrating that generative midlife adults (generativity being the primary psychosocial task of midlife) exhibit significantly more redemptive sequences in their life narratives than non-generative adults (McAdams et al., 1997; McAdams et al., 2001; McAdams, 2008). This suggests that redemption is related to the positive resolution of Eriksonian (1950) psychosocial conflicts in midlife. However, the identity commitments required to be guided by clear values—in McAdams' (1997) commitment story, grouped with generativity and redemption—are being developed and solidified during emerging adulthood (Erikson, 1959/1994). Therefore, understanding how redemption is associated with identity formation in emerging adulthood, and thus Eriksonian psychosocial development, is a worthwhile and understudied area of research.

As has been intimated several times throughout this project, identity and redeeming

challenging experiences are intimately connected. Highly arduous experiences pose a challenge in terms of coherently incorporating and structuring them into a broader life narrative (Adler, Wagner, & McAdams, 2007). Therefore, redeeming said events can be instrumental in achieving a coherent sense of identity. Pals (2006) theorized that negative events can also be particularly conducive to positive self-transformation because these events can cause one to significantly question the self. As stated previously, redemption involves numerous self-event connections wherein the narrator reconfigures the past in the context of a present internalized identity and anticipated goals. This process of integrating self with events is known as autobiographical reasoning, or self-event connection, thus implicating the construct of identity in all redemptive sequences (Habermas & Kober, 2015; McLean & Fournier, 2008). Returning to Lilgendahl and McAdams (2011), growth and autobiographical reasoning are best predicted via *differentiated processing*. They investigate this construct further by identifying three themes that constitute differentiated processing: a) identity clarity; b) intimacy; and c) wisdom/insight. Identity clarity refers to the deepening or elucidation of one's values, beliefs, goals, and morals; intimacy is comprised of meaningful relationships; and wisdom/insight captures transformations in perspectives vis-à-vis identity, communion, or life more broadly. These three themes map onto Tedeschi and Calhoun's (1995) three dimensions of benefit-finding/growth—changes in self, changes in relationships, and changes in spiritual, existential, and/or life philosophies. Interestingly, they also roughly correspond to Erikson's (1968/1994) three domains of identity formation—vocation, love, and ideology. This constructs a theoretical bridge between redemption and growth on the one hand and identity development on the other. However, it also calls into question what constitutes *identity*. While Lilgendahl and McAdams (2011) see only changes in the self as reflective of identity, the Eriksonian tradition from which their work stems

conceptualizes identity more broadly. For instance, in the Eriksonian framework, who one chooses to intimately love *is* part and parcel of identity, while Lilgendahl and McAdams more parsimoniously reserve the concept of identity for specific changes in the self.

Thus, there is tension within the empirical literature regarding what identity changes emerge from redemption. Dunlop and Tracy (2013) developed a coding scheme of redemption that emphasized what they term "self-redemption" of recovering alcoholics; that is, redemptive sequences that detail how the alcoholic has changed positively *as a person*—for example, by becoming more resilient—from their last drinking experience. According to these authors, self-redemption is particularly important in the maintenance of sobriety within this population. One direction for future research that these authors recommend is investigating if the benefits of self-redemption extend to transient challenges that are less enduringly pathological than alcoholism. This leads to another fascinating, and yet unaddressed, question of whether these identity changes fluctuate with varying types of personal challenge, and if resolutions of these challenges change as well. For example, redemptive sequences are not always reflective of situational resolution (McAdams, 2006). Indeed, Dunlop and Tracy's (2013) analysis of *self*-redemption makes good theoretical sense, considering that alcoholism is considered a lifelong disease within the AA community. Bettering oneself by virtue of the challenging experience is perhaps the most accessible form of redemption to a population that will never fully be rid of their personal challenge. Adding greater empirical validation for this idea, Adler et al. (2015) found that within a sample of late-midlife adults who had received a diagnosis of serious physical illness, redemption at baseline predicted mental health outcomes at later time points *independent* of physical health. This might be considered a qualitatively different form of redemption, though,

which is wholly dependent on the person ascribing internal meaning to a particular event rather than the situation itself resolving.

McAdams (2006) implicitly indexes this tension by noting two forms of redemptive sequences, one in which a negative event becomes a positive event, and another in which a negative event results in long-term benefit. In the first, the negative event is situationally resolved, while in the second the event may be resolved through a changed life philosophy or existential understanding. However, negative events turned positive may still incorporate elements of identity formation (e.g., poor grades leading to tutoring which led one to become a promising and newly dedicated student). The narrator in this example clearly commits to a new identity (that of the dedicated student); however, this type of resolution leaves no space for narrators to express identity-formative *reflection* because the situation is what leads to identity change. In the same vein, the second type of resolution McAdams (2006) describes may include narratives that orient towards an existential understanding of *life* rather than of *self*, which is arguably not focused on integrating emergent qualities into a cohesive identity. For example, existential meaning-making concerns might be framed as a narrator *seeing themselves as capable* of finding a silver lining in the tragedy, as opposed to a narrator realizing that *things* always work out for the best. Thus, there is a need for organizing canonical redemptive types along dimensions of identity development.

The Current Project

Existing research on narrative redemption has not dealt sufficiently with the nuanced and various subtypes and structural mechanisms by which challenging events are redeemed. In the literature that does exist on redemptive forms and styles, it has not been sufficiently applied to the psychosocial undertaking of emerging adulthood (viz. healthy identity development). Doing

so would provide a tremendous opportunity to study the identity formation processes inherent in redemptive autobiographical reasoning, as emerging adults are developmentally tasked with constructing a coherent, organized, and integrated ego identity (Arnett, 2000; Erikson, 1968/1994). A multi-method approach consisting of quantitative coding and analyses as well as 'thick' qualitative analysis provides complementary techniques for answering these questions.

Thus, in the current project, I perform a quantitative and qualitative exploration into the identity formation processes through which emerging adults might narratively redeem highly challenging events. The project is three-pronged in its goals: 1) Establish a more refined understanding of *canonical redemptive narrative typologies*; 2) Assess the degree to which newly conceived notions of redemption are *associated with psychological well-being*; and 3) Investigate the *processes of identity formation* in redemptive and non-redemptive narratives of personal challenge. First, this project addresses the need for a more nuanced depiction of redemption by applying Frank's (1994) tripartite conception of illness narratives to a newly devised redemption coding scheme. As previously stated, in Frank's formulation narrators can be enmeshed in illness (chaos), recover and return to homeostasis (restitution), or emerge from their challenges with new skills, deepened perspectives, and/or enhanced self-understanding (quest). The current project borrows this framework but relabels the terms for clarity: The chaos narrative is renamed *enmeshed*, restitution becomes *return*, and the quest narrative is titled *emergent*. Thus, redemption is no longer conceived of dichotomously, but instead there are two qualitatively different redemptive stories—the return and the emergent. There is also evidence in the narrative literature which would support this theoretical distinction. Pasupathi, Mansour, and Brubaker (2007) argue that there are two types of self-event connections via autobiographical reasoning: stability and change. Those that accentuate stability result in personal continuity,

while those highlighting change describe how the self has been transformed by virtue of the intruding challenge to identity. Having developed this new framework of narrative redemption, it is critical to understand how its relation with practically meaningful measures such as psychological well-being might differ from previous conceptualizations of redemption.

As has been discussed at length, redemption is an autobiographical project; accordingly, a complete understanding of redemption necessitates a companion scheme for identity. However, the current project problematizes the notion that redemptive sequences are inherently and explicitly identity-laden. Indeed, operating under a grounded theory tradition (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), the research team read several narratives from the archived data set and wondered what characteristically distinguished narratives that oriented towards redemptive aspects of the *situation* and those that oriented towards positive *self-transformation* and *self-affirmation*. In a phrase, some participants express modes of *doing*, while others express ways of *being* in the world. In identity-oriented narratives, individuals not only discuss the contextual elements of the experience, but also shed light on how that has led to existential reflections on the self. In situation-oriented narratives, no recourse is given to enduring qualities about the self. Furthermore, working within an Eriksonian (1968/1994) framework of ego identity, self-reflection must draw upon *lasting* qualities that allow for self-continuity. This ties well with current narrative theory, as narrative processing is marked by merging the reconstructed past with the present self and projected future to create an enduring, cohesive, and organized narrative identity (Pals, 2006).

In order to achieve the hermeneutic and highly contextualized view of identity formation that this exploration demands, a mixed-method design is critical. There is much to be said for the systematic patterns that can be uncovered through statistical, nomothetic approaches.

Nonetheless, these designs must be supplemented by rich qualitative analysis in order to gain a complete picture of the phenomenon under study. Processes of identity formation, especially in response to highly challenging experiences, require a deep, phenomenological, person-centered reading (Josselson & Flum, 2015). Thus, the current project relies on a thematic analysis framework (Braun & Clark, 2006) to better understand the movement between challenge, exploration, integration, and commitment in redemptive narratives, with an eye to the multiple layers of identity work.

Finally, the current project has practical implications. Better understanding how narrative characteristics relate to psychological well-being can help individuals narrate their personal challenges in a way that promotes well-being. This could have implications for future clinical research, as some contend that the main project of therapy is to help clients re-story their lives, including teaching them how to engage in the meaning-making process (e.g., narrative therapy; see White & Epston, 1990). Therefore, understanding narrative redemption can allow clinicians to facilitate a discursive change in how clients frame and deal with troubling histories. Finally, this project takes a largely interdisciplinary and qualitative approach to these issues. This is disproportionately underrepresented in the landscape of modern research psychology, and I hope that this project speaks to its necessity in the study of human lives. These approaches, in my view, help revive a psychology that is true to its name—a veritable 'study of the soul.'

Methods

Participants

The present study relied on archived data consisting of a sample of 221 full-time undergraduate students at Emory University, eight of whom were excluded from data analysis because of insufficient or off-topic narratives. Of the remaining 213 participants, ages ranged

from 18-24 (*M* = 19.12, SD = 1.13). 54.9% of participants identified as female, 43.2% as male, 0.5% as gender non-conforming, and 1.4% did not indicate a gender. Furthermore, participants identified with the following ethnicities/races: White or European American (43.7%), Black or African American (9.4%), Southeast Asian or Pacific Islander (26.8%), Latina/o (6.1%), Indo-Asian (5.6%), Middle-Eastern (2.3%), Multiracial (5.6%), Unidentified (0.5%). Participants were recruited via the Emory SONA system as part of enrollment in an Introductory Psychology course during the Fall 2016 and/or Spring 2017 semesters. Students received course credit for participation in any study offered, but they could elect to complete a class writing in lieu of participation.

Procedures

Data collection. All procedures were approved by the institutional review board as compliant with ethical research standards. Procedures were conducted through an online survey, completed by participants at their own computers and at their convenience. Data used in the current project were collected as part of a larger study, and after study procedures were explained and written informed consent was obtained, participants completed multiple open-ended narrative prompts and a battery of self-report questionnaires, all of which were completed in a single session over the span of approximately 1.5 hours. Of particular interest to the present study were the questionnaire measure of psychological well-being and the narrative prompt for personal challenge.

Questionnaire measure of psychological well-being. The current study used Ryff and Keyes' (1995) Scale of Psychological Well-Being (PWB), which includes fifty-four items and six subscales: *Autonomy* (α = .78), *Environmental Mastery* (α = .87), *Personal Growth* (α = .85), *Positive Relations* (α = .84), *Purpose in Life* (α = .82), and *Self-Acceptance* (α = .89). Subscales

each included nine items, which participants evaluated on a six-point scale from (1) *Strongly disagree* to (6) *Strongly agree*. Participants received a score on each subscale as well as a score for global PWB, calculated by averaging scores from all subscales. For a sample item from each subscale, see Appendix C. A summary of the qualities that characterize high and low scores on each subscale is presented in Appendix D. Finally, it should also be acknowledged that subscales are highly intercorrelated. For a table of bivariate correlations between subscales, see Table 17 in Appendix F.

Narrative prompt for personal challenge. All participants were prompted by the following question:

> All of us have times of personal difficulty. Please think of the most unstable, confusing, troubled, or discouraging time in your life—the one event with the most impact on your values, the way you view yourself, and the way you look at the world. Please describe that difficulty. How old were you? How do you now understand that event, reflecting back on it? Is there any lesson or "bottom line" you take away from that event? What were your thoughts and feelings about that experience?

Participants were not given a time limit for answering the question.

Narrative Coding

The quantitative component of this study's design necessitates an explanation and operationalization of the narrative coding schemes for the two constructs of interest: *redemption* and *identity*. I will then detail reliability processes for both coding schemes, after which I will discuss the quantitative analytical plan and the qualitative analyses that emerged.

Redemption coding. Based upon theoretical underpinnings and close readings of narratives, I identified three distinct categories for describing redemption**:** *enmeshed*, *return*, and *emergent*,

respectively. The complete coding scheme for redemption is presented in Appendix A, and Table 15 in Appendix F displays narrative frequencies in each redemption category.

Enmeshed narratives are non-redemptive. These narratives express an ongoing inability—whether implicitly or explicitly—to deal with or change the challenging aspects of the inciting event. Narrators may convey confusion about the event; an emotional inability to act; or they might tell the story in a matter-of-fact manner with no interpretive elaboration or effort at post-event reflection. Hope, mixed resolutions (i.e., both positive and negative), and ambiguous attempts at redemption do not warrant a score beyond enmeshed. For example, Participant 129 concludes their narrative by saying, "This experience fundamentally [changed] me." This would *not* merit a redemptive code above enmeshed because it is ambiguous. That can be contrasted with Participant 74, who says, "Though the experience was terrible, the lessons I learned later gave me strength to make a lot of important [changes] in my life." Because Participant 74 specifies the ways in which they have grown from their experience ("gave me strength"), they have exhibited redemption.

Return narratives are partially redemptive; however, there is nothing new that is gained from experiencing the personal challenge. The narrative, in essence, indicates a recovery back to baseline or a restoration of homeostasis. This may be expressed as emotionally moving on from a situation. That said, simply becoming accustomed to a worse situation (i.e., resigning oneself to a particular state) does not warrant a return code. Return narratives may also communicate specific behavioral strategies in place even if the narrator admits that they are still working through the emotional turbulence of the event.

Finally, emergent narratives are fully redemptive, to the extent that something new develops as a result of experiencing the personal challenge. There are certain necessary features

of emergent narratives: They give explicit expression and specification about growth, and they take something meaningful away from the personal challenge that generalizes beyond the situation. These narratives may also indicate gained values and strengths, or proactive and specific decision-making that improve one's present state.

Identity-Situation orientation coding. Narratives can orient either towards aspects of *identity* or towards aspects of *situation*. Identity-oriented narratives discuss how the challenging experience led to reflection on enduring aspects of the self, primarily involving one's values, beliefs, goals, and perspectives. Conversely, situation-oriented narratives only consider the circumstances of the experience without recourse to identity concerns. To be sure, most narratives were expected to have an eliciting event that includes contextual information about the situation; however, if the situation defines the self in a lasting way, then the narrative falls into the identity-oriented category. For example, transient emotional states do not warrant an identity-oriented code. However, if the narrator relates these states to aspects of identity (e.g., I felt sad that I could not accomplish [task] because I usually can accomplish what I set my mind to) then that qualifies as identity-oriented. Furthermore, abstract possessions besides goals, values, and perspectives (e.g., my achievements, my failures, etc.) are not identity-oriented because the focus is placed on the possession as object rather than on the self as object. The most difficult narratives to distinguish in this coding scheme are those that incorporate some type of life lesson. However, a situation-oriented code might read 'I learned that things take time,' whereas an identity-oriented code will transform the lesson's virtue into something that is explicitly self-referential (i.e., I learned to be patient).

The identity-situation orientation (hereinafter referred to as I-S orientation) coding scheme is meant to be used in tandem with the redemption scheme; therefore, expression of

identity- and/or situation-orientations manifests differently based on the redemption code. A *situation-oriented return* occurs when the narrative circles back at the end to the beginning state (e.g., I had friends who left me, but now I have new friends[2]). An *identity-oriented return* is a reaffirmation of the self that began the narrative (e.g., I was a happy person before I lost my closest group of friends, and finally years later I am a happy person again). A *situation-oriented emergence* expresses enhanced circumstances resulting from the personal challenge (e.g., I lost several friends, but then I found new, *better* friends). The narratives which demonstrate *identity-oriented emergence* are most striking: These narratives might be framed as the personal challenge leading to a growth experience wherein the narrator acquires new values and a newly defined sense of self (e.g., I lost several friends, but this experience made me a more mature, independent person).

I-S orientation is complicated by one more narrative feature explored in the current project: The formal distinction between *challenge* and *resolution*. Entire narrative arcs cannot be classified as dealing solely with identity or situation concerns. In redemptive narratives, there is narrative movement from personal challenge to positive resolution. These segments of a redemptive narrative can diverge in terms of evaluative concerns; that is, the challenging aspects of the situation and the positive resolution independently—and occasionally incongruously—orient towards situation or identity. The challenge provides context for the resolution; it is the eliciting event from which the resolution arises. In the resolution, a narrator considers how the challenge is transformed so that the narrator either returns to homeostasis or emerges from the challenge in a meaningful way. The resolution is the crux of narrative redemption; without it,

[2] After each type of redemptive resolution (e.g., situation-oriented return), I provide an example of what a narrator might say. I do this rather than giving actual narratives from the data set for ease of understanding. All examples contain the same content—losing friends—so the consistency can aid in understanding the thematic differences between redemptive types.

narratives are classified as non-redemptive. This distinction abstractly resonates with Marcia's (1966) status approaches. In these approaches, individuals are categorized according to the orthogonal dimensions of exploration (grappling with identity challenges and considering alternatives) and commitment (resolving to devote to one particular identity). McLean and Pratt (2006) even refer to these dimensions in terms similar to the ones advanced by the current project: crisis and resolution, respectively. Coding redemptive narratives according to both challenge and resolution adds tremendous value to existing schemes which have attempted to incorporate identity considerations into redemption. For the complete I-S orientation coding scheme, see Appendix B.

Narrative coding reliability. Redemption was coded on a three-point scale corresponding to the previously discussed distinctions between *enmeshed* (non-redemptive), *return* (homeostatic redemption), and *emergent* (gained redemption). Simultaneously, I distinguished challenge and resolution as distinct narrative parts, and then ascribed I-S orientation codes to both parts. To reiterate, the challenge and resolution could orient either congruently (e.g., both parts coded as situation-oriented) or incongruently (e.g., the challenge orienting towards the situation while the resolution orients towards identity). All narratives were coded for redemption (intraclass correlation = 0.928) and I-S orientation for challenge ($\kappa = 0.640$) and resolution ($\kappa = 0.619$). Narratives were independently coded by two researchers and disputes were resolved through consensus discussions. Because consensus was reached on all codes, interrater reliability is 1.000 for redemption and I-S orientation for challenge and resolution. However, I recognize that findings obtained from I-S orientation codes must be interpreted cautiously because of the failure to independently achieve the same codes at the frequency which would meet the discipline-specific threshold for Cohen's Kappa ($\kappa = 0.700$).

Quantitative Analysis

SPSS 24.0 (IBM, 2016) was used for all quantitative analysis. In order to answer the first research question regarding *canonical redemptive typologies*, multiple chi-square of independence tests were run to understand how types of redemption mapped onto I-S orientation in both challenges and resolutions. To answer the second question regarding *associations of redemption and I-S orientation with PWB*, a parametric design was implemented using multiple analysis of variance (ANOVA) and analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) tests. Preliminary analyses show no significant effects for gender. Additionally, there were not enough participants belonging to each ethnic/racial group to have sufficient statistical power; however, Table 16 in Appendix F displays frequencies of redemptive narratives along ethnicity/race for reference.

Qualitative Analysis

Developing the question. In the initial coding of I-S orientation, I found the categorical distinction between situation and identity to be murky, reflected in the sub-threshold Cohen's Kappa for interrater reliability. Perhaps this suggests that there is not the empirical difference between these two orientations as I originally claimed. However, there is a second theoretical implication: If there *is* a real empirical distinction, why was interrater reliability so low?

Seeking an explanation, I further investigated if agreement on resolution I-S orientation varied as a function of redemption, consensus codes on challenge I-S orientation, and consensus codes on resolution I-S orientation. A chi-square test of redemption and agreement did not meet the significance threshold of $\alpha = 0.05$, χ^2 (2, $N = 213$) = 0.409, $p = 0.82$, nor did a Fisher's Exact Test of agreement and challenge I-S orientation ($p = 0.872$). However, a chi-square test indicated that agreement was statistically dependent upon the codes given to resolution I-S orientation after consensus, χ^2 (2, $N = 213$) = 8.36, $p = 0.015$, demonstrating that coders' interrater reliability

varied as a function of whether resolutions were ultimately identity-oriented, situation-oriented, or had no resolution (see Table 1). However, the effect is reduced to marginal significance (p = 0.085) when only considering identity- and situation-oriented narratives. This suggests that agreement is easier to attain when narratives have no resolution, and that when narratives resolve they do not do so with an unambiguous identity- or situation-orientation. Rather, resolutions are intricate and multifaceted.

Table 1

Agreement across resolution I-S orientation

	Identity	**Situation**	**No Resolution**	***Total***
Agreement	74	49	38	161
Disagreement	21	26	5	52
Total	95	75	43	213

In critically examining these coding disagreements, I wondered to what degree dichotomizing I-S orientation was misguided; conceivably the construct would be better suited to a dimensional framework. Indeed, some narratives struck the coders as clearly identity-integrated, while others seemed entirely situational, while still others seemed to only index pieces of an identity that had not been fully and explicitly codified. These examinations of agreement inspired a qualitative analysis to understand the nuances of identity resolution in redemptive narratives. I asked if there were discernible markers of identity work that systematically differed between the narratives on which coders originally agreed and those where disagreements had to be resolved through discussion. I then asked if this identity work difference would relate to distinct typologies of challenge and resolution, and if that would further interact with primary codes on I-S orientation.

The qualitative process. In order to address these questions, I did a deep qualitative analysis of the narratives on which coders originally disagreed for resolution I-S orientation. I applied thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006) to the questions surrounding identity formation in redemptive and non-redemptive personal challenge narratives. This analytic framework involves six iterative phases: 1) familiarizing oneself with data; 2) generating codes; 3) identifying themes; 4) reviewing themes; 5) refining themes; and 6) producing the report. In the current project, I had already been familiarized with the data corpus of resolution I-S orientation disagreements ($N = 52$) since I had initially coded for redemption and I-S orientation. In the second phase, I organized narratives according to commonalities across the data corpus in leitmotifs, structure, voice, tone, dramatic movement, and diction. These groupings were given provisional themes, which I repeatedly scrutinized until themes were cohesively defined, clearly distinguished, and properly termed.

Reflexivity. As I engage in this qualitative mode of research, I am also challenged to engage with myself in a reflexive process. Reflexivity—defined as the researcher's method of reflecting on their own sociocultural and identity positioning in relation to the collection, analysis, and production of scholarly research—is considered critical to maintaining the integrity, reliability, and validity of the qualitative research process (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2017).

First, I wondered about the degree to which I am forcing the narrator to change values because of my own situations where I have engaged in deep, often difficult, identity work (i.e., on my enduring values and perspectives). For example, In Participant 20's narrative, I specifically disagreed with the other coder when the narrator regrets not being religious, with me viewing this as identity-oriented and the other coder seeing it as situation-oriented. Since I consider myself to be a religious and spiritual person, this statement felt like an incorporation of

a particular identity. However, it is necessary to acknowledge that what is true for me may not be so for someone else. To this point, during the qualitative analysis there was one narrative in particular for which the other coder and I could not gain consensus. In this narrative, Participant 92 details what they learned from the continuous conflict between their parents: "It made me realize what I want in a partner for the future." From my perspective, this did not warrant an identity code because the narrator was expressing qualities that they valued in another person, but not themselves. The other coder disagreed, arguing that because they (the other coder) is older than I am, we are in different psychosocial developmental periods and therefore reached different conclusions. I thought this was a compelling explanation, and we ultimately decided that as the master coder I should have final authority on coding. Still, this is an exemplar of the researcher's own impositions on the data.

Finally, I wonder if I am overvaluing questioning one's beliefs because I view myself as a very reflective person, and therefore I want to see it as somehow advantageous to identity formation. On this point, with regard to this study's qualitative question in general, I acknowledge that the definition I propose for identity is wedded to the sociocultural context in which I produced this research. Specifically, my conception of identity as emphasizing enduring values, beliefs, perspectives, and goals is inherently a product of the modes of thought in which I was culturally reared and academically trained. It is clear that themes and ideas do not *emerge* from the narratives; they are negotiated and brought forth through the researchers' own phenomenological lens (Josselson, 2010).

Presentation of findings. As the qualitative process is deeply intertwined with the presentation itself (Braun & Clark, 2006), I will provide a brief roadmap of the sections that follow (viz. results and discussion) in the service of orienting the reader to this report's mixed-

method layout. I first review quantitative results for Question 1 (canonical redemptive typologies) and Question 2 (associations with PWB). Next, I provide a Quantitative Discussion section, solely considering those two quantitatively-oriented questions. I then answer Question 3 (processes of identity formation) by introducing the qualitative findings and discussion together, as the depth and process of qualitative analysis necessitate simultaneous presentation of results and discussion. Lastly, I conclude with an integrative General Discussion section to synthesize both quantitative and qualitative findings, arguing that both methodologies are complementary and essential for comprehensive science.

Quantitative Results

Question 1: Canonical Redemptive Typologies

My first set of quantitative analyses addressed three hypotheses about the canonical organization of personal challenge narratives, specifically with regard to redemption and identity-situation (I-S) orientation. The hypotheses were as follows: 1) I-S orientations that are congruent across the challenge and resolution will be significantly more frequent than orientations that are incongruent; 2) Return narratives will most often correspond to situation-oriented resolutions; and 3) Emergent narratives will most often correspond to identity-oriented resolutions.

In order to test the first hypothesis, a Fisher's Exact Test was run using the categorical variables resolution I-S orientation (identity and situation[3]) and challenge I-S orientation (identity and situation), as displayed in Table 2. The test did not support this hypothesis (p = 0.76, n.s.), demonstrating that congruent challenges and resolutions were no more frequent than incongruent challenges and resolutions. The next two hypotheses were in relation to the

[3] The "No Resolution" category was not included because by definition it cannot be congruent with a challenge I-S orientation.

association between redemption and resolution I-S orientation. Table 3 displays frequencies of the three redemption subtypes that had no resolution, an identity-oriented resolution, or a situation-oriented resolution. These hypotheses were confirmed using a chi-square test χ^2 (4, N = 213) = 145.92, $p < 0.001$, with 67.5% of return narratives having a situation-oriented resolution and 66.4% of emergent narratives having an identity-oriented resolution. In order to ensure that the difference between resolution I-S orientation for return and emergent narratives was driving significance, a chi-square test was run solely with redemptive narratives (return and emergent)[4] and resolution I-S orientation. The results remained significant at the $\alpha = 0.05$ level, χ^2 (1, N = 150) = 13.75, $p < 0.001$.

Table 2

Frequency of challenge I-S orientation along resolution I-S orientation

	Identity Challenge	**Situation Challenge**	***Total***
Identity Resolution	45	50	95
Situation Resolution	33	42	75
Total	78	92	170

Table 3

Frequency of redemption subtypes along resolution I-S orientation

	Enmeshed	**Return**	**Emergent**	***Total***
Identity	9	13	73	95
Situation	11	27	37	43
No Resolution[5]	43	-	-	75
Total	63	40	110	213

[4] Throughout this paper, I refer to the grouping of return and emergent narratives as "redemptive." When it is necessary to discuss all three levels (including enmeshed), I use the term "redemption" more broadly to refer to the construct.

[5] By definition, return and emergent narratives will have a resolution.

As there has been a lack of research on the subtleties of redemption with regard to I-S orientation, several exploratory cross-tabulations were run in order to glean more information about canonical redemptive typologies. First, a chi-square of redemption and challenge I-S orientation was run and was found to be significant when considered across all three levels of redemption, χ^2 (2, N = 213) = 8.59, p = 0.014. To examine if the difference between redemptive types (return and emergent) was driving significance, a chi-square of redemption and challenge I-S orientation was run with enmeshed cases excluded. The effect of the original chi-square with all three levels of redemption was reduced to non-significance when only considering redemptive narratives in a Fisher's Exact Test (p = 0.856, n.s.). Therefore, challenge I-S orientation was only significant when considered with enmeshed narratives. This contrasts with resolution I-S orientation, which remains significant when enmeshed cases are excluded.

As another exploratory analysis, Tables 4-6 display frequencies of challenge and resolution I-S orientations within each redemption subtype (enmeshed, return, and emergent). Both return and emergent narratives were evenly divided between identity- and situation-oriented challenges (*return* = 50% identity-oriented, 50% situation-oriented; *emergent* = 48.2% identity-oriented, 51.8% situation-oriented). However, enmeshed narratives were heavily skewed toward situation-oriented challenges (73.0%) and no resolutions (68.3%), with 49.2% of enmeshed narratives containing both components.

Table 4

Frequency of enmeshed narratives along I-S orientation

	Challenge	**Resolution**	***Total***
Identity	17	9	26
Situation	46	11	57
No Resolution[6]	-	43	43
Total	63	63	126

Table 5

Frequency of return narratives along I-S orientation

	Challenge	**Resolution**	***Total***
Identity	20	13	33
Situation	20	27	47
Total	40	40	80

Table 6

Frequency of emergent narratives along I-S orientation

	Challenge	**Resolution**	***Total***
Identity	53	73	126
Situation	57	37	94
Total	110	110	220

[6] Because these are personal challenge narratives, all narratives provided must have included a challenge in order to be included in data analysis. However, enmeshed narratives do have the potential to exclude a resolution. By definition, both return and emergent narratives must include resolutions.

Question 2: Associations with Psychological Well-Being

I predicted the following hypothesized associations among redemption, I-S orientation, and PWB: 1) Redemption will produce significant mean-level differences in global PWB, with emergent narratives associated with the greatest mean and enmeshed narratives associated with the lowest mean; 2) There will be significant interaction effects between redemption and resolution I-S orientation in relation to PWB, such that 2a) Individuals expressing identity-oriented redemptive (return or emergent) resolutions will score higher on autonomy, personal growth, self-acceptance, and purpose in life than those with situation-oriented resolutions; and 2b) Conversely, individuals expressing situation-oriented redemptive resolutions will score higher on environmental mastery and positive relationships than individuals expressing identity-oriented resolutions.

To address the first hypothesis, a one-way ANOVA was run using redemption as the predictor variable with three levels (enmeshed, return, and emergent) and global PWB as the dependent variable. The first hypothesis was partially supported, with a marginally significant mean-level difference for global PWB, $F(2, 205) = 2.97$, $p = 0.054$. A Tukey HSD post-hoc test revealed that there was a marginally significant mean-level difference ($p = 0.066$) between return ($M = 4.07$, SD = 0.60) and emergent ($M = 4.30$, SD = 0.54) narratives. The differences between enmeshed and return ($p = 0.712$, n.s.) and enmeshed and emergent ($p = 0.248$, n.s.) narratives were found to be non-significant. Additionally, while emergent narratives were associated with the greatest mean score on global PWB, return narratives—contrary to hypothesis 1—were associated with a lower mean score ($M = 4.07$, SD = 0.60) than enmeshed narratives ($M = 4.16$, SD = 0.55). However, this difference, as stated previously, was non-significant.

Furthermore, as there has not been sufficient literature on the relationship between

redemption and PWB subscales, an exploratory analysis was conducted to assess if there were significant mean-level differences in the six subscales of PWB based on levels of redemption. In order to investigate this, a series of one-way ANOVAs was run with redemption as the predictor variable and each of the six subscales of PWB as dependent variables in different ANOVA tests. A significant mean-level difference was found for *personal growth*, $F(2, 210) = 3.80$, $p = 0.024$, and a Tukey HSD post-hoc test pinpointed a significant difference ($p = 0.047$) between return ($M = 4.37$, SD = 0.67) and emergent ($M = 4.67$, SD = 0.58) narratives, while the differences between enmeshed and return ($p = 0.68$, n.s.) and enmeshed and emergent narratives ($p = 0.10$, n.s.) were found to be non-significant. All other main effects of redemption on PWB subscales were non-significant. Table 18 in Appendix F displays descriptives and results for all one-way ANOVAs.

To address the second set of hypotheses (hypotheses 2, 2a, and 2b), a 2 (redemption: return and emergent[7]) x 2 (resolution I-S orientation: identity and situation[8]) factorial ANCOVA was run with global PWB and its six subscales as dependent variables in separate analyses, and gender as a covariate in each analysis. The hypotheses were partially supported; the two-way factorial ANCOVA yielded no significant interaction effect between redemption and resolution I-S orientation for global PWB, $F(1, 139) = 2.50$, $p = 0.116$, but a significant interaction effect was observed for redemption and resolution I-S orientation for *purpose in life*, $F(1, 142) = 6.64$, $p = 0.011$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.045$. There was also a significant main effect for resolution I-S orientation on *personal growth*, $F(1, 142) = 4.23$, $p = 0.041$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.029$, such that identity-oriented resolutions in redemptive narratives yielded significantly greater scores on

[7] I specifically excluded enmeshed narratives because these are non-redemptive. As detailed in the Introduction to this project, significant research has been conducted on outcomes of well-being between non-redemptive and redemptive narratives. However, this project uniquely contributes to the literature by delineating between two types of redemption: return and emergent.

[8] Without enmeshed narratives, the "No Resolution" category of resolution I-S orientation no longer appears. By definition, redemptive narratives (return and emergent) must have a resolution.

personal growth (M = 4.69, SD = 0.56) than did situation-oriented resolutions (M = 4.46, SD = 0.66). All other main effects and interaction effects were non-significant.[9]

As an additional exploratory analysis, a 2 (redemption: return and emergent) x 2 (challenge I-S orientation: identity and situation) factorial ANCOVA was run with global PWB and its six subscales as dependent variables in separate analyses and gender as a covariate in each analysis. There were no significant interaction effects between redemption and challenge I-S orientation on PWB. Redemption did show a significant main effect on global PWB, $F(1, 139) = 4.67$, $p = 0.032$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.032$. All other main effects and interaction effects were non-significant.

Quantitative Discussion

The quantitative portion of this study addressed two aims: 1) To determine if there are canonical redemptive typologies between redemption and identity in emerging adulthood; and 2) To assess the associations among redemption, identity, and psychological well-being. The overarching goal of this study was to develop a more nuanced view of redemption than has been presented in extant literature (e.g., McAdams, 1997). I conceptualized redemption around three levels (enmeshed, return, and emergent) based on Frank's (1994) sociological conceptualization of illness narratives, and I considered this newly advanced scheme of redemption alongside a newly devised emphasis on identity, assessed through a construct called Identity-Situation (I-S) orientation. Specifically, I examined whether narrators orient challenges and resolutions towards aspects of identity or aspects of the situation.

Individuals provided open-ended narratives of personal challenge from their lives. These

[9] Gender had a significant main effect on positive relations $F(1, 141) = 5.85$, $p = 0.040$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.029$. I do not report this main effect in text because I am primarily examining whether relations among redemption, I-S orientation, and PWB are reduced to non-significance when *controlling* for gender. I am not examining the relation of gender to PWB, although this is certainly a worthwhile topic for investigation.

narratives were then coded by the research team for redemption as well as I-S orientation for both challenge and resolution. Participants also completed a self-report questionnaire measuring psychological well-being—capturing eudaimonic elements of well-being—according to Ryff and Keyes' (1995) Scale of Psychological Well-Being. I expected that I-S orientation would be significantly associated with redemption, with different redemptive types most often corresponding to particular I-S orientations. I anticipated that emergent narratives would be associated with the greatest global well-being outcomes, and that enmeshed narratives would be associated with the lowest global well-being outcomes. I further expected that scores on global well-being and its six subscales for redemption would vary based upon resolution I-S orientation. In addition to these a priori hypotheses, I was also interested in conducting exploratory analyses for canonical redemptive typologies and their associations with well-being, as both these schemes are newly theorized.

Regarding Question 1, the first hypothesis was not supported insofar as resolutions and challenges that were congruent across I-S orientation were not significantly more frequent than those which were incongruent. This proved curious: It might make sense that situation-oriented challenges resolve through reconstructions of identity; however, how can we understand challenges that confront identity resolving through situation-oriented resolutions? One possible explanation is that dealing with challenges to identity can be cognitively and emotionally enervating, and therefore the situation itself resolving can be an excellent *deus ex machina* for avoiding ego threat. This escape from complex and taxing work, though, is only accessible in circumstances where narrators are fortunate enough to have their situations resolve. Therefore, it is likely to be a less sustainable pattern of dealing with ego threat, and in turn this system of dealing with ego threat may be longitudinally related to poor outcomes. Pals' (2006) findings

support this interpretation. Pals finds that coherent positive resolution (positively resolving a narrative of personal challenge with temporal, causal, and thematic completeness) is longitudinally related to ego-resiliency (one's ability to bounce back from ego threat) and life satisfaction. She proposes a model whereby ego-resiliency produces life satisfaction but is mediated by the bolstering effects of coherent positive resolution. Thus, having less frequent access to positive resolutions—perhaps through relying on situations to resolve themselves rather than resolving ego threat—may be detrimental for life satisfaction long-term. A final possibility is that individual differences determine why some narrators situationally resolve challenges to identity. Pals (2006) also notes that the trait of coping openness positively predicts one's exploratory narrative processing, and therefore those low in this trait may be more inclined to remove themselves from challenging identity work.

The second hypothesis for Question 1 was supported, finding that return narratives with situation-oriented resolutions occurred significantly more frequently than return narratives with identity-oriented resolutions. The third hypothesis was also confirmed, with emergent narratives containing identity-oriented resolutions occurring significantly more frequently than those with situation-oriented resolutions. These two findings demonstrate a culturally canonical form of redemption, with return narratives being focused less on regaining previously held values, beliefs, and perspectives and more on situational homeostasis. This corresponds nicely with Frank's (1994) conception of restitution illness narratives, which relate to situational hope that good health will be restored. This can be contrasted with quest narratives (in this study's scheme, emergent narratives), which are based on existential, spiritual, and ideological profits in the wake of illness. Furthermore, the significant difference in canonical typologies between nuances of redemption legitimizes the advancing of a tripartite redemptive scheme, as there are significant

and meaningful distinctions between these categories.

In the exploratory analyses for Question 1, return narratives had approximately equivalent numbers of identity- and situation-oriented challenges, as did emergent narratives. This suggests that there is no canonical, culturally-preferred I-S orientation for the challenge in redemptive narratives (return and emergence). However, when enmeshed narratives were examined, it was found that they were far more likely to be situation-oriented in challenge. Furthermore, enmeshed narratives were more likely to be left unresolved than contaminated in terms of situation or identity. This is promising for well-being, as contaminated narratives are often associated with poor mental health outcomes, including diminished life satisfaction and self-esteem (Adler et al., 2015; McAdams et al., 2001). These effects may be especially exacerbated in identity-oriented challenges as these challenges represent explicit threat to one's sense of self. Therefore, it may be adaptive that narrators who are enmeshed frame their challenges in terms of the situation and refrain from resolving them in a contaminated way.

Regarding Question 2, the first hypothesis stated that redemption would result in significant mean-level differences in global well-being, which was partially supported through a marginally significant main effect. This effect was specifically observed between return and emergent narratives, and the main effect was enhanced to significance when running a two-way factorial ANCOVA between redemption and challenge I-S orientation. Further, exploratory analyses indicated that emergent narratives corresponded to significantly higher scores on personal growth than return narratives. Supplementing this finding, a main effect of resolution I-S orientation on personal growth was found such that identity-oriented resolutions corresponded to higher personal growth than situation-oriented resolutions (partially supporting hypothesis 2a). Interestingly, though, redemption did not vary as a function of resolution I-S orientation for

personal growth or global well-being (failing to confirm hypothesis 2). This demonstrates that identity-oriented resolutions regardless of redemptive subtype show enhanced personal growth, and that emergent narratives show the same pattern regardless of resolution I-S orientation. To put it simply, focusing on identity concerns and finding benefit from challenge lend themselves to personal growth. This aligns well with existing literature on constructs related to redemption. King et al. (2000) find that accommodative change—grappling with ideological issues as a result of difficult life experiences—relates to enhanced subjective experiences of growth. It is also important to point out that despite the highly intercorrelated relations between well-being subscales, redemption and resolution I-S orientation were only significantly associated with personal growth. This demonstrates that emergent narratives and identity-oriented resolutions target just one facet of psychological well-being, and thus redemption and I-S orientation have construct validity; they are two specific autobiographical features that narrators call upon in the production of well-being as a whole, and many more features are required to achieve holistic, eudaimonic well-being.

In exploratory analyses for Question 2, a significant interaction effect was found between redemption and resolution I-S orientation for outcomes of the *purpose in life* subscale. However, the practical meaningfulness of this finding can be called into question considering that there were no main effects from either redemption or resolution I-S orientation for the purpose in life subscale. I further found that redemption and challenge I-S orientation did not significantly interact for outcomes of well-being, and there were no main effects of challenge I-S orientation for well-being. This suggests that resolution I-S orientation is significantly more meaningful for dimensions of well-being than is challenge I-S orientation, which may explain this study's previous conclusion that there is no canonical redemptive typology for challenges in redemptive

narratives.

Another noteworthy finding is that this study did not replicate previous results which indicate that redemptive narratives produce significantly greater well-being than non-redemptive narratives (McAdams et al., 1997; McAdams et al., 2001; Adler et al., 2015). Under the current study's conceptualization of redemption, the three levels of redemption (enmeshed, return, and emergent) are hierarchically arranged, with enmeshed being non-redemptive, return being partially redemptive, and emergent being fully redemptive. Tukey HSD post-hoc tests compared these levels, only finding significant differences between return and emergent narratives, and not between return and enmeshed or even emergent and enmeshed. This may be because previous coding schemes for redemption collapsed return and enmeshed narratives, making the difference between this non-redemptive group and the emergent, redemptive narratives significant. However, when redemption is thematically separated into its component parts, a more vivid picture emerges of what redemptive distinctions are driving significant differences in well-being.

This point segues into the last, and perhaps most striking, result: Mean-level differences in well-being among the three redemption subtypes did not follow expected patterns. While emergent narratives produced the hypothesized effect of increased scores on dimensions of well-being, return narratives had lower scores than anticipated. Indeed, the first hypothesis predicted that enmeshed narratives would be associated with the lowest global well-being, and the exploratory analysis extended this assumption to include the six subscales of psychological well-being as well. However, return narratives had lower mean scores on global well-being as well as five subscales (purpose in life is the only subscale on which return narratives performed better on measures of psychological well-being, and this difference was negligible; *enmeshed*: $M = 4.20$, SD = 0.75, *return*: $M = 4.22$, SD = 0.78). Although these effects were non-significant in all

cases, it is interesting nonetheless that this pattern was identified in six indicators of psychological well-being, and this trend may be significant given an increased sample size. This problematizes what constitutes redemption. That is not to say that return narratives are not redemptive; they are in the strict sense of the definition proposed by McAdams and colleagues (1997) (the sequencing of negative events to become positive). That said, return narratives may be a psychologically maladjusted and psychosocially detrimental form of redemption, but perhaps especially in emerging adulthood when the primary psychosocial task is identity development. In terms of Eriksonian (1968/1994) identity development, both exploration and commitment are critical for a robust ego identity. It is possible that return narratives, with their emphasis on restoring to life as it was prior to the intrusion of the personal challenge, present with a profound lack of exploration and possible ideological/behavioral alternatives. In this case, return narrators may most closely resemble the features of the foreclosure status (low exploration, high commitment) according to Marcia's (1966) identity status model, which has been negatively associated with psychological well-being (Waterman, 2007) and has been associated with negative outcomes on eudaimonic dimensions of well-being such as diminished meaning-making (McLean & Pratt, 2006). However, this is not a perfect comparison as return narrators may indeed engage in exploration, but restore the security of previously held ideologies. Further, one might wonder if the necessity of exploration is psychosocially specific to emerging adults, and thus if return narratives would be beneficial for different developmental periods. Finally, another consideration may be redemption's association with the *type* of challenge and resolution experienced by the narrator, as well as how the narrator engages in ego identity work. Perhaps return narrators are more likely than their emergent or even enmeshed counterparts to resolve intrapersonal tensions, whether in identity or situationally, in ways that

are maladaptive and/or non-canonical. For this reason, it is necessary to more thoroughly understand the qualitative mechanics of redemptive narratives in relation to ego identity formation. This is a topic I now address through an in-depth qualitative analysis.

Qualitative Results and Discussion

Question 3: Processes of Identity Formation

Qualitative model. As discussed previously, the present studied employed Braun and Clark's (2006) thematic analysis as a qualitative framework for studying identity formation processes in redemptive sequences. The primary question that guided qualitative analysis was why identity was a challenging construct to define, schematize, and recognize. The design of the qualitative analysis flowed from this question, in that the research team examined narratives on which coders originally disagreed for resolution I-S orientation (N = 52). Coders iteratively and deeply read each narrative in order to develop a thematic model for conceptualizing redemption. After development, the model was applied to thirty-three narratives on which the research team agreed in primary coding for resolution I-S orientation (N = 33; eleven narratives were chosen from each resolution I-S orientation category: identity, situation, and no resolution). This was to both ensure that the thematic model would hold when applied to narratives on which coders agreed, and also so that I could compare narratives by agreement and thematic domains. The research team was unaware of primary codes on resolution I-S orientation for both agreed upon and disagreed upon narratives.

From iterative readings, I developed a model which includes four domains within redemptive narratives: a) Challenge Typology; b) Resolution Typology; c) Self-Reference; an d) Integration. I will define and elaborate upon each of these domains, outlining and discussing the categories within each domain. For a comprehensive diagram depicting the results of the

qualitative analysis, see Figure 1. In addition, because the qualitative approach was a bottom-up process with the model evolving from close reading of the narratives themselves (for an in-depth discussion of this 'grounded' approach, see Glaser and Strauss, 1967), I will provide paradigmatic narrative examples from the data set that demonstrate the qualities of each category. This will work in the service of maintaining the intimate connection between proposed theory and the data.

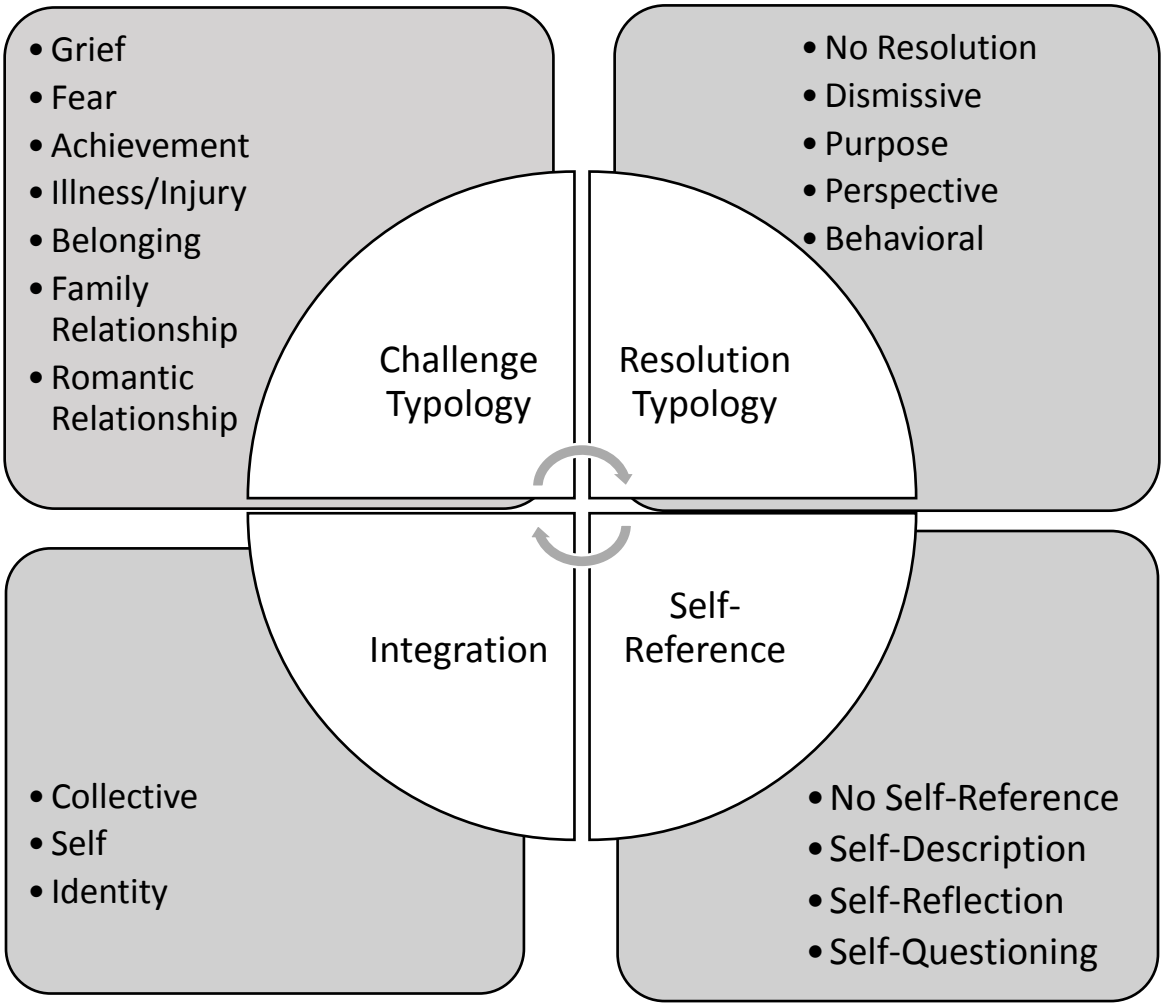

Figure 1. Representation of the thematic analysis constructed by the research team. The figure includes the four domains of this sample of emerging adults' redemptive narratives (Challenge Typology, Resolution Typology, Self-Reference, and Integration) as well as the observed categories within each domain.

Challenge Typology. Challenge Typology refers to the seven broad categories through which narrators can frame their difficult life experiences. These categories are as follows: a) *grief*; b) *fear*; c) *achievement*; d) *belonging*; e) *injury/illness*; f) *family relationship*; and g) *romantic relationship*.

Grief challenges discuss events surrounding the loss of a loved one (Participant 54: "A close friend of mine passed away the summer before my Freshman year of high school"). *Fear challenges* are marked by a narrator's distress towards some impending danger (Participant 27: "When I was about 2 years old in Congo, there was a war that made my mother and her family a target for the military. For about 8 months my family was constantly under the threat of being [arrested], assaulted, or even killed"). *Achievement challenges* are based on an obstructed striving in any given domain, such as academics, athletics, arts, etc. (Participant 175: "Emory was not originally my first choice; I had unsuccessfully applied early decision to a top-ten institution…Back then, I viewed life as a competition, one that I had lost. I had not gotten into my first choice university. I [had] failed"). *Belonging challenges* frame the difficult experience in terms of issues around social acceptance and communion (Participant 22: "In high school I had had great friends with similar values to me and who I could be myself with, however in my first semester at college I struggled a lot to find people that I [could] relate to and who [I] could have real conversations with"). *Injury/Illness challenges* deal with physical or mental harm experienced by the narrator (Participant 122: "The most troubling time in my life was when I dislocated my knee and tore a ligament in my knee"). *Family relationship challenges* detail arduous kin-related dynamics (Participant 58: "My mother has been chronically suffering from alcoholism and it got so bad that she began to react physically"). Finally, *romantic relationship*

challenges discuss circumstances regarding an intimate partnership (Participant 77: “I have gone through a difficult breakup last year”).

Resolution Typology. Resolution Typology refers to how the individual moves past the challenging characteristics of their experience. I identified five categories: a) *no resolution*; b) *dismissal*; c) *purpose*; d) *perspective*; and e) *behavior*.

The category *no resolution* captures enmeshed narratives. *Dismissive resolutions* are colloquially referred to as ‘this, but that’ narratives. In other words, they provide some evaluative resolution to the challenging experience; however, they quickly backpedal (Participant 122: “I felt bad that I got injured from that event because I thought it would [jeopardize] my future and possible athletic scholarships, but it didn't”). These narratives reject interpretive content because the narrator’s concerns were never actualized. *Purpose resolutions* indicate that the narrator has made a commitment to a particular passion from experiencing the challenge (Participant 41: “From there, I committed to majoring in human health with a concentration in nutrition”). *Behavior resolutions* involve commitments operating on the level of action as opposed to ideology (Participant 54: “I go to a fun run each year to honor [my deceased friend], and [seeing] his parents gets less and less hard. I go to mass on the day of his death every year”). What is most confusing about these resolutions is that they often *index* perspectives; behaviors can represent enacted or embodied values, beliefs, and goals. Still, these values remain implicit, unlike in the next Resolution Typology category, *perspective*. *Perspective resolutions* meaningfully engage ideological and existential concerns (Participant 142: “[Difficult] times may come, but they'll always pass eventually, and they may even strengthen our characters if we're open to learning from them”).

Self-Reference. Self-Reference describes the degree and quality of narrators' reflexive attitudes. I developed four distinct levels of Self-Reference, with each successive level demonstrating greater reflexivity. These four levels are as follows: a) *no self-reference*; b) *self-description*; c) *self-reflection*; and d) *self-questioning*. Self-Reference is hierarchical; deeper, more interior states take precedence over more shallow ones in coding narratives.

In the *no self-reference* level, there is a distinct and apparent lack of self-referential language. This can be differentiated from the next level: *self-description*. In this level, narrators remain at surface-level stages of introspection; they discuss external qualities about themselves such as physicality, or they explain preferences for tangibles outside of their inner life. For instance, Participant 33 describes their pursuit of and rejection from a summer internship: "My junior year I didn't get the internship that I wanted…Even though I didn't get it, I ended up getting something that I really wanted." At this level, the narrator does not move inward any more than merely expressing a preference for something outside of themselves (e.g., an internship). The narrative contains minimal introspective and elaborative texture, with no recourse given to the emotional timbre and intensity of the challenging experience.

This level can be contrasted with one deeper: *self-reflection*. At this level, narrators give recourse to internal states such as thoughts and emotions. There is movement between discussing *that* I am a particular way, to *why* I am that way. For example, Participant 54 explains how a death in the family negatively impacted their well-being: "To this day, his death is extremely hard for me to think about. When he died, I became very anxious and depressed."

Finally, a narrator might problematize these internal states, situating them in the final level of *self-questioning*. This can adopt many forms, such as consideration of alternative ideologies and positions (Participant 175: "Maybe life wasn't just a competition with one end

goal…but a journey. Maybe the present was just as important as the future"); downward or upward comparison of self to valued standards (Participant 35: "I felt like I was a nobody in this [world] because there was nothing that made me stand out in the big scheme of things"); or evaluative statements about ideological or vocational aimlessness (Participant 41: "I became [extremely] stressed because I did not know what classes to take since I did not know what I wanted to major in or be when I grew up").

Integration. The final domain is Integration, which is the culmination of identity work. In this domain, the narrator frames and embeds their resolution or—if an enmeshed narrative with no resolution—their challenge in one of three levels: a) *collective*; b) *self*; and c) *identity*.[10] Similar to Self-Reference, Integration is also hierarchical, and identity takes precedence over self which takes precedence over collective integration.

In *collective* narratives, individuals discuss their personal challenges in terms of a common human experience. For example, Participant 48 concludes their narrative by stating, "I know that a lot of other people are going through [the same] thing so that gives me a bit of reassurance." In these narratives, participants view the challenge as a rite of passage, a struggle which they must endure by virtue of being human. Furthermore, participants fall back on a collective worldview which can be said to indicate identity, but it does not capture it directly.

Some narrators move beyond reference to only the collective, even if they mention elements of a common human experience in their narrative. For example, Participant 41 begins their resolution by discussing how "everyone is in the same situation" of not knowing what they

[10] Originally, I conceptualized a *world* category in the first proceedings through the narratives. This category was meant to capture resolutions which are generalized beyond a collective experience. These narratives orient towards perceptions of how the world works (e.g., Participant 22: "I did not see the world as a very promising place"). However, I ultimately abandoned this category of Integration in later iterations of the model. Although narrators did express interpretive sentiments a la Participant 22, all of them went at least one step further. For example, Participant 22 finishes by moving into collective integration and then, finally, self integration: "Looking back on it, it is something that most freshmen go [through] in their first semester and I should not have been so hard on myself, but it is something that I still sort of struggle with because of the culture shock of coming from another country."

want to study. However, they do not end the narrative there: "You don't need to know every step of [what] you are going to do. You sort of just have to let it happen and in the end everything will work out. I am glad I ended up listening to [my friends] because I explored [different] areas of interest like predictive health. After taking this class, I realized how [passionate] I am about nutrition science." The narrator begins by drawing upon a cultural master narrative of the emerging adult as ideologically exploratory (Erikson, 1968/1994; Marcia, 1966). However, they integrate this collective narrative into their personalized narrative of *self*, which is the next level of integration.

In *self* integration, narrators position their evaluated experiences in terms of the effects those experiences have on themselves as individuals. Thus, these narrators differentiate themselves from the broader collective experience by honing the story in on their own lives, suggesting its salience and formative qualities for their individualized story. For example, Participant 61 elaborates on their thoughts and feelings after being rejected from their universities of choice: "I was very frustrated by the process…I felt a lot of my achievements went unnoticed by admissions committees." Participant 61 particularizes the experience of being rejected from college by having this rejection be a statement about an admission committee's failure to appreciate *their* individual achievements. Rather than discussing how the admissions process can occasionally be faulty or that this experience is doubtless encountered by many high-achieving adults, Participant 61 frames the experience as localized and individualized.

Albeit self integrated narratives operate at the level of personal experience, they do not discuss the essential values, perspectives, beliefs, and lifespan goals which underlie that self-orientation. The narratives that give recourse to these facets of self I define as *identity* integrated. This word choice and definition specifically borrow from the traditional Eriksonian conception

of identity (Marcia, 1966; Waterman, 1982; Waterman, 2011; Waterman, 2015). Further illustrative of this tradition, the fundamental distinction between self integration and identity integration parallels McAdams' (1995) delineation between Level II (personal concerns) and Level III (life story/narrative identity), in that the former is localized and temporally confined, while the latter engages a continuous ego throughout the reconstructed past, present self, and future strivings. Participant 208 exemplifies identity integration: "I learned the importance of balance in my life between study and play." What is particularly important for qualifying as identity integration is the inclusion of the segment "*in my life*." If Participant 208 had excluded this phrase from their narrative, the resolution would have been more broadly concerned with the way in which the world works (see footnote 10). This can be contrasted with Participant 44, who similarly gains a perspective from their personal challenge but integrates it only at the level of self: "The bottom line I took away from it was that even if I'm not [immediately] satisfied with my surroundings, things will work themselves out in due time." Participant 44 individualizes the narrative by talking about personal satisfaction; however, they finish by emphasizing that "*things* will work themselves out," not that they themselves are *capable* of working things out. Thus, the agentic center of the narrative is lost.

One final way in which the distinction between self and identity integration resonates with extant literature is through the lens of Markus's (1977) concept of self-schema and schematic generalizations. Schematic cognitions not only involve one's assessment of one's own competence in a given domain, but also whether or not one appraises that domain as important for one's sense of self. In identity integrated narratives, describing oneself as being a particular way is more deeply wedded to one's self-evaluations and beliefs about oneself, and thus

individuals narrating identity integration take existential ownership over their experiences and accompanying resolutions.

Frequencies of qualitative categories. Having reported all domains and their associated categories, I will outline the descriptive differences in the frequencies with which each category occurred (see Table 7). Although Challenge Typology had a reasonable distribution across categories, achievement was most frequent (27.1%). This may be a product of the particular sample used for this study, as these are high-achieving emerging adults attending an elite, private, highly-selective university. Indeed, there is a cultural master narrative that places tremendous pressure on these students to achieve, with students' identities bound up in their capacity to succeed (Participant 11: "My entire identity up to that point was based on academic success"). The most common Resolution Typology was perspective, with just under half (49.4%) of participants demonstrating this Resolution Typology. Self-reflection (47.1%) and self-questioning (40.0%) were the most common forms of Self-Reference, with only a few individuals displaying self-description (7.1%) or no self-reference (5.9%). This is perhaps due to the narrative prompt, which specifically asked participants to give their "thoughts and feelings" about the challenging experience. However, this does not nullify the model's categorical distinctions; the fact that 11/85 (12.9%) of individuals still failed to provide those internal qualities indicates a meaningful distinction between those that elaborate interpretively and those that do not. Finally, self (50.6%) and identity (44.7%) were the most common levels of integration, with collective integration exhibited in 4/85 narratives (4.7%). This is not to say that collective integration was uncommon; many narrators made reference to the fact that others were enduring similar challenges as them. However, most narrators then went on to incorporate elements of self or identity integration, and thus were assigned these latter codes.

Table 7

Frequency of qualitative categories

Qualitative Domains	Overall Frequency *N* = 85	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Challenge Typology			
Grief	13	15.29%	15.29%
Fear	6	7.06%	22.35%
Achievement	23	27.06%	49.41%
Injury/Illness	11	12.94%	62.35%
Belonging	14	16.47%	78.82%
Family Relationship	12	14.12%	92.94%
Romantic Relationship	6	7.06%	100.00%
Resolution Typology			
None	17	20.0%	20.00%
Dismissive	11	12.94%	32.94%
Purpose	2	2.35%	35.29%
Perspective	42	49.41%	84.70%
Behavioral	13	15.29%	100.00%
Self-Reference			
None	5	5.88%	5.88%
Self-Description	6	7.06%	12.94%
Self-Reflection	40	47.06%	60.00%
Self-Questioning	34	40.00%	100.00%
Integration			
Collective	4	4.71%	4.71%
Self	43	50.59%	55.30%
Identity	38	44.71%	100.00%

Bringing the four domains together. Now that the four qualitative domains and their categories have been reported, I will return to the original question guiding the qualitative analysis: Why was identity a difficult concept to recognize? Because the final domain (Integration) includes a category entitled identity, it might be tempting to assume that this is the

only meaningful domain for ascertaining what comprises an identity-oriented narrative. However, *all four domains contribute to the global impression of identity writ large.* There is a gestalt quality to identity work that relies upon the functional interplay between Challenge Typology, Resolution Typology, Self-Reference, and Integration. When cross-tabulations among agreement for resolution I-S orientation, ultimate codes on resolution, and the four qualitative domains are more closely examined, patterns emerge that indicate that the narratives on which coders originally disagreed were indeed qualitatively different from those on which coders agreed.

I first wondered if agreement on resolution varied based upon Integration, as this domain is the peak of identity work. Table 8 displays the frequencies of agreed and disagreed upon resolutions across the qualitative domain Integration. This table shows that all eleven (100%) identity-oriented resolutions that coders originally agreed on were qualitatively analyzed as identity integrated. In situation-oriented and no resolution narratives that coders agreed on, 9/11 (81.8%) of both orientations were self integrated. Therefore, when coders agreed, integration mapped almost exactly onto primary codes. However, when coders disagreed on primary codes for resolution I-S orientation, only 13/21 (61.9%) of narratives ultimately coded as containing identity-oriented resolutions were qualitatively analyzed as identity integrated. What's more, only 13/26 (50%) of resolutions ultimately coded as situation-oriented were self integrated. Thus, narratives were more widely distributed across Integration when coders disagreed. This suggests that there is a meaningful difference between narratives on which coders agreed and ones on which coders disagreed: Proportionally more of the narratives on which coders disagreed contained ultimately identity-oriented codes yet were self integrated, and more ultimately situation-oriented codes were identity integrated. Furthermore, all five (100%) no resolution

narratives were self integrated, as they were when coders agreed as well. This intimates that narratives without resolution are likely to be self integrated independent of agreement, and that this domain was not responsible for coders' disagreement over no resolution narratives. Integration, in sum, does explain differences in agreement and disagreement, demonstrating that more narratives where coders disagreed are non-canonically structured.

Table 8

Frequency of agreement and disagreement for resolution I-S orientation across Integration

	Collective	**Self**	**Identity**	***Total***
Agree				
Identity	0	0	11	11
Situation	1	9	1	11
No Resolution	0	9	2	11
Total	1	18	14	33
Disagree				
Identity (consensus)	1	7	13	21
Situation (consensus)	2	13	11	26
No Res. (consensus)	0	5	0	5
Total	3	25	24	52

Next, I wondered if the qualitative domain of Self-Reference could similarly explain agreement and disagreement. Table 9 displays frequencies of narratives that coders agreed and disagreed on for resolution I-S orientation cross-tabulated with Self-Reference categories. The data from this table show that the vast majority (81.8%) of agreed upon identity-oriented narratives contain self-questioning. Thus, there appears to be a canonical identity-oriented narrative form that involves self-questioning. This is further validated by Table 10, which displays frequencies of Integration levels cross-tabulated with Self-Reference. In Table 10, it is shown that a majority (73.5%) of identity integrated narratives also contain self-questioning.

However, when coders disagreed on resolution I-S orientation (Table 9), less than half (42.9%) of identity-oriented narratives contained self-questioning, with over half (52.4%) containing self-reflection instead. Therefore, ambiguous narrators discussed enduring values, beliefs, and goals in their resolutions without first questioning their previously held perspectives. In this sense, there is a tension when a narrator expresses an enduring perspective but there is not an appropriate self-referential *link* between challenge and resolution—between reconstructed past, present self, and anticipated future. Ambiguous narrators, then, demonstrate a form of causal incoherence (Habermas & Bluck, 2000) by neglecting to connect the explicit ways in which their past perspectives *became* their present and future perspectives. Thus, they undermine the continuity of self in their narrative telling.

A narrator may also do the inverse—grapple with identity concerns (self-questioning) but fail to achieve positive identity closure in the resolution (identity integration). In these narratives, self-questioning opens but then is met with unexpressed identity work. This may especially occur in circumstances where the challenging aspects of the situation resolve, enabling the narrator to avoid engaging in difficult identity resolution. This can be schematized as a *Resolution of Story* vs. a *Resolution of Interpretation*. Participant 61, for example, begins their narrative by detailing how being rejected from a university prompted an identity change: "Not getting into the top college of my choice really affected my outlook for a few months senior year. I remember opening 5 rejections in one day (Ivy day) and feeling completely crushed." However, they do not end the narrative by resolving these identity concerns: "I was very frustrated by the process. It seems petty now because I am so happy at Emory." Instead, Participant 61 relies on a situational resolution to sidestep identity work.

Finally, a narrator may engage in self-questioning while falling back on a collective

identity in order to salve ego threat, creating tension between ego-focused self-questioning and a resolution based on sociocultural backing. Participant 48 demonstrates this trope:

> I came [to Emory] wanting to pursue pre-med. However, after receiving a low GPA my first semester and seeing everyone else doing so well, I gave up on that goal (also because I didn't think I had a passion for it). Now I am taking random classes to find what I'm interested in, but that hasn't happened yet which makes me very worried about my future. I know that a lot of other people are going through [the same] thing so that gives me a bit of reassurance.

In all of these examples ambiguous narrators fail to integrate their full life stories into a temporally and thematically coherent *identity* vis-à-vis McAdams' (1993; 1995) conceptualization of narrative identity. Therefore, it is appropriate that these narratives warrant self and collective, as opposed to identity, integration.

Once more returning to Table 9, situation-oriented narratives were divided virtually evenly between self-reflection and self-questioning, regardless of whether coders originally agreed or disagreed. This suggests that there is no canonical form for situation-oriented resolutions in terms of Self-Reference. Finally, narratives with no resolution most frequently crowd together in the self-reflection category in both agreement and disagreement groups, indicating that narrators who do not resolve their challenging experiences are not telling their stories devoid of interpretive and emotional elaboration. These narrators *do* narrate their thoughts and feelings in a manner similar to narrators who resolve; however, they are unwilling and/or unable to provide emotional or factual closure to their narratives.

Table 9

Frequency of agreement and disagreement for resolution I-S orientation across Self-Reference

	None	**Self-Description**	**Self-Reflection**	**Self-Questioning**	***Total***
Agree					
Identity	0	0	2	9	11
Situation	0	3	4	4	11
No Resolution	1	1	7	2	11
Total	1	4	13	15	33
Disagree					
Identity (consensus)	1	0	11	9	21
Situation (consensus)	3	2	11	10	26
No Res. (consensus)	0	0	5	0	5
Total	4	2	27	19	52

Table 10

Frequency of Integration levels along Self-Reference

	Collective	**Self**	**Identity**	***Total***
None	0	5	0	5
Self-Description	0	6	0	6
Self-Reflection	1	25	14	40
Self-Questioning	3	7	24	34
Total	4	43	38	85

Resolution Typology can be assessed in the same fashion as Integration and Self-Reference. Table 11 displays frequencies of agreement and disagreement for resolution I-S orientation across categories of the qualitative domain Resolution Typology. There are fairly consistent patterns across identity-oriented and situation-oriented resolutions for agreement and

disagreement. Most narratives, when they have a resolution, tend to include *perspective resolutions*, whether on their own values, goals, and beliefs; the collective human experience; or life more broadly. Additionally, all eleven no resolution narratives (100%) that coders agreed on were qualitatively analyzed as no resolution for Resolution Typology. Yet, when coders disagreed, no resolution narratives were more widely distributed across Resolution Typology categories, including two in the dismissive category and one in the behavior category. The data show that agreed upon no resolution narratives follow a clear canonical structure with no features that indicate that the challenge has resolved; however, narratives of disagreement are murkier and tend to include dismissive or behavioral language in a mixed resolution (e.g., Participant 72 introduces a dismissive resolution, but quickly backtracks to make it a mixed resolution: "Luckily, the procedure was successful and my dad no longer has cancer…now, I don't ever think about that summer. I rarely ever tell people about that summer and I often lie when people talk about having parents who have/had cancer. I guess I just can't really deal with those feelings yet and I'd rather just ignore it"). Further, this finding bolsters this study's model because it demonstrates that the qualitative domains capture different facets of the redemptive arc. Because agreement and disagreement for no resolution narratives did not differ based upon Integration and Self-Reference, but did vary as a function of Resolution Typology, indicates that Resolution Typology captures a qualitatively different narrative characteristic than either Integration or Self-Reference.

Table 11

Frequency of agreement and disagreement for resolution I-S orientation across Resolution Typology

	None	**Dismissive**	**Purpose**	**Behavior**	**Perspective**	***Total***
Agree						
Identity	0	0	0	1	10	11
Situation	1	2	0	3	5	11
No Resolution	11	0	0	0	0	11
Total	12	2	0	4	15	33
Disagree						
Identity (consensus)	0	2	0	3	16	21
Situation (consensus)	3	5	2	5	11	26
No Res. (consensus)	2	2	0	1	0	5
Total	5	9	2	9	27	52

Finally, Table 12 presents frequencies of agreement and disagreement for resolution across categories for the qualitative domain Challenge Typology. Agreement did not vary appreciably as a function of Challenge Typology. This is consistent with this study's findings from the first quantitative question on canonical redemptive typologies, as challenges were not oriented more frequently in redemptive narratives towards either identity or situation. This, however, does not mean that Challenge Typology does not play a role in identity *coding*. In my view, this is where reflexivity becomes an increasingly important aspect of analysis. For example, the complexity and emotional turbulence of a grief narrative may prompt a researcher to code for identity integration: After all, how can something that would be so impactful not build identity? In the qualitative analytic process, it is crucial to always bear in mind one's own biases and assumptions based upon the researcher's subjective experience of different challenges.

Table 12

Frequency of agreement and disagreement for resolution I-S orientation across Challenge Typology

	Grief	**Fear**	**Ach.**	**Ill/Inj.**	**Belong.**	**Fam Rel.**	**Rom Rel.**	***Total***
Agree								
Identity	0	0	3	2	2	2	2	11
Situation	1	0	3	1	5	1	0	11
No Res.	2	1	3	1	2	2	0	11
Total	3	1	9	4	9	5	2	33
Disagree								
Identity (consensus)	5	1	6	3	1	1	4	21
Situation (consensus)	3	2	8	4	4	5	0	26
No Res. (consensus)	2	2	0	0	0	1	0	5
Total	10	5	14	7	5	7	4	52

Still, these qualitative domains cannot be considered in isolation; they are interdependent features of redemptive narratives more broadly, and understanding canonical identity forms necessitates understanding the ways in which narrators take different *pathways* through the qualitative domains. There are particular canonical pathways through these four domains, and failure to conform to these pathways produces ambiguity that makes identity difficult to discern. Considering all four domains at once, though, divides the qualitative data corpus to a point where frequencies cannot communicate anything meaningful because there are so few narratives in each category. Furthermore, as noted above, Challenge Typologies are relatively evenly spread,

with some concentration in the achievement category. Therefore, I will primarily hone in on dipartite and tripartite pathways through Resolution Typology, Self-Reference, and Integration.[11]

When examining a 2 (agreement) x 4 (Self-Reference) x 3 (Integration) contingency table (see Table 13), the pathways *self-questioning → identity integration* and *self-questioning → self integration* occurred proportionately across agreement and disagreement. To unpack this statement, the pathway *self-questioning → identity integration* was most frequent, regardless of agreement (*agree* = 80.0%; *disagree* = 63.2%). This suggests that self-questioning, when apparent, frequently results in an identity integration code, independent of whether or not coders agreed initially on resolution I-S orientation. Additionally, the pathway *self-questioning → self integration* was less frequent, constituting 20% of agreed upon resolutions and 21.1% of disagreed upon resolutions. With this information, it can be seen that this pattern for the two pathways holds regardless of agreement. The data paint a different picture for self-reflection: Only 15.4% of agreed upon self-reflection narratives were identity integrated, compared to nearly half (44.4%) of disagreed upon self-reflection narratives that were identity integrated. This suggests that some narrators for whom the initial codes were in disagreement non-canonically achieved identity integration through self-reflection rather than self-questioning.

[11] I focus my attention specifically on perspective for the Resolution Typology domain, self-questioning and self-reflection for the Self-Reference domain, and identity and self for the Integration domain. My reasons for doing this are two-fold: 1) The frequencies within each of these domains is sufficient to understand more vividly what is occurring; and 2) These are the categories in which most people are narrating their experiences, and thus they give a window into what is culturally canonical.

Table 13

Frequency of agreement and disagreement for resolution I-S orientation, Self-Reference, and Integration

	Collective	**Self**	**Identity**	***Total***
Agree				
None	0	1	0	1
Self-Description	0	4	0	4
Self-Reflection	1	10	2	13
Self-Questioning	0	3	12	15
Total	1	18	14	33
Disagree				
None	0	4	0	4
Self-Description	0	2	0	2
Self-Reflection	0	15	12	27
Self-Questioning	3	4	12	19
Total	3	25	24	52

Note. Agreement here still refers to resolution I-S orientation.

How does Resolution Typology factor into these pathways? Table 14 displays frequencies of Resolution Typology, Self-Reference, and Integration, and shows that the canonical pathway was clearly *perspective → self-questioning → identity*, comprising 16/85 (18.8%) of all narratives in the qualitative data corpus, and 16/38 (42.1%) of all identity integrated narratives. This can be compared to the pathway *perspective → self-reflection → identity*, which occurred 11/85 times (12.9%) in all narratives and in 11/38 (28.9%) of all identity integrated narratives. While not tremendously different, the canonical form becomes more apparent when considering that self integrated narratives constitute the majority of self-reflection narratives (25/40 [62.5%]), and identity integrated narratives constitute the majority of self-

questioning narratives (24/34 [70.1%]). To put it plainly, self-reflection is most often grouped with self integration, and self-questioning is most often grouped with identity. However, perspective resolutions, regardless of the Self-Reference domain, are most often grouped with identity. This suggests that self-questioning and perspective operate conjointly in the production of identity integration.

Table 14

Frequency of qualitative pathways through Behavior Typology, Self-Reference, and Integration

	Collective	**Self**	**Identity**	***Total***
None				
None	0	1	0	1
Dismissive	0	3	0	3
Purpose	0	0	0	0
Behavior	0	0	0	0
Perspective	0	1	0	1
Total	0	5	0	5
Self-Description				
None	0	2	0	2
Dismissive	0	2	0	2
Purpose	0	0	0	0
Behavior	0	1	0	1
Perspective	0	1	0	1
Total	0	6	0	6
Self-Reflection				
None	0	11	0	11
Dismissive	0	3	0	3
Purpose	0	0	2	2
Behavior	0	4	1	5
Perspective	1	7	11	19
Total	1	25	14	40
Self-Questioning				
None	0	0	3	3
Dismissive	1	1	1	3
Purpose	0	0	0	0
Behavior	0	3	4	7
Perspective	2	3	16	21
Total	3	7	24	34

In summation, agreement for resolution I-S orientation was indeed meaningful in the sense that disagreed upon narratives followed non-canonical structures. This made identity work ambiguous and contributed to less consensus over global impressions of identity writ large during primary coding. Therefore, parsing out qualitative domains through the thematic analysis was instrumental in assessing why identity work was difficult to pinpoint initially. Furthermore, these domains are not islands unto themselves, and no one domain is responsible for a clear vision of identity work. Instead, all four domains contribute, and at least three domains (Resolution Typology, Self-Reference, and Integration) are assembled into canonical pathways that lead most directly to identity work.

Returning to one of the primary motivations driving this study, the qualitative analysis provided a useful framework for understanding how narrative redemption relates to Eriksonian (1968/1994) identity formation in emerging adulthood. While existing literature examines redemption within samples of emerging adults, the current study supplements this research by asking specifically *how* canonical identity formation takes place within emerging adults' redemptive narratives of personal challenge. The qualitative analysis demonstrated that this canonical structure involves *questioning* the essential values, beliefs, perspectives, and goals that comprise the self; developing a new *perspective* by engaging and endorsing new ideologies; and deeply *integrating* these new perspectives into enduring values, and thus one's identity.

General Discussion

This study employed a mixed-method, quantitative and qualitative design in the service of answering three questions: 1) What canonical redemptive typologies are present in emerging adulthood; 2) How are these typologies associated with well-being; and 3) What are the identity formation processes inherent in redemptive sequences? The mixed-method design was critical in

answering these questions, and the quantitative and qualitative analyses in this study complement each other in important ways, thus bolstering the case for mixed-method designs in future narrative research.

The qualitative analysis emerged from the quantitative analysis, with the intention of understanding the meaningful differences between ambiguous and unambiguous identity resolutions. Parsing out the qualitative domains shed light on why the initial coders originally disagreed on identity- and situation-orientation for many narratives. These qualitative domains elucidated the mechanics of identity formation from challenging experiences; through deep qualitative reading, I was able to see 'under the hood' of redemptive narratives, assessing the canonical pathways through which identity work is expressed and resolved.

On this point, the qualitative analysis helped make sense of, and augment, the quantitative findings regarding canonical redemptive typologies. In the quantitative analysis, I found that return narratives most often paired with situation-oriented resolutions and emergent narratives with identity-oriented resolutions. The qualitative analysis supplemented these findings by showing that self-questioning—grappling with challenges to essential values, beliefs, goals, and perspectives—occurred most frequently in identity integrated narratives. The quantitative and qualitative findings are consistent and complementary, in that one would expect self-questioning to elicit *gained* values, beliefs, and perspectives (i.e., new identities), especially in the developmental period of emerging adulthood. Emerging adults are still exploring their identities and have not yet solidified the beliefs that integrally constitute who they are as a person. Therefore, the act of problematizing past or current beliefs in this age group may especially lend itself to *emerging* from a challenging experience with new values, beliefs, and perspectives rather than confirming existing ones. Thus, the interrelations among emergence,

self-questioning, and identity are canonical in emerging adulthood. This point extends to the association among return, self-reflection, and self-orientation/integration, as well.

The qualitative analysis also helped make sense of outcomes of well-being based upon redemptive identity work. Returning to the issue raised at the end of the Quantitative Discussion, the current study failed to replicate the significant PWB differences between non-redemptive (enmeshed) and redemptive (return and emergent) narratives. To this point, return narratives showed lower average scores on almost all domains of psychological well-being than enmeshed narratives, which seems counterintuitive considering that return is a redemptive category while enmeshed narratives are non-redemptive. When these data are examined in relation to the qualitative analyses, though, a potential explanation begins to take shape. In the emergent category, a large majority (78.9%) of narratives contain perspective resolutions, while the return category is more evenly distributed across perspective (44.4%), dismissive (27.8%), and behavior (27.8%) resolutions. The enmeshed narratives are usually unresolved (58.6%), with the second most frequent resolution being dismissive (20.7%). Therefore, there are proportionally more dismissive resolutions in the return category than in the enmeshed category. It is reasonable to contend that dismissive resolutions may predict poor psychosocial functioning and well-being. Indeed, in dismissive narratives, individuals explicitly reject the evaluative content of their narratives rather than taking a stance of self-acceptance. Theoretically, dismissive narratives appear to be void of self-compassion; self-compassion is a psychologically adaptive self-orientation that promotes well-being and tempers psychopathology (Neff, 2003; Neff, Kirkpatrick, & Rude, 2006). Therefore, even though return narratives do exhibit the negative-to-positive sequencing characteristic of a redemptive story, they do not have the same positive psychological outcomes that fully redemptive (emergent) narratives do. In sum, the qualitative

analysis provides insight into why return narratives had lower scores on dimensions of psychological well-being and why there was no observed significant mean-level difference between non-redemptive and redemptive narratives.

Conclusions, Limitations, and Future Directions

I set out to understand the nuances of redemptive sequencing in emerging adults' narratives of personal challenges, with a particular interest in investigating how identity work is embedded within these redemptive narratives. I then assessed these findings in relation to psychological well-being to observe how identity formation in redemptive sequences is implicated in positive psychological outcomes. Ultimately, I found that redemption is more internally varied than has been represented in the existing narrative identity literature, and that these variations are significant for outcomes on eudaimonic measures of well-being. Finally, I found that qualitatively analyzing narratives with ambiguous identity work served tremendously in understanding the structures and mechanisms of redemptive narratives.

That said, there are several limitations to the present study that should be addressed in future work. First, the conclusions about the theoretical distinction between ambiguous and unambiguous narrators should be accepted cautiously. Certainly, the cross-tabulations which support these points are promising, but they would have been bolstered by statistical tests that empirically validate that these differences are significant. To be sure, this was not the aim of the qualitative analysis, and to have sufficient statistical power for each qualitative category would have required collecting more narratives, a task which this study was not able to complete because of the reliance on archived data. That said, when this qualitative scheme is applied to more narratives, several interesting research questions can be asked and answered. For example, is there a meaningful difference between ambiguous and unambiguous narrators on outcomes of

well-being, separating unambiguous narrators into categories of explicit identity-orientation and explicit situation-orientation? Furthermore, are observed differences in the qualitative domains explained by individual differences in personality traits (e.g., Raggatt, 2006; McAdams & Pals, 2006; Pals, 2006; McAdams et al., 2004), or is there some quality of narrative identity that explains this variance above and beyond traits (Bauer, McAdams, & Pals, 2008; Adler, Lodi-Smith, Philippe, & Houle, 2016; Graci, Watts, & Fivush, 2018)? This question returns to McAdams' (1995) three levels of personality reviewed in the Qualitative Results and Discussion, and empirically substantiates the incremental validity that narrative adds to the construct of personality.

Furthermore, I must reflexively recognize my own role in imposing and eliciting particular canonical forms in this study's prompt. The prompt specifically asks for a "bottom line." Again, because the present study relied on archived data, I was not able to avoid this limitation. However, this does raise a fascinating research question which has received little attention: If researchers were to ask an extraordinarily bare-bones question (e.g., 'What is your most negative experience?') would that significantly differ from more elaborative questions, and would that delineate spontaneous redeemers from prompted redeemers? Further, would these differences manifest in outcomes of psychological well-being?

Finally, there is an inherent tension in mixed-method research in that quantitative analyses rely on large samples of data, while qualitative analyses are interested in the idiographic features of just a few cases. Practically, the in-depth process of a qualitative analysis limits the researcher to only examining a few cases. This tension between sample sizes poses a challenge for mixed-method designs, and this project similarly struggled to meet the sample size demands of both approaches while asking interesting research questions and completing the project in a

reasonable time frame. Thus, more work should be done on how to best combine quantitative and qualitative designs in a methodologically sound framework that maintains the integrity of both approaches. This study contributes a small part to the revitalization of strong interdisciplinarity in psychology, and the complementary quantitative and qualitative findings guide researchers towards future directions for understanding challenge, identity, and well-being through narratives.

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Appendix A

Redemption Coding Scheme

There are three possible codes as a part of this scheme. These are based on Arthur Frank's (1994) typologies of illness narratives, in which he classifies said narratives as either chaos, restitution, or quest. In this formulation of Frank's typologies, we select different terms in order to avoid any unnecessary implications, and to temper the language. We call chaos narratives "enmeshed," restitution "return", and quest "emergence."

Enmeshed—0

These narratives are non-redemptive. The narrator is stuck, or "enmeshed," in the personal challenge.

Possible Features

- An ongoing inability—whether implicitly or explicitly—to deal with or change the challenging aspects of the event
- Expression of confusion about the event
- An emotional inability to act (i.e., being 'frozen')
- A telling of the story that is matter-of-fact with no interpretive elaboration or effort at post-event reflection

General Rules

- Merely expressing hope that a situation could get better does not warrant a score beyond "enmeshed," because I am assessing the extent to which narrators redeem their personal challenges, not express hope about them.
- Making a vague attempt at a redemptive sequence *does not* warrant a score beyond "enmeshed."
    - For example, saying 'my life is different now because of this event' or 'this event changed me' does not offer any specific ways in which the situation or person have changed.

    - These do not count because we should be parsimonious in scoring redemption and we also want to avoid crediting redemption where the narrator is merely attempting to fit a cultural norm that narratives should be redemptive.
- If a narrative demonstrates mixed resolutions (i.e., some redemptive, some contaminated), then the narrative should be coded as "enmeshed."

Return—1

These narratives are redemptive in some sense; however, there is nothing new that is gained from experiencing the personal challenge. The narrative, in essence, indicates a recovery back to baseline or a restoration of homeostasis.

There are two types of redemptive returns: situational and identity. A situational return is where the narrative circles back at the end to the beginning state (i.e., 'I had friends who left me, but now I have new friends'). An identity return is a reaffirmation of the self that began the narrative (i.e., 'I was a happy child before my parents' divorce, and finally years after that I am a happy person again').

General Rules

- Moving on emotionally from a situation warrants a "return" code.
- Simply becoming accustomed to a worse situation does not constitute a "return" code.
- Having specific behavioral strategies in place even if the narrator admits that they are still working through the emotional turbulence of the event warrants a "return" code.

Emergence—2

These narratives are extremely redemptive, to the extent that something new develops, either situationally or with one's identity, as a result of experiencing the personal challenge.

Necessary Features

- Give *explicit* expression and specification about growth
- Take something meaningful away from the challenge that generalizes beyond the situation.

Possible Features

- Signs of new values or strengths
- Gaining a new understanding, belief, or perspective

General Rules

- Any indication of personal growth (barring mixed growth perspectives; see enmeshed—0) warrants an "emergent" code.

Appendix B

Identity-Situation Orientation Coding Scheme

This is a categorical coding scheme in which different parts of a narrative are classified as either focusing on the situation to the exclusion of identity concerns, or focusing on elements of the narrator's identity. The main distinguishing factor between situation and identity narratives is where the narrator's thoughts are directed: Are they more oriented towards aspects of the self or aspects of the situation?

In this project, we have identified two narrative parts that can be thus classified: the challenge and the resolution. The challenge provides context for the resolution; within it is contained the eliciting event from which the resolution arises. The resolution is the essence of narrative redemption; without it, narratives are classified as "enmeshed," or non-redemptive (including contaminated narratives). In the resolution, a narrator discusses how the challenging aspects of the situation have transformed so that the narrator either returns to homeostasis or emerges from the challenge in some meaningful way (see Redemption Coding Scheme).

Situation

These narratives only discuss the circumstances of the experience as opposed to interpreting the experience as reflecting some aspect of the self.

Identity

These narratives discuss the circumstances of the experience, but they also include some element of how that experience demonstrates some enduring characteristic of the narrator's identity. The identity code should be earned; in other words, it should be difficult to get an identity code. Narratives may also include the narrator's perceptions of how others evaluate them. The identity code is meant to capture explicitly existential considerations; the narratives operate on the landscape of personhood as opposed to action. For example, the most difficult narratives to distinguish in this coding scheme are those that incorporate some type of life lesson as a result of the experience of the challenge. However, a situational code might read, 'I learned that things take time,' whereas an identity code will transform the lesson's virtue into something that is explicitly self-referential (i.e., 'I learned to be patient'). Furthermore, taking possession of a

particular action (e.g., ‘my achievements,’ ‘my failures,’ etc.) are not existential events because the focus is placed on the possessions rather than on the self.

Additional Notes/General Rules

- Most narratives will have an eliciting event that includes contextual information about the situation or circumstances; however, if the situation defines the self, then the narrative falls into the “identity” category.
- In this coding scheme, identity codes take priority over situation; therefore, any mention of specific considerations of identity should be counted as identity narratives.
- Redemptive identity sequences are accessible to everyone, while redemptive situational sequences are only accessible in circumstances that resolve or become better.
    - Situational reflections will be subject to change by extrinsic circumstances, whereas existential reflections will be in the control of the narrator and their interpretation of those circumstances.
- The challenge and the resolution do not need to both focus on situation or identity. For example, the challenge can focus on the situation without recourse to identity while the resolution solely focuses on identity.
- Any chronic illness counts as identity.
- An easier way to delineate between situation and identity is to consider how enduring the description of self is. If the narrator says ‘I was upset,’ that is a transient emotion that is elicited by the challenge. However, if the narrator says ‘I felt selfish,’ that is a more enduring quality that describes personality.
    - The enduring quality described by the narrator cannot be a physical quality (e.g., I am not very tall).
- If the life lesson is structured using the second-person (e.g., Sometimes you have to be a kind person in order to succeed) then it automatically warrants a situation code.

Appendix C

Sample Items from Ryff and Keyes' (1995) Scale of Psychological Well-Being

PWB Subscale	**Sample Item**
Autonomy	My decisions are not usually influenced by what everyone else is doing.
Environmental Mastery	I am quite good at managing the many responsibilities of my daily life.
Personal Growth	I have a sense that I have developed a lot as a person over time.
Positive Relations	I know that I can trust my friends, and they know that I can trust my friends, and they know they can trust me.
Purpose in Life	Some people wander aimlessly through life, but I am not one of them.
Self-Acceptance	When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out.

Note. Higher ratings (up to 6) for all sample items indicate greater scores on each subscale.

Appendix D

High-Score vs. Low-Score Definitions of PWB Subscales (Ryff and Keyes, 1995)

Self-Acceptance
High scorer: Possesses a positive attitude toward the self; acknowledges and accepts multiple aspects of self, including good and bad qualities; feels positive about past life.

Low scorer: Feels dissatisfied with self, is disappointed with what has occurred in past life, is troubled about certain personal qualities, wishes to be different than what he or she is.

Positive Relations with Others
High scorer: Has warm, satisfying, trusting relationships with others; is concerned about the welfare of others; capable of strong empathy, affection, and intimacy; understands give and take of human relationships.

Low scorer: Has few close, trusting relationships with others; finds it difficult to be warm, open, and concerned about others; is isolated and frustrated in interpersonal relationships; not willing to make compromises to sustain important ties with others.

Autonomy
High scorer: Is self-determining and independent, able to resist social pressures to think and act in certain ways, regulates behavior from within, evaluates self by personal standards.

Low scorer: Is concerned about the expectations and evaluations of others, relies on judgments of others to make important decisions, conforms to social pressures to think and act in certain ways.

Environmental Mastery
High scorer: Has a sense of mastery and competence in managing the environment, controls complex array of external activities, makes effective use of surrounding opportunities, able to choose or create contexts suitable to personal needs and values.

Low scorer: Has difficulty managing everyday affairs, feels unable to change or improve surrounding context, is unaware of surrounding opportunities, lacks sense of control over external world.

Purpose in Life
High scorer: Has goals in life and a sense of directedness, feels there is meaning to present and past life, holds beliefs that give life purpose, has aims and objectives for living.

Low scorer: Lacks a sense of meaning in life; has few goals or aims, lacks sense of direction; does not see purpose in past life; has no outlooks or beliefs that give life meaning.

Personal Growth

High scorer: Has a feeling of continued development, sees self as growing and expanding, is open to new experiences, has sense of realizing his or her potential, sees improvement in self and behavior over time, is changing in ways that reflect more self-knowledge and effectiveness.

Low scorer: Has a sense of personal stagnation, lacks sense of improvement or expansion over time, feels bored and uninterested with life, feels unable to develop new attitudes or behaviors.

Appendix E

Qualitative Analysis for Participant 75

"I was very discouraged when I was working in a biology lab in high school. **I spent a whole semester attending the lab twice a week with no results in the lab.**[1] I repeated the same procedure every day over and over again. This process takes most people no [more] than 3 or 4 weeks, but it took me a whole semester. I was very disappointed in myself, as **I usually reach the goals I set for myself**.[2]

I attended this lab with one friend who achieved the goal much quicker than I did. I found myself comparing myself [to her], which discouraged me even more. Eventually, I succeeded and completed the lab. But **the experience taught me that just because I failed at the lab does not mean I should accept defeat.**[3] I kept coming back every week, and **my persistence** led to *my* [success]**.**[4]" (emphasis in bold added)

Challenge

Resolution

[1] Challenge Typology: *Achievement*

[2] Self-Reference: *Self-Questioning*

[3] Resolution Typology: *Perspective*

[4] Integration: *Identity*

Appendix F

Supplemental Tables

Table 15

Frequencies for coded narrative characteristics (redemption and I-S orientation)

Narrative Characteristics	**Overall Frequency *N* = 213**	**Percent**	**Cumulative Percent**
Redemption			
Enmeshed	63	29.58%	29.58%
Return	40	18.78%	48.36%
Emergent	110	51.64%	100.00%
Challenge			
Identity	90	42.25%	42.25%
Situation	123	57.75%	100.00%
Resolution			
No Resolution	43	20.19%	20.19%
Identity	95	44.60%	64.79%
Situation	75	35.21%	100.00%

Table 16

Frequencies of redemption along categories of ethnicity/race

	Enmeshed	**Return**	**Emergent**	***Total***
White/European American	27	18	48	93
Black/African American	4	1	15	20
Southeast Asian/Pacific Islander	16	13	28	57
Latino/a	5	2	6	13
Indo-Asian	2	3	7	12
Middle Eastern	2	0	3	5
Multiracial	6	3	3	12
Unidentified	0	0	1	1
Total	63	40	110	213

Table 17

Bivariate correlations among global PWB and its six subscales

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. Global PWB		.61**	.81**	.74**	.68**	.79**	.83**
2. Autonomy			.38**	.30**	.38**	.35**	.34**
3. Environmental Mastery				.59**	.33**	.59**	.75**
4. Positive Relations					.45**	.43**	.58**
5. Personal Growth						.49**	.35**
6. Purpose in Life							.60**
7. Self-Acceptance							

Note. ** $p < .01$

Table 18

One-way ANOVA for redemption and psychological well-being

	Enmeshed	**Return**	**Emergent**	**F**	**Sig.**
Global PWB	4.16 (0.55)	4.07 (0.60)	4.30 (0.54)	2.97	0.054
Autonomy	3.97 (0.76)	3.86 (0.66)	4.00 (0.71)	0.59	0.558
Environmental Mastery	3.93 (0.75)	3.80 (0.77)	3.94 (0.80)	0.52	0.594
Personal Growth	4.45 (0.87)	4.37 (0.67)	4.67 (0.58)	3.80	0.024
Positive Relations	4.31 (0.89)	4.17 (0.80)	4.44 (0.90)	1.58	0.208
Sense of Purpose	4.20 (0.75)	4.22 (0.78)	4.36 (0.74)	1.11	0.332
Self-Acceptance	4.02 (0.79)	4.01 (0.86)	4.17 (0.97)	0.82	0.443
N	63	40	110		