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I Narrate, Therefore, I Am: How the Construction of a Storied Self Bridges Cognitive and Discursive Understandings of Identity Development

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ABSTRACT

I Narrate, Therefore, I Am: How the Construction of a Storied Self Bridges Cognitive and Discursive Understandings of Identity Development

by

Stephanie J. Wilson

Researchers have approached the construct of identity and issues surrounding it from very disparate theoretical perspectives. Some conceptualize identity as an internal entity molded over time by reflection, and others view it as a transitory construction negotiated in dialogue. I proposed a narrative bridge between two of the major camps—cognitive-developmental and social-discursive—and asked the question: **How does the narrative work young adults do in representing identity-relevant experiences relate to their identity commitments and concerns?** After an Identity Centrality Questionnaire (ICQ) was developed and piloted along with a narrative prompt, 93 participants completed surveys about their identity centrality, status, and concerns. Then, 86 participants wrote narratives about social experiences characterized by difference and again completed the ICQ. Authors’ scores on standard measures of identity achievement were not related in coherent ways to the evidence of identity work seen in their stories. Identity claims made in the narratives were examined in a micropositioning analysis that illuminated identity work being done in the story writing.
I Narrate, Therefore, I Am: How the Construction of a Storied Self Bridges Cognitive and Discursive Understandings of Identity Development

Dare to be yourself— the central message promoted in the identity-themed, June 2008 issue of Psychology Today, represents only a subtle reflection of the conspicuous modern concern for “Managing the Self,” whose namesake entitles an article within the same issue (Epstein, 2008). Indeed, both the population at large and the academic community, particularly within the fields of psychology and sociology, have lit upon this phenomenon of the significance of individual identity. The variety of situated contexts and construct operationalizations also reflects the plurality and ambiguity of the term. While it may be reasonable to assume that the field’s popularity speaks to its novelty, the intrigue of identity within the academic sphere actually burgeoned sixty years ago when disconnected and disillusioned World War II veterans returned home, only to experience a chronic externality from the coherent fabric of self and a foreignness to former social roles (Erikson, 1968).

To explore the emergence of identity as a topic of interest, I will review the literature of its historical trajectory. After contextualizing the construct, I extrapolate two major theoretical lineages: first, those scholars adhering to an internal, stage-oriented approach; and second, those academics that follow a communicative, process-oriented framework. I then describe the work of a few researchers who have attempted to bring disparate theories together and pose
my own integrationist research question: what accounts for the selection of features that become central to identity? I discuss two potential mechanisms for triggering identity development: encountering otherness and experiencing solo status. I substantiate these conjectures first with research detailing the effects of college diversity programs and second with literature concerning minority stress and Asch’s compelling work on social conformity. Next, I consider the value of the narrative methodology as a means to study identity and underscore the appropriateness of an emerging adult research population. In light of these arguments, I present the design of my study.

*Historical Bases for Concern with Identity*

Many researchers have conjectured about the possible historical routes by which identity accrued such popular and academic priority. Erikson (1968) posited our sociogenetic evolution to have functioned as the root of the need to construct an identity. Since we humans have been able to “unmake” ourselves, or divorce ourselves from a monotheistic God, sub-groupings of “pseudospecies,” organized along religious and ethnic lines, have arisen to provide order. These divisions naturally foster notions of superiority over outgroups, which, what with the rise of technology and subsequent trends toward globalization, have grown inescapable (Hammack, 2008). This forced contact with outgroups has sparked two world wars, and the survivors of these conflicts, believes Erikson, have begun to realize the need for the development of an all-human identity. Such identity crises experienced by the veterans of World War II and many
adolescents point to this underlying concern for undergoing such arduous, but
inevitable identity work. (Erikson, 1968)

Another historical hypothesis was put forth by Roy Baumeister (1987).
Through a comprehensive review of analyses of fiction and autobiography
authored by Westerners during the last several centuries, he illuminated
historical landmarks which presumably have plotted the trajectory of “selfhood
issues.” These subjects include self-definition and the relationship of the
individual to society. According to Baumeister, in the late medieval era the
determinative power of single-event attainments, such as birth and knighthood,
obviated any active process of self-definition. The rise of the middle class in the
early modern period allowed for more influence in the position and image of the
self via the medium of wealth. Next, the Protestant Reformation and
urbanization further widened the range of options, and hence opened another
pathway for self-definition in religious and occupational domains. The Romantic
perspective of questioning the oppressive authority of religion and society led to
yet more emphasis on individual agency. With growing existentialist concerns in
the 20th century accompanied the search for authenticity and responsibility of
the individual to establish his or her own place in the absence of rigid
parameters, evidenced by the emergence of the identity crisis characteristic of
adolescence.

Baumeister delineated a second issue of selfhood, the relation between
the individual and society. Many people in medieval years still operated under
the social credo of St. Augustine, that society is a “great chain of being” whose
structure necessitates individuals’ endorsement of their own born position. Nor were personal beings thought to be useful apart from the larger whole of society, evidenced by the lack of a valuation of privacy and the nonexistence of political uprising. However, the social mobility of peasants through accumulation of wealth and intermarriage with aristocrats challenged the belief that social class differences reflect inherent disparities in the quality of people. Likewise, political rebellions in the late 18th and 19th centuries contradicted the notion of individuals’ dependence on the larger group. Further, the de-emphasis of the discovery of fulfillment in the Christian afterlife accentuated a subsequent discontent with a nonfulfillment in the current life, creating a backlash of individualism and transcendentalism so as to shirk the imperatives forced by society. However, the rise of urbanization in the 20th century facilitated increased social interdependence and, thus, stimulated a sense of powerlessness and individual meaninglessness, manifested in the notions of alienation and nihilism, for those who yearned to be free to progress toward self-fulfillment apart from a resented, hampering society. Nevertheless, after experiencing the throes of World War II, many writers began to shift toward a perspective of accommodation, in which a balance between integrating into an acceptable society and asserting one’s own will was idealized. This approach persists still.

Baumeister conjectured that the problematic state of these two issues of selfhood, self-definition and the individual-society relationship, spawned two corresponding lines of prominent identity research—the unified-identity tradition of Erikson, and the self-presentation arena of Goffman. Although the
two camps diverge on virtually every aspect of the study of identity from its definition to its operationalization, both have contributed useful findings and ideas to the field.

*Cogitative-developmental approach*

As aforementioned, Erikson’s (1968) initial investigation of identity was clinically motivated. Through casual, nonscientific observations, therapeutic work with adolescents, and case studies of extraordinary figures such as Martin Luther and Mohatma Gandhi, Erikson merged his psychoanalytic background with historical and cultural contextualization. He synthesized a view of identity as internally organized, sociogenetically necessary, penetrating unconsciousness and sometimes consciousness, and extending in various levels of development throughout the life course. The “ego identity,” as Erikson deemed it, derives its label from the ordering role of the ego, whose function is to maintain a sense of psychological continuity in spite of developmental crises and social change and across personal and social identities. Each of Erikson’s eight psychosocial stages, intended to elaborate Freud’s psychosexual progression, contains a corollary that contributes to the adolescent formation of a coherent identity. For example, the stage of autonomy vs. shame and doubt, which occurs in the second year of life, is accompanied by a simultaneous identity-focused conflict of the will to be oneself vs. self-doubt.

Though worry of an untimely operationalization of the identity construct plagued Erikson’s intentions to apply his theoretical meditations, a plethora of succeeding social scientists have implemented his theory in research (Marcia,
Among the most prominent of these is James Marcia (1988), who expounded upon Erikson’s theory with a proposal of four identity statuses—identity achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and diffusion. According to Marcia, these categorizations locate individuals along their quest for resolution of identity crisis on the two factors of exploration and commitment. Those who have undergone identity exploration and established a commitment subsequently are defined as “identity-achieved.” Those who are exploring but have not yet committed to an identity are in “moratorium.” Ones who have made a commitment without exploring are considered “foreclosed.” Last, individuals who express interest in neither exploring nor committing are deemed “diffused.” While Marcia developed an intensive interview process to assess participants’ status, other researchers have adapted his criteria to a logistically simpler questionnaire form (Adams, 1998). This camp has been quite prolific in their publications detailing a range of correlates with the identity statuses (e.g., Bartley & Robitschec, 2000; Cakir & Aydin, 2005; Dwairy, 2004; Streitmatter, 1989). Streitmatter (1989), for instance, found that identity achievement status predicted academic accomplishment in early adolescents. In its most current form, Adams’ (1986) assessment, labeled Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status-2, gauges testtakers’ identity status in the following content areas: religion, politics, career, “lifestyle,” dating, gender roles in marriage and family, and recreational activities. While this iteration certainly has expanded on the triumvirate of religion, politics, and career, spheres focused upon in the original instruments, the collection of domains still excludes critical
aspects of the self for which identities can be achieved, whether ascribed or freely chosen. Further, the rigidity of the four delimiting factors, the built-in cultural valuation of identity exploration (a privilege for only the economically prosperous), and the misleading presumption that identity is perpetually stable once achieved, dilute the potency of their findings. Even Erikson (1968) disputed this view of identity as finitely accomplishable when he wrote, “For identity is never ‘established’ as an ‘achievement’ in the form of a personality armor, or of anything static and unchangeable” (p. 24).

Other Eriksonian identity researchers have elaborated upon patterns of individual difference, such as identity “styles” (Berzonsky, 1989) and means of identity formation (Grotevant, 1982). David Moshman (1998), however, worried that extenders of Erikson’s work on identity diverted attention away from establishing a singular definition of the construct, a key element in forming a lasting contribution to this line of research. He argues that identity emerges in the shape of an explicit, coherent theory complete with explanatory power for behaviors and other aspects of self. This personal theory is organized, Moshman asserts, with an eye toward creating a self that is unified across situations, agentive, continuous over time, and rational. Moshman’s theoretical endeavor seems to omit that identity is also essentially relational. Even as Baumeister (1987) underscored the problem of the self-society relation as a key contributor to what we now consider the common identity “crisis,” the fundamental distinction of identity from like constructs is its negotiation between how we know ourselves and how we are known. In short, this Eriksonian tradition
primarily focuses upon the internal constancy of identity, rather than the process of how such a phenomenon arises.

*Social-discursive approach*

The nature of identity and its function have been extensively addressed by social and discursive psychologists. In this approach, identities are constructed specifically in relation to other people. The social psychologists’ lineage derives from sociologists Charles Horton Cooley (as cited in Baumeister, 1987) and George Herbert Mead (1982), who construed the self as developing through social interaction as a reflection of others’ reactions to the self. Two of their successors, Erving Goffman and John Turner, extrapolated these ideas in their own offshoot theories.

Goffman (1959), in his self-presentation theory, posited a metaphor for self as actor. Each setting, or scene, is comprised of a front stage, back stage, and props. The competence of the actor and cooperation of the audience are both primary determinants of each show’s success. This dramaturgical approach underscores the necessity of others’ participation in the communicative creation and maintenance of identities. It also illuminates our ability to slip into a variety of roles as social players.

According to Turner (1987), whose framework is a modification of Tajfel’s social identity theory, the self-concept is a composite of mental depictions of the self, made up of several spheres of categorization that vary in specificity. We may think of ourselves as human, as belonging to a particular group (e.g. whites, females, southerners, short people), or as an individual
unique within a group. What abstraction of self-concept becomes salient depends on the situation and frame of reference. Both self-categorization (Turner, 1987) and social identity theory (Tajfel, 1982) take into account the value individuals derive from group membership. Questionnaires assessing the quality of a social identity may include items about how connected an individual feels to a group and how central group membership feels for the self. Researchers drawing from this framework sometimes focus on a salient social identity (e.g. national, religious, ethnic) and determine the extent to which it implicates other outcomes, such as positive or negative adjustment (Kiang, Yip, & Fuligni, 2008). One group took this paradigm a step further to look at the correlates of assuming multiple social identities (Kiang, Yip, & Fuligni, 2008). They gathered longitudinal survey data from a group of ethnically, socioeconomically diverse high school students on family, religious, ethnic, and American identity measures. They compared participants along measures of positive and negative affect, and perceptions of discrimination. Those who scored highly on all four domains of social identity also reported higher positive affect, lower negative affect, and lower perceptions of discrimination than those who did not score highly on all identity measures. Nevertheless, a question that lingers in my mind is, what are the processes by which multiple identities become centralized?

Another vein of the process-oriented approach is reflected in the work of discursive analysts. For this group, the individual positions him- or herself in interpersonal exchanges by resisting and affirming certain identities, which are
many, fluid, and situationally contextualized. Rather than investigating
individual difference on the state of identity as attained or not, researchers focus
on what identities become critical to the ongoing interaction. Many in this camp
believe, as Deborah Schiffrin (1996) does, that because identity is not static, it
should not be treated as a discrete, categorical variable. Instead, researchers can
extract subsections of written or spoken accounts and describe each part in
terms of the particular roles that are salient.

Indeed, this group of researchers capitalizes on the interactive capacity of
language to communicate identity claims asserted by an author or speaker. The
telling of a story, for example, reveals aspects of the construal of the self through
characterizations of protagonists and antagonists and through the role assumed
by the speaker, be it “advice-giver,” “gossiper,” “teacher,” etc. (Bamberg, 2004).
This perspective of identity as a “drafting” process lends itself to a microanalytic
examination of bits of interaction, localized in time and space. In one study,
Bamberg (2004) examined the micro-genesis of identity through an exploration
of five 15-year-old boys’ positioning of themselves in “small stories” that they
told about everyday life experiences in a series of interviews with an adult
moderator. Construing self and identity as continually being constructed and
negotiated through the medium of interaction, he performed “positioning
analysis” on a co-narrated story that details the sexual promiscuity and resulting
moral failure of a female peer. He considered the participants’ positioning work
on the narrative level of the characters’ positioning in space and time, on the
local level of the immediate interaction among the five boys and moderator, and
on the global level of the master narratives\(^1\) that capture appropriate behaviors and reactions of adolescent boys in our culture. Thus, in this process-focused tradition of identity research, identity claims are bound by, rather than transcend, temporal and situational factors.

This interactional approach also yields potential for practical relevance. As Fiol (2002) described, one computer storage company employed the principles of social identity theory and capitalized on the power of language to foster and express identity change in attempt to transform their institutional identity. According to the theoretical model, prosperous organizations depend on a stable and unifying institutional identity to integrate each employee into a common image. However, successful identification on the part of individuals may hinder an identity change that is necessary for the company’s growth. By tailoring their efforts to individuals’ experience of identification processes—first, losing identification with the organization’s old identity, then restoring ingroup affiliations at the level of local projects and core beliefs—the company was able to execute a successful identity transition. Accompanying each stage of the transformation was a set of linguistic markers to facilitate distance or inclusion. For example, during deidentification, administrators used fewer inclusive referents (e.g. *we, us*) and more negations (e.g. “*not* meaningful, *not* growing”; Fiol, 2002, p. 659) to weaken, but not completely eliminate, individual

\(^1\) A master narrative, also referred to as “dominant discourse,” describes the values of a culture in a structured way. A popular American master narrative is the rags-to-riches story. People living in and those familiar with American culture are also acquainted with this narrative that serves as a testament to the promise of financial success and societal elevation to those who seek it.
employees’ ability to identify positively with the old image. Clearly, the consideration of identity processes can permeate theoretical bounds to offer action-oriented applications.

Integrationist models

Though the internal and interactional perspectives diverge dramatically on the conceptualization of identity and its subsequent empirical implications, certain aspects of both seem reasonable and potentially congruous. Phillip Hammack (2008) attempted to unite cognitive and social aspects of identity theory with a sociocultural, narrative focus by drawing upon the life story attributes of personal construction (i.e., the actual piecing together of a coherent life narrative) and relational enactment (i.e., the sharing of the life narrative among social networks). He posited a three-pronged definition of identity, which accounts for its content, structure, and process:

[I]dentity is defined as ideology cognized through the individual engagement with discourse, made manifest in a personal narrative constructed and reconstructed across the life course, and scripted in and through social interaction and social practice. (Hammack, 2008, p. 222)

With this framework in mind, Hammack (2006) gathered life-story data from Palestinian and Israeli adolescents who had participated in a cross-group intervention program. Through a grounded theory approach, he noted the trend of identity polarization (i.e., extreme in-group identifications) in pre-intervention narratives and was able to categorize post-intervention stories according to whether the master narratives of ingroup and outgroup cultures
were accepted or rejected. Hammack saw a range of identity-development outcomes, including identity transcendence (i.e., the creation of an identity that includes both ingroup and outgroup), accentuation, and conflict. He concluded that such coexistence interventions reveal the pliability of identity during adolescence, and he acknowledged the influence of both immediate interaction and more implicit cultural discourses on the formation of identity. Given the special scenario of programmed intervention and the deeply-entrenched hostility surrounding Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is not clear that the various stages of identity work revealed in these data would generalize to identity development amid less extreme circumstances. Hammack’s findings seem to indicate that invested interaction is the key to spurring identity work. How does this affect the dynamic interaction of the various identities we assume?

On the one hand, in alignment with self-presentation theory, we are, indeed, able to take on many different identities in our varied social situations, treating identity as a somewhat adaptable activity (Goffman, 1987). In this vein, questions of which identities become relevant in certain scenarios may prove more informative than queries about whether identity is achieved. On the other hand, there do seem to be certain identities that remain relatively stable across interactions. Our apparent commitment to these identities may manifest itself in our effortful choosing of particular interactions in which we are afforded the opportunity to endorse or reject identities ascribed to us. Further, the discursive perspective cannot account for the notion of authenticity, or “being true to oneself” and “discovering who you are.”
In fact, sociologist Steven Hitlin (2003), who attempted to infuse social identity theory pioneered by Tajfel (1982) with an emphasis on personal identity, posited this view. According to Hitlin, social, or group, identities are behavioral representations of corresponding personal identities, which are established in commitment to certain values. Responses to the behavioral manifestation of a value may then cause an individual to reconsider and revise that value, thus allowing for change. Focusing on the volunteer identity as an exemplar of group identifications and transsituational beliefs, he collected questionnaire data from 314 college students within a larger three-wave longitudinal study of self-conception. These surveys included measures of two value domains—self-enhancement and self-transcendence. He also assessed participants’ perceptions of others’ attitudes concerning volunteering, number of hours per week participants spent volunteering, and extent to which they identified the self as a volunteer. As expected, regression analyses revealed all four measures—high scores of self-transcendence, low marks on self-enhancement, time invested in volunteering, and perceptions of others’ expectations—to be positive predictors of volunteer identity strength. Although Hitlin showed that somewhat stable variables, such as values, can track personal identifications and corresponding behaviors, he was not able to address the directionality of his model given the use of correlational data. Also, I wonder to what degree his value framework would be sustained among other domains of identity that are not as likely to be characterized as “value-laden,” or do not concern conscious, ideological choices. What happens in scenarios in which
identities and situations are largely ascribed to, or chosen for us (e.g. racial identity)? This emphasis on ideology may limit the application of Hitlin’s theory.

What accounts for the selection of features that become central to identity?

Though Hitlin did acknowledge the possibility that the choice of certain interactions over others can lead to what might be considered the “centralization” of some identity domains over others, identity researchers have largely ignored the question of what accounts for the selection of features that become central to identity. Discursive psychologists might pinpoint the identity made salient in the present interaction as the central one of the moment but cannot explain any stability in what identity features are central. However, the centrality question adapted to this framework may be, what identity positions does a speaker defend and resist across a variety of situations? Those in the Eriksonian camp have investigated only a limited number of identity features and have not conceptualized such features as capable of being back- and foregrounded. Nevertheless, the appropriate inquiry for them may be, what features of the self organize the others?

It does certainly seem that a myriad of culturally relevant features may become important to our identity. Walton (2008) proffered five distinct content categories of identity: the embodied self, relational, socio-cultural, moral, and psychological self. There hitherto has existed a vacuum in identity research regarding theoretical notions of centrality and accompanying assessments that allows individuals to express their identities in such ways. Further, why do some aspects of identity become central for some people—both critical to the
organization of the self and defensible in discursive contexts—and not for others?

The potential for some culturally relevant features to become identity-critical in time and to later be backgrounded by other aspects of the self highlights this question of what mechanisms work to trigger identity development. Walton and Wetzel (2008) underscored the notion that there exist at least four landscapes that seem to be fertile for identity development. Among them is the experience of encountering otherness. In other words, acknowledging oneself as different from an Other may, under some conditions, spark psychological work that leads to the centralization of that element to one’s identity. That this particular identity-relevant experience involves a relationship with a different other is consistent with a previous argument that identity is essentially a relational endeavor, an interpersonal construct. It is the balance between how we know ourselves and how we are known by others.

Studies looking at college students’ experiences with diversity substantiate this theory (Zúñiga, et al., 2002). In continuing work to elaborate this process, we have proposed that experiences of singularity, or “solo status,” may also trigger such psychological work. The psychological uniqueness of solo status, of “being the only one,” may be traced back to the findings of Solomon Asch’s (1956) conformity studies and is also reflected in DiPlacido’s (1998) discussion of minority stress.
Diversity experiences in college

Zúñiga, et al. (2002) demonstrated a clear connection between fostering relationships across social group boundaries and developing one’s identity. Acknowledging the needs of marginalized groups in higher education and the widely held view that properly educated students must experience diversity to thrive in a globalized society, they proposed a four-step intergroup dialogue program to promote diversity initiatives and the awareness of social justice issues. This pedagogic model starts with the establishment of sustained relationships for a number of weeks or months, depending on the setting in which the program is implemented. This building process allows group members to develop empathic ties and thus provides ground for meaningful and invested discussion of differences. The next step of the process encourages participants to explore their own social group identities. They are asked to recall memories of events that seem important to their identification with the group of interest and consider these in light of perceptions of privilege. This sequence demonstrates not only the relevance of identity development to the progress of social justice, but also the implicit assumption that close relationships with different others can serve as a vehicle for that identity growth.

The effects of “solo status”

The most prevalent form of “solo status” experienced and researched may be that of social minorities. In her exploration of stress experienced by sexual minorities, DiPlacido (1998) noted that negative life events, such as losing
employment or the custody of children, and daily hassles, like overhearing gay slander, are two of the most common stressors for sexual minorities. These experiences of minority status are linked to both physiological and psychological effects. They include chronic headaches, premenstrual symptoms, depression, and schizophreniform characteristics, among others. Conversely, one powerful protective factor against such effects is participation in a community network of sexual minorities. Clearly, being the only GBLTQ individual amidst a crowd of people who can openly disparage oneself either directly or indirectly, represents a dramatic example of the psychological uniqueness of repeatedly experiencing “solo status.”

Solomon Asch’s study (1956) of social conformity also illustrates the power of this “solo” psychological setting, even in the absence of overt hostility and denigration. Participants in the experimental group were placed in a room of confederates, and each was asked to announce which of three lines appeared to be the longest after confederates had done the same. Though the difference between the correct and incorrect lines was obvious, participants in the experimental group produced more wrong answers than those in the control group, who were not exposed to a misleading majority. Twenty-seven percent complied with confederates during most trials, and 49% compromised their responses for up to half of the trials. The experimental group also exhibited more variability than did the control group. This seems a rather potent effect given the insignificance of the task itself. Indeed, recognizing one’s solo status
presents promising and intriguing psychological ground to explore the fostering of identity development.

*Narrative as a vehicle for the expression of identity—a theoretical bridge*

So, how might we capture a glance at identity’s centralizing processes? Jerome Bruner (1990), in his critique of the reductionistic assumptions of the cognitive age, argued for the use of narrative as a practice central to human social life—a window into understanding how humans make meaning. Bruner (as cited in Schiffrin, 1996) concluded that certain narrative conventions help us to create agentive selves, through reporting goal-directed actions, and epistemic selves, through expressing desires and beliefs. Charlotte Linde (1993) noted that the genre of narrative allows for identity-relevant processes to happen. The sequence of narrative gives opportunity for expressing temporal continuity of self; the self-other distinction reflected in differentiation of characters allows us to construct uniqueness and similarity; and the evaluative component of narrative reflexivity grants the chance to see the self from an external view, as a “me,” to create a moral character. For Rom Harré (as cited in Schiffrin, 1996), storytelling represents one of many media for discourse, the primary vehicle of identity negotiation.

Dan McAdams (1993) championed a more central role for narrative; that is, the life story *itself* is identity. This life story that is added to and edited over time should be complete with main characters, turning points, themes. McAdams documents the narrative tasks for each stage of life, from the collecting of narrative materials during childhood to the generative living-out of
one’s personal myth in the later years of life. The relation between ourselves and our story is reciprocal—we piece together the account, which then influences our perspective of ourselves and our actions. Though narrative researchers conceptualize the specific role of identity development differently, the narrative structure seems a promising locale for the study of how specific identities become central.

Given the central role of narrative to the human experience as documented by Bruner (1990), not only does narrative provide a convenient lens from which to peer in on identity processes, but it also proffers theoretical welding between the discursive and Eriksonian approaches with regard to our interest in centrality. For, on the one hand, the telling of stories serves as a primary instrument for “doing” identity in interaction. On the other hand, from our continual existence we tacitly, “internally” select only certain experiences to transform into reportable stories. Hence, both approaches hold narrative as pivotal to what identity features become central and by what process that is accomplished.

*Emerging adults as a prime population*

Many researchers have acknowledged the suitability of the adolescent population to the study of identity development (Erikson, 1968; Arnett, 2007). Erikson (1968) was one of the first to recognize that adolescents are ripe for identity development. This normative period of life includes preparation for adulthood and, thus, entails a consolidation and synthesis of identity achievements from childhood. Arnett (2007) argued for the establishment of a
distinct stage he deemed *emerging adulthood*, which encompasses the late teenage years to twenties and is unique from adolescence and young adulthood. One of its primary characteristics is prolonged “role” exploration, an activity incited with the variety of people and ideas experienced in college and continued throughout a period of post-graduation latency.

*Study description*

In this study, which is informed by a pilot study during which we pretested our measures and narrative prompt, we collected data that we expected would speak to the mechanisms by which certain facets of the self become identity-central across settings amidst others that seem to be peripheral in most interactions. This study consists of both qualitative and quantitative components. Narratives were written by individuals asked to give an account of their experiences of being different from others in a group or of developing relationships with others whom they recognize as different from the self. The stories were analyzed with grounded theory methods described by Strauss & Corbin (1998). Hence, a scrutiny of these data allowed us to extract and refine theoretical constructs by discerning relevant patterns. A battery of quantitative assessments administered a few weeks before the narrative-writing was comprised of an identity concern survey, a measure of Marcia’s identity statuses, a racial attitudes instrument, and an identity-centrality questionnaire that we piloted in Spring 2008 and have continued to develop. This centrality measure, similar to Hermans’ personal position repertoire (2003), attempts to gauge the strength of individuals’ commitments to a range of identity features. These
assessments afford us the opportunity to draw connections between previous
social and cognitive developmental research and the nuances we are able to
unveil in qualitative analyses.

To this end, I have in mind the following more-focused research question:

**How does the narrative work young adults do in representing these
experiences with difference relate to their identity commitments and
concerns?**

**Pilot Study**

**Method**

A pilot study was conducted 6 months prior to the current study to test
the newly developed Identity Centrality Questionnaire and to evaluate the
productivity of the chosen narrative prompt.

**Participants.** The participants were 66 introductory psychology students at
Rhodes College who were obliged to acquire three hours of research credit.
They received one credit for this study, which was advertised on a departmental
bulletin board among other research projects. The participants consisted of 14
men, 49 women, and 3 individuals who chose not to specify their gender. Fifty-
four participants reported themselves as European American, 6 as African
American, 2 as Asian, 1 as Egyptian, and 3 did not offer their race.

**Materials.** The Identity Centrality Questionnaire (ICQ) is an 80-item instrument
we developed to gauge the degree to which individual's identify with 16
different features of the self (see Appendix A for this original version of the ICQ).
conversation with 4 undergraduate members of our research team. We began with a discussion of the four domain clusters, considering dozens of identity features in each of the categories. Members of the team scoured the literature on identity development, examining questionnaires and interview items used in previous research as part of our preparation for developing the questionnaire. From dozens of potential identity features in each of the clusters, we selected those expected to be most salient and relevant to a young adult population, based on the intuitions and insights of the research team members.

Each of the 16 chosen domains consisted of 1 free response item regarding the test-taker’s identity in each category, 4 7-point Likert items modeled after a commonly used questionnaire assessing group membership closeness and salience (Phinney, 1992), and 1 additional 7-point Likert query about relationships with respective outgroup members.

Procedure. Participants entered a computer lab and sat down to an open Word document. I presented them with the following instructions visually (projected on a screen) and orally:

“I am collecting preliminary data for my honors research on narratives about interpersonal relationships. Please take a few moments to think about a relationship you have had with someone who is different from you in some significant way. I am asking you to spend half an hour writing the story of this relationship, starting with how you met. Don’t worry about grammar
or spelling—we’re just interested in how the stories of relationships unfold.”

After being informed that all identifiable information in their stories would be changed to protect the privacy of all characters, participants were given 30 minutes to type. Once the 30 minutes had elapsed, subjects were instructed to open the Authorware file of the Identity Centrality Questionnaire and asked to enter the ID number written on an index card at their computer. After each subject answered the questionnaire items, he or she was handed a debriefing form complete with a brief explanation of the theoretical gist and contact information for the Counseling Center in the event that the writing brought up disturbing issues. Participants were given the option of writing their name and number on their index card if they were interested in participating in follow-up interviews, in which they would be asked to reflect on their experience in the study and for which they would be given .5 research credit hour in return.

Five subjects were called for individual follow-up interviews, and 3 of those participated. They were asked general questions about the writing experience and about their reactions to the questionnaire.

Results. Narratives written in response to the prompt offered much promise for future research. The topic generated coherent, well-developed stories about a range of 5 discernable kinds of relationships (e.g., romantic, roommate, familial) and 16 types of difference (e.g., ethnicity, social class, religion).

Preliminary analyses of the distribution of scores and missing data patterns on the ICQ prompted minor revisions in ordering of the items, some re-
wording, and the development of 21 additional items. These addenda included the category of a Moral Self and one item per category that pertains to another potentially identity-provoking experience of being the only one of a kind. The free response item of the Moral Domain was excluded due to its prospective sensitivity.

Feedback from participants who were interviewed about the study, and from research team members who assisted with data collection, prompted some refinements in instructions and in time allotments for the data collection.

Current Study

Materials

The first wave of data collection consisted of a battery of Authorware questionnaires administered in the following sequence: Identity Centrality Questionnaire (ICQ); Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status-II (EOMEIS-2; Adams, 1998); Identity Distress Survey (IDS; Berman, Montgomery, & Kurtines, 2004); an abridged amalgam of racial attitude measures, entitled “Racial Attitudes” (Copeland, 2008); and a four-item demographic inventory, including gender, race, year in school, and academic major (See Appendix B for questionnaires in their entirety).

The EOMEIS-2 (Adams, et al., 1989), presented to our participants as the “Where I am” survey, is a 64-item, 6-point Likert questionnaire purporting to categorize test-takers within ideological and interpersonal domains by Marcia’s (1988) four identity statuses: achieved, moratorium, foreclosed, and diffused.
The IDS (Berman, et al., 2004) was developed originally as a clinical tool to assess symptoms of Identity Disorder as defined by DSM-III and DSM-III-R along a range of identity issues. It consists of 2 items per identity issue, one concerning degree of distress and the other regarding length of worry, and 2 items relating to the extent of global identity concerns. We replaced their 7 identity issues with 10 domains that align more closely with the ICQ and retitled it as “Identity Concern Survey.”

The racial attitudes survey (Copeland, 2008) is a 63-item compilation of several widely-used racism scales. It was included in the battery to follow up on previous research conducted in another lab at Rhodes but did not directly pertain to the research questions of this paper and, therefore, was not included in statistical analyses.

Participants

Our data were gathered in two waves from Rhodes College students enrolled in introductory psychology classes. Subjects were required to participate in three hours of departmental research and were offered an hour of credit for each of the two stages of our study through posts on a departmental bulletin board advertising a variety of studies. In the first wave, 114 participants gave electronic responses to a battery of surveys in Authorware. Due to a malfunction, demographic information is available for 93 of those participants, 69 of whom are women and 24, men. The group consisted of 5 seniors, 12 juniors, 21 sophomores, and 54 first years. Seventy-one subjects labeled

One month later, 86 participants wrote personal stories about a relationship or about a time when they were “the only one” in some respect. 85 of 86 then completed the Identity Centrality Questionnaire. One participant’s data were removed from the corpus ex post facto due to this person’s involvement on our research team. 67 of the participants took part in both waves of the study. Fifty-four of the 86 completed the demographic survey. Forty-one of those reported themselves as female and 13 as male. The group consisted of 3 seniors, 6 juniors, 13 sophomores, and 32 first years. Of the 54 who provided demographic information, 41 were European American, 7 were Asian, 4 African American, 1 multiracial, and 1 Hispanic.

A subset of 22 participants was selected for more detailed scrutiny according to their responses to the Identity Concern Survey. Eleven participants who wrote a narrative reported either severe or very severe global concern for their identity, and 12 for whom we have stories reported a complete lack of global identity “discomfort.” One participant in the “no concern” group was randomly selected for elimination to produce equally sized groups. The high concern group consisted of 9 females and 2 males, while the no concern group included 4 females and 7 males. 8 European American subjects and 3 African American participants made up the high concern group, and 7 European American, 3 Asian, and 1 African American participant completed the no concern group. This subset of 22 was comprised of 2 seniors (1 severe concern; 1 no
concern), 3 juniors (3 severe concern; 0 no concern), 9 sophomores (3 severe concern; 6 no concern), and 8 first years (4 severe concern; 4 no concern).

Data Collection Procedures

In the first stage, participants gathered in a computer lab, where each opened an Authorware file containing a battery of 4 questionnaires along with a demographic inventory. Before completing each survey, they were asked to provide an ID number consisting of their birthdate and the last four digits of their cell phone number. After completing the battery, participants were debriefed and dismissed.

In the second stage, participants initially gathered in one computer lab. Then half of those present were randomly chosen to follow a research assistant to another computer lab to be given a different set of writing instructions. Both sets of instructions were read aloud and projected onto a large screen in the front of the room for later reference. Prompts and locations were counterbalanced to prevent systematic effects. All participants were told that I was interested in the stories people tell about social experience. Then, they were given one of the following two prompts:

1. “Please take a few moments to think about a relationship you have had with someone who is different from you in some significant way. The relationship may be of any kind: a professional relationship, familial, mentoring, romantic relationship, or friendship. I am asking you to spend between 30 and 40 minutes writing the story of this relationship, starting with how you met. Don’t worry
about grammar or spelling—we are just interested in the story of how relationships unfold.”

2. “Please take a few moments to think about a situation in which you were different from the others you were with in some significant way. The situation may have happened recently or a long time ago, and may be of any kind—positive, negative, or neutral. Your situation may be set anywhere: a professional setting, home, an academic, religious, or recreational setting. I am asking you to spend between 30 and 40 minutes writing the story of this experience, starting with how you came to be in the situation, when you realized you were different, how you reacted, and what happened next. Try to give as much detail as you can, and reflect on what the experience was like. Don’t worry about grammar or spelling—we are just interested in the story of how being the “only one” unfolds.”

Participants were then reassured that all names and other identifying information would be changed before members of the research team read the stories to protect the privacy of characters mentioned, regardless of participants’ own usage of altered or abbreviated names. After instructions were read, participants were allowed to begin typing into a blank Word document. Subjects were given a 10-minute notice after 30 minutes had elapsed, then were asked to conclude their stories and to add the ID number used in Wave 1 (birthdate plus the last four cell phone number digits) at the bottom of their document. Participants in both labs then were asked to complete the Authorware version of
the Identity Centrality Questionnaire after entering their ID number. Once participants completed the questionnaire, each was handed a debriefing form which included encouragement to seek assistance at the college’s Counseling Center if anything they had written brought up disturbing issues for them. Participants were then dismissed.

Data Analysis Procedures

Questionnaires. EOMEIS-2 scores were computed based upon the instrument’s published manual (Adams, 1998), assigning each participant to one of four identity statuses. Appropriate ICQ items were reverse-scored, then Likert responses were summed by domain, giving each participant a centrality score of 5 to 35 for each of the 17 identity categories. Based on these scores, we were able to create graphic profiles consisting of the 17 identity centrality summed scores for each of the 84 authors who completed the second-wave ICQ. Refer to Appendix C for this array of centrality profiles.

Narratives. After all 85 narratives were stripped of identifying information, they were coded by consensus between two raters by five members of the research team for the types of difference the author mentioned, since both prompts specifically requested a narrative about a relationship or solo situation characterized by difference. Through multiple readings of the stories, a list of 15 types of difference along with one “other” category to account for differences outside the 15 specified types was compiled. Consensus coding is a method of rating data whereby two coders independently assign scores then come together

2 Due to data loss encountered during the first wave of the study, ICQ responses from this wave have been excluded from analyses.
to compare and reach agreements on their decisions through thoughtful debate. This method of coding was preferred in this scenario due to large number of categories, some of them occurring too infrequently to allow us to achieve sufficient inter-rater reliability scores. Indeed, all coders were carefully briefed on all categories, had familiarized themselves with the corpus, and thoughtfully resolved any disagreements. There were no cases in which we failed to reach consensus. Raters were trained to code the narratives as a 0, 1, or 2, on 16 categories of difference listed in Table 1. A code of 0 reflects a complete absence of the difference in the narrative, while a code of 2 indicates that the author presented and explored the difference in question. A rating of 1 signals that the author noted the difference but either explicitly minimized its pertinence or mentioned it only once among a “laundry-list” of differences (Refer to Appendix D for the coding manual in its entirety).

Table 1. Types of difference coding categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difference Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>Pertaining to institutionalized beliefs (i.e. religious &amp; political beliefs and philosophies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality</td>
<td>Pertaining to goodness/badness, rightness/wrongness (e.g. one of us makes better decisions than the other; I was strong enough to follow and stand up for what I believe in)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>Regarding personality traits (e.g. openness, extraversion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abilities</td>
<td>Pertaining to skills, whether physical or cognitive (i.e., intelligence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjustment</td>
<td>Pertaining to mental health (in rehab, on medication, in therapy, etc.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lifestyle

Regular activities of life; the way we spend our time. These may be influenced by other categories, such as adjustment, ideology, morality, or physicality. Lifestyle differences, however, are the daily manifestation or realization of these sources.

Social Status

Pertains to any characteristic that provides or removes social authority. Social status need not co-occur with age. For, one may be more or less popular, or more or less privileged than another because of some other difference.

Age

Regarding any numerical age disparities.

Physical

Pertaining to the function, appearance, or health of the body

Sexual Orientation

Regarding differences in sexuality (e.g., gay, straight, transsexual, questioning)

Gender

Regarding differences in gender or disparate experiences attributed to gender

Socioeconomic Status

Pertaining to differences in socioeconomic level (e.g. rich, poor, upper-class, lower-class, or mentions of assets or material items.)

Family

Regarding rearing style, family structure, family dynamics or health, and familial ideology

Race/ethnicity

Pertaining to racial differences (e.g. European American, African American, Asian)

Region/nationality

Regarding geographic location or origin with respect to region or country. Mentions of language and dialect variations are also included.

Other

Pertaining to any difference not encompassed by the previous categories (e.g. differences in educational background, dating status)

Results

Descriptive Analysis of Narrative Data

Eighty-five authors showcased, or at least mentioned, a total of 16 types of difference in their story (See Figure 1). The length of these accounts averaged
around 793 words, ranging from as few as 363 words to as many as 1606. A series of 16 One-Way ANOVAs confirmed that story word count did not vary as a function of the 16 differences (ps>.05). However, a One-Way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect for Race (European American, African American, or “other,” which includes Asian, Hispanic, and multiracial authors) on story length, F(2, 73)= 4.85, p=.011, such that European American participants wrote significantly longer accounts (M=844.03) than did African American participants (M=641.20) and Asian, Hispanic, and multiracial individuals in the “others” group (M=614.29). Three additional One-Way ANOVAs showed that story length varied neither by Gender (female or male), Age (first year or older student), nor by Prompt (relationship or solo status; ps>.05).

Figure 1. Frequency of categories construed as Major or Minor Differences written about in the authors’ stories. Each value is out of 85. Major Differences are shown in red and minor, in yellow.
Forty of the 48 chi-square analyses examining the presence or absence of the 16 types of difference written about by authors in our demographic categories (Age, Gender, and Race) could not be conducted due to small cell sizes, and the 8 chi-square tests that did include a sufficient number of cases did not reach significance ($ps>.05$).

A chi-square test (Prompt by Race) confirmed that the three Race groups represented in our sample were assigned equally to both prompts ($p>.05$). However, a second chi-square analysis (Prompt by Gender) showed that significantly fewer male participants wrote about differences within the context of a relationship than within that of solo status ($X^2(1)=6.08, p=.014$).

*Emerging patterns in the narratives.* With a Strauss and Corbin (1998) grounded theory approach, we returned to the narratives for several additional careful readings and open coded, or recorded any recurrent themes and patterns across stories. Having established and extrapolated the definitions of categories on this basis, members of the research team set out to achieve reliability on a subset of the stories.

Applying this methodology, we entertained the question of how narrative can be used to reflect identity development within the context of the two social circumstances our authors described in their stories. Indeed, two hallmark constituents of development—change and stability—arose as recurring themes in the stories. The constructs were further refined, then two members of the research team were trained on category definitions. They were able to independently code with inter-rater reliability a subset of the narratives as
“present” or “absent” for authors’ descriptions of personal change and sameness (see Table 2 for reliabilities and Appendix D for the coding manual).

Table 2. Author Change and Author Stability category descriptions, reliability outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Inter-rater Reliability</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author Change</td>
<td>The author describes personal change in a particular identity domain or in the way he or she views him or herself in that domain</td>
<td>(k=0.80)</td>
<td>Present: 40 \nAbsent: 45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author Stability</td>
<td>The author explicitly describes staying the same or shows a refusal to change</td>
<td>(k=0.89)</td>
<td>Present: 22 \nAbsent: 63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two One-way ANOVAs confirmed that the stories did not significantly differ in length as a function of Author Change or Author Stability (\(ps>.05\)).

Two chi-square tests (Prompt by Change and Prompt by Stability) were performed to determine whether authors in the two prompt conditions differed in the tendency to write about Change or to affirm Stability. These analyses revealed no prompt effect on the tendency to write about change. However, the “solo status” prompt provoked more stories with explicit Stability affirmations than did the relationship prompt, \(X^2(1)=3.27, p=.07\).

Again, we returned to the stories with questions of how narrative serves as a vehicle for identity development and expression. During open coding, I began to notice systematicity in the way authors used personal pronoun phrases to put forth claims about the self. A “claim” was defined as any statement including any personal pronoun, as well as second person pronouns delivered by
another character about the author. I took note of and defined 8 distinct, culturally recognized categories of selfhood: the embodied self, psychological self, moral self, acquisitional self, relational, communicative, group membership, and productive. An “other” category was also created to gauge the number of claims unaccounted for by our 8 groups. Two independent coders achieved reliability on counts of the 8 content categories (Refer to Table 3 for category descriptions and reliabilities; see Appendix D for coding details). Once claims were classified and summed by category for each participant, scores were divided by the overall story word count to produce a claim ratio score for each of the 8 claim types.

Table 3. Categories of self claims (Mean of total claims=75.76 per story)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Pearson r</th>
<th>Mean claims/story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Embodied</td>
<td>Mentions of an author’s physical appearance, beauty, health, body function, ability, or lack thereof</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>7.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychological</td>
<td>Allusions to the author’s own cognitive processes (e.g. hoping, thinking, daydreaming, realizing, wanting), emotions, mental states, psychological traits (conscientiousness, introversion), or psychological disorders</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>24.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral</td>
<td>Valenced or evaluative mentions of the self, or instances in which the author positions him or herself as an evaluator</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>6.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquisitional</td>
<td>Mentions of buying, selling, possessing material things, or being able or unable to afford a good of some sort</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>2.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Value1</td>
<td>Value2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relational</td>
<td>Mentions of the author's individual family members, friends, co-workers, teachers, significant others, roommates, and any “other”</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>19.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicative</td>
<td>Mentions in which the author presents the self as a communicator (telling, speaking, mentioning, writing a note, gossiping, etc.)</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>5.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Membership</td>
<td>References to the author's group affiliations, such as the “family” proper (i.e., “my family” or “my extended family,” not “my sister”), a school, team, Greek organization, religion (I’m a Muslim), age indicated by grade (My sophomore class; When I was in 9th grade), race, etc. The group should have institutional status, as the ones mentioned above.</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>5.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productive</td>
<td>Mentions in which the author relates any sort of action, or lack thereof, to a goal. This category includes mention of successes, accomplishments, failures, completion of tasks, wins, losses, etc.</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>4.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Claim analyses.* We conducted a one-way (Prompt Type) ANOVA on all claim ratio scores. This revealed a main effect for Prompt Type on relational claim ratio such that authors who wrote a story about a relationship with someone who is different had higher relational claim ratio scores (M=.034) than those who narrated about a solo experience (M=.020; F(1, 20)=12.04, p=.002).

A series of three ANOVAs were conducted to ascertain any Gender (female or male author), Age (first-year or older student), or Race (European-American, African-American, or other) effects on the claim ratio scores. There
arose a main effect for Gender on total identity claim ratio, such that women had higher overall summed identity claim ratios (M=.105) than did men (M=.090; F(1, 20)=7.96, \(p=.011\)). Two additional Gender main effects emerged, such that female participants produced greater psychological claim ratios (M=.036) than did men (M=.026; F(1, 20)= 9.32, \(p=.006\)), as well as larger communicative claim ratios (M=.008) than men (M=.005; F(1, 20)= 4.49, \(p=.047\)). No Age group or Race group differences were found to be significant (\(ps>.05\)).

Descriptive Analysis of Questionnaire Data

EOMEIS-2. According to the EOMEIS-2, all 97 participants who completed the questionnaire were categorized as having an ideological identity status either of diffusion (84) or foreclosure (13; See Figure 2). Hence, regarding topics of politics, religion, and career, most participants’ responses were consistent with neither the practice of deciding on an identity or of exploring their options, and the rest reported having assumed their current identities from authority figures without previously surveying potential identities. Participants appear to have followed a similar pattern with regard to interpersonal identity decisions, such as choices of friends, conclusions about gender roles in the family, and dating philosophies. Indeed, 88 reflected a diffuse identity; 7, foreclosed; and 1 individual supplied evidence for having accomplished a “moratorium,” or exploratory identity\(^3\) (See Fig. 3).

\(^3\) Note that the participant whose score reflected an interpersonal identity status of moratorium was excluded from statistical analyses and was not grouped with another status due to theoretical incongruity.
Figure 2. Ideological Identity Status of the 97 participants from Wave 1.

Figure 3. Interpersonal Identity Status of 97 participants from the first wave.

*Identity Concern Survey.* According to the results of a Prompt One-Way ANOVA on identity concern survey scores, there were no significant distinctions between the concern levels of relationship writers and those of solo status authors (p>.05).

A series of one-way ANOVAs unveiled several Race (European-American, African-American, or other), Gender (female or male), and Age (first-year or older student) differences on identity concern responses. A significant main
effect for Race on racial identity concern revealed that Asian, Hispanic, and multiracial participants grouped into the “other” category showed more identity concern about race (M=1.9) than did European American participants (M=1.3; F(2, 93)=3.34, p=.040). Another significant Race main effect on moral identity concern showed that participants in the “other” category demonstrated less worry about their moral identity (M=1.50) than European Americans expressed (M=2.31; F(2, 93)= 3.81, p=.026). A main effect for Race on relationship identity concern revealed that European American participants also communicated more identity concern with regard to their relationships (M=3.42) than African American subjects did (M=2.58; F(2, 93)=3.78, p=.026). However, a main effect for sexual orientation identity concern demonstrated that African American participants showed more worry about sexual orientation identity (M=1.5) than European Americans did (M=1.03; F(2, 93)=5.95, p=.004). There were no significant differences among Race groups on their reports of global identity concerns.

As for Gender differences, a One-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect on global identity concern, such that women’s reports of their global identity concerns (M=2.61) were higher than those of men (M=1.96; F (1, 94)=7.88, p=.006). Another Gender main effect showed that women expressed greater identity anxiety about their careers (M=3.06) than did men (M=2.36; F(1, 94)=6.82, p=.010). A main effect for Gender on body identity concern arose, such that female participants worried more about their body identity (M=3.18) than men did (M=2.24; F(1, 94)=14.16, p=.0001). An Age ANOVA revealed that
older students (sophomores, juniors, and seniors) showed more concern for their career identity (M=3.10) than did first years (M=2.43; F(1, 93)=4.39, p=.039). Another significant main effect for Age emerged, such that first years demonstrated more concern for their adjustment identity (M=2.13) than older students (M=1.59; F(1, 93)=5.30, p=.024).

Identity Centrality Questionnaire. Responses to each of the 17 identity centrality domains reflect an adequate use of the scale range and show low values of skewness and kurtosis. Ranges, minimums, maximums, means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis of each identity centrality summed domain can be found in Appendix E. Refer to Appendix C for the centrality profiles of our 84 story writers.

Race (European American, African American, or other), Gender (female or male), and Age (first year or older student) differences were investigated in responses to the ICQ. A One-way ANOVA for Race on racial identity centrality revealed that non-European American participants (i.e. African American participants and those grouped in the category of “other”) reported their racial identity as more central to them (M_{AA}=29.30; M_{others}=29.57) than European American participants expressed (M=24.21; F(2, 66)= 7.36, p=.001). Another main effect for Race on personal ability centrality showed that European American and African American participants considered their personal ability identity more central (M_{EA}=26.64; M_{AA}=27.10) than did those in the “other” group (M=21.29; F(2, 66)=5.95, p=.004). Further, a main effect for Race on social class centrality arose such that African American participants reported higher
centrality within the domain of social class identity (M=27.10) than did either European American participants (M=23.50) or subjects grouped into the “other” category (M=20.57; F(2, 66)= 4.214, p=.019).

As for Gender effects, a One-Way ANOVA on body appearance centrality revealed that female participants demonstrated greater body appearance identity centrality (M=25.88) than did males (M=22.50; F(1, 67)= 9.53, p=.003). There also arose a main effect for Gender on personality trait centrality, such that females considered their trait identity more central (M=27.65) than did males (M=25.17; F(1, 67)=4.13, p=.046). Further, the Gender ANOVA showed that female participants reported their moral identity as being more central to them (M=28.84) than did male participants (25.61; F(1, 67)=7.75, p=.007). N-values in individual cells were too small to explore interactions between Race and Gender differences. No differences in Age were found for identity centrality scores with a One-Way ANOVA (p>.05).

Relating Questionnaire Data Among Each Other and to Narratives

Several series of Pearson r correlations were conducted to explore patterns across data. Correlations among story length, centrality sums, identity concern scores, and identity claim ratios were calculated. Of the 494 correlations computed, only 10 accounted for more than 15% of the variance among scores. Those 10 were examined more closely, but no coherent patterns emerged.

Change and Stability. One-way ANOVAs were computed for Author Change and Author Stability on identity concern and centrality scores. Though no effects for
Author Change were significant, a main effect for Author Stability regarding career identity concern did reach significance, such that authors who explicitly wrote about staying the same or resisting self-change showed a higher degree of worry about their career identity (M=3.47) than those who did not expressly mention stability (M=2.80; F(1, 63)=4.11, p=.047). Another significant main effect for Author Stability on political identity concern reflected that those who wrote about their own stability expressed higher political concerns (M=2.29) than participants who did not (M=1.74; F(1, 63)=5.00, p=.029). A marginally significant Author Stability main effect on global identity concern indicated that those authors coded as communicating “stability” reported higher global identity worries (M=2.94) than those who expressed no such sameness (M=2.38; F(1, 63)=3.62, p=.062). Identity centrality sums did not differ significantly as a factor of either Author Change or Author Stability (ps>.05).

Four chi-square tests between Author Change and Stability and Ideological and Interpersonal Identity Status (Author Change by Ideological Identity Status, Author Change by Interpersonal Identity Status, Author Stability by Ideological Identity Status, and Author Stability by Interpersonal Identity Status) were conducted and found to be non-significant.

Concern groups. As indicated by a One-way ANOVA on story word count for Concern Group differences, severe-concern and no-concern groups wrote equally long stories (p>.05). However, a marginally significant Concern Group main effect for overall identity claim ratios arose, such that the total identity
claim ratio was greater for the severe-concern group (M=.104) than it was for the no-concern group (M=.094; F(1, 20)= 2.80, p=.110).

A Concern Group ANOVA on gender identity centrality showed that high concern participants also reported greater gender identity centrality (M=30.81) than those who were not concerned (M=27.83; F(1, 20)=5.85, p=.025). A significant main effect for body identity centrality also emerged, such that severe-concern subjects indicated that their body identity was more central to them (M=27.36) than did participants with no global identity concern (M=23.46; F(1, 20)=7.27, p=.014). Further, a Concern Group main effect for health identity centrality indicated that health centrality scores were higher for severely concerned participants (M=27.27) than for participants not worried about their identity (M=22.46; F(1, 20)=7.28, p=.014). Finally, a main effect for Concern Group on moral identity centrality showed that moral identity scores of severely concerned participants (M=29.82) exceeded those of unconcerned participants (M=25.00; F(1, 20)=7.35, p=.013).

Identity Status differences. A One-Way ANOVA for Ideological Identity Status on identity concern survey responses showed that participants with a diffuse ideological identity status did not differ from those with a foreclosed status on any of their identity concern scores. However, there arose a main effect from an Interpersonal Identity Status ANOVA on sexual orientation identity concern, such that those with foreclosed identities in the interpersonal domain did express greater sexual orientation identity anxiety (M=1.71) than those with a diffuse identity in the same domain (M=1.06; F(1, 92)= 12.77, p=.001).
A One-way ANOVA (Ideological Identity Status) revealed significant differences regarding religious identity centrality (F(1, 63)=6.81, p=.011), such that those with a identity-diffuse status showed higher religious centrality (M=26.10) than those who were characterized by a foreclosed identity status (M=22.56). There also was a marginally significant main effect for Ideological Identity Status on political identity centrality, such that diffuse participants reported greater political centrality (M=26.37) than foreclosed subjects (M=17.00; F(1, 63)=3.78, p=.056). Because only 4 participants who took the ICQ in the second wave were characterized as having a foreclosed identity status, ANOVAs were not computed within the interpersonal domain.

We were also unable to conduct ANOVAs on identity claim ratios due to the small group of 2 participants considered to have an interpersonal foreclosed identity out of the subset of 22.

Discussion

For the present study, we attempted to design an identity assessment that would serve as a broad substrate on which testtakers could build a portrait of their network of identity commitments. We conjured up identity-relevant questions to elicit thoughtful, self-disclosing, identity-rich narratives and amassed information about our authors’ identity achievement, concerns, and centrality in hopes that in the end, we would be equipped to deliver, in turn, our own coherent story of how particular identities become central. Thankfully, a key task of the narrative enterprise is accounting for the unexpected—a
proclivity that I will capitalize on to narrate our tangled tale of marginal significance and instrumental surprises.

When we requested narratives about difference scenarios from our participants, authors responded on average with approximately one single-spaced page about any of 16 identifiable differences. Further, a good number of our writers included in their stories some unprompted discussion of change or stability in themselves. Those narrating solo status experiences seemed slightly more predisposed to talk about self-stability than relationship writers were, though this effect was marginally significant. Hence, not only did authors document a wide range of difference types—they made these differences identity-relevant. Indeed, the two fundamental components of identity development, and development at large, are change and constancy. Some of our authors even drew causal connections between their identity change or constancy and the actual experience of being different:

Example 1:

“These things were inside of me [a confident self] ready to be shown and he helped me show them.” (Author 17)

Example 2:

“Looking back on my trip I am glad I went because it helped me realize who my real friend were (as cliché as that sounds) [...] Overall I learned that I was very different from those people and a lot more down to earth.” (Author 67)

In the sense that self-change and −stability are identity-pertinent, both prompts successfully triggered “identity talk” without specifically asking participants to give a “life story,” or an account of who they are. Direct requests such as these are common to the psychologist discursive setting but do not
contain much verisimilitude. We are more likely to tell a greater number of audiences on more than one occasion about this one awkward time in class when we suddenly realized that we were the only one who held a certain political view than to report a story of “who we are.” Indeed, it seems quite possible that the more “tellable” a story is, or the more conversationally interesting and appropriate it is, the more likely it will be told frequently and thereby inch toward the center of one’s identity. Likewise may be the case for identities already at the core of one’s current identity network.

Surprisingly, the identity-rich consistency unearthed with our narrative corpus did not transfer to the results of the seasoned Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status-2, an instrument rooted in the identity achievement approach of Marcia. Again, this assessment has been demonstrated to predict a variety of factors, including health, romantic attachment, and academic performance (e.g., Marcia, 1988; Berman, Weems, Rodriguez, & Zamora, & 2006; Streitmatter, 1989). The failure of this instrument to relate to other data we collected was disappointing, but in an interesting and provocative way. The statistic that not one participant was found to have achieved an identity in either the interpersonal or ideological domain was quite alarming. All 97 emerging adult participants were in an age group that corresponds to the stage of development “Identity vs. Role Confusion,” a time those in the Eriksonian tradition consider to be ripe for identity work. Further, all were attending a liberal arts institution that privileges the critical examination of “questions of meaning and value” (“The Foundations Curriculum,” 2007, p. 63),
reflected in the College’s choice of this agenda as the first of eleven curricular foundations. This “Foundation 1” functions as a keystone requirement for students, as indicated by the following elaboration:

“Questions about the meaning and purpose of life are central to human existence. Every area of the Rhodes curriculum touches in some way upon such problems and questions, whether directly as in moral philosophy, epic poetry, and political thought, or indirectly as in studies of the history of medieval Europe, economic theory, and the physical structure of the universe.” (“The Foundations Curriculum,” 2007, p. 63)

Furthermore, every student is required to take two of three primary Foundation 1 courses in their first year, thus having exposed all of our participants to such value- and identity-challenges.

Also, the college’s most recent initiative of bridging academic work with service (deemed LEAP, “Linking Education And Practice”) notably increases student opportunity to encounter and engage people who are different, and to thoughtfully examine themselves in light of these interactions. In short, it seems to me that if any particular identity status is likely to prevail at Rhodes, the emphases on critical inquiry and exposure to difference should encourage exploratory processes necessary for the classifications of moratorium and achievement.

Further, the only marginally significant and fully significant outcomes of analyses conducted on identity statuses showed counterintuitively that participants with a diffused status had more central political and religious identities, respectively, than those in foreclosure. If any prediction could be
made for identity status with regard to centrality, it should either project no
mean differences between these two statuses, or even a greater average for
foreclosed individuals than diffused. To address the reasons why such
incongruities surfaced, I returned to the questionnaire itself to perform a more
detailed item scrutiny.

Items concern a total of 8 issues: 4 ideological (i.e., career, religion,
“lifestyle,” and politics) and 4 interpersonal (i.e., friends, dating, hobbies, and
gender roles). Some of these topics—that is, career, religion, and politics— have
conventionally been studied, as they reflect “coming-of-age” decisions on which
our culture places high importance and are reminiscent of our historical roots
for identity crises (Baumeister, 1987). I became curious to review how the
“lifestyle” issue and the interpersonal topics were worded in the items. As
intuited, the lifestyle items felt rather vague, with the term lifestyle in quotation
marks and not prefaced by a definition of the intended meaning, e.g. “I’m looking
for an acceptable perspective for my own ‘life style’, but haven’t really found it
yet” (Item 12). The recreational items resemble the following: “While I don’t
have one recreational activity I’m really committed to, I’m experiencing
numerous leisure outlets to identify one I can truly enjoy” (Item 14). While
some hobbies boast notoriously avid practitioners, such as bird-watchers, for
instance, a recreation is typically not conceptualized as something members of
our culture are expected to choose or “settle on,” as religious and political views
are. Upon rereading the gender role items, I was reminded of their anachronistic
quality. Since the trend of “failures to launch”—that is, a global delay of full
responsibility—has arisen as typical of certain Western “twentysomethings,” choices regarding marriage and family roles have, in turn, been postponed. Hence, to much of our cohort, the statement “There are many ways that married couples can divide up family responsibilities [...] I’ve thought about lots of ways, and not [sic] I know exactly how I want it to happen for me” (Item 51) seems largely foreign. If one must have decided upon a rigid set of recreational activities and be clear exactly how one will conduct the affairs of a future family, we should not be surprised that our participants did not register as “achieved” or even as “in moratorium,” at least within the interpersonal domain of Adams’ scale. For, I posit that identity issues arise in a cultural context. Certain domains come to the fore as the culture demands answers from its members. But they also can fall into the background at certain points in life, as evidenced by the gender role issues included in the 1986 iteration of the EOMEIS.

As for the distinction between ideological and interpersonal identity statuses, these two contrasting facets do not lie at the core of Marcia’s framework. They may represent an attempt to reconcile the internally-focused cognitive-developmental view with a more social notion. However, this bridging has not yet been accomplished in the sense that identity as an entity, according to cognitive-developmental researchers, is yet wholly housed within the individual.

Whether or not we agree with the theoretical contrast drawn between ideological and interpersonal realms, we still may be left with the question of why the particular group of eight issues was selected. They may have been
privileged as purely “chosen” identities over ascribed ones. Though there certainly exists room to question whether certain subgroups of people even perceive the issues at hand as decisions to be made, they are not forced upon us by society in the same way that race and gender seem to be. Even so, the race identity and gender identity literatures are both quite prolific, thus documenting some value to the study of how people come to understand their own ascribed identities (e.g., Phinney, 1992; Helms, 1990). Further, Phinney (1992), a prominent cognitive-developmental identity researcher, has studied ethnic identity as an achievable construct. There are, yet, more ascribed identities not so abundantly studied in the cognitive-developmental literature, such as what would be characterized in the ICQ as “Health Identity,” which may point to certain visible disabilities. In short, researchers who hail from the Eriksonian lineage have not considered sufficiently important a host of identities that very well may represent the aspects of self that organize other features, or the ones that are “central,” or “identity-critical.” In light of this, the production of our identity centrality measure seems all the more pivotal to achieving a full survey of identity.

To gather a more complete perspective on the participants who responded to the EOMEIS-2, I examined the identity status profiles to select cases. Two cases immediately attracted my attention: one who responded with high scores on all four of the statuses (though it is theoretically incongruous to be in four states of identity status at once), and another with low scores on all
four. These response patterns translate to identity statuses of foreclosure (Author 81) and moratorium (Author 39), respectively.

Upon investigating the battery of data for Author 81 (who had high scores in achievement, foreclosure, moratorium and diffusion), I found that she actually reported very severe identity concerns regarding her relationships, evidence that does not align with her EOMEIS-2 score, which classified her as an individual who simply assumed her parents’ philosophies to construct an interpersonal identity. A few details in her narrative corroborate her responses to the concern survey. Author 81 tells a tale of being the only one of her race in her new class. She even mentions holding her mother’s hand while walking into school, seeking support, perhaps even explanations from her mother as she is abandoned to a class-full of people who do not look like her. She describes her condition during the first month of school as “dying from loneliness” (Story 81, Line 30); thus, she paints herself as “going it alone,” so to speak, without any reception of easy resolutions from her mother. Eventually, she decides to reach out to one of these foreign “others” to befriend him, again without any documented help from authority figures. Indeed, our author “finally gathered the courage to go talk to someone” (Line 30). From her exploratory experiences, she reports having transformed into someone who finds herself “in more and more diverse situations” (Line 43), and this as a result of her own initiative-taking. In short, Author 81 provides substantial evidence to demonstrate processes of moratorium and, according to her, who now has “a new perspective” (Line 47), a more enriched racial identity. Though this story took
place several years in the author’s past, she paints the anecdote for us in her present self and current understanding of that past experience. I argue that by telling us now, she gives us her “college-aged” perspective and, therefore, provides us with insight relevant to her current identity, as well.

Author 39, who scored low on all four status domains and was assigned to the category of “moratorium,” the state of identity-exploration, expressed a complete lack of global concern for identity issues in the IDS. She provides an account about a friendship that developed between herself and a very outspoken classmate. She seems to perform no apparent exploring. Further, there is very little narrative structure that characterizes her writing. In other words, she gives the reader a description of the differences between her and her classmate, rather than situating a series of events in time and space. From the narrative data, there arises no obvious evidence of the author’s being in a moratorious state.

Though the narrative of Author 39 does not seem to reflect the employment of clear exploratory work as her EOMEIS-2 score indicates, a substantial number of our authors did write explicitly about changing or staying the same, which implies some sort of identity work—that is, putting forth new, or revised identities or defending the old ones. After documenting her time as a counselor of a southern, inner-city camp, Author 9 reports “[having come] out of the experience a lot different than I was going into it (now that I have had sufficient time to reflect)” (Line 43). According to the EOMEIS-2, her interpersonal and ideological statuses are diffuse and foreclosed, respectively,
despite her narrative documentation of thoughtful change in the way she views herself as a confident social actor, and as a person of privileged social status.

Juxtaposed against people who do not share her moral values, Author 60 lays out her moral identity first by realizing “right when I walked inside and saw people dressed differently, holding drugs, and actually doing drugs, that I was really different” (l. 12). Then she confirms a stable past and future moral identity with “I sure wasn’t like them or will ever become like the people I met that night” (l. 69). Although Author 60 describes a process of affirming her moral identity through an encounter with those who she designates as “different,” she achieved two “diffuse” scores as her interpersonal and ideological statuses.

According to Marcia’s framework, those in diffuse and foreclosed states will not have undergone any sort of exploratory processes with regard to their identity. However, the following examples revealing exploratory and epiphanic processes were excerpted from the narratives of authors who were categorized as “diffused,” or “identity-disinterested” (proceeding emphasis is mine):

Example 5:

“Although most people my age are placed in my situation I defiantly handled it differently than a lot of my friends. Some of my friends from home took awhile to have fun and were homesick in the begging [beginning]. But they never changed who they were. I think that would have been a better way to handle things. They actually dealt with their emotions […] I find that I cry more this year when im stressed out with a lot of work [or am] homesick but that is just because I am dealing with my emotion. In high school I cried frequently when I was stressed. Freshman year I cried probably twice the entire time I was at school. *I realize I am an emotional person [...]” (Author 71)
After a difficult transition year from high school to college, Author 71 reflects on the mental and physical deterioration she endured, and compares herself to her friends who did not change “who they were.” She acknowledges both the experiences of changing into a person she later documents her mom “didn’t know” and of her long return to health. She experientially discovered her “emotional” self in the process.

Example 6:

“[A]s I looked at this teenaged kid, lying in his bed, in pain, with who-knows-what kind of thoughts running through his head, with an utterly depressed look on his face, I started to think about what if that was me.” (Author 37)

Author 37 describes his experience as being different from a hospital patient and in the middle of the account begins to reflect on his own identity in light of this character’s circumstances. Could he, as a person of a certain age, race, socioeconomic status, and family background, be placed in this person’s position? This exploratory perspective-taking may very well provide the kindling for further identity development. After all, he first must identify himself in particular ways to question if he, seeing himself as a certain kind of person, could endure the patient’s personal turmoil. Whether or not Author 37 is approaching the centralization of new identities, he certainly does not give the impression of being “identity-alooof,” as his EOMEIS-2 score would indicate.

Hence, detailed comparisons of our battery of quantitative and qualitative data have reflected consistency with the constructs of the cognitive-
developmental theoretical framework. The operationalizations of those concepts, though, do appear to be incompatible with our data.

Although narrative can serve to conveniently illuminate relevant patterns veiled by other methodologies, it is not the case that authors always explicitly entertain the experiences of self-change and -stability. So, what has narrative to do with the identities of authors who did not describe themselves as changing or explicitly staying the same? No matter whether or not participants wrote about identity proper, all authors positioned themselves in simple, subtle, yet poignant ways at one of the smallest meaningful grammatical levels—specifically, the personal pronoun phrase. Authors put forth very localized, yet bold and direct identity claims in their usage of statements with personal pronouns. One of the simplest ways to claim an identity of “athletic,” for example, is to announce to one’s audience, “I am very athletic.” This kind of claiming may assume different shades of pragmatic meaning across a variety of linguistic environments, depending on the particular audience, conversational context, and location within the course of a sentence or utterance. Such a statement may seem inordinately boastful and inappropriate or may be interpreted as a fitting defense of one’s reputation. Hence, a qualitative scrutiny of such claims situated within their contexts proves a valuably informative endeavor. Nevertheless, at a certain semantic level, the statement “I am athletic” always communicates a stable set of propositions. That is, the speaker is asserting the present and ongoing characteristic of the physical prowess of his or her body—the potential for his or her body to exert its strength and agility in some physical feat.
Because of their “semantic stability,” these local identity claims also have the potential for quantification and quantitative analyses. Hence, an enumeration of identity claims might provide a portrait of the identity landscape in one window of time. However, that “one window of time” is only deceptively singular, for in the telling of a story from one’s past, identity is automatically being put forth from two perspectives: that of the author’s own character in the story—that is, his or her “past” self—and the participant presently constructing that narrative with a present understanding and a current authorial voice.

Further, a speaker or writer may highlight or defend a variety of attributes of the self through these micropositionings. We were able to pull out 8 distinct, culturally recognized categories of selfhood: the embodied self, psychological self, moral self, acquisitional self, relational, communicative, group membership, and productive self.

The term “micropositioning” is used to hearken back to what Michael Bamberg (2004) has deemed *positioning analysis*. This discursive researcher posits that we use language in conversational “small stories” to situate ourselves at three levels: amidst the characters in our story, within the real-time interaction at hand, and at the grand stage of our culture’s master narratives. With a purely qualitative approach, Bamberg tracked the way a group of adolescent boys built up identities for themselves in these three ways in a pseudo-naturally occurring conversation held between the boys and a moderator.
The first tier, the positioning that happens amongst characters in the story, does occur in our authors’ stories, given the nature of the task. But these particular prompts not only allow for analysis of any author’s positioning of characters to each other; further, they are narrations of *discursive situations.* For, the subset of 22 stories coded for the 8 domains of selfhood claims contained several instances of reported speech and an average of 5.09 communicative claims in which the author positioned him or herself specifically as “speaker.”

Though Bamberg allows that positioning analysis can be applied to first-person and past-experience narratives, what he staunchly defends is the necessity of the conversational medium. However, if one can permit that a narrative written about a past experience reflects, to a degree, a sort of interaction between the author and his or her audience—in this case, between a participant and the researcher whom he or she has just met and from whom he or she receives instructions—then analyzing a typed account at the second level is certainly possible. Indeed, evidence from our author’s stories indicates that many explicitly took on the task as an interactive one. Particular metadiscursive tools, such as “Oh, I forgot to tell you” and “I know what you’re thinking” reflect direct communication from the author to his or her audience, the visible researcher. Also, after the conclusion of their story, some participants addressed the researchers at length.
Here are just a few examples:

Example 3

“This seems like it would be a really cool experiment and I hope that I get to read the results. I’m sure that there will be some interesting responses and it seems like a shame that so many fascinating personal anecdotes will only be read by two people. I would be curious to read them all as a collection. I really want to know what the study will see in my story.” (Story 12)

Example 4

“Hope you enjoyed my story Stephanie Wilson and Dr. Walton.” (Story 70)

Pieces of evidence such as these make conspicuous the adaptive work an author undertakes to tailor his or her account to the “interactive” environment, just as a conversation with particular interlocutors might elicit and shape the small stories told in face-to-face, spoken exchange. While I do not purport that the two media are conflatable, I am arguing that analyzable discursive remnants very well may exist in written narrative and, if so, are valuable to consider. I plan to continue to explore the data so that I may extrapolate these ideas and substantiate my claims with further evidence.

The third level of positioning—that is, in relation to a culture’s master narratives—seems not quite as difficult to imagine arising in the written story. Any identity claim that calls upon the typicalities of a culture may be considered a submission to a dominant discourse. For instance, Author 22 explains that instead of dating her new friend’s ex-boyfriend (and her own crush), she “obeyed the Secret Laws of Girlhood.” Here Author 22 appeals to two opposing master narratives—the story of self-advancement (a typical individualist plot)
and the discourse of “girl power,” which glorifies the unification and mutual respect of women. She makes the moral decision of engendering the “girl power” credo, owning it fully with herself positioned as subject, as agent, in her afore-stated identity claim.

Though this sort of claim analysis may apply the three tiers of interaction to authors’ writing, not every level is apparent in each individual claim. Because the unit of analysis is so small, it is somewhat decontextualized. Though an author may offer an utterance that tells the reader about his or her first conversation with a newly made friend of a different race—positioning him or herself at all three levels, such a sentence would most likely be comprised of several personal pronoun phrases and, thus, would need to be summed over the utterance to achieve the full meaning. For instance, by writing “I forgot to tell you that we started talking at a lesbian bar on the weekends,” an author puts forth two moves of micropositioning—one that places the self explicitly in interaction with the reader, and another that simultaneously situates the characters in a space and time that may be considered defiant of the dominant discourse.

This notion of personal pronoun micropositioning is reminiscent of Hermans’ (2003) development of the personal position repertoire. This tool has been used for assessment of clinical populations and allows the identification of any number of “I-positions” in the self, such as “I as father” or “I as worker.” Clients rank these positions in association with each other, hence forming a network of I-positions to reveal marginalized aspects of self. This idea of
identity networks even relates to our construct of identity centrality. While the power of the personal pronoun claim is mirrored in Hermans’ instrument, the clinical assessment wholly extracts and transforms such claims from the context, in contrast to micropositioning, which considers these identity moves within the framework of a personal narrative.

Although there is theoretical reason and previous research suggesting a possible connection between the narrative act of claiming and self-reported centrality, our analysis did not find statistically reliable connections between our identity claims measures in the micropositioning analysis and participant scores on our Identity Centrality Questionnaire. There arise several potential explanations for the failure to find links. First, stories coded for identity claims only numbered 22, so we had limited statistical power. However, this reasoning certainly cannot stand alone. Another contributing factor may be the incongruity of categories. Because the ICQ reflects an instrument pre-written with the end of standardization for future research, and since micropositioning categories were developed ex post facto in light of our careful study of the data itself, one should not expect groups to align precisely. Further, many of the centrality domains may be best classified in the claim category of “Group Membership.” While this category must be differentiated in the future to meaningfully speak to individual group memberships, this content area itself should have picked up on high centrality scores in many of the domains. Nevertheless, the group membership claim mean was next to the lowest average. Hence, the “goodness-of-fit” argument does not suffice in this circumstance.
Another possibility still is that the two—micropositioning claims and identity centrality responses—are completely unrelated entities; that is, one or both have naught to do with the construct of identity. However, there did arise an at least marginally significant main effect for concern groups on total identity claim ratio, such that severely concerned participants devoted a greater proportion of their story to making identity claims than did participants expressing no global identity worry. This finding weaves identity claims into the matrix of identity issues, and in a very sensible way. Further, the Identity Concern measure was one whose analyses fit into culturally expected patterns. That minority groups are worried about racial identity more than European Americans should seem credible, as should the finding that women reflected more identity concern regarding their careers and bodies. Likewise were most response patterns shown by the ICQ culturally presumed. According to this instrument, European American participants disclosed the lowest racial centrality, and African American participants reported the highest centrality for Social Class identity. These trends are not surprising, especially in light of Rhodes’ demographic landscape. Though the ICQ remains in its infant stages and will continue to be refined, but it is not clear at this point how its use might relate to the study of identity claims in personal narratives.

It should be reiterated that in addition to the ICQ, the technique of micropositioning analysis has not yet been fully developed. Both establish a foundation for continued enhancement, but the claims coding especially reflects preliminary work. Aside from further dividing and refining content categories of
selfhood, the task of introducing context into the coding scheme is, I posit, a *sine qua non*. During the process of open coding, I noticed several *features* of the claims—that is, grammatical components—that add nuance to the claim content, and demonstrate the true contextual spirit of narrative. Such features include: noun number, voice, tense, subjunctivity, continuity (i.e., punctuated vs. ongoing action), author of the claim (self or another), acceptance or rejection of the claim, and the strength of claim (indicated by devices of hedges and intensifiers).

Certainly it seems interesting to look at the degree to which an author brings into play a certain kind of identity as opposed to other aspects of selfhood. But, we glean critical contextualizing information by asking whether the author is referring to a past self (e.g. “I used to be a big hockey fan”), or a hypothetical self (e.g. “If only I were more outgoing!”); whether the writer couches the claim in the voice of another character and, subsequently, if that claim is accepted or rejected (e.g. “Brent said incorrectly that I’m a messy eater”); or whether the author “tones down,” or minimizes the importance of a particular claim (e.g. “I kind of feel pretty, sometimes”). Continuing work with these stories will code every identity claim for each of these features and will allow us to tell a more refined and contextualized story about the narrative presentation of identity.

*Conclusions*

Though the task of condensing a year’s worth of investigation into a few sentences seems daunting, a fitting conclusion I would like to draw is the central role of narrative to our understanding of identity and identity processes. The value of the narrative context is pivotal in our attempts to elucidate quantitative
manifestations of identity. It proffers a primary medium for thinking about identity in the cognitive-developmental sense (as shown by the emergence of authors’ patterns in writing about their own change and constancy) and for doing identity, in the social-discursive sense (as supported by the use of a variety of identity claims).

We developed a narrative analytic technique and a centrality questionnaire, both of whose statistical outcomes should be digested as provisional hors d’oeuvres to a forthcoming main course. For, such results encourage previously anticipated expansion of the coding scheme and affirm their theoretical viability.

The precise nature of the relationship between claiming identities in narrative and holding certain aspects of self as central is not fully understood but will be heartily pursued in future work.

Limitations/Future Directions

As aforementioned, this work is foundational and, as such, reveals much space for enhancement. Not the most trivial among our limitations is the preliminary quality of our micropositioning technique and ICQ. Another factor that limited our ability to draw boldly definitive conclusions was the failure of the EOMEIS-2 to facilitate interpretation of scores and to track other variables confirmed as valid. These limitations determine the directions we plan to take in the future. That is, work must be accomplished to revise and refine the EOMEIS-2, as well as the micropositioning tools and ICQ, so as to increase its utility for comparison. Eventually, the ICQ may be used as a gauge in an experimental
design to assess the effects of actual discursive conditions on the centrality
network to further illuminate the events that trigger the centralization of various
identities.
References


Appendix A

Identity Centrality Questionnaire in its original Authorware form, Spring 2008
1=Strongly disagree
2=Moderately disagree
3=Slightly disagree
4=Neither agree or disagree
5=Slightly agree
6=Moderately agree
7=Strongly agree

**Heading[1]= “National Identity (American, Canadian, Argentinian, etc.)”**
Item[1]= “Overall, my national identity has very little to do with how I feel about myself.”
Item[2]= “I frequently think of myself as a member of my national group.”
Item[3]= “I feel very close to the other members of my national group.”
Item[4]= “I have a good friend from a country different from my own.”

**Heading[2]= “Regional Identity (Southerner, New Yorker, Mid-westerner, etc.)”**
Item[6]= “Overall, my regional or state identity has very little to do with how I feel about myself.”
Item[7]= “I frequently think of myself as a person from my state or region.”
Item[8]= “I feel very close to the others from my state or region of the country.”
Item[9]= “I have a good friend from a state or region of the country different from my own.”

**Heading[3]= “Racial/Ethnic Identity (White, Black, Asian, African-American, Hispanic, etc.)”**
Item[11]= “Overall, my racial/ethnic identity has very little to do with how I feel about myself.”
Item[12]= “I frequently think of myself as a member of my racial/ethnic group.”
Item[13]= “I feel very close to the other members of my racial/ethnic group.”
Item[14]= “I have a good friend from an racial/ethnic group different from my own.”

**Heading[4]= “Religious Identity (Christian, Jewish, Southern Baptist, Suni Muslim, Atheist, non-religious, etc.)”**
Item[16]= “Overall, my religious identity has very little to do with how I feel about myself.”
Item[17]= “I frequently think of myself as a member of my religious group.”
Item[18]= “I feel very close to the other members of my religious group.”
Item[19]= “I have a good friend from a religious group different from my own.”
Item[20]= “ “
Heading[5]= “Social Class Identity (wealthy, working class, middle class, etc.)"
Item[21]= “Overall, my social class has very little to do with how I feel about myself.”
Item[22]= “I frequently think of myself as a member of my social class group.”
Item[23]= “I feel very close to the other members of my social class group.”
Item[24]= “I have a good friend from a social class different from my own.”
Item[25]= “

Heading[6]= “Gender Identity (female, male, trans, intersex)”
Item[26]= “Overall, my gender identity has very little to do with how I feel about myself.”
Item[27]= “I frequently think of myself as a person of my gender group.”
Item[28]= “I feel very close to the other people in my gender group.”
Item[29]= “I have a good friend whose gender is different from my own.”

Heading[7]= “Sexual Orientation Identity (gay, straight, lesbian, bisexual, etc.)”
Item[31]= “Overall, my sexual orientation has very little to do with how I feel about myself.”
Item[32]= “I frequently think of myself as a person of my sexual orientation group.”
Item[33]= “I feel very close to the other people in my sexual orientation group.”
Item[34]= “I have a good friend whose sexual orientation is different from my own.”
Item[35]= “

Heading[8]= “Professional/Career Identity (psychology major, pre-law, human services, etc.)”
Item[36]= “Overall, my college major or my career plan has very little to do with how I feel about myself.”
Item[37]= “I frequently think of myself as a member of my major department, or a career, or profession.”
Item[38]= “I feel very close to the other members of my major department or people with my same career plan.”
Item[39]= “I have a good friend from a major department or with career plans different from my own.”
Item[40]= “

Heading[9]= “Political Identity (democrat, republican, liberal, conservative, etc.)”
Item[41]= “Overall, my political identity has very little to do with how I feel about myself.”
Item[42]= “I frequently think of myself as a member of my political group.”
Item[43]= “I feel very close to the other people who share my political views.”
Item[44]= “I have a good friend with political views very different from my own.”
Item[45]= “

Heading[10]= “Personal Style Identity (goth, preppy, nerdy, artsy, etc.)”
Item[46] = “Overall, my personal style identity has very little to do with how I feel about myself.”
Item[47] = “I frequently think of myself as a member of a group with my kind of personal style.”
Item[48] = “I feel very close to the other people who share my style.”
Item[49] = “I have a good friend with a personal style very different from my own.”
Item[50] = “

Item[51] = “Overall, my body appearance identity has very little to do with how I feel about myself.”
Item[52] = “I frequently think of myself as a member of a group with my kind of looks.”
Item[53] = “I feel very close to the other people who share my appearance.”
Item[54] = “I have a good friend with body appearance very different from my own.”
Item[55] = “

Heading[12] = “Health Identity (physically fit, handicapped, diabetic, etc.)”
Item[56] = “Overall, my body function identity has very little to do with how I feel about myself.”
Item[57] = “I frequently think of myself as a member of a group with my health attributes.”
Item[58] = “I feel very close to the other people who share my health attributes.”
Item[59] = “I have a good friend with health attributes very different from my own.”
Item[60] = “

Heading[13] = “Personal Ability Identity (math whiz, artistic, learning disabled, social butterfly etc.)”
Item[61] = “Overall, my personal abilities have very little to do with how I feel about myself.”
Item[62] = “I frequently think of myself as a member of a group of people with my personal abilities.”
Item[63] = “I feel very close to the other people who share my personal abilities.”
Item[64] = “I have a good friend with abilities very different from my own.”
Item[65] = “

Heading[14] = “Personality Identity (introverted, conscientious, adventurous, etc.)”
Item[66] = “Overall, my personality identity has very little to do with how I feel about myself.”
Item[67] = “I frequently think of myself as a member of a group of people with my personality.”
Item[68] = “I feel very close to the other people who share my personality.”
Item[69] = “I have a good friend with a personality very different from my own.”
Item[70] = “

"
**Heading[15]= “Adjustment Identity (bulemic, resilient, anxious, sober, in therapy, etc.)”**

Item[71]= “Overall, my adjustment identity has very little to do with how I feel about myself.”
Item[72]= “I frequently think of myself as a member of a group of people with my type of adjustment.”
Item[73]= “I feel very close to the other people who share my type of adjustment.”
Item[74]= “I have a good friend with a type of adjustment very different from my own.”
Item[75]= “ “

**Heading[16]= “Recreational Identity (Red Sox fan, opera lover, movie buff, gamer, hiker, etc.)”**

Item[76]= “Overall, my recreational identity has very little to do with how I feel about myself.”
Item[77]= “I frequently think of myself as a member of a group of people with my choice of recreation.”
Item[78]= “I feel very close to the other people who share my choice of recreation.”
Item[79]= “I have a good friend with a choice of recreation very different from my own.”
Item[80]= “ “
Appendix B

Identity Centrality Questionnaire (Modified from Spring 2008 version)

1=Strongly disagree  
2=Moderately disagree  
3=Slightly disagree  
4=Neither agree or disagree  
5=Slightly agree  
6=Moderately agree  
7=Strongly agree

Heading[1]= “National Identity (American, Canadian, Argentinian, etc.)”  
Item[1]= “Please tell us your personal identity in this category, if you are willing: ______”

Item[2]= “Overall, my national identity has very little to do with how I feel about myself.”
Item[3]= “I frequently think of myself as a member of my national group.”
Item[4]= “I feel very close to the other members of my national group.”
Item[5]= “I have a good friend from a country different from my own.”
Item[6]= “I have often found myself in situations where I am the only person from my country.”

Heading[2]= “Regional Identity (Southerner, New Yorker, Mid-westerner, etc.)”
Item[7]= “ ”
Item[8]= “Overall, my regional or state identity has very little to do with how I feel about myself.”
Item[9]= “I frequently think of myself as a person from my state or region.”
Item[10]= “I feel very close to the others from my state or region of the country.”
Item[11]= “I have a good friend from a state or region of the country different from my own.”
Item[12]= “I have often found myself in situations where I am the only person from my region.”

Heading[3]= “Racial/Ethnic Identity (White, Black, Asian, African-American, Hispanic, etc.)”
Item[13]= “ ”
Item[14]= “Overall, my racial/ethnic identity has very little to do with how I feel about myself.”
Item[15]= “I frequently think of myself as a member of my racial/ethnic group.”
Item[16]= “I feel very close to the other members of my racial/ethnic group.”
Item[17]= “I have a good friend from a racial/ethnic group different from my own.”
Item[18]= “I have often found myself in situations where I am the only person of my racial/ethnic group.”

Heading[4]= “Religious Identity (Christian, Jewish, Southern Baptist, Suni Muslim, Atheist, non-religious, etc.)”
Item[19]= “ ”
Item[20] = "Overall, my religious identity has very little to do with how I feel about myself."
Item[21] = "I frequently think of myself as a member of my religious group."
Item[22] = "I feel very close to the other members of my religious group."
Item[23] = "I have a good friend from a religious group different from my own."
Item[24] = "I have often found myself in situations where I am the only one from my religious group."

Heading[5] = "Social Class Identity (wealthy, working class, middle class, etc.)"
Item[25] = ""
Item[26] = "Overall, my social class has very little to do with how I feel about myself."
Item[27] = "I frequently think of myself as a member of my social class."
Item[28] = "I feel very close to the other members of my social class."
Item[29] = "I have a good friend from a social class different from my own."
Item[30] = "I have often found myself in situations where I am the only one from my social class."

Heading[6] = "Gender Identity (female, male, trans, intersex)"
Item[31] = ""
Item[32] = "Overall, my gender identity has very little to do with how I feel about myself."
Item[33] = "I frequently think of myself as a person of my gender group."
Item[34] = "I feel very close to the other people in my gender group."
Item[35] = "I have a good friend whose gender is different from my own."
Item[36] = "I have often found myself in situations where I am the only one of my gender."

Heading[7] = "Sexual Orientation Identity (gay, straight, lesbian, bisexual, etc.)"
Item[37] = ""
Item[38] = "Overall, my sexual orientation has very little to do with how I feel about myself."
Item[39] = "I frequently think of myself as a person of my sexual orientation group."
Item[40] = "I feel very close to the other people in my sexual orientation group."
Item[41] = "I have a good friend whose sexual orientation is different from my own."
Item[42] = "I have often found myself in situations where I am the only one of my sexual orientation."

Heading[8] = "Professional/Career Identity (psychology major, pre-law, human services, etc.)"
Item[43] = ""
Item[44] = "Overall, my college major or my career plan has very little to do with how I feel about myself."
Item[45] = "I frequently think of myself as a member of my major department, or a career, or profession."
Item[46] = "I feel very close to the other members of my major department or people with my same career plan."
Item[47]= “I have a good friend from a major department or with career plans different from my own.”
Item[48]= “I have often found myself in situations where I am the only one from my major department or with my career plans.”
Heading[9]= “Political Identity (democrat, republican, liberal, conservative, etc.)”
Item[49]= “
Item[50]= “Overall, my political identity has very little to do with how I feel about myself.”
Item[51]= “I frequently think of myself as a member of my political group.”
Item[52]= “I feel very close to the other people who share my political views.”
Item[53]= “I have a good friend with political views very different from my own.”
Item[54]= “I have often found myself in situations where I am the only one from my political group.”
Heading[10]= “Personal Style Identity (goth, preppy, nerdy, artsy, etc.)”
Item[55]= “
Item[56]= “Overall, my personal style identity has very little to do with how I feel about myself.”
Item[57]= “I frequently think of myself as a member of a group with my kind of personal style.”
Item[58]= “I feel very close to the other people who share my style.”
Item[59]= “I have a good friend with a personal style very different from my own.”
Item[60]= “I have often found myself in situations where I am the only one with my personal style.”
Item[61]= “
Item[62]= “Overall, my body appearance identity has very little to do with how I feel about myself.”
Item[63]= “I frequently think of myself as a member of a group with my kind of looks.”
Item[64]= “I feel very close to the other people who share my appearance.”
Item[65]= “I have a good friend with body appearance very different from my own.”
Item[66]= “I have often found myself in situations where I am the only one with my body appearance.”
Heading[12]= “Health Identity (physically fit, handicapped, diabetic, etc.)”
Item[67]= “
Item[68]= “Overall, my body function identity has very little to do with how I feel about myself.”
Item[69]= “I frequently think of myself as a member of a group with my health attributes.”
Item[70]= “I feel very close to the other people who share my health attributes.”
Item[71]= “I have a good friend with health attributes very different from my own.”
Item[72] = “I have often found myself in situations where I am the only one with my health attributes.”
Heading[13] = “Personal Ability Identity (math whiz, artistic, learning disabled, social butterfly etc.)”
Item[73] = “
Item[74] = “Overall, my personal abilities have very little to do with how I feel about myself.”
Item[75] = “I frequently think of myself as a member of a group of people with my personal abilities.”
Item[76] = “I feel very close to the other people who share my personal abilities.”
Item[77] = “I have a good friend with abilities very different from my own.”
Item[78] = “I have often found myself in situations where I am the only one with my personal abilities.”
Heading[14] = “Personality Identity (introverted, conscientious, adventurous, etc.)”
Item[79] = “
Item[80] = “Overall, my personality identity has very little to do with how I feel about myself.”
Item[81] = “I frequently think of myself as a member of a group of people with my personality.”
Item[82] = “I feel very close to the other people who share my personality.”
Item[83] = “I have a good friend with a personality very different from my own.”
Item[84] = “I have often found myself in situations where I am the only one with my personality.”
Heading[15] = “Adjustment Identity (bulimic, resilient, anxious, sober, in therapy, etc.)”
Item[85] = “
Item[86] = “Overall, my adjustment identity has very little to do with how I feel about myself.”
Item[87] = “I frequently think of myself as a member of a group of people with my type of adjustment.”
Item[88] = “I feel very close to the other people who share my type of adjustment.”
Item[89] = “I have a good friend with a type of adjustment very different from my own.”
Item[90] = “I have often found myself in situations where I am the only one with my type of adjustment.”
Heading[16] = “Recreational Identity (Red Sox fan, opera lover, movie buff, gamer, hiker, etc.)”
Item[91] = “
Item[92] = “Overall, my recreational identity has very little to do with how I feel about myself.”
Item[93] = “I frequently think of myself as a member of a group of people with my choice of recreation.”
Item[94] = “I feel very close to the other people who share my choice of recreation.”
Item[95] = “I have a good friend with a choice of recreation very different from my own.”
Item[96] = “I have often found myself in situations where I am the only one with my recreational identity.”
Heading[17] = “Moral identity (sexually promiscuous, prude, drug user, abstainer, etc.)”
Item[97] = “Overall, my moral identity has very little to do with how I feel about myself.”
Item[98] = ”I frequently think of myself as a member of a group of people with my sense of morality.”
Item[99] = “I feel very close to the other people who share my sense of morality.”
Item[100] = ”I have a good friend with a sense of morality very different from my own.”
Item[101] = ”I have often found myself in situations where I am the only one with my moral identity.”

**EOMEIS-2 (Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status)--->Where I Am Scale**

1=Strongly disagree
2=Moderately disagree
3=Slightly disagree
4=Slightly agree
5=Moderately agree
6=Strongly agree

Item[] = “I haven’t chosen the occupation I really want to get into, and I’m just working at what is available until something better comes along.”
Item[] = “When it comes to religion I just haven’t found anything that appeals and I don’t really feel the need to look.”
Item[] = “My ideas about men’s and women’s roles are identical to my parents’. What has worked for them will obviously work for me.”
Item[] = “There’s no single “life style” which appeals to me more than another.”
Item[] = “There are a lot of different kinds of people. I’m still exploring the many possibilities to find the right kind of friends for me.”
Item[] = “I sometimes join in recreational activities when asked, but I rarely try anything on my own.”
Item[] = “I haven’t really thought about a “dating style.” I’m not too concerned whether I date or not.”
Item[] = “Politics is something that I can never be too sure about because things change so fast. But I do think it’s important to know what I can politically stand for and believe in.”
Item[] = ”I’m still trying to decide how capable I am as a person and what work will be right for me.”
Item[] = “I don’t give religion much thought and it doesn’t bother me one way or the other.”
Item[] = “There’s so many ways to divide responsibilities in marriage, I’m trying to decide what will work for me.”
Item[] = “I’m looking for an acceptable perspective for my own “life style”, but haven’t really found it yet.”
Item[] = “There are many reasons for friendship, but I choose my close friends on the basis of certain values and similarities that I’ve personally decided on.”
Item[] = “While I don’t have one recreational activity I’m really committed to, I’m experiencing numerous leisure outlets to identify one I can truly enjoy.”
Item[] = “Based on past experiences, I’ve chosen the type of dating relationship I want now.”
Item[] = “I haven’t really considered politics. It just doesn’t excite me much.”
Item[] = “I might have thought about a lot of different jobs, but there’s never really been any question since my parents said what they wanted.”
Item[] = “A person’s faith is unique to each individual. I’ve considered and reconsidered it myself and know what I can believe.”
Item[] = “I’ve never really seriously considered men’s and women’s roles in marriage. It just doesn’t seem to concern me.”
Item[] = “After considerable thought I’ve developed my own individual viewpoint of what is for me an ideal “life style” and don’t believe anyone will be likely to change my perspective.”
Item[] = “My parents know what’s best for me in terms of how to choose my friends.”
Item[] = “I’ve chosen one or more recreational activities to engage in regularly from lots of things and I’m satisfied with those choices.”
Item[] = “I don’t think about dating much. I just kind of take it as it comes.”
Item[] = “I guess I’m pretty much like my folks when it comes to politics. I follow what they do in terms of voting and such.”
Item[] = “I’m not really interested in finding the right job, any job will do. I just seem to flow with what is available.”
Item[] = “I’m not sure what religion means to me. I’d like to make up my mind but I’m not done looking yet.”
Item[] = “My ideas about men’s and women’s roles have come right for my parents and family. I haven’t seen any need to look further.”
Item[] = “My own views on a desirable life style were taught to me by my parents and I don’t see any need to question what they taught me.”
Item[] = “I don’t have any real close friends, and I don’t think I’m looking for one right now.”
Item[] = “Sometimes I join in leisure activities, but I really don’t see a need to look for a particular activity to do regularly.”
Item[] = “I’m trying out different types of dating relationships. I just haven’t decided what is best for me.”
Item[] = “There are so many different political parties and ideals. I can’t decide which to follow until I figure it all out.”
Item[] = “It took me a while to figure it out, but now I really know what I want for a career.”
Item[] = “Religion is confusing to me right now. I keep changing my views on what is right and wrong for me.”
Item[] = “I’ve spent some time thinking about men’s and women’s roles in marriage and I’ve decided what will work best for me.”
Item[] = “In finding an acceptable viewpoint to life itself, I find myself engaging in a lot of discussions with others and some self exploration.”
Item[] = “I only pick friends my parent would approve of.”
Item[] = “I’ve always liked doing the same recreational activities my parents do and haven’t ever seriously considered anything else.”
Item[] = “I only go out with the type of people my parents expect me to date.”
Item[] = “I’ve thought my political beliefs through and realize I can agree with some and not other aspects of what my parents believe.”
Item[] = “My parents decided a long time ago what I should go into for employment and I’m following through their plans.”
Item[] = “I’ve gone through a period of serious questions about faith and can now say I understand what I believe in as an individual.”
Item[] = “I’ve been thinking about the roles that husbands and wives play a lot these days, and I’m trying to make a final decision.”
Item[] = “My parents’ views on life are good enough for me, I don’t need anything else.”
Item[] = “I’ve had many different friendships and now I have a clear idea of what I look for in a friend.”
Item[] = “After trying a lot of different recreational activities I’ve found one or more I really enjoy doing by myself or with friends.”
Item[] = “My preferences about dating are still in the process of developing. I haven’t fully decided yet.”
Item[] = “I’m not sure about my political beliefs, but I’m trying to figure out what I can truly believe in.”
Item[] = “It took me a long time to decide but now I know for sure what direction to move in for a career.”
Item[] = “I attend the same church as my family has always attended. I’ve never really questioned why.”
Item[] = “There are many ways that married couples can divide up family responsibilities. I’ve thought about lots of ways, and not I know exactly how I want it to happen for me.”
Item[] = “I guess I just kind of enjoy life in general, and I don’t see myself living by any particular viewpoint to life.”
Item[] = “I don’t have any close friends. I just like to hang around with the crowd.”
Item[] = “I’ve been experiencing a variety of recreational activities in hope of finding one or more I can really enjoy for some time to come.”
Item[]= “I’ve dated different types of people and know exactly what my own “unwritten rules” for dating are and who I will date.”
Item[]= “I really have never been involved in politics enough to have made a firm stand one way or the other.”
Item[]= “I just can’t decide what to do for an occupation. There are so many possibilities.”
Item[]= “I’ve never really questioned my religion. If it’s right for my parents it must be right for me.”
Item[]= “Opinions on men’s and women’s roles seem so varied that I don’t think much about it.”
Item[]= “After a lot of self-examination I have established a very definite view on what my own life style will be.”
Item[]= “I really don’t know what kind of friend is best for me. I’m trying to figure out exactly what friendship means to me.”
Item[]= “All of my recreational preferences I got from my parents and I haven’t really tried anything else.”
Item[]= “I date only people my parents would approve of.”
Item[]= “My folks have always had their own political and moral beliefs about issues like abortion and mercy killing and I’ve always gone along accepting what they have.”

**Identity Statuses:**
Pure Diffusion
Pure Foreclosure
Pure Moratorium
Pure Achievement

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**Identity Distress Survey-->Identity Concern Scale**

(For both domain-specific and global items)
1=None at all
2=Mildly
3=Moderately
4=Severely
5=Very severely
Length
- Never or less than one month
- 1-3 months
- 4-6 months
- 7-9 months
- More than 12 months
Heading[1]= “To what degree have you recently been upset, distressed, or worried over any of the following issues in your life?”
Heading[2]= “How long (if at all) have you felt upset, distressed, or worried over this issue?”
Item[]= “Career choice (e.g., deciding on a trade or profession, aligning abilities with interest, etc.)”
Item[]= “Body condition (e.g. physical appearance or health)”
Item[]= “Social class (e.g. worrying about social status related to finances, etc.)”
Item[]= “Race/ethnicity (e.g. feeling confused about your place within your racial group, or your race’s relations to other racial groups)”
Item[]= “Relationships (e.g., experiencing a loss of or change in relations with friends, family, romantic partners, etc.)”
Item[]= “Sexual orientation (e.g., feeling confused about sexual preferences, etc.)”
Item[]= “Religion (e.g., stopped believing, changed your belief in God/religion, etc.)”
Item[]= “Morality (e.g., feeling confused about what is right or wrong, being torn between one’s moral standards and behavior, etc.)”
Item[]= “Political beliefs (e.g., experiencing a change or confusion in political stance, etc.)”
Item[]= “Adjustment (e.g., entering therapy, struggling with a disorder, etc.)”
Heading[3]= “Global ratings”
Item[]= “Please rate your overall level of discomfort (how bad they made you feel) about all the above issues as a whole.”
Item[]= “Please rate how much uncertainty over these issues as a whole has interfered with your life (for example, stopped you from doing things you wanted to do, or being happy)”

**Social Attitudes Scale**

1=Strongly disagree
2=Moderately disagree
3=Slightly disagree
4=Neither agree or disagree
5=Slightly agree
6=Moderately agree
7=Strongly agree

Item[1]= “It’s OK if some groups have more of a chance in life than others.”
Item[2]= “To get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on other groups.”
Item[3]= “Group equality should be our ideal.”
Item[4]= “We should do what we can to equalize conditions for different groups.”
Item[6] = “White people have certain unearned advantages that minorities do not have in this society.”
Item[7] = “White people do NOT have any benefits or privileges due to their race.”
Item[8] = “White skin opens many doors for Whites during their everyday lives.”
Item[9] = “White people have access to more and better opportunities than do people of color.”
Item[10] = “People in the upper classes have certain unearned advantages that the lower economic classes do not have in this society.”
Item[11] = “Physically attractive people have certain unearned advantages that physically unattractive people do not have in this society.”
Item[12] = “Men have certain unearned advantages that women do not have in this society.”
Item[13] = “Heterosexuals have certain unearned advantages that homo/bisexuals do not have in this society.”
Item[14] = “My skin color is an asset to me in my everyday life.”
Item[15] = “I have certain unearned advantages that minorities do not have in this society.”
Item[16] = “Personally, I do NOT have any benefits or privileges due to my race.”
Item[17] = “My skin color opens many doors during my everyday life.”
Item[18] = “With my skin color, I have access to more and better opportunities than do people of color.”
Item[19] = “I can easily think of a time when I was penalized because of my skin color.”
Item[20] = “Having my skin color is a disadvantage in today’s society.”
Item[21] = “I have personally experienced disadvantage for reasons related to my skin color.”
Item[22] = “People with my skin color are frequently denied privileges.”
Item[23] = “My skin color has caused me to miss out on educational or employment opportunities.”
Item[24] = “White people in the US are discriminated against because of the color of their skin.”
Item[25] = “The advantages that Whites enjoy are directly the result of the disadvantages that Blacks face.”
Item[26] = “Whites enjoy privileges at the expense of Blacks.”
Item[27] = “White privilege makes the lives of Blacks more difficult.”
Item[28] = “If Whites are advantaged, people of color must be disadvantaged.”
Item[29] = “It’s surprising that Black people do well as they do, considering all the obstacles they face.”
Item[30] = “Too many Blacks still lose out on jobs and promotions because of their skin color.”
Item[31] = “Blacks have more to offer than they have been allowed to show.”
Item[32] = “A lot of Black people are treated unfairly because of race.”
Item[33] = “Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class.”
Item[34] = “Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve.”
Item[35] = “Many black customers receive bad service from businesses because of their race.”
Item[36] = “In many cities, Black people are treated badly by the police simply because of their race.”
Item[37] = “Although I feel my behavior is typically nondiscriminatory toward Blacks, I still feel guilt due to my race.”
Item[38] = “I feel guilty about the past and present social inequality of Black Americans (i.e., slavery, discrimination, poverty).”
Item[39] = “When I learn about racism, I feel guilt due to my association with my race.”
Item[40] = “I feel guilty about the benefits and privileges that White Americans receive from their skin color.”
Item[41] = “I am willing to forgo the privileges that I have because of my race.”
Item[42] = “I will give up some of the advantages that I have because of my race.”
Item[43] = “It is my responsibility to counter the effects of racial discrimination.”
Item[44] = “It is NOT up to me to correct or compensate for white privilege.”
Item[45] = “Irish, Italian, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same.”
Item[46] = “Many Whites show a real lack of understanding of the problems that Blacks face.”
Item[47] = “I would probably feel somewhat self-conscious dancing with a Black in a public place.”
Item[48] = “Whites should actively support Blacks in their struggle against discrimination and segregation.”
Item[49] = “Some Blacks are so touchy about race that it is difficult to get along with them.”
Item[50] = “Everyone who works hard, no matter what race they are, has an equal chance to become rich.”
Item[51] = “Talking about racial issues causes unnecessary tension.”
Item[52] = “Blacks have to learn they are entitled to no special consideration and must make it strictly on merit.”
Item[53] = “Racism may have been a problem in the past, it is not an important problem today.”
Item[54] = “It is unfair when Black students are admitted to college over better qualified Whites.”
Item[55] = “Blacks tend to be prejudiced against Whites.”
Item[56] = “Blacks demand too much from college officials.”
Item[57] = “Black students tend to see racism where racism is not present.”
Item[58] = “I attempt to act in non-prejudiced ways toward Black people because it is personally important to me.”
Item[59] = “According to my personal values, using stereotypes about Black people is OK.”
Item[60] = “I get angry with myself when I have a thought or feeling that might be considered prejudiced.”
Item[61] = “Because of today's PC (politically correct) standards, I try to appear nonprejudiced toward Black people.”
Item[62]= “If I acted prejudiced toward Black people, I would be concerned that others would be angry with me.”
Item[63]= “It is important to me that other people don't think I am prejudiced.”
Appendix C

Identity Centrality Profiles (Authors 1-85; Author 60 data missing)
Profiles reflect all 17 summed Identity Centrality domain scores, which can range from 5 to 35. Refer to the following key for domains and corresponding numbers:

1=Nation
2=Region
3=Race/Ethnicity
4=Religion
5=Social Class
6=Gender
7=Sexual Orientation
8=Professional/Career
9=Political
10=Personal Style
11=Body Appearance
12=Health
13=Ability
14=Personality
15=Adjustment
16=Recreational
17=Moral
Identity Claims
Code any statement that pertains to the author as present for an identity claim. Such statements include I, me, mine, my, myself, we, us, ours, our, or ourselves. Comments about the author from another’s standpoint also should be coded as present for an identity claim. These often are packaged in the form of direct quotation, so be watchful for such instances. For example, “She said, ‘You are incredibly boring’” should be counted as a claim if you’s referent is the author.

Also count speech directed at the author that may not include an explicit pronoun, so “He looked at me and said, ‘Idiot’” should be counted as consisting of two claims.

First, each line should be coded as present or absent for claims. If there is more than one statement within a line that constitutes a claim, record each on a separate line and distinguish them with a, b, c, etc. In other words, each pronoun should evoke another claim within the line such that “We promised each other that we would not let that interfere with our friendship” has three identity claim units (We promised [...] that we [...] with our friendship).

(Present=1; Absent=0)

Decide whether each claim is singular (I, me, my) or plural (we, us, ours).
(Singular=1; Plural=2)

For each claim, count the number of instances each of the following categories is evoked:

Embodied
Count each instance the author refers to his or her physical appearance, beauty, health, body function, ability, or lack thereof, as an embodied claim. Also consider the claim embodied if the author mentions his or her own physical attraction to someone else. Count cases of fatigue as both embodied and psychological unless an explicit connection to the physical aspect is drawn. Mentions of a particular age number should be considered embodied claims, while statements about grade level should be included in the group membership category. Any instances of smiling, laughing, dancing, looking, walking, standing,

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4 Try to use the context of the line itself to determine the content of a claim. Therefore, do not code a pronoun as containing all of the categories of its referent. In other words, if an author says “I felt hungry and hopeless/ And I just couldn’t stand that,” do not code that as if it were hungry and hopeless, even though the pronoun is functioning in the place of those states. Also, on a different note, the coding of multiple instances of a category within the same claim usually arises in the context of compound predicates (e.g. I am funny and outgoing) and not complex verb phrases (e.g. I’d like to think [...]).
and any other activity relying on the body should be counted at least as embodied. Note the distinction between walking and going, for instance—the prior is explicitly referring to an action achieved by the body, and the latter is tracking some sort of abstracted travelling. Also count metaphorical claims involving the body as embodied (e.g. I was spitting out numbers), in addition to the other categories to which the metaphor may apply. If the author reports using one of the five senses, count such a statement as both embodied and psychological.

**Psychological**
Count as a psychological claim if the author alludes to his or her cognitive processes (e.g. hoping, thinking, day-dreaming, realizing, wanting), emotions, mental states, psychological traits (consciousness, introversion), or psychological disorders. Count cases of fatigue as both embodied and psychological, unless an explicit connection to the psychological aspect is drawn. Also count mentions of mental skills and abilities (I am good at math). Consider relation-relevant qualities (sociability, friendliness, extraversion, loneliness, independence) to be only psychological, not relational. Any time the author mentions wanting, hoping, or dreaming, count the content of the wishful state in the appropriate category. For example, “I want to be with him again one day” should be coded as both psychological and relational. Also consider claims psychological when they comment on the author’s potential, or ability, since having or acknowledging that one has the capacity to do something implies that the actual performance is still “internal,” or that it has not been realized.

**Moral**
Count the statement as a moral claim if the author talks about the self in a valenced or evaluative way, or positions the self as an evaluator. This includes reference to obligations and punishments, and may be characterized by the following: should, should not, ought, ought not, have to. Consider claims of deservingness, judging, and equality to be moral. Any valenced evaluation of the self, no matter the content of the judgment, should be coded as moral. For instance, “I am a really good friend” should be coded as both relational and moral. Also count instances in which the object of an author’s cognitive process (wishing, hoping, wanting, thinking, believing, etc.) is evaluative in nature. For example, “I thought that was a bad idea” should be counted as having a moral claim because the substance of the author’s report of thinking is evaluative. Conversely, “That was a bad idea” would not be counted because the author is not making explicit the ownership of that thought. For moral claims whose evaluative content is found in the main verb (I should, I had to), the content of the object should be counted in the appropriate category. To illustrate, “I had to buy it” should be considered moral for “had to” and acquisitional for “buy it.” Also count as moral any expressions of luck or blessedness.

**Acquisitional**
Count each instance as acquisitional if the author mentions buying, selling, possessing material things, or being able or unable to afford a good of some sort. The idea of wanting may often co-occur with this category but must be within the confines of desire for consumer goods. Key words include got, have, receive, etc., in the context of physical objects and often can be triggered by my or our. Any mention of the author’s clothing should be deemed acquisitional (or not) based upon the context of the line. For example, “I put on sweats and went to class” should not be considered acquisitional, while “She borrowed my hiking boots” should count as acquisitional.

Relational
Count as a relational claim authors’ mentions of their individual family members, friends, co-workers, teachers, significant others, roommates, and any “other.” This category is restricted to dyads, except for cases in which the author mentions individuals from a particular group (e.g. my sisters, our friends). Also include such relational activities as meeting people and sharing secrets that help to forge bonds or create rifts among people. Count as relational any statements pertaining to trust, betrayal, and dependability. Other trigger words may include with and together. Do not simply count all instances of we, ourselves, our, and us as relational claims. Communicative claims may or may not be considered relational, depending on context. Include as relational any communicative acts that create distance in relationships or that tighten bonds between people. Exclude statements such as “I told him I was going to the store.” Include “I always told him everything” or “I never told him anything.” Mentions of social etiquette, e.g. being polite, should not be considered relational unless they pertain to a specific relationship or are pointed to specified persons. So, “I was always polite to her” is considered relational, but “I am always polite to guests” is not. Exclude statements about relationally relevant personality traits, such as friendliness, sociability, and extraversion. These should be counted only as psychological.

Communicative
Count as communicative all mentions in which the author presents the self as a communicator (telling, speaking, mentioning, writing a note, gossiping, etc.). Statements considered communicative may or may not also count as relational, depending on context (see Relational category description).

Group membership
Count a unit as a group membership claim if the author refers to his or her group affiliations, such as the “family” proper (i.e., “my family” or “my extended family,” not “my sister”), a school, team, Greek organization, religion (I’m a Muslim), age indicated by grade (My sophomore class; When I was in 9th grade), race, etc. The group should have institutional status, as the ones mentioned above. If the author names an otherwise unrecognizable unit of people (e.g. the birders), consider the statement a group membership claim. For example, “I share common interests with the birders” should be counted for group membership,
but “I am interested in bird-watching” should not. Also, consider a claim to fall into the group membership category if the author uses the words *group, gang,* or *clique.* Another trigger word may be *all,* as in “We all were worn out at the end of the day.”

**Productive**
Consider a unit a productive claim if the author relates any sort of action, or lack thereof, to a goal. This category includes mention of successes, accomplishments, failures, completion of tasks, wins, losses, etc. Any mention of working or doing homework should also be counted, since a goal state is implied. Further, any action that may be job-evaluated, whether appropriate for doing a job or potentially punishable, should be included as productive.

**Global ratings**

**Types of Difference**
The participants were asked to describe a relationship with someone different from the self in an important way or a situation in which the self was the only one of his or her kind in some respect. Many authors described a person different from the self on many dimensions. The coder should consider each of the types of difference described below, and consider each difference to be the primary difference unless the author indicates it as less significant through disavowal or by placing it into a laundry list of differences that are not later elaborated upon. Note that a given story may not explicitly highlight *any* difference, so it is possible for a story to have *no* differences coded as present. Code as present for difference if the author draws a connection between a type of difference and a particular detail, even if the author doesn’t specify his or her identity in that area. For instance “The fact that he’s in rehab right now is a very clear difference in our personalities” (Story 33) should be coded for a difference in Adjustment. Let context decide whether the difference should be categorized as primary or not.

Each type of difference should be coded as follows:

0 = the author did not present this difference as characteristic of the primary relationship they are describing.
1 = the author did present this difference as characterizing the primary relationship, but it does not seem to be a major difference the author chose to write about in the story.
2 = the author did present this difference as characterizing the primary relationship, and it appears to be the major difference the author is exploring or describing in the story.
A. Ideology—Anything pertaining to institutionalized beliefs (i.e. religious & political beliefs and philosophies). Ideology vs. Lifestyle: ideologies are chosen philosophies, while lifestyle may reflect the everyday realization of those choices and beliefs. To say “He is Catholic and I am not” draws an ideological difference, and to say “He goes to church multiple times a week while I find that annoying” makes a distinction of lifestyles. In other words, lifestyles may be ideologically influenced. They may also be influenced by social or physiological factors, such as in the cases of daily familial involvement or responsibility and sleep patterns.

B. Morality—Anything pertaining to goodness/badness, rightness/wrongness (e.g. one of us makes better decisions than the other; I was strong enough to follow and stand up for what I believe in)

C. Personality—Regarding traits

D. Abilities—Regarding to skills, whether cognitive (e.g. intelligence) or physical

E. Adjustment—Anything pertaining to mental health (in rehab, on medication, in therapy, etc.)

F. Lifestyle—Pertaining to regular activities of life, i.e. the way we spend our time. These may be influenced by other categories, such as adjustment, ideology, morality, or physicality. Lifestyle differences, however, are the daily manifestation or realization of these sources.

G. Social Status—Pertains to any characteristic that provides or removes social authority. The category of age differences will almost always be accompanied by social status differences, but social status need not always co-occur with age. For example, one may be more or less popular, or more or less privileged than another because of some other difference.

H. Age—Mentions of age disparities. Though we may not consider the mention of a two-year age difference to be significant, it’s important to note such. In high school, the disparity of a few years means the difference between a junior and a freshman, a sophomore and an eighth grader. Thus, significant developmental differences may accompany what seems to be a miniscule numerical distance. Count mentions of maturity differences in this category as well.

I. Physical—Anything pertaining to the function, appearance, or health of the body.

J. Sexual orientation—Regarding sexual orientation, e.g. gay, straight, trans, questioning

K. Gender—Male, female, transgender. This category may be broached by attributing differences in life experiences to gender. For instance, “Because I’m a girl, I had a much harder first experience with sex than my male friend because it’s not painful for guys.”
L. SES—Any mention of socio-economic difference: rich, poor, upper-class, lower-class, or the mentioning of assets or materials.
M. Family—Rearing style, family structure, family dynamics or health, and familial ideology
N. Race/ethnicity—Any mention of racial differences (e.g. European American, African American, Asian).
O. Region/nationality—Difference in geographic location or origin by region or country. Also include language and dialect variations associated with such differences.
P. Other—Differences that do not fit into any of the categories listed above may fall into this catch-all classification, e.g. differences in educational background (public or private school), dating status (single vs. dating)

Author Change and Author Stability

Give one global rating to each story for the following questions:

A. Does the author show change in the self throughout the account? In other words, does the author describe a personal change, either in a particular domain of identity or in the way he or she views him or herself in that domain. So, statements reminiscent of “I used to be that, but now I’m this,” or “I used to be that, but now I see myself as that in a more complex way” should trigger the presence of clear self-change. However, two people growing together in a relationship does not necessarily entail a self-change.

0= No apparent change; 2= yes, the author describes one or more changes regarding the self

B. Does the author make an explicit statement about staying the same, or show a refusal to change?

0= No explicit commitment to staying the same; 2= Yes, the author makes it clear that he or she refused to change

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5 Any mention of birth order or other family structure references may be considered a psychological difference by the author, or may have psychological implications
Appendix E

Descriptive values of ICQ domain-specific centrality summed scores. All scores were taken from the second wave of data collection.

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