

Exploring Time Perspective and Narrative Coherence Links Between Identity Styles and Flourishing

Jeffrey Dean Webster

Langara College

This study investigated the relationship between identity processing styles and psychological flourishing in relation to two under-examined variables in identity research, namely narrative awareness and a balanced time perspective. Participants ($N = 205$) ranged in age from 17 to 57 ($M = 22.73$, $SD = 6.75$) and completed the Identity Styles Inventory-5, Flourishing Scale, Awareness of Narrative Identity Questionnaire, and the modified Balanced Time Perspective Scale. Results indicated that the informational identity style was positively, and the diffused-avoidant identity style was negatively, correlated with flourishing. These associations were mediated by a balanced time perspective and narrative awareness. Results suggest that thinking about one's past, present, and future in positive ways, as well as recognizing that identity can be adaptively construed in narrative terms, produce increases in psychological well-being over and above specific identity styles. Narrative awareness and time perspective, therefore, can provide novel insights in identity research.

Key Words: Balanced Time Perspective; Eudaimonic Well-Being; Hedonistic Well-Being; Narrative Identity; Narrative Coherence

Achieving a well-articulated sense of identity is an important developmental task (Erikson, 1963; McAdams & McLean, 2013; Waterman, 2007) and one which is associated with a host of positive psychosocial outcomes (Berzonsky & Ciecuch, 2016; Meeus, 2011; Waters & Fivush, 2015). Those individuals who have actively explored and committed to a set of guiding values and goals tend to achieve high levels of basic subjective or hedonic well-being such as life satisfaction and happiness (Huta & Ryan, 2010; Ryff, 1989). Such individuals may also be more likely to maximize their potential, pursue adaptive developmental pathways, and achieve eudaimonic well-being and flourishing (Huta & Waterman, 2014; Keyes, 2002; Seligman, 2011; Waterman, 2008). Although separate indices of flourishing

(e.g., sense of purpose in life) have been previously linked to mature identity components (e.g., Sumner, Burrow, & Hill, 2015), validated measures of flourishing have not been systematically examined directly as an outcome in identity research to date.

The ostensible link between identity and flourishing is likely modified by intervening variables. One implicitly acknowledged, yet under-examined class of variables within identity research concerns time perspective (TP). Across different theoretical orientations stemming from an Eriksonian perspective (identity status, narrative identity), the notion that identity involves a synthesis of one's personal past, present, and anticipated future is considered fundamentally important (e.g., McAdams, 1993; Waters & Fivush, 2015). Indeed, recent work (Syed & Mitchell, 2016) suggests that temporal identity integration is a core developmental process. Although some previous studies have investigated aspects of identity and temporal orientation, many of these studies only included one or two time dimensions (typically only focusing on a future time perspective). Therefore, it is important to supplement prior identity research by including time perspective measures which incorporate indices of the past, present, and future.

A second possible mediator of the identity-flourishing link involves the recent construct of narrative awareness (Hallford & Mellor, 2017). Narrative awareness involves a conscious recognition of the structure and function of narratives in one's personal life and the subjective sense that such narratives are marked by various forms of coherence (e.g., temporal, thematic). As with TP, narrative awareness has not been investigated in relation to identity

Author Information:

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Correspondence should be sent to: Jeffrey Dean Webster, PhD, Psychology Department, Langara College, 100 West 49th Avenue, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, V5Y 2Z6. Tel: 604 -323-5865; email: jdwebster2014@gmail.com

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outside of Hallford and Mellor's original study. Nevertheless, individual differences in narrative awareness are likely associated with differences in both identity orientations and well-being outcomes. With respect to the former, for instance, an appreciation of story structure components (e.g., protagonists, obstacles, plots, beginnings-middles-endings) helps individuals identify motivations, goals, and themes in their lives which strongly contribute to a relatively comprehensive, and comprehensible, sense of self. With respect to the latter, fragmented and disoriented life stories are associated with poor mental health outcomes such as depression, anxiety, and personality disorders (e.g., Adler, 2012).

The current project helps fill these gaps in the literature by including a measure of time perspective which assesses all three temporal orientations (past, present, and future), the new measure of narrative awareness, and a measure of eudaimonic well-being, or flourishing. I test in an exploratory way the possible mediating roles which TP and narrative awareness play in the identity-flourishing link. To illustrate the rationale for the hypotheses of the current project, I first describe relevant identity research focusing on the identity styles perspective (Berzonsky, 1990) which forms the focus for the current project, but also information pertinent to a narrative identity orientation, as these two approaches should be complimentary (McLean & Pasupathi, 2012). Next, I review evidence for the link between identity and possible flourishing, then briefly describe some important associations (some documented, some proposed) between TP and identity.

Identity

Identity development has been investigated from different theoretical and conceptual perspectives (Syed & McLean, 2016). Earlier models investigated identity as a status and emphasized processes of exploration and commitment (McLean & Pasupathi, 2012); a more recent narrative perspective conceptualizes identity as an evolving lifestory which primarily emphasizes a past to present time frame with less attention paid to the future. Indeed, according to Syed and McLean (2016), "there is almost no empirical attention paid to the future within the narrative literature, and how the future is integrated with the past and present" (p. 5).

Identity from a Status/Styles Perspective. Erikson (1963) postulated that the main psychosocial task of late adolescence was to establish a clearly articulated and coherent identity. Through consolidating strengths and limitations of previous psychosocial stage outcomes, the developing adolescent can distinguish patterns, themes, and goals which are self-defining.

This maturing insight helps lead to identity achievement rather than role confusion. Marcia (1966) elaborated and extended Erikson's theoretical model by identifying two orthogonal dimensions, crisis and commitment, which when crossed produced four identity

statuses: identity achieved, moratorium, foreclosed, and identity diffusion. This typology was the dominant method of identity research for over three decades (Kroger, 2000).

As an alternative to the identity status approach, Berzonsky (1990, 2008; Berzonsky & Luyckx, 2008) developed measures of identity processing styles, rather than discrete identity statuses (or categories). Berzonsky (1990) defined identity as "a self-constructed cognitive representation of oneself that is used to interpret self-relevant information and to cope with personal problems and life events" (p. 156). His model consists of three social-cognitive identity styles, the informational, normative, and diffuse/avoidant, each with a relatively distinct pattern of psychosocial adjustment (Berzonsky & Kuk, 2005; Schwartz, Zamboanga, Luyckx, Meca, & Ritchie, 2013).

The informational style involves an active, critical evaluation of identity alternatives which typically results in a strong commitment to a coherent sense of self. Research indicates that the informational style is associated with higher levels of openness to experiences and need for cognition (Berzonsky & Sullivan, 1992), future time perspective, (Luyckx, Lens, Smits, & Goossens, 2010), problem-focussed coping and empathy (Soenens, Duriez, & Goossens, 2005), and psychological well-being (Berzonsky & Cieciuch, 2016).

The normative style also describes persons with strong commitments to fundamental ideological issues (e.g., sex roles, occupational choices), but this decision closure does not follow from an active questioning, exploration, and analysis of identity alternatives. Instead, life choices usually originate from significant others (typically parents) in the adolescent's life. The normative style is consistent with Marcia's foreclosed ego identity status, and as such, has both positive and negative associated traits. In terms of the former, normative individuals typically show self-discipline and a clear sense of purpose. In terms of the latter, however, normative individuals score lower on measures of empathy and openness and higher on measures of prejudice and conservatism (Beaumont, 2009; Berzonsky, 1990; Soenens, Duriez, & Goossens, 2005).

The diffuse-avoidant style is characteristic of persons for whom issues of identity are avoided and/or which produce feelings of confusion or anxiety. This identity style shares conceptual space with Marcia's identity diffused category. As such, individuals scoring high on the diffuse-avoidant style tend to lack introspection, conscientiousness, cognitive complexity, and emotional intelligence, and tend to be higher in neuroticism, procrastination, the use of avoidant coping strategies, Borderline Personality Disorder, and higher levels of binge drinking and binge eating (e.g., Berzonsky & Kuk, 2005; Jorgensen, Berntsen, Bech, Kjolbye, Bennedsen, & Ramsgaard, 2012; Laghi, Baiocco, Liga, Lonigro, & Baumgartner, 2014; Seaton & Beaumont, 2008).

Identity from a Narrative Perspective. Conceptualizing identity as a type of narrative is currently a well-established paradigm (Adler, 2012; McAdams, 1993; McAdams & McLean, 2013; Waters & Fivush, 2015).

Personal stories and autobiographical reflections provide a deeper level of understanding of the person and help highlight phenomenological perspectives and subjective experiences which may go unreported in quantitative approaches.

Within this framework, identity is conceived of as a type of evolving life story in which a person's past, present, and future selves are constructed and reconstructed in some coherent and integrative fashion. Through narrative identity, "...people convey to themselves and to others who they are now, how they came to be, and where they think their lives may be going in the future" (McAdams & McLean, 2013, p. 233). Narratives can serve as the means through which identity processing and exploration occur (e.g., McLean & Pasupathi, 2012), with the potential outcome being a strengthening of identity commitments to goals, values, and roles. Nevertheless, as noted earlier, there are strong individual differences in identity processing styles such that the type of elaborate analytic/synthetic exploration and processing of personal experiences occurs more frequently in some styles (e.g., informational) than others (e.g., diffused-avoidant).

An assumed critical aspect of narrative identity is coherence which has been defined in different ways (e.g., Habermas & Bluck, 2000; Reese, Haden, Baker-Ward, Bauer, Fivush, & Ornstein, 2011). Despite such definitional variations, prototypical characteristics include situating life events within a logical time sequence (i.e., temporal coherence); identifying overarching patterns and motifs in one's life story (i.e., thematic coherence); and making logical connections between antecedent and consequent events, emotions, and psychological outcomes (i.e., causal coherence). Kober, Schmiedek, and Habermas (2015) showed these types of coherence emerge gradually in a developmental sequence: temporal, causal, and thematic.

Recently, Hallford and Mellor (2017) suggested that an important and novel aspect of narrative identity is a type of metacognitive recognition concerning the importance of personal narratives in identity formation. In conjunction with other aspects of narrative identity, they propose "...that the basic awareness of having life stories that bring cohesion and meaning to events from a person's life, irrespective of the content of those stories, may itself be adaptive" (p. 400). They developed a four-factor questionnaire (ANIQ; Awareness of Narrative Identity Questionnaire) which assesses three types of narrative coherence (i.e., temporal, causal, and thematic) and a separate awareness factor. Results from the initial validation study (Studies 1 and 2) found expected relations with several hedonistic well-being measures (e.g., positive correlations with self-esteem and anxiety); a form of reminiscence enhancing identity understanding; and measures of well-being (e.g., meaning in life). In Study 3, a turning point narrative was coded for context, chronology, and theme and these factors generally correlated in theoretically expected ways with the ANIQ factor scores.

Identity and Flourishing

The set of positive and negative attributes differentially associated with each of the identity processing styles illustrated above are relevant to the concept of flourishing (Keyes, 2002; Seligman, 2011). Flourishing refers to more than the simple absence of mental illness, a type of neutral existence in which persons are performing adequately and have normal levels of well-being; rather, flourishing signifies that persons have maximized their potential and have discovered and/or developed satisfying ways of being which produce high levels of both positive affect and purposeful behavior. For instance, the informational identity style has been associated with higher levels of transcendence and self-actualization (Beaumont, 2009), curiosity/exploration, proactive coping, and emotional intelligence (Seaton & Beaumont, 2008), and wisdom (Webster, 2013). These qualities and attributes are strongly related to flourishing (e.g., Webster, Bohlmeijer, & Westerhof, 2014).

Flourishing includes emotional, social, and psychological well-being components, and reflects basic human needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence (e.g., Ryan & Deci, 2000). Recently, Diener, Diener, Wirtz, Tov, Kim-Prieto, Choi, Oishi, and Biswas-Diener (2010) developed a short assessment instrument to measure "social-psychological prosperity" (p. 144), or flourishing. Diener et al. (2010) found that flourishing correlated with Ryff's PWB subscales and basic needs such as competence, supportive relationships, and autonomy. Other researchers using this scale found that flourishing was related to supervisor-rated creativity (Demerouti, Bakker, & Gevers, 2015), dispositional mindfulness (Duan, 2016), and higher identity consistency across social roles (Daukantaite & Thompson, 2014).

Identity and Time

Constructing an identity is necessarily a temporal quest (Syed & McLean, 2016). In late adolescence and emerging adulthood, persons consider such questions as, "How did I become the person I am today and how will I evolve into my later self?" The answers to such existential questions requires extensive explorations of our recollected pasts and anticipated futures as filtered through our present circumstances. In other words, all three temporal perspectives (past, present, and future) contribute important information about our sense of who we are (e.g., Peetz & Wilson, 2008). Our past tells us who we have been, the values we have adopted, and highlights our strengths and weaknesses. Indeed, one of the important functions of reminiscence is to consolidate and maintain a strong sense of self and identity (e.g., Webster & Gould, 2007). Our future imbues us with hope for achieving dreams and accomplishing personal goals, and as such provides an optimistic, teleological pull forward. Our present allows us to live in the moment, to savour the now, and be mindful of what makes life worth living. An

integration of these temporal elements was a cornerstone of Erikson's (1963) lifespan theory. Effectively incorporating these three time orientations within the sense of self allows for the developing adolescent "an assured sense of inner continuity and social sameness which will bridge what he was as a child and what he is about to become" (Erikson, 1959, p. 111).

Despite this key theoretical assumption, relatively little empirical research has directly investigated the relationship between identity and time perspective (TP), described by Boniwell and Zimbardo (2004) as "...one of the most powerful influences on virtually all aspects of human behavior" (p. 167). Zimbardo and Boyd (1999) see time perspective as an often unconscious process in which a person's temporal orientation (i.e., past, present, or future) serves as a temporal lens through which life experiences are filtered. An extensive body of research (see Boniwell & Zimbardo, 2004; Kairys & Liniauskaite, 2015 for reviews) clearly shows how individual TPs influence psychosocial choices, behaviours, and consequences (e.g., engaging in risky behaviour and negative health outcomes). Similar outcomes have been noted in the identity literature.

For instance, in a review article, Schwartz et al. (2013) note that an identity status termed *carefree diffusion* is associated with a host of physically risky and maladaptive behaviours such as physical aggression, anal sex and sex with multiple partners in a 30-day period, drunk driving, and high levels of illicit and dangerous drug use. These individuals had a short-term outlook on life and appeared to live for the moment. These characteristics map very closely onto a *present hedonistic* TP as measured by the Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (Zimbardo and Boyd, 1999). Individuals dominated by this TP are unconcerned with the future and the consequences of their actions which are primarily directed towards immediate self-pleasure, excitement, and risk-taking (e.g., Keough, Zimbardo, & Boyd, 1999). Taken together, such findings strongly suggest that TP and identity interact in meaningful and important ways. Nevertheless, only a few studies have investigated the explicit relationship between TP and aspects of identity in general, and identity processing styles in particular.

Shirai, Nakamura, and Katsuma (2016) investigated the relationship between time perspective (present and future orientations only) and identity formation in a longitudinal study of Japanese students. Results indicated that the identity constructs of commitment and exploration were positively associated with aspects of a future orientation (delay of gratification and concern for the future). Exploration was also positively associated with a present orientation as measured by mindfulness. These findings suggest that identity processing styles which encourage exploration, openness, and mindfulness (i.e., informational style) should score higher on both a present and future orientation.

Luyckx, Lens, Smits, and Goossens (2010) examined the reciprocal relationships among identity processing styles and time perspective (again, present and future

orientations only) in a short-term longitudinal study of college students from Belgium. Consistent with their hypotheses, results indicated that time perspective and identity styles mutually reinforce each other. The authors noted that future research would benefit from studies in which all three temporal dimensions (past, present, and future) are assessed, as well as the utility of assessing a balanced time perspective. I briefly address this latter suggestion next.

Recent work in TP has centered on examining the construct of a balanced time perspective (BTP) which involves a flexible engagement with the different temporal orientations (i.e., past, present, future) as the context demands (Stolarski, Wiberg, & Osin, 2015). Some persons may habitually focus predominantly on only one or two temporal orientations (e.g., they may be "stuck in the past"). Other persons may consistently draw upon positive aspects of all three temporal orientations in a more optimal way. A BTP measures more than a rose-colored glasses perspective, as such effects are not wholly explained by positive mood states or personality traits (e.g., Barsics, Rebetz, Rochat, D'Argembeau, & Van der Linden 2017; Webster, Vowinckel, & Ma, in press).

Results indicate that a BTP predicts many positive psychosocial outcomes such as life satisfaction, happiness, mental health, and wisdom (e.g., Simons, Peeters, Janssens, Lataster, & Jacobs, 2018; Stolarski, 2016; Webster, 2011; Webster, Bohlmeijer, & Westerhof, 2014; Zhang, Howell, and Stolarski, 2013). Recently, Stolarski, Vowinckel, Jankowski, and Zajenkowski (2016) examined the relationship between mindfulness and life satisfaction, finding that a BTP mediated this relationship. Given that mindfulness is more likely to be associated with the informational identity style, this finding is consistent with the current assumption that a BTP will mediate the relationship between the informational identity style and flourishing. Nevertheless, the relationship between a BTP and identity styles has not been systematically investigated to date, an important omission given the inherent temporal nature of identity development (e.g., Syed & Mitchell, 2015).

Interim Summary and Hypotheses

A strong and healthy sense of identity is related to a host of positive psychosocial outcomes, including many which are indices of flourishing. I expect, therefore, that the informational identity style will be positively associated with flourishing. Positively evaluating your past, present, and future should lead to higher levels of well-being and so I expect a BTP to be positively associated with flourishing, and because time is integral to identity development, a BTP should also be associated with identity in unique ways. Given the expected positive interrelationship among identity, BTP, and flourishing, I test the possibility that a BTP mediates the identity-flourishing link. Finally, given the lack of previous studies using the ANIQ, any hypotheses are necessarily tentative;

nevertheless, based upon the findings of Hallford and Mellor (2017) reviewed above (e.g., ANIQ scores predict outcomes similar to flourishing as well as aspects of identity), I make the exploratory hypothesis that the ANIQ will have similar relations to the main study variables as does a BTP. The specific study hypotheses follow.

Hypotheses (Zero Order, Bivariate Associations):

Hypothesis 1a: The informational identity processing style, BTP, ANIQ, and flourishing will all be positively correlated with each other.

Hypothesis 1b: The diffused identity processing style will be negatively correlated with a BTP, ANIQ, and flourishing.

Hypothesis 1c: Given the mixed outcomes associated with the normative identity processing style, I predict weak or non-significant associations among this identity style and a BTP, ANIQ, and flourishing.

Hypothesis 1d: The information style will be negatively correlated with both the normative and diffused styles, the latter two of which will be positively correlated with each other.

Hypotheses Regression Analyses)

Hypothesis 2. ANIQ and a BTP will show incremental validity (i.e., account for additional unique variance in flourishing) over and above demographic and identity style variables.

Hypotheses (Mediation Analyses)

Hypotheses 3a: There will be significant and positive direct paths from the informational style to a BTP, ANIQ, and flourishing; both a BTP and ANIQ will significantly mediate the direct path from the informational style to flourishing.

Hypotheses 3b: There will be significant and negative direct paths from the diffused-avoidant style to a BTP, ANIQ, and flourishing; both a BTP and ANIQ will significantly mediate the direct path from the diffuse-avoidant style to flourishing.

Hypotheses 3c: The direct paths from the normative style to a BTP, ANIQ, and flourishing will all be non-significant.

Methods

Participants

Participants, including 67 men, 138 women, two persons who self-identified as “other”, and 1 person with a missing value for gender, completed the study. Participants (three persons did not indicate their age) ranged in age from 17 to 57 ($M = 22.73$, $SD = 6.75$) and were recruited

from first- and second-year psychology students at an ethnically diverse college in Vancouver, Canada. Participants included both Canadian and international students who identified their ethnicity as primarily South Asian (32.7%), Chinese (25.0%), and White (15.4%), followed in descending order by Korean (3.4%), Middle Eastern (2.4%), Black (2.4%), Japanese (2.4%), and Hispanic (0.5%). Those who self-identified as either mixed ethnicity or other each constituted 7.2% of the sample. Finally, three persons did not indicate their ethnicity. All participants provided informed consent and the study was approved by the Research Ethics Board of the sponsor institution.

Measures

Identity. Identity was measured with the Identity Style Inventory, Revised (ISI-5) by Berzonsky, Soenens, Luyckx, Smits, Papini, and Goossens (2013) which assesses the strength of three identity processing styles within each participant via a 36-item inventory measuring three styles of identity processing orientation. The information style consists of nine items (e.g., “I’ve spent a lot of time and talked to a lot of people trying to develop a set of values that make sense to me”); the normative style consists of nine items (e.g., “I’ve more-or-less always operated according to the values with which I was brought up”); and the diffuse-avoidant style consists of nine items (e.g., “It doesn’t pay to worry about values in advance; I decide things as they happen”). An additional 9-item subscale measures commitment to identity but is not analyzed/discussed in the current study. Participants respond to all statements using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *not at all like me*, to 5 = *very much like me*. After reverse scoring negatively worded items, total scores are computed by summing across items composing each subscale. Higher scores indicate higher levels of a particular identity processing style. Cronbach’s alphas in the current study for the informational, normative, and diffuse-avoidant styles, respectively, were .79, .71, and .73.

Time Perspective. A balanced time perspective was measured with the modified Balanced Time Perspective Scale (mBTPS; Webster, 2011; Vowinckel, Westerhof, Bohlmeijer, & Webster, 2017). The mBTPS is a 38-item scale containing two 14-item subscales, one reflecting a positive past orientation and one reflecting a positive future orientation, and one 10-item subscale reflecting a positive present orientation. Participants respond to each item on a 6-point Likert type scale where 1 = *strongly disagree* and 6 = *strongly agree*. Sample items include: Past - “Tapping into my past is a source of comfort to me.”; Present - “Being in the present helps me appreciate what I have.”; Future - “I look forward to my future”. Cronbach’s alpha for the past, present, and future subscales are, .90, .89, and .94, respectively.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Zero Order Correlations for Demographic and Main Study Variables

Measure	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Age	22.73	6.75	--	.07	-.20**	-.26**	.20**	.16*	.19**	.24**	.09	.09	.01	.13	.11	.23**
2. Inform	34.05	5.91		--	-.14*	-.20**	.42**	.32**	.37**	.48**	.32**	.05	.19**	.28**	.29**	.41**
3. Norm	24.26	6.00			--	.33**	-.12	.10	-.00	-.02	.10	.02	-.01	.02	.05	-.04
4. Diffuse	23.86	6.41				--	-.35**	-.14*	-.15*	-.28**	.01	.10	-.10	.01	.00	-.36**
5. Future	4.52	0.98					--	.38**	.46**	.81**	.06	.08	.13	.16*	.15*	.61**
6. Past	3.97	0.90						--	.39**	.76**	.46**	.10	.33**	.35**	.43**	.26**
7. Present	3.74	0.78							--	.76**	.11	.12	.16*	.24**	.21**	.47**
8. BTP	12.23	2.07								--	.27**	.13	.27**	.32**	.33**	.58**
9. ANIQaware	34.22	10.16									--	.26**	.45**	.50**	.76**	.22**
10. ANIQtempor	34.22	8.57										--	.37**	.37**	.65**	.17*
11. ANIQcausal	33.60	9.62											--	.44**	.76**	.32**
12. ANIQtheme	34.46	9.53												--	.78**	.27**
13. ANIQtot	136.50	28.17													--	.33**
14. Flourish	43.77	7.59														--

Note. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Narrative Awareness. Narrative awareness was measured with the Awareness of Narrative Identity Questionnaire (ANIQ; Hallford & Mellor, 2017). The ANIQ is a 20-item measure assessing four aspects of narrative identity (five items each using an 11-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 = *completely disagree* to 10 = *completely agree*). Sample items include: “*I use my stories about my life to work out the kind of person I am*” (Awareness); “*I can put the events of my life in order of when they occurred*” (Temporal Coherence); “*Things that have happened over the course of my life are meaningfully tied together*” (Causal Coherence); and “*I can perceive common themes about who I am across memories of my life*” (Thematic Coherence). Cronbach alphas for the four subscales in the current study were, respectively, .87, .74, .87, and .89. Cronbach alpha for the total ANIQ was .90.

Flourishing. Flourishing was measured with the 8-item Flourishing Scale (FS; Diener et al, 2010). Items assess different components of overall well-being, including engagement with life, positive social relationships, purpose and meaning in life, and a sense of competence and self-acceptance. Items are assessed with a 7-point, Likert type scale where 1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *strongly agree*. Scores are summed to produce an overall flourishing score where higher values indicated greater well-being. Sample items include, “*I lead a purposeful and meaningful life*”, “*I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others*”, and “*I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me*”. Cronbach’s alpha in the current study was .87.

Results

I first report the descriptive statistics and zero-order Person correlations among the main study variables in Table 1. Next, I conduct a hierarchical multiple regression (see Table 2) to test if narrative awareness and a BTP show incremental validity in predicting flourishing over and

above demographic and identity variables. Finally, I use structural equation modeling (SEM) to illustrate the mediating effects which a BTP and narrative awareness have on the relationship between the three identity processing styles as predictor variables on the dependent variable of flourishing, as presented in Figure 1.

As can be seen in Table 1, with one exception, all major hypotheses were supported. Supporting hypothesis 1a, the informational identity style was positively correlated with a BTP, narrative awareness, and flourishing. Partially supporting hypothesis 1b, the diffused-avoidant identity style was negatively correlated with a BTP and flourishing, whereas the predicted negative correlation between the diffuse-avoidant style and total ANIQ was not significant. Finally, supporting hypotheses 1c and 1d, the normative identity style was not correlated with any variables, except for the other two identity styles. Given this pattern of correlations, I performed a hierarchical multiple regression analysis (see Table 2) to examine whether a BTP and narrative awareness showed incremental validity in predicting flourishing.

In model 1 the demographic variables of gender and age were entered as a block. The overall model was significant, $F(2, 202) = 6.48, p = .002$, with the demographic variables accounting for 6% of the variance in flourishing. Only age was a significant predictor. In model 2 the three identity processing styles were entered as a block. Overall, the model was significant and accounted for an additional 20% of the variance in flourishing, $F_{change}(3, 199) = 17.91, p < .001$. All three identity styles were significant predictors. In model 3 the four ANIQ subscales were entered as a block. Overall, the model was significant and accounted for an additional 6.6% of the variance in flourishing, $F_{change}(4, 195) = 4.79, p = .001$. Only the causal subscale significantly predicted flourishing. Finally, in model 4, BTP was entered as a block. Overall, the model was significant and accounted for an additional 9.4% of the

Table 2

Hierarchical Regression on Flourishing

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	Beta	<i>t</i>	Sig.	Beta	<i>t</i>	Sig.	Beta	<i>t</i>	Sig.	Beta	<i>t</i>	Sig.
Sex	.077	1.128	.261	.065	1.05	.294	.032	0.53	.594	.020	0.36	.719
Age	.230	3.364	.001	.168	2.63	.009	.156	2.49	.014	.092	1.57	.121
Inform				.344	5.53	.000	.287	4.37	.000	.148	2.42	.026
Norm				.144	2.20	.029	.140	2.19	.030	.092	1.53	.127
Diffuse				-.265	-.395	.000	-.269	-4.07	.000	-.198	-3.16	.002
ANIQaware							-.019	-0.25	.801	-.028	-0.40	.690
ANIQtemp							.066	0.98	.326	.061	-0.99	.325
ANIQcausal							.202	2.82	.005	.162	2.41	.017
ANIQtheme							.71	0.95	.345	.025	0.36	.721
BTP										.377	5.619	.000
R		.246			.510			.571			.648	
R ²		.060			.260			.326			.421	
ΔR ²		.060			.200			.066			.094	
F		6.48*			17.90*			4.79*			31.58*	

Note. * $p < .01$. ** $p < .001$

variance in flourishing, $F_{change}(1, 194) = 31.58, p < .001$. Overall, 42.1% of the variance in flourishing was accounted for in the final model with the informative and diffuse-avoidant identity styles, ANIQ causal subscale, and a BTP remaining as significant predictors of flourishing (supporting hypothesis 2).

Given this pattern of correlation and regression findings, it seemed likely that both a BTP and narrative awareness mediate the identity styles to flourishing link. I tested this assumption using SEM. I used AMOS version 23 with Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimation to evaluate parameter fit using the following model fit indices: χ^2 , Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and Comparative Fit Index (CFI). Indications of good model fit for these fit statistics are a non-significant χ^2 , RMSEA < .05, and CFI > .95 (e.g., Kline, 2011).

Results for this original model generally fit the data well ($\chi^2 = 5.09, p = .162, df = 3$; CFI = .991; RMSEA = .058) with the exception that the postulated negative path from the diffused-avoidant identity style to narrative awareness did not attain statistical significance (standardized path coefficient = .064, $p = .342$), and was therefore dropped from the final model. This resulted in a slightly improved model fit ($\chi^2 = 5.99, p = .200, df = 4$; CFI = .991; RMSEA = .049). All remaining standardized regression weights were statistically significant (fully supporting hypotheses 3a and 3c, and partially supporting hypothesis 3b). Overall, the model accounted for 43% of the variance in the dependent variable of flourishing.

In terms of mediation, I used the *MyIndirectEffects.AmosEstimandVB* (Gaskin, 2016) to test the indirect effects. A significant indirect effect is considered evidence for mediation. As can be seen in Table 3, both of the proposed mediated paths (i.e., through BTP and ANIQ) from the informational style to flourishing were statistically significant. For the diffuse-avoidant style, the mediated path through a BTP was significant, indicating that a BTP lessened the negative relationship between the diffused-avoidant style and flourishing. Because the direct

Table 3

Indirect effects estimates, 95% confidence intervals, and probability levels for mediated paths

BTP as Mediator	Estimate	Lower 95% CI	Upper 95% CI	Probability
Informative—Flourishing	.192	.135	.269	<.001
Diffuse—Flourishing	-.100	-.172	-.046	.001
ANIQ as Mediator				
Informative—Flourishing	.060	.011	.137	.013

path from diffuse-avoidant to ANIQ was dropped, no mediation was possible.

Discussion

This study examined the links between identity styles, time perspective, narrative awareness, and flourishing. The results are consistent with, but also significantly extend, prior research on the positive psychosocial benefits of attaining a strong sense of self (e.g., Schwartz et al., 2015). As predicted, the informational, normative, and diffuse-avoidant identity styles were positively correlated, uncorrelated, and negatively correlated, respectively, with flourishing, a BTP, and narrative awareness. With respect to the flourishing outcome, these results are consistent with prior research showing the informational style predicts a suite of positive well-being results, including those allied with eudaimonic processes such as wisdom, mindfulness, and self-actualization (e.g., Beaumont, 2009, 2011; Webster, 2013). Persons who actively, openly, and flexibly engage in identity exploration (i.e., informational style) widen their options, discover new personal truths, and engage with their immediate and broader social community in ways which enhance their sense of competence, purpose, and meaning in life. In contrast, participants with elevated diffuse-avoidant scores showed essentially the opposite pattern of results, suggesting they were unable, or unwilling, to proactively engage in ways which would contribute to a sense of social engagement, psychological health, and a purposeful direction in life. These findings are consistent with Schwartz et al. (2015) who found a diffused profile (based on latent profile analysis) scored lowest on meaning in life, and both subjective and eudaimonic well-being. Additionally, Berzonsky and Cieciuch (2016) found that the diffuse-avoidant style correlated negatively with all six of Ryff's PWB subscales, while the informational style correlated positively with five of the six. The normative style had a mix of positive and negative correlations.

The results of the SEM analyses, specifically the significant mediation effects, suggest that part of the identity-flourishing link may be accounted for by both narrative awareness and a BTP. In terms of the former, the novel findings presented here on narrative awareness suggest that recognizing, at least at some level, that life and identity are storylike (e.g., McAdams, 1993) provides important mental health dividends. For instance, persons scoring higher on the informational identity style can see patterns, connections, and implications in the stories they tell to themselves and others, and this facilitates the development of flourishing. The positive correlation between the informational style and narrative awareness supports this supposition.

The tentative and exploratory hypothesis which predicted a negative correlation between the diffuse-avoidant style and narrative awareness was not found. This is likely due to the ubiquity of narrative in everyday life. Even persons who lack the motivation and/or skills to

effectively articulate autobiographical narratives are, nevertheless, frequently exposed to stories in their myriad forms on a daily basis. Such exposure likely produces at least a minimal level of narrative awareness.

In contrast, emerging adults who strongly endorse the informational style may have the ability to narrate their lives in more coherent ways, as reflected in the positive correlation with the causal and thematic subscales of the ANIQ. This finding reinforces and underscores the importance of Waters and Fivush's (2015) contention that "the coherence of our accounts of personally significant events is a critical feature of psychological health, especially when identity construction is a salient developmental task" (p. 441). Bolstering this interpretation is the significant mediating role narrative awareness plays in the link between the informational style and flourishing.

A minor qualification to the above was the finding that the temporal coherence subscale of the ANIQ and the informational style were not positively correlated. This may be because a simple linear chronology does not allow for more complex story structures, such as foreshadowing, flashbacks, and other literary devices which capture listener attention and provide greater contextual information (Kober & Habermas, 2017). Perhaps persons higher in the informational identity style are more likely to employ such enhanced techniques (given their documented complex reasoning skills; Soenens, Duriez, & Goossens, 2005), a speculation which could be fruitfully tested in future research.

With respect to time, the current study presents the first findings concerning the relationship between a BTP and identity styles as well as conceptually replicates an earlier finding by Webster, Bohlmeijer, and Westerhof (2014) who found that a BTP correlated positively with mental health. As predicted, the informational style was positively correlated with a BTP (including all three component parts – past, present, and future). This finding suggests that persons high on this style can draw upon inspirational and uplifting memories from their past (Hallford & Mellor, 2017), can savour, appreciate, and be mindful of the present moment (Beaumont, 2011), and be energized and optimistic when imagining their future (Nurmi, 2004). Given the paucity of prior research on identity and a BTP, direct comparisons are few, but these results are in part consistent with Shirai et al., (2016) who examined the identity components of exploration and commitment rather than identity styles per se, and Luyckx et al., (2010) who found that the informational style was positively associated with a future orientation as measured by the ZTPI.

In contrast, the diffuse-avoidant style was negatively correlated with a BTP (including all three components – past, present, and future) suggesting that past memories, present experiences, and future anticipations are all negative for individuals high on this style. Again, Luyckx et al. (2010) also found that the diffuse-avoidant style was negatively correlated with a future orientation.

Finally, as predicted, narrative awareness was positively correlated with a BTP. This novel result makes

both intuitive and theoretical (from a narrative identity perspective) sense. Basic story structures include beginnings (past), middles (present), and endings (future). Stories, particularly life narratives, require explicit time frames, and discourses about subjectively experienced time perspectives are best explicated in narrative form. The results of the current study suggest that persons who are capable of forging a coherent identity narrative from material garnered from past, present, and imagined future experiences have a better chance of flourishing than those less capable or motivated to do so (e.g., Adler, Lodi-Smith, Philippe, & Houle, 2016).

Limitations and Future Directions

This study has contributed to the literature by including three variables which have, to date, been either relatively underexamined (the identity-flourishing link) or not previously examined at all (a BTP and narrative awareness). The findings are novel and help identify important interrelationships among identity, time perspective, and narrative. Nevertheless, certain limitations need noting.

First, all the measures used were questionnaires, and this may contribute to common method bias. It is important to include actual narratives, instead of only persons' perceptions in future studies in order to assess more directly if and how time perspective and narrative awareness variables are included in stories about identity development. Second, the findings should be replicated with other measures of flourishing. Recently, Schotanus-Dijkstra, ten Klooster, Drossaert, Pieterse, Bolier, Walburg, and Bohlmeijer (2016) suggested that the Flourishing Scale (FS), despite its name, is limited to eudaimonic well-being and neglects hedonic well-being. True flourishing integrates emotional, social, and psychological dimensions (Seligman, 2011) and might be better captured in other scales. Third, although Hallford and Mellor (2017) noted how the four subscales of the ANIQ were significantly intercorrelated, they did not actually construct a total ANIQ score and so, while theoretically plausible, this procedure should be seen as exploratory. Fourth, the current sample was disproportionately younger adults. Given that identity development is considered a lifespan process (Erikson, 1963), future studies should aim for the inclusion of a greater number of participants from the third to fifth decades. Finally, the cross-sectional nature of the study precludes any statements concerning cause and effect. Does identity style cause an increased balanced time perspective, or does regularly examining one's past, present, and future serve as a source of identity development? Is narrative awareness an antecedent or consequence of identity and a BTP? Longitudinal studies are required to disentangle these important issues. Consequently, it is prudent to stress that the mediation observed in the present study is "statistical" rather than causal.

Despite these limitations, the current project provides initial findings on the interplay among identity, a balanced time perspective, and narrative awareness. These elements, and their possible interactions, can stimulate important new avenues of future research.

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