Studies 1

Is there a pattern of narrative differences that differentiate the life stories of adults who score high on self-transcendence? Method: Participants completed the Adult Bible Transcendence Inventory (ABTI). Participants were matched based on their self-reported transience (ABTI + NEIS) and coded for narrative themes: being, becoming, participating.

Results: We identified 6 narrative themes which differentiated high and low narratives in self-reported transience. These themes allowed us to differentiate phases of being, becoming, and participating.

Study 2

Do Study 1 narrative themes tell us something generalizable about self-transcendence? Method: Participants completed the ABTI and the 2014 Life Story Interview. Participants were matched based on their self-reported transience (ABTI + NEIS) and coded for narrative themes: being, becoming, and participating.

Results: We identified 6 narrative themes which differentiated high and low narratives in self-reported transience. These themes allowed us to differentiate phases of being, becoming, and participating.

Study 3

Emerging adults Method: Participants completed the ABTI and the 2014 Life Story Interview. Participants were matched based on their self-reported transience (ABTI + NEIS) and coded for narrative themes: being, becoming, and participating.

Results: We identified 6 narrative themes which differentiated high and low narratives in self-reported transience. These themes allowed us to differentiate phases of being, becoming, and participating.

Study 4

Do the narrative themes also predict self-transcendence for emerging adults? Method: Participants completed the ABTI and the 2014 Life Story Interview. Participants were matched based on their self-reported transience (ABTI + NEIS) and coded for narrative themes: being, becoming, and participating.

Results: We identified 6 narrative themes which differentiated high and low narratives in self-reported transience. These themes allowed us to differentiate phases of being, becoming, and participating.

Narrative themes & self-transcendence

Narrative theme | Study 2 Late-adults | Study 3 Emerging adults | Study 4 Oldiest-adults
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 closure | 0.52*** | 0.21 | 0.12
 self-transcendence | 0.36** | 0.47 | 0.04
 lifelong learning | 0.13 | 0.14 | 0.08
 spiritual pluralism | 0.38*** | 0.29 | 0.05

*Correlations between narrative themes and self-reported transience scores were all study.

Young, mid-life, and oldest-old adults narrate self-transcendence: Themes across the lifespan
Hollen N. Keicher, Laura J. Roth, Jorge A. Villarreal, Sabrina F. Rabin, & Dan P. McAdams Northwestern University corresponding author: hollen@northwestern.edu

Background

Self-transcendence may be experienced as a feeling of expansion:
- intrapersonally—self of self
- temporally—becoming, change, growth, evolution
- interpersonally—secure, fulfilled, harmonious
- interconnectedness—experiences of self, others, and nature
- purpose: sense of being, purpose of being, meaning of being
- ideological quality of life and independence

Narrative research captures the richness of the lived experience by investigating how individuals construct the stories of their lives, and exploring how these stories relate to various psychological outcomes.

Narrative identity theory understands life stories to be products of adult personality development. We measure coherence as our sense of how our story makes sense.

Grounded theory is a qualitative data analysis technique. Researchers begin with no preconceived hypotheses about the construct of interest. Instead, they behaviorally generate theory directly from the data collected.

Late-midlife adults

Do Study 1 narrative themes tell us something generalizable about self-transcendence? Method: Participants completed the Adult Bible Transcendence Inventory (ABTI). Participants were matched based on their self-reported transience (ABTI + NEIS) and coded for narrative themes: being, becoming, and participating.

Results: We identified 6 narrative themes which differentiated high and low narratives in self-reported transience. These themes allowed us to differentiate phases of being, becoming, and participating.

Oldest-olds adults

Do the narrative themes also predict self-transcendence for the oldest-old adults? Method: Participants completed the NEIS and the 2014 Life Story Interview. Participants were matched based on their self-reported transience (NEIS) and coded for narrative themes: being, becoming, and participating.

Results: We identified 6 narrative themes which differentiated high and low narratives in self-reported transience. These themes allowed us to differentiate phases of being, becoming, and participating.

Provisional narrative prototype

Our provisional narrative gains an awareness of itself as an independent being at some point in the life story which is embedded within the fabric of an interconnected community. To become—she grows in interdependence as part of a social family, unit, the unit is later strained and independence is needed to gain closure. The closure, is forever, for some time before creating a major life shift in pursuit of self-transcendence (being, becoming, participating)—she actively works to use a new connotation and meaning to redefine her commitment to participation, and look forward to her future as a process of lifelong learning.

Thanks

References and Funding


2. Levenson et al., 2005


5. Aldwin, 1993; Oishi, 1996; Shiraishi, 2006


8. Levenson et al., 2005

9. ICC = .59, .79.

10. Median income of the oldest-old adults was $50,000, 58% White, 40% African American, 2% other. Median income of the midlife adults was $50,000, 65% female, 35% male. Median income of the late-midlife adults was $50,000, 64% female, 36% male.

11. We selected the top and bottom scorers for self-transcendence on the ASTI, NEIS, and the 2014 Life Story Interview. We selected the top and bottom scorers for self-transcendence on the ASTI, NEIS, and the 2014 Life Story Interview.