

## Process Questions Comments

The definition of narrative identity: “Narrative identity is the internalized and evolving story of your life that integrates your past, present, and future to create a sense of unity and purpose. It's the personal story you construct about yourself, including your experiences, beliefs, values, and goals, which shapes your self-perception and actions. This life narrative has characters, plot, and themes, and continues to be shaped throughout life.

Narrative themes (some but not all): **Agency, Communion, Closure, Self-Actualization, Redemption, Contamination, Exploratory Processing.**

- **Agency:** Narratives high in agency are fundamentally concerned with the protagonist's understanding of their own autonomy
  - Highly agentic narratives describe protagonists who believe they can affect their own lives (Lysaker), initiate changes on their own (Adler, Skalina, & McAdams), and who achieve some degree of control over the course of their experiences (McAdams's status/victory). This theme is also related to the degree to which people internalize their actions, reflect on them, and engage in them with a full sense of choice (Deci & Ryan's Self-Determination Theory).
  - Agency may be demonstrated through self-insight, gaining a sense of control, or a feeling of increased power (McAdams' self-mastery). In other words, the protagonist's meaning-making of action in their lives (response to a situation—perspective, behavior, belief) is one way the protagonist may understand or demonstrate themselves to be agentic or not. For example, a determination to make the most out of a very difficult situation would be considered an agentic move.
- **Communion:** Narratives that are high in communion are fundamentally concerned with the connection, intimacy, love, belonging, union, friendship, and caring by the protagonist. Highly communal narratives describe protagonists who experience satisfying romantic and friendship relationships, involve nurture and caretaking, and are rich with themes of unity and togetherness (McAdams).
  - Social connections may be to individuals, groups, or to society (although connections to specific individuals are weighted heaviest towards high communion scores, and isolation from society writ large are weighted highest in low communion scores). Communion may be revealed in the explicit language participants use to describe their relational lives, or evidenced in their pronoun use (i.e. “we” is more communal than “I”; likewise, “me” versus “them” (plural) is less communal than “me” versus “him/her”), but these are fairly low-level ways in which communion is instantiated in narratives. Participants may discuss their lack of connection to others, which is to be scored as low in communion.
- **Closure**  
**Description:** The general trajectory of this scale from low to high is the extent to which the author is mired in past regrets versus has accepted and moved beyond difficult experiences in the past.

You are measuring both the explicit and implicit elements of the narrative—what the narrator is stating and the underlying tone.

The top of the scale is special! For a score of a “2”: At the highest point of this scale, the author rejects the usefulness of regret to their life. A person high on this scale will explicitly regard the notion of regret as not useful or inappropriate, negative, or bad. This person views trying life experiences as necessary, productive, and often not worth dwelling on. Note that this is not characterized by romanticizing difficult past events or saying “I don’t believe in regret” and then going on to use regretful language to describe past experiences. It is an outright rejection of regret as a useful construct. If the person does *not* use explicitly “anti-regret” language, but more implicit language, the event must be a strong negative event to consider a “2.” (See examples.)

#### Tips

- Regret/difficult events typically involve something which happened in the past which had a poor outcome or an outcome which is a *mismatch* between what the author would’ve desired and what actually happened. The outcome could be due to either personal failures (making the “wrong” choice) or external, uncontrollable circumstances (lack of freedom to choose).
- Examples:
  - Missed opportunities (e.g., not pursuing a desired career or relationship)
  - Not successfully helping a loved one in need (e.g., not taking care of a sick parent, or watching a child suffer due to an illness)
  - Moral errors (e.g., cheating on a test, betraying a loved one).
  - Non-events would include normative life transitions (birth of a child, death of an older parent, caregiving) *unless the participant indicates some sort of closure attitude toward the event*. Death of an older parent which is “just part of life” would score a 0; “really sad and hard to cope with but I’ve made peace with it” would be a 1; “the biggest loss of my life and I can’t seem to move forward in my life without my parent” would be a negative score
- **Self-Actualization**
  - On this scale, high SA indicates the narrator’s fulfillment of positive personal potential of their self (Maslow, 1960) and/or life. The narrator articulates congruence with or understanding of themselves (and likes themselves) and a feeling of fulfillment with their life.
- **Redemption**
  - [Redemption](#) (bad things get better)
  - NOTE: Redemption is *not* present if things go from neutral or good to better. Redemption is only present if they go from *bad* to *better/good*
  - A redemption sequence is a particular narrative form that appears in some accounts of significant scenes in a person's life story. In a redemption sequence, **a demonstrably "bad" or emotionally negative event or circumstance leads to a demonstrably "good" or emotionally positive outcome**. The story plot moves from a negative to a positive valence, bad leads to good. Therefore, the initial negative state is "redeemed" or salvaged by the good that follows it.

- Redemption is a common theme in both classic and contemporary narratives. In life story research, redemption sequences can be detected in a wide range of accounts that people provide, from their reconstructions of the past events, to their characterizations of what may happen in their lives in the future.
- **Contamination**
  - In a contamination scene, **a good or positive event or state becomes bad or negative. That which was good or acceptable becomes contaminated, ruined, undermined, undone, or spoiled. Positive affect gives way to negative affect, so that the negativity overwhelms, destroys, or erases the effects of the preceding positivity.**
- **Exploratory Processing**
  - Exploratory processing is defined as the extent to which a narrator openly analyzes and explores the meaning of events in order to understand the events' impact on themselves as a person (e.g., change in one's self or one's broader understanding of life, the world, people, etc). Because the impact of an event is often emotional, highly exploratory narratives often (but not always) are characterized by the acknowledgment and thoughtful analysis of one's emotional reactions experienced in relation to the event or the memory of the event. Consider both encompassing narrative style (how the narrative is told) and narrative content (what the narrator says about the impact/meaning of the event)--examples of style and content are listed below.
  - While this theme was originally developed for use with past events only, the Life Story Interview (McAdams, 2008) includes plans for the future and overall values, beliefs, and so on. In these cases, ongoing or future plans (e.g., the process of aging, expected retirement plans) should be considered as the relevant "events."

Narrative Structure: The four dimensions of narrative coherence (Adler and colleagues), are **Orientation, Structure, Affect, and Integration**. This model was developed by Baerger and McAdams in 1999 and used by Adler to study the coherence of psychotherapy narratives.

**Life story interview:** "The Life Story Interview (LSI) is a narrative psychology method developed by Dan McAdams to help individuals construct their personal identity by telling the story of their life. It involves organizing one's life into "chapters" and then detailing specific "scenes" within those chapters, focusing on key events, characters, high and low points, and core themes to understand personal beliefs, values, and life goals.

The LSI was developed to assist in uncovering the central narrative that connects past experiences with future aspirations, revealing how a person understands their own life.

“Key components of the Life Story Interview

**Life as a story:** Participants are asked to view their life as a book with several chapters, each with a title and a brief summary.

**Critical events:** Interviews focus on specific "scenes" or pivotal moments, including:

**Peak experiences:** Moments of extreme positive emotion.

**Low points:** Episodes of significant sadness or adversity.

**Turning points:** Moments that marked a significant change in life.

**Key elements of scenes:** For each critical event, participants describe what happened, where it occurred, who was involved, their thoughts and feelings, and the event's impact and what it says about them as a person.

**Central themes:** The interview explores the underlying themes, beliefs, and values that run through the life story, including spiritual and political dimensions and the most important values in life.

**Future orientation:** It also includes an exploration of how the individual imagines their life developing in the future.

Purpose and application

**Identity formation:** The LSI is a core tool in narrative identity theory, which posits that people create a sense of self by weaving their past experiences into a coherent life story.

Understanding the self: It helps individuals make sense of their lives, providing a framework for understanding their motivations, goals, and values.

### Discipline type questions

**I want to include life story interview here, even though humans are natural storytellers and autobiographical beings, for the most part and in research, they are prompted to talk about who they are and where they are coming from so if I were an ontologist I would try to capture that.**

**Who is the narrator?** We called this narrative agent in the closure paper, a narrator is an agent that takes part in narrating or actively constructing their own narrative.

**What is a narrative?**

- What is a critical event, ex. Regrettable event ( and when this is being narrated we search for whether or not the narrative theme closure is emerging)
- What is a turning point?
- What is a central theme?
- What is future orientation? The interview usually asks about next goals as well as hopes and prospects.

**What is an event?**

**What is a scene?** Detailed account of significant life event

**What is narrative coherence?** The ability to construct and communicate a clear and consistent story this involves the narrative having coherence, orientation, integration and affect.

- What is coherence?
- What is orientation? When I am coding I usually answer this by asking myself how easily I can answer Who? What? When? Where?and Why? Based on reading the response. When assigning scores for orientation if i can answer all of them then that warrants a full score.
- What is integration? How well all the experiences and scenes are woven together to depict one complete story of who the person is and or who they are becoming.
- What is affect? Emotional component that gives a narrative meaning.

**What is a narrative theme?** A central or recurring idea that is present in a person's story that they are narrating

**What is narrative coherence?** For example, people with schizophrenia tend to narrate incoherent narratives about themselves.

**What is psychological well-being?** Narratives high in self-transcendent themes are associated with psychological well-being.