



## On rhetoric and ratings: II. Requesting redemptive stories and continuous ratings

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### ABSTRACT

The tendency to disclose redemptive stories (negative beginnings, positive endings) is associated with indicators of flourishing. The success of any examination of redemption relies on the methods adopted. Here, we introduce three novel techniques to assess redemption: (a) directly request redemptive stories, (b) directly request participants rate the degree of redemption in their stories, and (c) quantify the degree of redemption in stories using trained coders. We noted a relation between the self-reported tendency to view one's life as a story and the degree of redemption in stories (Study 1), and self-other consensus in perceptions of this content, with both corresponding with life satisfaction (Study 2). This work expands the methodological toolbox from which to draw in study of redemption.

### 1. Introduction

When asked for descriptions of the most salient and important moments from their lives, many people provide redemptive stories. These stories begin on an emotionally negative note before giving way to an emotionally positive resolve (McAdams, 1999). Crafting stories that emphasize the bright side of challenging experiences may represent an adaptive coping strategy (McAdams et al., 2001). Consistent with this notion, those who tend to tell redemptive stories also tend to evince higher levels of a number of adaptive constructs, including well-being, health behaviors, and generativity (for a review, see Dunlop, 2021).

Although redemptive themes within autobiographical narratives have been found to correspond favorably with these aforementioned constructs, for certain people and in response to certain narrative prompts, an inverse relation has been observed between redemption and flourishing, broadly defined (e.g., Bauer et al., 2019; McCoy & Dunlop, 2017). For example, McCoy and Dunlop (2017) noted that, among a sample of college-aged adult children of alcoholics (ACOA's  $n = 53$ , non-ACOA's  $n = 80$ ), the tendency to disclose redemptive stories was positively associated with self-reports of emotional dysregulation ( $r = 0.33$ ) and depression ( $r = 0.36$ ). In distinction, Bauer and colleagues (2019)

observed a positive relation between redemption as manifest in participants' stories ( $n = 206$ ) of low points and life satisfaction (a finding aligning with the broader literature, e.g., Cox et al., 2019; McAdams et al., 2001), but a negative relation between life satisfaction and redemption as manifest in participants' stories of high points ( $\beta = -0.37$ ). It remains the product of speculation as to why themes of redemption within narratives sometimes correspond positively, and on rarer occasion negatively, with adaptive processes and outcomes.

Of course, the success of any effort to further understanding of the nature of relations with redemption will ultimately depend on the methods used to assess participants' stories and quantify the redemptive content therein. With respect to the former, researchers have most often considered participants' descriptions of certain self-defining scenes, including life high points, low points, and turning points (e.g., Adler et al., 2017). With respect to the latter, researchers have most often employed a presence/absence dichotomous coding system.<sup>1</sup> In this system, trained coders read each story in a dataset and then indicate whether said story is (denoted with a "1") or is not (denoted with a "0") redemptive in nature (McAdams, 1999).

Recently, calls have been made to rethink redemption, through a consideration of more varied prompts and more complex and nuanced

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<sup>1</sup> Though earlier versions of the coding system allowed the researcher to capture higher degrees of redemption by applying 'bonus points' for enhanced agency and communion (McAdams, 1999), this practice has been largely forgotten in favor of the widely used presence/absence coding system for redemption (see Dunlop, 2021, p. 8).

coding systems (e.g., Cox et al., 2019; Dunlop et al., 2020a; Dunlop et al., 2020b; Perlin & Fivush, 2021). A shift in this manner may be required due to the ubiquity of the redemptive story and the varied forms it may take and functions it may serve. Some research groups have gone so far as to suggest that redemption should be studied using a multi-method approach, in which the objective quantification of its presence within stories be considered alongside additional types of data, including participants' ratings of their own stories (e.g., Dunlop et al., 2020a; Dunlop et al., 2020b).

It is in the above spirit that we undertook the current work. Over the course of two studies, we sought to apply a small number of as-yet unconsidered assessment techniques and coding systems to examination of the redemptive story. In our first study, we adopted the novel strategy of directly prompting participants for redemptive stories. This shifted the assessment away from a focus on whether participants spontaneously provide redemptive stories when discussing their major autobiographical milestones and towards a focus on whether participants can construct redemptive stories when asked to do so and whether this relates with well-being. To determine the proportion of stories produced under such conditions that were, in fact, redemptive, we quantified the resulting stories using McAdams' (1999) traditional presence/absence coding system. Building upon previous research (Cox et al., 2019), we then applied a more nuanced approach to the quantification of redemption by seeking to capture the degree of redemption in these stories (rather than presence/absence). The level of redemption in participants' stories was explored in relation to measures of adaptive functioning including life satisfaction, optimism, and defensive pessimism<sup>2</sup> as well as participants' tendency to think about their lives as if they were stories (life story mindset; Dunlop, 2019). We sought to understand whether directly requested redemptive stories related with broad measures of adaptive functioning and the tendency to view one's life as a story.

Our second study built upon the first in two ways. First, we again applied our novel coding system targeting the degree, rather than presence/absence, of redemption in participants' narratives. In the case of Study 2, however, participants were prompted for a type of story more often considered in the narrative identity literature (i.e., a self-defining memory; see Singer & Blagov, 2002). Second, in the interest of further exploring the degree of redemption present in the resulting stories, while also recognizing recent work incorporating self-ratings alongside the more objective ratings provided by trained coders (e.g., Dunlop et al., 2020a), we prompted participants themselves to rate their stories using the same degree-based coding system pioneered in Study 1. This multimethod approach allowed us to gain additional insight into the person, as the self-report data garnered through self-ratings was complimentary to the behavioral data that is traditionally obtained through observers' ratings (Dunlop et al., 2020b; Paulhus & Vazire, 2007). In addition, researchers have yet to examine consensus between self-and-other ratings of dimensions of narrative identity. Our research advances person-perception literature examining self-versus-other reports of a targets' personality, beyond personality traits (e.g., Dunlop et al., 2018; Dunlop et al., 2020a). Our intent in Study 2 was twofold. First, we wished to determine the degree of self-other consensus in redemptive ratings. Second, we wished to explore both ratings in relation to life satisfaction. Drawing from past research (e.g., Dunlop et al., 2020a; McAdams et al., 2001), a positive relation between the applicable constructs was anticipated in both cases.

<sup>2</sup> Although defensive pessimism has been found to correspond with certain adaptive outcomes (Norem & Cantor, 1986), it is also related with greater negative affect (Sanna et al., 2006). For this reason, we predicted that defensive pessimism would relate negatively with redemption, which possesses more positive affective qualities (McLean et al., 2020).

### 1.1. Study 1: tell me a (redemptive) story

One hundred and sixty-six individuals were recruited from an online survey-based website to take part in this study and received \$2.00 USD in exchange for so doing. The mean age of our sample was 35.76 years ( $SD = 10.17$ ), 45% identified as female, and 74% identified as White/European. After providing informed consent, we requested participants generate a redemptive story in response to the following prompt (the wording of which was drawn from the coding system outlined in McAdams, 1999):

In a redemptive story, a demonstrably 'bad' or emotionally negative event or circumstance leads to a demonstrably 'good' or emotionally positive outcome. The story plot moves from a negative to a positive valence, bad leads to good. Therefore, the initial negative state is 'redeemed' or salvaged by the good that follows it.

In the space below, please describe a redemptive story from your own life. Please provide as much detail as possible about this experience. What happened? Where and when did this occur? Who was involved, and what were you thinking and feeling?

Following the provision of these stories ( $M_{\text{length}} = 149$  words,  $SD = 118$ ), participants were asked for a second story unrelated to the current project and to complete a battery of questionnaires, which contained measures of adaptive functioning, broadly defined. This included *life satisfaction* (Satisfaction with Life Scale; SWLS; Diener et al., 1985) in which participants rated items including "I am satisfied with my life" on a seven-point Likert type scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" ( $\alpha = 0.92$ ). *Optimism* (the Life Orientation Test-Revised; LOT-R; Scheier et al., 1994), in which participants rated six items including "I am always optimistic about my future" on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from "I agree a lot" to "I disagree a lot" ( $\alpha = 0.89$ ). *Defensive pessimism* (the Defensive Pessimism Questionnaire-Short Form; Norem et al., 2015), in which participants rated five items including "I usually prepare for the worst" on the same scale as the LOT-R ( $\alpha = 0.69$ ). Scores of optimism and defensive pessimism were reflected, such that higher values indicated greater levels of these constructs. Lastly, participants completed a measure of *life story mindset*<sup>3</sup> (adapted from Dunlop, 2019), in which participants rated three items including "I often think about my life as if it were a story, complete with characters and a plot" on a five-point Likert type scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" ( $\alpha = 0.75$ ). Life story mindset was measured to determine how the degree to which one views (1) storytelling as enjoyable and (2) their life as a story relates with whether one produces a redemptive story when so requested.<sup>4</sup>

Participants' stories were quantified by two coding teams using two coding systems (see Table 1 for examples of high and low redemptive content). First, in line with the traditional presence/absence coding system (McAdams, 1999) two independent coders read and rated each story to determine if it contained a redemptive sequence (95% agreement,  $\kappa = 0.51$ ).<sup>5</sup> Second, building upon this system as well as more recent efforts to consider redemption beyond its presence/absence (e.g., Cox et al., 2019), three independent coders, familiar with the concept of redemption and with a history of coding autobiographical narratives, read and rated each story on a four-point scale, ranging from *not redemptive at all* ("0"), to *somewhat redemptive* ("1"), *pretty redemptive*

<sup>3</sup> The life story mindset measure was adapted from the narrative mindset measure used by Dunlop (2019), which measured the extent to which individuals viewed (1) storytelling in romantic relationships as enjoyable and (2) their romantic relationship in narrative terms.

<sup>4</sup> The data considered in Studies 1 and 2 contains identifiable information and is therefore not publicly accessible. These analyses were not preregistered.

<sup>5</sup> The kappa coefficient was diminished due to the highly uneven distribution of codes. In other words, because most stories were coded as 1 = *present* for redemption, stories that were coded as 0 = *absent* had a larger negative impact on  $\kappa$  (see Syed & Nelson, 2015, pp. 380-381).

**Table 1**  
Exemplary redemptive stories (Studies 1 and 2).

Study 1 (Redemptive Stories)	Study 2 (Self-defining memories)
<p><i>Low redemptive content</i></p> <p>I had a plumbing incident in a medium-sized house last winter. It was very cold and icy, temperatures dropping below 0. The electric heat pump motor in the basement broke, and there was no other heating available in the house. My car battery also froze and the car would not start. The roads were too icy to drive much. What I should have immediately done was shut off the water valve near the street outside the house, and drained the water heater. Then I should have drained the toilet tank, and poured antifreeze (or windshield washer fluid) in the drains. I was ignorant and did none of these things. The water in the toilet froze, but didn't break anything. The water in the plastic lines for the bathroom sink eventually burst, and water started pouring in the bathroom and drenching down to the basement. This was a fairly dangerous situation. I managed to shut off some water valves in the basement to stop the flow. After the weather warmed up a bit, and I got the heat pump motor fixed, I went back and checked the water lines. The metal ruffage in the shower was leaking, and the plastic pipes for the shower also broke. I ended up spending about \$100 buying various plumbing valves and lines, and several hours of work with pipe-wrenches.</p>	<p><i>High redemptive content (self-rating)</i></p> <p>Although I did not grow up in a bad environment, I did fall into the wrong crowd. In high school I met someone that changed me for the worst and it resulted in me rebelling against my mom and causing arguments that could have been avoided. At the time I thought it was normal for kids my age but now when I look back I think my situation was extreme. I think about it a lot and have flashbacks to how I used to be. I didn't quite mature until my junior year of college to be honest. I got drunk and crashed my car many times. It wasn't until I saw my mom crying and her begging me to not die that I finally snapped out of it. I never drink and drive anymore nor cause arguments with my mom and I've become more family oriented and have been receiving such good grades that I wish I snapped out of it earlier. These memories obviously can't be forgotten as it was traumatic for me but I don't mind it because it's a constant reminder of who and what I should be because I never want to go back to being that person ever again</p>
<p><i>High redemptive content</i></p> <p>When I was 23, I was engaged to be married. I thought I had my life planned out and everything would be great. However, my fiancé apparently felt different. She dumped me. She made me move out. She broke my heart. I struggled for several months. It was definitely the most depressing phase of my life. Finally, I had enough. I started writing new songs. In about a month, I had nine completed. I decided to start a band with these songs and little did I know, this decision would change my life. We started playing shows and within just a few months, we had a management team and we were in the recording studio. We released the album to indie critic acclaim and toured for the next three years, releasing another album along the way. Eventually, the band broke up. Things changed. I am now a music teacher in a public school. However, I would not give up those memories for anything. I went from being in a terrible spot to having the most fun I ever had all because I wrote songs about the terrible time. I learned that silver linings are real and one should always try to make the best of a bad situation.</p>	<p><i>High redemptive content (coder rating)</i></p> <p>One self-defining memory is during my early teen years, I moved permanently to the United States with only my father leaving behind my older siblings and my mother which was extremely difficult in terms of coping to the new culture and</p>
<p><i>Low redemptive content (coder rating)</i></p> <p>When I was young, I would play outside with the neighborhood kids until it turned dark outside. My lungs would burn as I dash across the large green field next to my house, my legs throbbing with each heavy step. My</p>	<p><i>High redemptive content (coder rating)</i></p> <p>learning to be completely independent, like walking myself to school and back, and getting no help on schoolwork or support from my parent and occasionally being bullied for being foreign, and very little contact to my family back home. In spite of the many difficulties, I became self-sufficient, scored above average on my schoolwork and became independent. This event has largely contributed to whom I am today in terms of cultural understanding, advocating for diversity, supporting feminism, and being driven and ambitious.</p>

**Table 1 (continued)**

<p>clothes would be completely covered in grass stains, and there would be dirt underneath my nails and streaked across my arms. The smell of the outdoors lingers when I come back inside once my mother called for me - her face scrunching up before she promptly tells me to "take a shower, you stink!" After having dinner with my family, I would be hurried up to my shared room with my sister and made to go to sleep for the school day the next day.</p>	<p>learning to be completely independent, like walking myself to school and back, and getting no help on schoolwork or support from my parent and occasionally being bullied for being foreign, and very little contact to my family back home. In spite of the many difficulties, I became self-sufficient, scored above average on my schoolwork and became independent. This event has largely contributed to whom I am today in terms of cultural understanding, advocating for diversity, supporting feminism, and being driven and ambitious.</p>
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("2"), and *very redemptive* ("3"). Relative to Cox and colleagues' (2019) continuous coding system for redemption, ours was broader in scope in an effort to capture more varied forms of redemption. In addition, the simplistic nature of our coding system was intended to make it more accessible to untrained coders. To determine the degree to which this coding system was intuitive and could be reliably applied by coders with minimal training, the coding team was provided with no further instructions and did not meet regularly to resolve coding discrepancies. This was anomalous to coding conventions in the published literature but allowed us to gauge whether our continuous coding system was accessible to untrained raters (as was undertaken in Study 2). Under these minimal conditions, ratings were found to be reliable and, subsequently averaged (ICC = 0.81).<sup>6</sup>

## 2. Results and Discussion

When interpreted using the classic presence/absence coding system, 93% of stories were deemed redemptive by both coders. We also noted that participants with lower levels of defensive pessimism ( $r = -0.19$ ,  $p = .01$ ) and higher levels of a life story mindset ( $r = 0.25$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) produced stories containing a greater degree of redemptive content measured using the continuous rating scale. This story content was unrelated to optimism and life satisfaction ( $r_s \leq 0.05$ ,  $p_s \geq 0.54$ ).

Collectively, these results suggest that, when so requested, the majority of adults can produce redemptive stories when prompted. This finding is consistent with the notion that redemption is a culturally shared story that is quite accessible to Americans (McAdams et al., 2001). Furthermore, under such conditions, individuals low in defensive pessimism and high in the tendency to view the self through the prism of story provided stories that were particularly redemptive in nature. Interestingly, no relation was noted between the degree of redemption in participants' stories and their life satisfaction. It may be that there was not sufficient variability to examine relations between redemption and life satisfaction, as most stories were coded as redemptive. Nevertheless, the continuous coding system used in Study 1 expands the paucity of research examining redemption beyond dichotomous ratings and contributes to reconceptualizing the measurement of redemption to better capture its multidimensional nature.

In Study 2, we again applied our four-point, degree-based coding system to participants' narratives. This time, however, we requested a type of story more commonly considered in the narrative identity literature (i.e., a self-defining memory; Singer & Blagov, 2002). In addition, drawing inspiration from recent work incorporating self-rating of stories alongside the objective coding of stories provided by trained

<sup>6</sup> The narrative prompt requesting a redemptive story and a coding manual for the continuous redemption coding system (produced by raters after coding concluded) are available here: <https://osf.io/426vq/>. Additional coding systems and narrative prompts that may be of interest to researchers concerned with the study of narrative are available here: <https://osf.io/7fm62/>.

raters (Dunlop et al., 2020a), participants were also prompted to themselves rate their stories using the four-point scale introduced in Study 1. We predicted that a significant degree of self-other consensus would be noted in ratings of redemption and that both rating types would correspond favorably with life satisfaction.

### 2.1. Study 2: Rate Your (Redemptive) Story

One hundred and ninety-five undergraduate students took part in this study in exchange for course credit. The mean age of our sample was 21.36 years ( $SD = 2.29$ ), 72% identified as female, and 47%, 40%, 22%, and 3% identified as being of Latinx/Hispanic, Asian/Asian American, White, and African American, respectively. After providing consent, participants were asked for a self-defining memory (see Singer & Blagov, 2002), which was described as a memory participants deemed important, helped them understand themselves, and thought about frequently. Following the provision of these memories ( $M_{\text{length}} = 238$  words,  $SD = 206$ ), participants were presented with the following prompt:

As personality psychologists, we are often interested in 'redemptive' personal stories. In a redemptive story, a 'bad' or emotionally negative event or circumstance leads to a 'good' or positive outcome. So, the story moves from a negative beginning to a positive ending.

Based on this description, how redemptive would you consider your self-defining memory?

Participants next rated their memories on the four-point scale reported in Study 1. Finally, they completed a battery of questionnaires, which included the SWLS ( $\alpha = 0.88$ ). As was the case in Study 1, memories were then read and rated on the same four-point scale provided to participants by a primary coder (see Table 2, for examples). Two secondary coders rated a random quarter of the data for reliability purposes ( $\alpha = 0.84$ ).

## 3. Results

Participants rated their own stories as more prototypically redemptive ( $M = 2.52$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ) when compared to the primary coder ( $M = 1.93$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ,  $F[1,194] = 53.76$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.54$ ). This difference was accompanied by a significant degree of rank-order consistency between self-other ratings ( $r = 0.47$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Both ratings related significantly with life satisfaction ( $r_s = 0.18$ ,  $p_s = 0.02$ ).

## 4. General Discussion

In the present studies, we explored three novel methods to capture and quantify redemptive autobiographical stories. In Study 1, we introduced a prompt designed to solicit redemptive stories. In both Studies 1 and 2, we used a novel continuous rating scale to capture the degree of redemption in participants' stories rather than its presence/absence, which is traditionally done (e.g., McAdams, 1999; McAdams et al., 2001). Third and finally, in Study 2, we introduced a parallel self-rating system in which participants were asked to rate the degree of redemption present in the stories they had produced moments earlier using our continuous rating scale.

Exploring the stories produced in Study 1 using the traditional presence/absence coding system, it is clear that, when asked to do so, most adults can provide redemptive autobiographical stories.<sup>7</sup> This finding substantiates an additional way of capturing redemption in participants' stories that might contribute to researchers' understanding

<sup>7</sup> This coheres with research conceptualizing redemption as a culturally shared story that guides collective thoughts, attitudes, and behavior (i.e., *master narrative*; McLean & Syed, 2015). The point at which a narrative dimension is a master narrative is largely undecided. Participants' ability to recall stories representative of shared narrative themes may be one as-yet unconsidered criteria.

**Table 2**  
Continuous redemption coding system examples (Study 2).

"0" = <i>Not at all redemptive</i>	"There was a time in my childhood where I was being raised by my grandparents since my mom had to go to work so often. My grandparents hated me, and they would always talk about how I'm worthless and that their lives would be better if I had never been born. They would even throw me in the kitchen with no lights and I would have to sit there for hours on end just waiting for someone to notice me. I didn't have anything to do except for imaginary play with my fingers. I also wasn't allowed to make a lot of noise since that would disturb everyone else in the house. Even when I would play with my cousins my grandma would purposely grab the toys away from me saying that I might break them and wouldn't let me watch TV either, she would make me sit next to the TV so I wouldn't be able to see what was on it."
"1" = <i>Somewhat redemptive</i>	"I was severely depressed my freshman year of high school. I was out of school for 3 months consecutively and attempted suicide. I managed to pass the year with ok grades, and as a getaway my parents took my family to stay a weekend at a bed and breakfast on the beach. The inn we stayed at was memorable because it was the first time in a long time, I felt happy, my parents held hands while walking along the shore which they never do, and we all got a break from stresses of our normal lives for a short while."
"2" = <i>Pretty redemptive</i>	"This was about two years ago, the day that I finally decided that I no longer wanted to be a biology major but a psychology major instead. During this time, I found myself in a very dark and sad place because I knew that biology was something I no longer wanted to pursue. I made my appointment with my psychology advisor, and I finally met the prerequisites to become a psychology major. That day was very nerve racking because I was now going to go into a whole new direction, but at the same time I felt very excited because for once I felt like I was doing the right thing for myself, and I was just ready to show my potential."
"3" = <i>Very redemptive</i>	"The breakup of my first serious relationship. Breaking up with my ex is not a memory that brings up very strong feelings; however, I feel like it was a moment in which I learned a lot about myself. I was able to learn and think back to all the things that I've been through or given up during my relationship with my ex and this led to me understanding what I want and don't want in life. I remember when I broke up with my ex, I was miserable crying nonstop for the first 48 h but after it was like a relief. I felt freer than I ever felt in the past year and a half, and I felt like I was able to leave this thing behind and truly focus on what it is that I really enjoyed in life. I learned a lot about myself and became more confident in who I was as a person."

of how to manipulate narrative identity and whether this is beneficial for the person (e.g., Jones et al., 2018). Such an assessment technique shifts the study of redemption away from examining whether such stories are spontaneously generated when participants describe their self-definitional experiences and towards study of the ways in which redemptive stories, when explicitly requested, differ from one another. To this aim, we considered the stories in Study 1 based on their degree of redemptive content. We found that participants who viewed their lives as if they were stories "complete with characters and a plot" tended to produce narratives with higher redemptive content. On the basis of this finding, however, it remains unclear whether those with such a life story mindset view their lives more redemptively, are skilled storytellers capable of tailoring their stories to prompt-based and situational demands, or both. Individuals with higher defensive pessimism also produced stories with comparably little redemptive content. This is consistent with research finding that defensive pessimism is related with feeling closer to negative distant futures and future failures as well as greater negative affect (Sanna et al., 2006).

Shifting from those relations present to those conspicuously absent, in Study 1 we did not observe a relation between the redemptive content of participants' stories and their life satisfaction. It is likely that this null

effect is owed in large part to the lack of variability in redemption observed within the Study 1 narratives. Still, directly requesting redemptive stories may have undermined the role that the dispositional tendency to tell redemptive stories plays in promoting well-being. In other words, it may not be the act of telling a redemptive story, but rather the propensity to form redemptive stories, that promotes well-being. Whether one tells a redemptive story may be informed by characteristics of the storyteller but can also be influenced by which narrative prompt is used by the researcher (Bauer et al., 2019; Cox et al., 2019). Consistent with this notion, in Study 2, we noted that the degree of redemption naturally present in self-defining memories yielded a positive relation with life satisfaction. It will be important for future research to compare the content and predictive ability of directly requested redemptive narratives with other stories that feature redemption. Given that asking the person for a redemptive story is akin to soliciting a negative experience, it may be particularly fruitful to draw comparisons between directly requested redemptive narratives and those pertaining to low-point experiences. This would ideally be done in a larger sample with greater statistical power to detect relatively small effects.

We also noted that the self-other consensus in ratings of redemption was relatively high in Study 2, suggesting that narrators and objective coders viewed these stories in much the same way. Narrative identity work is resource-intensive, so it would be in researchers' best interest to articulate how self-versus-other ratings of personal stories function in relation to valued outcomes. This would be particularly useful to researchers unfamiliar with qualitative data, seeking to incorporate an economical measure of narrative identity. However, self-ratings are best suited for basic dimensions of narrative identity (e.g., redemption, contamination, affective tone) and cannot completely eclipse the coding of subtle narrative dimensions conducted by researchers.

With the few words we have remaining, we wish to signal a small number of implications, limitations, and conclusions. First, some have suggested that, by asking participants to reflect upon and then provide stories from their lives, narrative researchers are enacting an intervention of sorts (e.g., Johnson, 2015). Due to the many correlates of the redemptive story, it remains an interesting question to explore the potential downstream consequences of asking participants directly for redemptive personal stories. Second, within our four-point coding system, stories that were "highly redemptive" possessed a certain degree of homogeneity. True to form, they start negatively and end positively. In highly redemptive stories, the negative circumstances described at the outset were closely tethered to subsequent positive endings in a way that participants often framed as causal (see Dunlop & Walker, 2013). These stories possessed the most prominent affective shifts and strongest perceptions of positive change in the self (see Table 2). In contrast, stories with a lower degree of redemption were comparably heterogeneous (see Tables 1 and 2). The diversity of stories containing lower redemption was evident in terms of their variability in affective and manifest content (i.e., what the participant discussed) as well as narrative length. Some stories were saturated with negativity (see example for "0" = *Not at all redemptive* in Table 2), others were short and descriptive ("I grew up in [redacted] and my family consists of my parents, brother, and dog. My family had to move out due to gentrification when I was in high school."), and others still were ambiguous in terms of their affective content (e.g., "One self-defining memory I had was my first-time smoking weed. It was with my childhood best friend, and we smoked it out of a soda can after school at the park. Sometimes I look back on this memory and regret ever trying it since it has negatively affected me. Other times I look at it positively because that is also when I started to chill out"). In so many words, the script for disclosing a redemptive story is relatively well established. However, there are many varied ways in which one can choose not to tell a redemptive story.

An implication stemming from this observation, one that also pertains to the traditional presence/absence system, is that more needs to be done to parse out the variability among stories that possess a low (or

an absent) level of redemptive content. Properly accounting for this variability within coding systems for redemption would make a significant contribution to the literature. In addition, in future, it will be necessary to determine if the degree-based coding system for redemptive content introduced here demonstrates incremental validity in predicting well-being over and above the more tried-and-true presence/absence coding system. This would be most useful in the context of narratives about low-point experiences, where redemption has been found to be more strongly related to well-being (Bauer et al., 2019). Third, although a significant degree of self-other consensus was noted in the rating of redemptive content in self-defining memories (Study 2), the magnitude of this consensus did not meet the high threshold required for the purposes of inter-rater reliability (see Adler et al., 2017). For this reason, researchers are encouraged to explore reasons for both the high degree of consensus, and lack of absolute agreement, between self-ratings and trained coder-ratings of the redemptive content of autobiographical stories. On the basis of the respective advantages of self-report and behavioral data (see Paulhus & Vazire, 2007), as well as reasons conceptual in nature (see Dunlop et al., 2020a), we believe that a more multi-modal, multi-method approach to the study of redemption will be necessary to better understand for who and under what conditions crafting a redemptive story can contribute to the good life.

### Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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