

Narrative Identity in Emerging Adulthood

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Overview

What is a Narrative Approach to Identity?

Why take a Narrative Approach?

What are the Critical Findings (with some complications on some of them)?

What are the Emerging Questions and Pressing Issues for the Field?

Discuss!

What is a Narrative Approach to Identity?

Narrative identity is a *subjective, constructed, and evolving* recollection of the personal past.

Narrative identity provides *purpose, meaning, and integration* to the individual.

Narrative identity approaches attend to both *Big and Small* stories.

Why take a Narrative Approach?

Ubiquity:

- **62%** of the most memorable event of the day are disclosed by the end of the day (Pasupathi, McLean, & Weeks, 2007).
- **90%** of emotional events (across cultures) are disclosed within a few days (Rimé, Mesquita, Philippot, & Boca, 1991)
- **90%** of self-defining memories have been shared at least once (Thorne, McLean, & Lawrence, 2004).
- **One story for every five minutes** of dinner-table talk (Bohanek, Marin, Fivush, & Duke, 2006).
- **Nine stories for every 15 minutes** of marital conflict talk (Pasupathi, Lucas, & Coombs, 2002).
- **Four stories for every 10 minutes** of talk between friends (Thorne, Korobov, & Morgan, 2007).

Disequilibrium

Process *and* Content

What are the Critical Findings?

Development

- In Childhood (see Fivush et al., 2006 for a review)
- In Adolescence (e.g., Reese et al., 2010; McLean & Mansfield, 2011) 
- In Emerging Adulthood (e.g., Pasupathi & Hoyt, 2009)

The Importance of Others

Narrative Content

- Family (McLean et al., 2014; Zaman & Fivush, 2010)
- Different contents may require different processes (McLean et al., 2014; under review)

Narrative Processes

- Autobiographical Reasoning (e.g., Habermas & Bluck, 2000)
- Associations with well-being...and a complication

Where might Autobiographical Reasoning *not* always look good?

Developmental Issues

- Narrative skills
- Emotion regulation skills

Life experiences, narrative material

Complicating the relation between autobiographical reasoning and well-being

Boys in *early* adolescence who reported more autobiographical reasoning reported lower well-being (McLean et al., 2010)

- Replicated (Chen et al., 2012)

At-risk adolescents who reported more autobiographical reasoning were engaged in more delinquent behavior (McLean et al., 2013)

- Semi-replication (Sales et al., 2012)

College students with prior histories of abuse who reported more reasoning also reported greater psychological symptoms (Greenhoot et al., 2012)

- Semi-replication (Greenhoot & McLean, 2013)

Implications

Development

Background/Person Characteristics

- Experiences
- **Personality** (Lilgendahl et al., 2012)

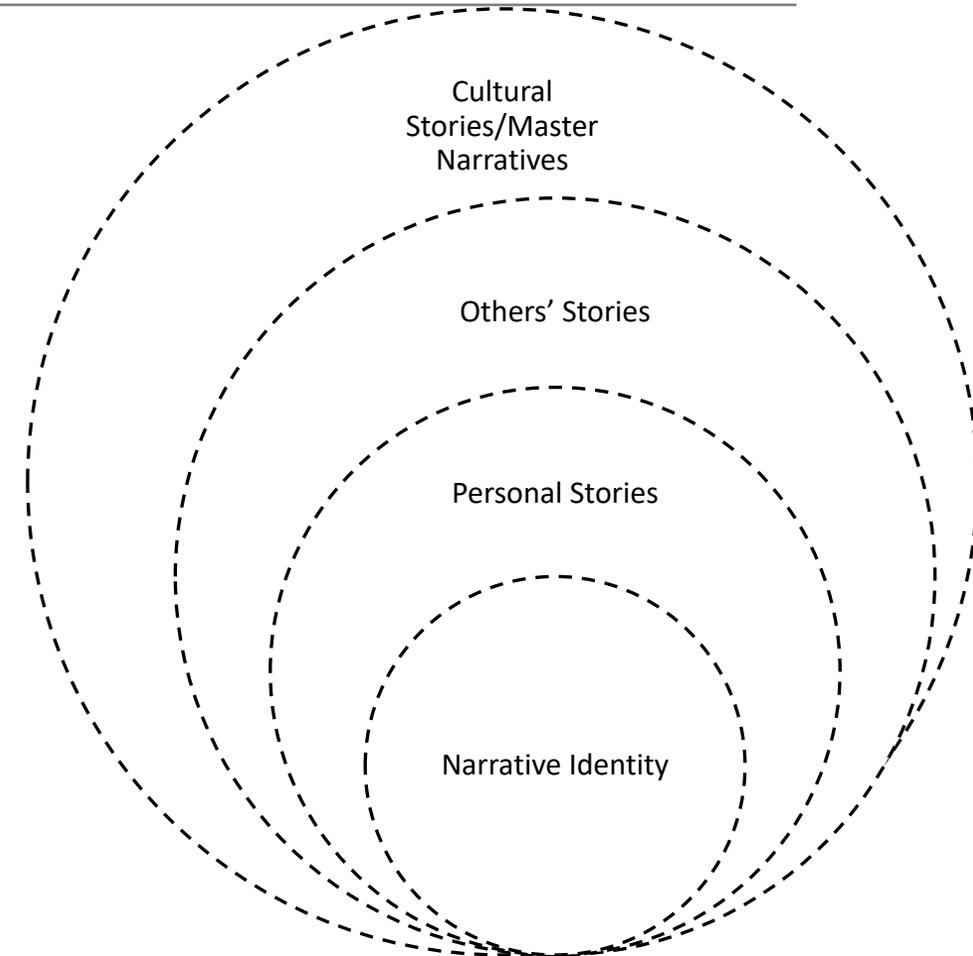
Is the Master Narrative of Redemption and Personal Growth a problem (Breen & McLean, in press)?

Which brings us to the problem of Agency...

Do we really write our own stories?

The Narrative Ecology of Self

(McLean, 2015; McLean & Breen, 2015)



Master Narratives: An Emerging Topic

Culturally *shared* stories (or story structures)

Creation of a shared narrative reality (Bruner, 1991; Hammack, 2008; 2011)

Requirements for a Master Narrative

- They are ubiquitous, utilitarian, compulsory, rigid, and invisible

An MN approach allows an examination of the intersection of the personal and cultural

An MN approach showcases the limits of personal agency

Other Emerging Questions and Pressing Issues for the Field?

Development over time

- Changes in process and content?
- Changes in the same story, different stories?
- *What does it mean to have a stable narrative identity?*
- Pathways of development?

Intra-individual variability

Emerging Adulthood and Narrative Identity

A time when the

- *ability*
- *interest*
- *and demand*

to construct a narrative identity is at a peak

A time of relative uncertainty and change

A time when it may be important to get this task down

Understanding this task means attending to the whole person and the context

Thank you!
