



Western Washington University
Western CEDAR

WWU Graduate School Collection

WWU Graduate and Undergraduate Scholarship

Summer 2017

Gender Identity in a Cultural Context: An Application of the Master Narrative Framework

Chelsea Fordham

Western Washington University, fordhac@wwu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://cedar.wwu.edu/wwuet>



Part of the [Psychology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Fordham, Chelsea, "Gender Identity in a Cultural Context: An Application of the Master Narrative Framework" (2017). *WWU Graduate School Collection*. 601.

<https://cedar.wwu.edu/wwuet/601>

This Masters Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the WWU Graduate and Undergraduate Scholarship at Western CEDAR. It has been accepted for inclusion in WWU Graduate School Collection by an authorized administrator of Western CEDAR. For more information, please contact westerncedar@wwu.edu.

**Gender Identity in a Cultural Context:
An Application of the Master Narrative Framework**

By Chelsea Fordham

Accepted in Partial Completion
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science

Kathleen L. Kitto, Dean of the Graduate School

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Chair, Dr. Kate McLean

Dr. Alexander Czopp

Dr. Joseph Trimble

MASTER'S THESIS

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a master's degree at Western Washington University, I grant to Western Washington University the non-exclusive royalty-free right to archive, reproduce, distribute, and display the thesis in any and all forms, including electronic format, via any digital library mechanisms maintained by WWU.

I represent and warrant this is my original work, and does not infringe or violate any rights of others. I warrant that I have obtained written permissions from the owner of any third party copyrighted material included in these files.

I acknowledge that I retain ownership rights to the copyright of this work, including but not limited to the right to use all or part of this work in future works, such as articles or books.

Library users are granted permission for individual, research and non-commercial reproduction of this work for educational purposes only. Any further digital posting of this document requires specific permission from the author.

Any copying or publication of this thesis for commercial purposes, or for financial gain, is not allowed without my written permission

Chelsea Fordham
July 21, 2017

**Gender Identity in a Cultural Context:
An Application of the Master Narrative Framework**

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of
Western Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science

by Chelsea Fordham
July 2017

Abstract

The current study builds upon existing work that defines master narratives (McLean & Syed, 2016), and explores master narratives relating to gender (McLean, Syed, & Shucard, 2016). The specific question addressed in this thesis is, *how does one's sociocultural context relate to the individual process of identity construction, in the domain of gender identity?* I examined biographical master narratives, or those that describe cultural expectations for a life course, in the context of gender identity. I used narrative and survey methodologies to describe the American biographical master narratives for men and women, and whether and how individuals deviate from these narratives. I examined how these deviations are incorporated into one's identity and if these deviations are related to psychological distress. Men and women reported similar expected life courses. Gender differences emerged for the importance of selected life events and the content of narratives describing either deviation from or conformity to cultural expectations relating to gender. As hypothesized, elaboration of an alternative narrative was associated with the presence of self-event connections and identity exploration. Not as hypothesized, elaboration of an alternative narrative was not associated with psychological distress. These findings have implications for both the cultural expectations for men and women within America and the processes by which men and women construct their identities in context of these expectations, as well as broader implications for the study of gender identity.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iv
List of Figures and Tables.....	vi
Introduction.....	1
Method.....	15
Results.....	25
Discussion.....	35
Conclusions.....	53
References.....	54
Appendix.....	72

List of Figures and Tables

Table 1. Narrative Examples for Content categories

Table 2. Means (Standardized Deviations) and Frequencies (Percentages) for Demographic Variables

Table 3. Descriptives for Participant-generated Life Course Event List

Table 4. Means (Standard Deviations) for Narrative Codes and Variables

Table 5. Frequencies (Percent) for Narrative Codes and Variables

Table 6. Pearson's Correlations for Selected Variables

Gender Identity in a Cultural Context: An Application of the Master Narrative Framework

Adolescent and emerging adult development is characterized by social and cognitive growth, notably seen through the resolution of what Erikson (1968) described as a “crisis” of identity construction. Resolution of this crisis is achieved through the process of integrating one’s experiences and beliefs into a cohesive, knowable identity. More specifically, a narrative approach to identity is defined as an individual’s sense of self, consisting of salient autobiographical events organized using a narrative structure (McAdams & McLean, 2013). This identity is constructed through the continuous process of storying past experiences, as well as interpretations of and connections between those experiences, into a broader narrative referred to as an individual’s *life story*, or *narrative identity* (McAdams et al., 2006).

Identity construction has been primarily examined on an individual level, focusing on personal processes of exploration (e.g., McLean, 2008). This existing work has shown that narrative identity construction often involves exploring and making sense of different components of the self and past experiences (e.g., McAdams, 2001; McLean, Syed, Yoder, & Greenhoot, 2014; Singer & Bluck, 2001). Though substantial research has shown that these meaning-making processes are facilitated by social and cultural activities (e.g., Fivush & Haden, 2003; Pasupathi, 2001), this work has focused primarily on *micro* contexts, such as past-event conversations (e.g., Weeks & Pasupathi, 2010), and does not fully address the larger *macro* context of the culture in which the identity is developing (for exceptions see: Hammack, 2008; McLean & Syed, 2016). In fact, substantial theoretical work, including Erikson’s (1968) original writings, emphasizes the importance of cultural context in understanding identity development. For example, a young woman living in rural India develops her identity in consideration of different sociocultural norms and expectations than a young man growing up in Manhattan. The

question that I aimed to address in this thesis is, *how does one's sociocultural context relate to the individual process of identity construction?* I address this question within the specific content domain of gender identity.

Constructing an Identity

Identity construction has been established as an important developmental task that begins in adolescence (Erikson, 1968; Habermas & de Silveira, 2008), a time when contradictions in self-understanding peak and is followed by the emergence of the skills for resolving these contradictions (Harter, Monsour, & Parke, 1992). Along with these developmental changes, the complexity of roles and identities also varies over time. For example, younger adolescents are more likely to deal with role conflict within their families, whereas older adolescents also engage in role conflicts pertaining to larger cultural expectations they encounter with increased independence outside of their home (Fivush, Habermas, & Zaman, 2011), at least in Western cultures.

As the types of conflict individuals are managing shifts over time, so too do the cognitive tools necessary to narratively manage those conflicts. By late middle childhood, youth have the skills to tell culturally appropriate stories, but the construction of coherent narratives that define the self continues to develop across adolescence. Specifically, the skills that facilitate the construction of coherent narratives develop across adolescence and into emerging adulthood (Habermas & Bluck, 2000; Köber, Schmiedek, & Habermas, 2015). *Autobiographical reasoning* is a broad term that subsumes these processes.

One aspect of autobiographical reasoning that is central to identity development is the process of making *self-event connections* within autobiographical narratives. These connections may describe a variety of relationships between the self and an event, such as causal or

explanatory self-event connections that describe how an event changes an aspect of the self (e.g., a traumatic event may change one's value system concerning the importance of family) or how an event may be explained by an aspect of one's self (e.g., being hired for a job due to one's established skillset), respectively (Pasupathi & Weeks, 2010). These autobiographical connections—between past events and current conceptions of self—become more frequent and more complex with age as individuals integrate new events and as changes in self-conceptions develop (Reese, Yan, Jack, & Hayne, 2010). The process of making these connections leads to more meaning-filled stories that provide a person with a sense of purpose and unity across time (Habermas & Bluck, 2000; Habermas & de Silveira, 2008). Thus, the creation of these connections is considered a particularly important part of identity development for adolescents as they begin working to form and revise their life story (Pasupathi & Weeks, 2010).

Although traditional research on the development of a life story has conceptualized adolescence as the primary period for identity construction (Habermas & Bluck, 2000), more recent research and theorizing have pointed to emerging adulthood as a time when identity development not only continues, but may be heightened, particularly as the tools are now in place to engage more intensely in exploring and defining the self (McLean & Pratt, 2006; Schwartz, Zamboanga, Luyckx, Meca, & Ritchie, 2013). Arnett (2000) describes activities involved in the process of identity construction during emerging adulthood as more serious and complex in terms of individuals' active engagement with the task, and the potential impact of that engagement on their futures. For example, activities like part-time employment in adolescence are likely to transition during emerging adulthood to full-time employment with increased responsibilities, or even a career that extends into adulthood. Thus, emerging

adulthood is a fitting developmental stage during which to examine individuals' active identity construction.

Identity and Narrative: The Importance of Content

As I have just reviewed, individuals subjectively construct a story that creates a coherent thread through time, tying past event memories together into a narrative account of one's life (McAdams, 2001). However, there is a lack of research examining in what *domain contents* this autobiographical reasoning occurs. Identity content is broadly defined as the topics that individuals reflect upon during identity construction, such as family, friends, and religion (McLean, Syed, & Shucard, 2016). That is, autobiographical reasoning is the *how* of identity development, and content domains are the *what* of identity development.

Recent attempts to examine identity content (i.e., what is developing) have shown that emerging adults reported that exploration of interpersonal (e.g., family and friends), existential (e.g., mortality and mental health), and ideological content domains (e.g., religion and politics) were all salient to their developing identities (McLean et al., 2014). However, not all exploration is the same across domains – that is, some content domains seem to ‘pull’ for more exploration than others, and gender is one of the content domains where we see greater identity exploration, compared to content domains like family (McLean et al., 2016). Despite the likelihood of reasoning in this domain, when participants were asked to report personally salient experiences (e.g., turning points, self-defining memories) without specifying content domains, gender did not emerge spontaneously (McLean et al., 2014). In other words, it is only when participants were *explicitly asked* to narrate experiences related to gender (and other content domains), that they engaged in a higher autobiographical reasoning process compared to other domains (McLean et al., 2016).

Given that individuals appear likely to engage in higher reflective work in the context of gender compared to other domains when asked, this suggests that gender is an important domain of identity development. Additionally, gender identity cannot be understood outside of the culture in which gender is defined (Best & Williams, 2001; Guimond et al., 2007), and there are strong cultural norms surrounding the roles of men and women. For example, some of the experiences that were reported in response to prompts about gender identity included considerations of femininity or masculinity in appearance or behavior, as well as decisions related to child rearing and one's career, or work-life balance, all issues that are intricately tied to cultural meanings (e.g., femininity) and structures (e.g., family leave policies). Thus, specifying the study of identity development within the content of gender both allows a deeper understanding of this domain, and provides an exemplar domain for considering the role of culture in identity development.

Identity and Narrative: The Role of Culture

Construction of one's identity must be considered not only in relation to individual experiences and beliefs, but also in consideration for how the individual interacts with the larger culture to form an understanding of those experiences and beliefs. Along with gains in autobiographical reasoning abilities, adolescents and emerging adults gain awareness of their selves in a cultural context, leading to knowledge of a *cultural concept of biography* (Arnett, 2016, Bernsten & Rubin, 2004; Habermas, 2007). This is a culturally shared set of conventions for constructing a biography, including norms of how to begin and end a narrative. Additionally, these conventions provide guidelines as to what events are important to include in one's biography, such as marriage, childbirth, attending college, etc., as well as the expected order and timing of these events (e.g., marriage before childbearing in many cultures). These conventions

lend a framework in which to construct a life story, and are informed by relevant cultural information and norms.

Although the cultural concept of biography and related life scripts illuminate the ways lives should be lived, and thus provide a framework for how lives should be narrated, they have been largely described as relatively separate from the individual. For example, research has examined the age at which individuals gain this knowledge and the degree to which this knowledge is stable across the lifespan (Habermas, 2007), but there is limited research examining these concepts *as parts of individual identity processes*. One example counter to this pattern is Umanath and Bernstein's (2013) comparison of personal life story and cultural life script contents. Emerging adults reported widespread knowledge of and conformity to cultural expectations in terms of event types and their timing. However, many of the events that emerging adults included in their life stories (e.g., moving to a new place, witnessing parents' re-marriage) were *not* a part of relevant cultural life scripts they reported. Thus, cultural life scripts do not always match individuals' personal life stories, raising the question of *how individuals use and negotiate* with these cultural expectations as a part of the process of personal identity development.

The Master Narrative Framework for Identity Development

A recent and novel framework for examining identity development has at its center a dynamic model of person-culture interaction, focusing on both personal and master narratives. In this model, master narratives¹ are common, pervasive cultural stories used as guides for living

¹ According to McLean and Syed (2016), there are three types of master narratives. Biographical master narratives describe expectations for a life course (e.g., timing and type of events), and are the focus of the current study. Structural master narratives describe how stories should be constructed (e.g., the American redemption arc). Episodic master narratives describe culturally

and interpreting our lives (McLean & Syed, 2016). The difference between the master narrative approach and other approaches to thinking about biography (e.g., Bernsten & Rubin, 2004; Habermas, 2007) is three-fold, and primarily focuses on specifying processes of development.

First, individuals can *negotiate* with master narratives (McLean & Syed, 2016). They are not always simply adopted, as individuals may work to determine what aspects of master narratives align with their experiences. Second, those who are actively negotiating with master narratives are likely doing so because they do not fit with these larger cultural expectations, and may be forced to construct *alternative* narratives to describe or explain their deviation from the canonical. Finally, individuals *internalize* master (and/or alternative) narratives as a part of the identity development process – they become a part of one’s identity, and are visible in individual’s stories. And they may internalize them whether they deviate or not. Thus, these processes of negotiation, deviation, and internalization specify what individuals *do* with cultural expectations as they work to define themselves.

Additionally, the master narrative framework goes beyond simply describing the processes by which individuals negotiate and internalize master narratives. The framework also highlights the power of master narratives to limit personal agency in the construction of an identity (McLean & Syed, 2016). Most critically, those whose identities and life courses run counter to the master narrative are constrained by these cultural expectations, and tasked with the difficult work of constructing an alternative narrative that they may or may not be able to develop, and that may or may not be accepted by the culture at large. The consequences for deviating can be severe, such as is the case with the historical legal persecution of gay and

acceptable ways for recollecting and telling specific stories about past (e.g., recalling the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001).

lesbian individuals whose life course runs counter to expectations of a heterosexual life course (Hammack & Cohler, 2011).

Yet the limitations of agency are not only for those who deviate. Interestingly, those whose lives align with the master narrative may *experience* agency because their lives are validated by the culture at large, but they are less likely to have actively engaged with the master narrative in an agentic fashion, and may be more likely to adopt it without awareness of its constraints on their own identities. That is, those who are aligned with master narratives are also constrained by them – they just might be less aware of the constraint. In both situations, master narratives exert power over individuals, but some may be more conscious of this constraint than others. Thus, the differences between prior approaches and the master narrative framework are seen in the emphasis put on the processes of development, and on the importance of power structures in the process of identity construction.

Current Study: Biographical Master Narratives and Gender

Biographical master narratives describe cultural expectations for how the life course should unfold in terms of the ordering and content of events (McLean & Syed, 2016). These dominant narratives contain information individuals use in forming the identities, often functioning as constraints on this individual process. The current study does not view one's culture or the cultural information within master narratives as a variable or outcome, but rather as the context for identity formation. As such, the current thesis seeks to describe the information contained in master narratives so as to understand the dynamic between individuals and master narratives during this continuous process. As of yet, these narratives have been largely defined without addressing whether the life course is the same for all groups within society, though it was proposed that there would be differences for various subgroups, including men and women.

The first question of this thesis is whether, and if so how, the American biographical master narrative differs for men and women.

Historically, American men and women have been subject to different social norms related to the life course, as reflected in American legislation, economic policies, and popular media (e.g., laws that have restricted women from voting, television programs featuring “breadwinner” fathers and “stay-at-home” mothers; Lindsey, 2015). With more recent shifts in gendered cultural expectations (e.g., access to birth control, no-fault divorce), women have more freedom to attend college and work outside of the home (i.e., activities traditionally only acceptable for men). However, traditional expectations of motherhood and the prioritization of one’s family, notions of sexual and moral purity, and wage inequality remain as constraints to women and their life courses. Thus, it is possible that modern men and women may be forming their identities and life courses in consideration of both the traditional gendered master narrative of persisting expectations about separate gender roles, as well as a new master narrative that incorporates recent strides toward gender equality (McLean et al., 2016). In the current study, efforts are made to specifically define the biographical master narrative for men and women, and to determine how alignment with or deviation from these narratives is associated with identity development.

Extant research has shown that knowledge of the type of culturally expected events over the lifespan is widespread and emerges in mid-adolescence (Bohn & Berntsen, 2008), though little research has examined potential group differences in knowledge of these life course master narratives. Further, life events that do not match the expectations laid out in the cultural life script are frequently included in individuals’ life stories (Umanath & Bernsten, 2013), suggesting that some form of deviation from cultural life scripts may be important in understanding identity

development. The current study examined 1) what the biographical master narratives are for the life course for men and women, 2) whether and how men and women deviate from the biographical master narrative for their gender, 3) whether and how those deviations are incorporated into one's identity, and 4) whether the way in which individuals narrate these deviations is related to psychological functioning.

Defining the Gendered Master Narrative. In terms of men's and women's knowledge of cultural expectations, only one study has tested this question explicitly, finding only minimal differences for the timing of events uncharacteristic of a master narrative, with women expecting traumatic events to occur slightly earlier in the lifespan than men (Bernsten & Rubin, 2004); however, this study was not designed to examine gender differences. One recent study did not test for potential gender differences in the knowledge of the types of events, but did take a master narrative approach to examining emerging adults' negotiation with master narratives of gender, and how that negotiation was related to identity development (McLean et al., 2016). First, in recounting their experiences with gender, males were slightly more likely to use a master narrative focused on the *traditional* life course (e.g., women should attend more to caregiving, and men to breadwinning). However, alternative narratives were also identified: one focused on the idea that men and women have achieved life course equality in society, and one focused on the idea that men and women *should* be equal in their life course expectations, but have not yet achieved this state (there were no gender differences in these alternative narratives, but statistical power may have been an issue in detecting them). Although identification of potential alternative narratives was a good first step, in this study participants responded to a prompt for any experiences related to gender, not just issues of the life course. This leads to a great deal of variability. In the present study, I will specify the biographical master narrative, to examine

potential differences in the content of expected life events, using the potential master and alternative narratives defined in this prior study as guidance.

Deviation from the Master Narrative. In the study described above (McLean et al., 2016), men and women who provided narratives that referenced an alternative narrative reported higher degrees of identity exploration than those whose narratives referenced the traditional master narrative, though these deviations were harder to share with others. This suggests that understanding deviations from traditional narratives is particularly important for understanding higher-level identity processes (see also: McLean et al., under review), and that social contexts in which narratives are shared may tell us about which narratives are more or less acceptable to others. Further, examining experiences of deviation from cultural expectations tells us something about the expectations themselves. In other words, asking people about cultural expectations when they are followed, may be like asking about the air we breathe. Thus, in the current study, I examined individuals' negotiation with the biographical master narrative, focusing primarily on how individuals deviate from the biographical master narrative and how those deviations are conveyed to others. Indeed, according to Pasupathi (2001), telling autobiographical events to others serves as a way to socially construct the self, and is influenced by both the telling context and the audience. In particular, how others react to a personal story can reveal cultural norms and expectations for a given story, depending on whether the story is validated (e.g., Thorne & McLean, 2003).

Incorporating Master Narrative Deviations into Identity. Once a deviation occurs, a narrator is tasked with making sense of it (McLean & Syed, 2016), both for one's own sense of internal coherence, as well as for social acceptance and validation. That is, to feel coherent in one's identity, one needs a good story about the deviation. One mechanism for managing

deviations is to engage in autobiographical reasoning processes, such as when one creates self-event connections to trace personal development across time and experiences (Pasupathi & Mansour, 2006). Those who are able to make sense of the deviation, and who connect it to their sense of self, are forming a more coherent identity, though it does take more effort. Indeed, outside of the context of master narratives, autobiographical reasoning is more likely to occur in the context of conflicting or disruptive life events (Thorne, McLean, & Lawrence, 2004). In the current study, deviation narratives were coded for self-event connections to examine the autobiographical reasoning components of a “good story” that make sense of the deviation, connect it to the self, and encourage identity exploration. Thus, I expected the development of an alternative narrative in the deviation narratives to be positively related to the amount of self-event connections. Finally, just as McLean et al. (2016) observed that those who reported an alternative narrative pertaining to gender roles also reported higher degrees of identity exploration, I expected the development of an alternative narrative within individuals’ narratives of deviation to be positively related to identity exploration.

Master Narrative Deviations and Psychological Functioning. If one is able to incorporate a master narrative deviation into his or her identity via autobiographical reasoning processes, this does not necessarily equate to psychological health. Master and alternative narratives define groups that one belongs to, so finding connection to and validation from others, may be a critical part of narrating deviations. Prior research concerning autobiographical memories has demonstrated the importance of context and listener response during social sharing of past memories and experiences. For example, individuals have been shown to engage in deeper meaning-making when discussing personal memories with an engaged audience (Pasupathi & Hoyt, 2009), and that individuals may receive more emotional benefit from telling experiences to

an agreeable audience (Pasupathi, 2003). Thus, I predicted those who told a deviation story in which they develop an alternative narrative, *and* report a positive telling experience, should also have higher psychological health.

Further, audiences have been shown to respond more favorably to certain kinds of stories, particularly those stories that are resolved positively (Lilgendahl, 2006; McAdams et al., 2006; Thorne & McLean, 2003), reflecting a cultural preference for how stories should be told (McAdams, 2006). As discussed previously, a “good story” is needed to explain one’s deviation successfully, but whether how well your storytelling conforms to cultural expectations and your audience’s reaction also impacts your well-being. Thus, I also predict those who tell a deviation story in which they elaborate an alternative narrative, *and* resolve the narrative positively, will have higher psychological functioning.

It should be noted that the questions and hypotheses of this study concern those who feel that they have deviated from the master narrative and describe their experiences as such. I will examine, in an exploratory fashion, potential differences between those who feel that they have not deviated and those who do.

Although the primary aim of this study is to specify the cultural nature of individual identity development by applying the master narrative framework to the content domain of gender, I also expect to learn something about the nature of gender identity more broadly. In particular, there is a gap between research within the realm of identity development, described above, and the existing literature on gender that defines gender identity by individuals’ gender typicality, their contentedness with this typicality, and the degree to which they feel free to explore or compelled to adhere to gender stereotypes (Egan & Perry, 2001). Research in this area has largely focused on gender differences in these masculine and feminine characteristics and

behaviors (Carver, Yunger, & Perry, 2003; Perry & Pauletti, 2011; Wood & Eagly, 2015). Further, in this literature, the experience of gender has been mostly decontextualized and studied using closed-ended surveys. The current study utilized narrative methodologies to contextualize the experience of gender, capturing both the personal experiences that make up the gender content of identity, and the cultural factors that influence that content.

To address the four questions listed above, participants answered questions regarding the importance of life events for someone of their same gender. This served as the basis for understanding possible differences in events and priorities for the life courses of men and women. In order to explicitly examine the person-culture interaction within identity processes pertaining to gender, participants were asked if they have deviated from expectations, and if so, to provide written personal narratives of deviations, and to describe an instance of telling this deviation story to another person (telling memory; Thorne & McLean, 2003). Personal narratives were analyzed using multiple coding schemes designed to address the role of master narratives in individual identity processes, including the development of alternative narratives, self-event connections, positive resolution, and positive telling responses.

Participants were both undergraduate students, as well as graduate students because prior research suggests that the salience of some gendered content may be influenced by an individuals' life stage (McLean et al., 2016). For example, family planning decisions may gain greater importance in the latter stages of emerging adulthood. Specifically, graduate students were sampled due to their pursuance of long-term career goals that might increase the salience of cultural life course expectations (e.g., work-life balance, financial success). For similar reasons, my sample also included community college students from the same county, to gain a more representative examination of identity development in emerging adulthood.

The current study was designed to examine the following research questions and hypotheses:

RQ1: What are the biographical master narratives for the life course for men and women?

RQ2: How do men and women deviate from the biographical master narrative for their gender?

H1: Individuals who report narratives of a master narrative deviation that are more elaborated (i.e., development of alternative narrative) will also contain more meaning (e.g., presence of a self-event connection).

H2: Individuals who report deviation narratives containing a more developed alternative narrative will report more identity exploration.

H3: Those who have a more elaborated alternative narrative within their deviation narrative, and a positive resolution to that narrative, will have lower psychological distress. Similarly, those who have a more elaborated alternative narrative within their deviation narrative, and a positive telling experience, will have lower psychological distress.

Method

Participants

Four-hundred and fourteen participants completed the study (age range 18-29; $M = 20.39$, $SD = 2.89$): 285 undergraduate students from a state university in the Pacific Northwest, 54 graduate students from the same university, and 75 students from a community college in the same area. This final sample does not include 21 participants who were excluded because they were older than 30.²

² Thirty-nine participants also indicated that they were not born in the United States. This characteristic is pertinent to the current study due to the intended examination of American

Participants consisted of 200 men and 204 women, as well as 10 individuals who either identified as transgender or declined to answer, the latter of whom were not included in analyses due to low sample sizes. Participants were predominantly heterosexual or straight (82%) and white or Caucasian (76%). There were no hypotheses about race/ethnicity, so this variable is not examined further. However, given the tight link between gender and sexuality (Gamson & Moon, 2004), I report some descriptive information on differences between those who reported that they were heterosexual versus not. Means, standards deviations, and frequencies for demographic data are displayed in Table 2.

Procedure

University undergraduates were recruited through the subject pool for undergraduate psychology courses that satisfy general education requirements for a variety of courses, and they received course credit for their participation. Approximately 730 graduate students were recruited through an email from the graduate school at their university indicating that a fellow graduate student was recruiting participants for her master's thesis study. The email also included information pertaining to participation in the study (i.e., location and duration of the study, compensation). Sixty-six graduate students responded to the recruitment email, and 61 graduate students participated (seven graduate were students removed from sample due to age restrictions). The graduate students were enrolled in a variety of Master of Science or Arts programs, including biology, geology, anthropology, English literature, and computer science. Graduate students received \$10 for their participation. After providing informed consent, undergraduate and graduate participants from the university completed the study in a room alone,

cultural narratives. Results of analyses did not differ based on the inclusion of this subgroup, therefore the results reported include these 39 participants.

responded to survey measures and providing typed narratives in response to prompts presented on computers.

Students from the community college were verbally invited to participate in the study by their professors in three introductory-level psychology courses. Fifty-five participants completed a paper survey in their classroom. Nineteen participants completed the survey on-line, outside of class. Once finished, all participants were debriefed and thanked for their time. Participants received extra course credit for their participation.

The measure of gender typicality and its instructions (obtained from Egan & Perry, 2001) proved to be very confusing for participants who viewed the survey both on paper and online. Further, although there were participants who completed the survey fully, it was clear from their answers that it was confusing, and not reliable. Thus, this measure was not used in any analyses.

Additionally, 39 individuals from the community college sample declined to say whether they had deviated or not (i.e., “Yes” or “No”). Undergraduate and graduate participants viewed the survey online, where a response to this question was a button (“Yes” or “No”) that had to be pressed. In lieu of a participant response to this question on the paper survey, coding for the content of the narratives allowed the author to determine whether the participant has deviated or not. In other words, if a participant did not explicitly report they deviated or conformed to cultural expectations for someone of their same gender, then the author determined whether the participant has deviated based on whether the participant described deviation or conformity. Four participants who did not report whether or not they had deviated also declined to provide a narrative from which either deviation or conformity could be determined.

Materials

The prompts and measures are listed in the order that they appeared to participants, and are provided in the Appendix.

Narrative Prompts.

Life Course Master Narrative. The first prompt is modeled after Bernsten and Rubin's (2004) life script task, and was designed to capture the American biographical narrative for men and women. The prompt elicited participants' perceptions of the normative events for a life course of a typical person of their same gender. Participants were instructed to "think about a typical life" of someone of their same gender, then to "write down the most important events that you imagine will occur during this person's life," and to "write the events in the same order they would occur." Participants were provided a large text box to type their responses, or a full sheet of paper. Participants open-ended responses are the first component of our effort to define the life course master narratives for men and women.

Master Narrative Deviation. The second prompt first asked participants to consider whether or not they had deviated from the master narrative for their gender, or what is considered to be "normal, expected, or accepted." This prompt was developed by Lilgendahl et al. (2013) specifically to elicit participants' master narrative deviations (see also: McLean et al., under review). For those who viewed the survey on paper, instructions were provided that direct participants who indicated that they do not deviate from cultural expectations for their gender to "explain why not" in the space below (approximately 2/3 of the page left open for responses, as well as the back of the page, as needed). If a participant indicated they had deviated, they were instructed to turn to the next page where a prompt asked them to "please describe the most memorable experience of divergence from cultural expectations," including "how it made you feel, and its significance to you (if any)." For those who viewed the survey online, participants

were able to choose “yes” or “no” to indicate whether or not they had deviated, and were then presented the prompt corresponding to whether they have deviated or not.

Telling Narrative. The third prompt asked participants to describe a memorable instance of sharing their deviation or experience of non-deviation with another person, and asked them “What led you to tell them about it, how did you tell them, what was their reaction, and your reaction?” This prompt was adapted from McLean and Thorne’s (2003) self-defining memory questionnaire.

Event Ratings. The fourth question pertaining to the master narrative definition task was to rate the importance a set of life events for a typical person of their same gender, because events that are present in the life course may vary in their degree of importance. The 14 events were chosen by the author and a professor based on Bernsten and Rubin’s (2004) findings regarding the most frequently reported expected life course events. This task was presented directly after the *Life Course Master Narrative*, *Master Narrative Deviation*, and *Telling Narrative* prompts, so that the list of events did not influence participants’ responses to other narrative prompts. Participants rated “how important it is for a typical [male/female] in this culture to experience” 14 life events (e.g., choose a career, graduate high school, fall in love, or devote energy to childrearing) on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Not important at all, 5 = Very important). Differences in men and women’s ratings of these life events may suggest different prioritization of events and related goals.

Measures.

Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (EIPQ; Balisteri, Busch-Rossnagel, & Geisinger, 1995). This 32-item scale assessed individuals’ identity commitment (“My ideas about men’s and women’s roles will never change”) and exploration (e.g., “I have never questioned my

occupational aspirations”). Participants indicated their agreement with these statements using a seven-point Likert scale (1 = Disagree strongly, 7 = Agree strongly). There are multiple subscales for identity domains (e.g., values, politics, sex roles), but I focused on the scale for overall identity exploration (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .80$).

The Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). This 21-item survey is a highly reliable and valid self-report instrument designed to measure the three related negative emotional states of depression, anxiety and tension/stress (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .94$). Sample items include: “I couldn’t seem to experience any positive feeling at all,” “I felt scared without any good reason,” and “I found it difficult to relax.” Participants indicated how much the statement applied to them in the last week using a four-point Likert scale (0 = Did not apply to me at all, 3 = Applied to me very much or most of the time). Scores for this measure represent an overall composite, rather than scores from possible subscales within the measure.

Narrative coding

Reliability. I coded all narratives according to the following coding systems, with the exception of the Life Course Content coding that was completed by a trained research assistant. Research assistants were first trained to code using each coding system, then a subset of narratives (15-30%; depending on the coding system) were coded by a trained research assistant to establish reliability with the first author. After reaching reliability, the same research assistants then coded another subset of the total narratives and discussed disagreements with me as a check for coder drift. For narrative coding that relies on linear coding schemes (e.g., development of alternative narratives), reliability for each coding scheme was assessed using interclass correlation coefficients. For narrative coding based on categorical coding schemes (e.g., self-event connections) reliability was assessed using Cohen’s kappa (Syed & Nelson, 2015). Note

that base rates were low for some categories, resulting in low kappas, and for some events in there were no cases found in the reliability set, resulting in a kappa of zero; thus, I also report percent agreement.

Life Course Content. The events that participants provided in response to the first *Life Course Master Narrative* prompt were assessed using a multi-step coding process. Because there was such an array of events, I began with recording just those events that were included in the fourth prompt for the event ratings (e.g., fall in love, graduate high school), because these events have been previously established as expected life course events (Bernsten & Rubin, 2004). Specifically, a research assistant and I recorded each life event that was listed in participants' life courses, using the 14 life events as a starting point. Each participant response was coded for the presence or absence of each of the 14 life events. Reliability was computed for 14 events: graduate high school (*kappa*: 1.0; *percent agreement*: 100%), graduate from university (*kappa*: .84; *percent agreement*: 94%), have a child (*kappa*: .44; *percent agreement*: 88%), choose a career (*kappa*: .64; *percent agreement*: 85%), care for parents in old age (*kappa*: 0.0; *percent agreement*: 100%), buy home (*kappa*: 1.0; *percent agreement*: 100%), travel to another country (*kappa*: .79; *percent agreement*: 97%), get married (*kappa*: .63; *percent agreement*: 94%), devote energy to career advancement (*kappa*: .62; *percent agreement*: 91%), devote energy to childrearing (*kappa*: .84; *percent agreement*: 94%), fall in love (*kappa*: .87; *percent agreement*: 94%), retire (*kappa*: .76; *percent agreement*: 88%), have a grandchild (*kappa*: .92; *percent agreement*: 97%), and leave home (*kappa*: 1.0; *percent agreement*: 100%). After reaching reliability, the trained research assistant then completed the coding for all participants' reported life courses.

Any event beyond those 14 original events was also recorded. Beyond the original 14 life events, 30 life event or types of life events were found in participants' recorded life events (e.g., birth, first job, explore sexuality). The latter events were not used in the present analyses; I focus only on the initial 14 events.

Deviation or Conformity Content. This coding system was developed as a collaborative effort by the author, another graduate student, a professor, and a team of undergraduate research assistants. The aim of this coding system was to describe the content of participants' narratives regarding their conformity to or deviations from biographical master narratives for their gender. To code for conformity or deviation, coders needed to know the gender of the participant (e.g., acting in a feminine way would be conformity for women, and a deviation for men). Categories are described below, and examples are displayed in Table 1.

Categories of Deviation. For those who felt that they had deviated, there were six categories. *Norms for masculinity and femininity* describes deviations from cultural expectations for masculinity and femininity (e.g., interests, physical characteristics, or emotional expression; *kappa*: .76; *percent agreement*: 94%). *Sexuality or sexual behaviors* describes deviations from cultural expectations for heteronormativity (e.g., identifying as gay, being a promiscuous woman; *kappa*: 1.0; *percent agreement*: 100%). *Gender beliefs* describes beliefs or attitudes regarding gender that the narrator identifies as contradicting cultural norms or expectations (e.g., identifying as a feminist in a conservative location; *kappa*: .51; *percent agreement*: 92%). *Timing or Omission* describes deviations where typical life course events are not experienced according to cultural expectations for timing or order (e.g., not dating until college, or not having been in a romantic relationship; *kappa*: .72; *percent agreement*: 92%). *Unexpected event* describes deviations consisting of event(s) outside of the typical life course, usually negative or disruptive

in nature (e.g., addiction; *kappa*: .84; *percent agreement*: 95%). *Gendered life course event* describes deviations that either pertain to specific life events that are related to gender (e.g., childbearing), are framed by the narrator in such a way that gender is a subjectively important part of the deviation, or deviations that are exacerbated by being male or female (e.g., not having a romantic relationship in high school is more important for women than men; *kappa*: .42; *percent agreement*: 92%).

Categories of Conformity. For those who did not think they had deviated, there were three categories. *Non-specific conformity* narratives do not describe conformity to any specific gender norms or master narrative of gender (e.g., describing oneself as not being unique; *kappa*: .70; *percent agreement*: 95%). *Traditional master narrative conformity* describes conformity to the gendered norms and expectations for one's gender, with reference to cultural expectations for men and women (e.g., a man providing financially for his family; *kappa*: 1.0; *percent agreement*: 100%). *Equality master narrative conformity* describes conformity to what the narrator thinks is a master narrative of equality, meaning there is no discussion of men and women being equal as a deviation from the traditional narrative (*kappa*: .49; *percent agreement*: 97%). Here, a participant assumes equality as the dominant paradigm (e.g., no one is limited by their gender). *Other* describes narratives in which other types of deviation are discussed (e.g., being a person of color in a majority-White location; *kappa*: .64; *percent agreement*: 95%). Abnormally low kappas here are in part due to low reporting rates for particular content categories (*Gender beliefs* $n = 15$, *Equality master narrative* $n = 12$, and *Other* $n = 16$).

Development of Alternative Narrative. Based on Alpert, Marsden, Szymanowski, & Lilgendahl's coding of unspecified master narrative deviations (2013; see also: McLean et al., under review), this code represented the degree to which an alternative narrative is elaborated

within an individual's narrative. This was described as the elaboration of "one's own storyline that counters the prevailing master narrative." In addition to elaboration, the coder considered the narrator's level of agency expressed within the narrative (e.g., the degree to which they've decidedly engaged with the master narrative to form their own narrative from their experiences). Narratives were rated for the development of an alternative narrative on a 4-point scale, with a score of 1 meaning that a narrative contains no evidence of an alternative narrative. Scores of 2 and 3 indicate gradual increases in reference and elaboration of a master narrative, with a score of 3 meaning that an alternative narrative is clearly present but lacking in detail or agency. A score of 4 indicates that an alternative narrative is clearly present, well-developed, and expressed with agency ($icc = .91$).

Coherent Positive Resolution. Narratives were rated on a 5-point scale for the degree to which they end in a coherent and emotionally positive way. Based on Lilgendahl's (2006) "Coding System for Components of Transformational Processing," a score of 1 indicated a narrative, or primary event described in the narrative, that is very unresolved and remains emotionally troubling to the narrator. A score of 5 indicated that the narrative or primary event within the narrative is completely resolved and the narrator may have completely "moved on." Scores of 2 and 4 indicated narratives that are partly unresolved or partly resolved, respectively. A score of 3 represented a narrative that contains a mix of negative and positive resolution, or an ambiguous resolution ($icc = .94$).

Self-event Connections. Narratives were coded for the presence or absence of specific and explicit connections between the event described and the narrator's self (Pasupathi & Mansour, 2006). These self-event connections can include a range of specific and broad aspects of the self, including personality traits, interests, hobbies, and the society in which the individual

lives. Self-event connections were also coded as explaining either *stability* or *change*, as well as whether the connection was positive or negative/neutral. A *stable* self-event connection may describe how the event explains a part of the self that existed before the event, or reaffirmed by the event (e.g., an event illustrates a person's existing compassion, trustworthiness, etc.). A *change* self-event connection may describe an aspect of the self that was changed or somehow impacted by the event (e.g., an event caused a person to become more distrusting or to develop a new interest). These more specific codes are explained here (i.e., type and valence), but only the presence/absence of self-event connections was used in the current analyses (*overall kappa* = .79).

Listener Response. Based on Thorne, McLean, and Lawrence's (2004) coding of listener responses for telling narratives of self-defining events, telling narratives were coded for the response of the audience, either as positive or negative (or neutral/mixed). A listener response may be coded positive if the narrator seems to be satisfied with the listener's reaction, or if the listener seems to support and understand the narrator's story. A listener response may be coded as negative if the listener fails to support, understand, or connect to the narrator and their deviation, or as neutral/mixed if the listener's response is neither clearly positive nor negative, or is a mix of positive and negative (*kappa* = .79).

Results

Descriptive Analyses

Before pursuing my proposed research questions and hypotheses, I examined my data for the presence of outliers, non-response, as well as ceiling and floor effects³. Identifying low base

³ Sample sizes vary throughout the results due to differing response rates for individual items or measures.

rates for reporting self-event connections (i.e., very few individuals reporting more than one connection) resulted in my decision to examine this variable as presence/absence, rather than the number of connections as was planned. Results are reported without controlling for word count, as controlling for word count did not alter any results. Analyses pertaining to gender differences only include data from participants who reported their gender as male or female, excluding 10 participants.

Means, standard deviations, and frequencies for all variables of interest are listed in Tables 3, 4, and 5, which are separated by gender, as I examined gender differences in all analyses. Table 3 displays the frequencies of the initial 14 life course events as they appeared in participants' reported life course. Table 4 displays the means and standard deviations for the linear narrative codes, participants' event ratings, and two scale measures. Table 5 displays the frequencies of categorical narratives codes, as well as reports of deviation or conformity.

I first examined rates of non-reporting, and whether this varied by sample or gender. Forty-three participants (10%) did not provide expected life course events for someone of their same gender, with no gender or sample differences for non-response to this prompt. Seventy-three percent of participants reported that they deviated from cultural expectations for their gender, while 27% reported they did not deviate (gender and sample differences are addressed in the main analyses).

Forty-three participants (10%) did not indicate "yes" or "no" to whether or not they deviate, but from the majority of these participants' narratives of either deviation or conformity, I was able to determine whether or not they deviate from cultural expectations for men and women. Three of these participants (less than 1% of the total sample) did not respond to the

prompt, and one participant provided a narrative from which his deviation or conformity could not be ascertained.

Seven percent of participants, who answered the question about whether or not they had deviated, did not provide a narrative to describe their deviation or conformity to the master narrative for their gender, with no gender or sample differences for non-response to this prompt. 75% participants reported an experience of sharing their story with another person, while 22% reported not having shared their stories (3% did not respond to the telling narrative questions). There were no gender differences for likelihood of sharing a story of deviation or conformity. However, undergraduate participants were overrepresented among those who report not having shared these experiences in comparison to graduate or community college participants, $\chi^2(4, N = 414) = 41.36, p < .001, ASR = 4.0^4$.

The 14 life event importance ratings had varying rates of non-response across events. Ten events were not rated by 11 participants: graduating high school, graduating university, having a child, choosing a career, get married, devote energy to childrearing, fall in love, retire, have a grandchild, and leave home. Two events were not rated by 12 participants: travel to another country and devote energy to career advancement. Two events were also not rated by 13 participants: caring for parents in old age and purchase a home. No procedure was conducted to prevent list-wise deletion for individuals who failed to rate the importance of all 14 life course events because each life course event was analyzed individually (i.e., not as a scale or subscale).

⁴ If a significant chi-square was obtained, I used adjusted standardized residuals (ASRs) associated with individual cells to see the location of difference in rates of reporting for men and women. ASR values serve as a standardized measurement of the discrepancy between the expected and observed values for individual cells, and they are interpreted similarly to a z-score (also see Table 5 for ASR values). Thus, an ASR with an absolute value greater than 1 is meaningfully different.

In order to prevent list-wise exclusions of data from analyses, individuals who completed more than 75% of a scale or subscale had their missing data points substituted for his or her average for the scale. For the Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (EIPQ), 98 individuals required at least one item to be replaced by his or her subscale average and 16 individuals were list-wise deleted (i.e., did not complete at least 12 out of 16 subscale items). For the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS), 19 individuals required at least one item to be replaced by his or her scale average and 13 individuals were list-wise deleted (i.e., did not complete at least 16 out of 21 scale items). The inclusion of these individuals who did not complete 100% of the scale or subscale did not alter the results, thus the reported results include these individuals.

I also examined age and sample differences on the main variables of interest: the development of an alternative narrative, the presence of self-event connections, positive resolution of their narrative of deviation or conformity, the positivity of their audience support during their telling experience, degree of identity exploration (EIPQ), and psychological distress (DASS). As expected, participant age differed by sample, $F(2, 391) = 145.17, p < .001, \eta^2 = .43$. Post hoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD test indicated that the mean age for graduate participants ($M = 24.88, SD = 2.30$) was higher than that of undergraduate ($M = 19.32, SD = 1.89$) and community college participants ($M = 21.28, SD = 3.06$). In turn, the average age of community college students was higher than that of undergraduate participants.

Participant age was positively related to the development of an alternative narrative, such that older participants' narratives of deviation were likely to be more elaborate, detailed, and agentic, $r(370) = .16, p < .01$. Older participants were also likely to report less psychological distress, $r(389) = -.11, p < .05$, and more likely to report identity exploration, $r(386) = .18, p < .001$. There were no age differences found for the presence of self-event connections, the

positive resolution of their deviation or conformity narrative, or the positivity of their audience support during their telling experience.

Sample differences emerged for psychological distress, $F(2, 398) = 15.23, p < .001, n^2 = .07$. Post hoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD test showed that community college participants ($M = 1.41; SD = .80$) reported less psychological distress than both undergraduate ($M = 1.87; SD = .60$) and graduate participants ($M = 1.81; SD = .43$). Additionally, sample differences emerged for identity exploration, $F(2, 395) = 10.74, p < .001, n^2 = .05$. Post hoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD test showed that graduate participants reported more identity exploration ($M = 5.13; SD = .59$) than both undergraduate ($M = 4.67; SD = .70$) and community college participants ($M = 4.57; SD = .81$). There were no sample differences for participant's development of an alternative narrative, the presence of self-event connections, the positive resolution of their deviation or conformity narrative, or the positivity of their audience support during their telling experience.

I now turn to the primary questions of my thesis.

RQ1a: Do men and women report similar or distinct events in describing the biographical master narrative for their gender?

To address this question, I had three sources of data: participants' reports of the expected life course events, the importance ratings for pre-selected life course events, and participants' narratives describing their deviation or conformity.

First, I examined the prevalence of the 14 established life course events reported by participants (*Life Course Master Narrative* prompt; See Table 3 for frequencies and percentages⁵). Overall, men and women reported the individual 14 life course events at similar

⁵ Percentages are reported considering the sample that responded to this prompt ($N = 371$).

rates. The largest difference in frequencies of reporting between men and women occurring for devoting energy to childrearing, where more women reported this event more than men (14% and 41% of men and women, respectively; See Table 3 for frequencies and percentages by gender). The five events listed most often by men and women were getting married (men: 84%, women: 91%), having a child (men: 81%, women: 91%), graduating university (men: 75%, women: 85%), graduating high school (men: 75%, women: 77%), choosing a career (men: 73%, women: 79%), and retiring (men: 48%, women: 41%). The remaining 8 events had reporting rates below 25% for men and women. The events listed least frequently by participants were caring for parents in old age (men: less than 1%, women: 2%), leaving home (men: 6%, women: 7%) and devoting energy to career advancement (men: 6%, women: 9%).

Men and women had similar reporting rates for the six most frequently listed events from the original 14 events, suggesting that men and women spontaneously report similar events for the biographical master narrative for their gender. Further, though not included in this analyses, the necessity of 43 additional event categories suggests that the biographical master narrative for men and women includes a variety of events that extend beyond the 14 events included in the event ratings task.

RQ1b: Do men and women ascribe the same or different importance to life course events for their gender?

As another component of describing the biographical master narratives for American men and women, I conducted independent samples t-tests to determine if men and women differed in their ratings of the cultural importance of the 14 life events they were presented in the survey (see Table 4 for means and standard deviations). I used a Bonferroni correction (overall $\alpha = .05$) to control for the increased statistical error produced by conducting fourteen repeated tests,

resulting in a critical p -value of .003 for each test. There were only two events in which gender differences emerged. For both, men rated the events higher than women: choosing a career, $t(399) = 4.37, p < .001, d = .43$, and devoting energy to career advancement, $t(398) = 5.63, p < .001, d = .57$.

RQ2: How do men and women deviate from the biographical master narrative for their gender?

In answering the question of gender differences, my first step was to examine if men and women differed in whether or not they reported deviating from the master narrative, which they did not, $X^2(2, N = 397) = .67, p > .05$.

Men and women did, however, differ in the coded content of their reported deviations, $X^2(18, N = 381) = 41.99, p = .001$. Men were overrepresented in reporting deviations regarding cultural norms of masculinity and femininity, as well as those regarding and sexuality or sexual behaviors. Men were also over-represented in conformity to a traditional view of gender. Women were overrepresented in reporting deviations regarding gendered life events. Women were also over-represented in conforming to a master narrative that emphasizes gender equality. The other content categories—gender role beliefs, deviations in the timing and/or omission of non-gendered life events, deviations in the experience of non-gendered unexpected life events, unspecified conformity, and “Other” deviations—resulted in ASRs of less than one.

I also examined whether there were sample differences for the content of participants’ reported deviations and conformity, and there were, $X^2(18, N = 386) = 30.43, p < .05$.

Undergraduate participants were more likely to report deviations related to one’s sexuality, as well more likely to report conformity to a traditional master narrative for gender. They were less likely to report deviations pertaining to gendered life course events. Community college

participants were more likely to report deviations related to unexpected life course events, but were less likely to report deviations related to sexuality and gender role beliefs, as well as less likely to report conformity to a traditional master narrative of gender. Graduate participants were more likely to report deviations pertaining to gendered life course events, and less likely to report deviations relating to unexpected life course events.

In summary, participants' spontaneous reporting of expected life events suggests similar life events are expected for men and women. However, when rating the importance of a pre-defined list of events, men rated choosing a career and devoting time to career advancement as more important for completion than women. When asked to consider their own life course and possible deviation from cultural expectations for American men and women, a majority of participants reported that they do deviate, and there were meaningful gender differences. Men were more likely to report deviations pertaining to certain characteristics (e.g., norms of femininity and masculinity, sexuality or sexual behaviors), while women were more likely to report deviations involving specific life events related to gender. Men were more likely to report conformity to a traditional master narrative, while women were more likely to report conformity to an equality master narrative. These findings suggest that while the expected events in the life courses for men and women are generally similar, there may be differences in the importance of particular events, and in the experiences of deviation.

H1 and H2: Are more elaborated alternative narratives associated with the presence of self-event connections and a higher degree of identity exploration?

Before testing my hypotheses, I examined gender differences in these markers of identity development and exploration.⁶ There were no gender differences in the degree of alternative narrative development, $t(378) = -1.44, p > .05$, or in identity exploration, $t(394) = -1.22, p > .05$. However, men's deviation narratives were more likely to contain a self-event connection than women's narratives, $X^2(2, N = 381) = 6.17, p < .05$.

To test my hypotheses, I conducted an independent samples t-test to examine the relationship between individuals' development of an alternative narrative and the presence of self-event connections (see Tables 4 and 5 for frequencies, means, and standard deviations). As predicted, the presence of self-event connections was associated with more developed alternative narratives ($M = 3.19; SD = .70$) compared to the absence of self-event connections ($M = 2.38; SD = 1.08$), $t(384) = -6.08, p < .001, d = .88$, suggesting that more elaborated narratives are also likely to describe an explicit connection between the past event and the current self.

I conducted a Pearson's correlation to examine the relationship between individuals' development of an alternative narrative and the degree of overall identity exploration, assessed on the EIPQ (see Table 4 for descriptives, and Table 6 for correlations). As predicted, the degree of alternative narrative development was associated with identity exploration, $r(375) = .26, p < .001$. In other words, those who report a more detailed and agentic alternative narrative are also likely to report a greater degree of identity exploration.

⁶ Planned analyses only examined gender differences for the development of an alternative narrative, the presence of self-event connections, and identity exploration. However, exploratory analyses showed that those who identified as non-straight reported more elaborated alternative narratives than those who identified as straight, $t(384) = 2.52, p < .05, d = .35$. There were no differences among straight and non-straight participants for the presence of self-event connections or identity exploration.

Together, these findings suggest that individuals who construct more elaborate alternative narratives about their deviations are more likely to discuss a direct link between past events and their current self, and this elaboration has a positive relationship to their engagement in identity exploration.

H3a: Do those who have a more elaborated alternative narrative and a positive resolution to that narrative, have lower psychological distress?

To begin, I tested whether there were gender differences in reported psychological distress. There was no difference in the reported psychological distress of men and women, $t(397) = -1.89, p = .06$. To test my hypotheses, I conducted Pearson's correlations between the development of an alternative narrative, the degree of positive resolution of the deviation narrative, and psychological distress (DASS; See Table 6). The development of an alternative narrative was positively related to positive resolution, $r(383) = .104, p < .05$, but was not related to psychological distress.

To test the hypothesis that the relationship between the development of an alternative narrative and psychological distress was moderated by the degree to which the narrative is positively resolved, I conducted a linear regression analysis. Psychological distress was selected as the outcome variable. Narrative codes for the development of an alternative narrative and coherent positive resolution were entered as predictors. Next, I entered an interaction term to represent the interaction of the two predictors. The relationship between the development of an alternative narrative and psychological distress was not significantly moderated by the degree of coherent positive resolution, $F(2, 374) = .54, p = .59, R^2 = .003$.

H3b: Do those who have a more elaborated alternative narrative within their deviation narrative, and a positive telling experience, have lower psychological distress?

I conducted Pearson's correlations between the development of an alternative narrative, the positivity of the telling experience, and psychological distress (See Table 6). The development of an alternative narrative was not related to listener response, $r(252) = .01, p = .86$, or psychological distress, $r(378) = -.03, p = .53$. Listener response was not related to psychological distress, $r(255) = .06, p = .35$. There were no gender differences found for the positivity of listener response.

To test the hypothesis that the relationship between the development of an alternative narrative and psychological distress was moderated by the positivity of the telling experience, I conducted a linear regression analysis. Psychological distress was selected as the outcome variable. Narrative codes for the development of an alternative narrative and listener response were entered as separate predictors. Next, I entered an interaction term to represent the interaction of the two predictors. The relationship between the development of an alternative narrative and psychological distress was not significantly moderated by listener response to the narrative, $F(2, 248) = .64, p = .53, R^2 = .005$.

Thus, individuals' level of positive resolution and their experience sharing their deviation did not moderate the relation between the development of an alternative narrative and psychological distress.

Discussion

Describing the Life Course Master Narratives for Men and Women

This study first sought to describe the life course master narratives for American men and women with a variety of prompts. In asking participants to spontaneously list culturally expected life course events for someone of their same gender, I sought to probe participants' pre-existing knowledge of what types of events they—as a self-identified male or female—are expected to

experience in their lifetime. Separately, I examined participants' ratings of the importance of an empirically-driven selection of life course events to capture the cultural emphasis placed upon these events, as well as narrative accounts of deviation from and conformity to expectations.

Using the 14 life course events from the event ratings task as a guide in interpreting the event lists participants provided, men and women reported similar life courses that included events such as marriage, having children, graduating from high school and university, and retiring. Participants' event lists included the 14 life course events from the event ratings task at similar rates for men and women, except for devoting energy to childrearing. In contrast to how infrequently some of the life events were reported, when explicitly asked to rate their importance, each of the 14 life course events were rated by participants as being at least somewhat important for someone of their same gender to experience (means were all greater than 3; 1 = Not important at all, 5 = Very important). Further, men rated choosing a career and devoting energy to career advancement more importantly than women.

Comparing the occurrence of these life events to their reported importance raises the question: why are all 14 events rated as important, but most of these 14 events were not frequently included in men and women's reported life courses? I argue that both the event lists and event ratings represent participants' knowledge of cultural expectations for the life course of someone of their same gender, but they offer unique information. Free response event-listings represent participants' spontaneous, easily-accessible knowledge of cultural expectations for the life course, and the most frequently reported events (i.e., getting married, having a child, graduating university) may highlight the experiences and milestones that are particularly salient. Participants' event ratings offer a different perspective, focusing on their beliefs of the importance of individual events that they might not have included in their own reported life

courses. Essentially, simple inclusion of an event in a participant's life course event list identifies the event as important, but the event ratings allow the participant to express whether some events are more important than others.

This subtle difference allowed for the emergence of gender differences in the degree of importance for three events: choosing a career, devoting energy to career advancement, and devoting energy to childrearing. What does it mean that men rated choosing a career and devoting time to career advancement as more important than women, and that women were more likely to include devoting time to childrearing in their expected life courses? Traditional division of labor in American households places the burdens of financial provision and caregiving on men and women, respectively (Lindsey, 2015). Just as working outside of the home is a hallmark of traditional masculinity, prioritizing one's family (particularly children) and working within the home are important components of traditional femininity. Thus, the men in our study rating events related to career more importantly than women, as well as women more frequently including childrearing in their expected life course, is representative of these traditional cultural values. These differences are related to persistent cultural norms, but they may also be present for structural reasons—particularly due to social policies surrounding childcare and income inequality (Blaue & Kahn, 2016). In fact, even hypothetical increased institutional constraints in the form of unsupportive work-family policies from a potential employer lead to a strengthening of endorsement of traditional roles for men and women (Pedulla & Thébaud, 2015).

Further, the pattern of men reporting the events associated with income and work significantly higher than women may also be related to gender socialization, in which deviation from gender roles is judged more harshly for boys than girls (for a review: Leaper & Friedman, 2007). For example, boys are often subject to intensive socialization of masculinity via fathers,

resulting in increased sensitivity to disapproval for non-gender-normative play (Raag & Rackliff, 1998; Reigeluth, & Addis, 2016). In relation to career expectations, men are shown to experience role-strain when performing feminine or otherwise non-masculine occupations, particularly as the result of their male peers' perceptions (Simpson, 2005). Together, these findings suggest that cultural norms for gender and potential consequences for deviation may be especially salient for men, particularly for norms regarding the pursuit of a career, and this heightened awareness may manifest in men rating these life events as more important than women.

In summary, men and women's reported life courses showed similarity in content, but men and women's assessment of the importance for specific life events differed in one area. This suggests that all reported life events are important across genders, but some are more important for men than women. Men's increased valuation of events relating to work is representative of persistent cultural norms surrounding financial provision and work outside of the home. Subtle differences in childhood and adolescent socialization for boys (i.e., intensive masculinity socialization by fathers) make men more attentive to cultural norms for masculinity, which may partly explain why gender differences in the current study appear as men rating events as more important than women, and which are also consistent with some of the findings from the analysis of deviation narratives.

Deviations from the Biographical Master Narratives for Men and Women

After defining the biographical master narratives for men and women, the current study sought to examine how individuals deviated from those cultural expectations. The *Master Narrative Deviation* prompt elicited participants' deviations pertaining to cultural expectations for men and women, and served as my source for examining engagement with the biographical master narratives for men and women.

Neither men nor women were more likely to deviate, but they did differ in the types of deviations or conformity they reported. Men were more likely to discuss more long-term or ongoing deviations (i.e., norms of masculinity/femininity and sexuality/sexual behaviors) and women were more likely to discuss discrete events as deviations (i.e., gendered life course events). Similarly, men and women reported different types of conformity. Men were more likely to report conformity to a traditional master narrative of gender (consistent with prior work, McLean et al., 2016), while women were more likely to report conformity to a master narrative affirming existing equality among men and women.

In the previous section, I connected socialization practices for masculinity in boyhood and adolescence, and beyond to men's higher importance ratings. Here, I argue these practices are also important for understanding men's increased likelihood for reporting deviations that center around masculinity and heterosexuality, as well as the ongoing or long-term quality of these deviations. Reigeluth and Addis's (2016) examination of the policing of masculinity (POM) provides valuable insight into why men might be socialized to be particularly sensitive to deviations based on masculinity norms and sexuality. POM is shown to be a highly normative process for male socialization with multiple functions, including masculine norm enforcement. Methods for enforcement include both homophobic and misogynistic verbal abuse among peers (Slaatten, Anderssen, & Hetland, 2014). Those who conform to masculinity norms most fully and participate in the policing process benefit from elevated status among their peers—much like those who conform to and uphold master narratives benefit. Due to methods of POM and its ongoing nature, norms of masculinity and heterosexuality might be particularly salient for men when asked about their conformity to master narratives of gender and would result in their overrepresentation in those deviation content categories. Further, the continuous pressure to

properly perform one's own masculinity and heterosexuality would contribute to the ongoing or long-term quality of these deviations as these men's statuses as deviants are reaffirmed.

Because men were overrepresented in their reporting of deviations related to sexuality or sexual behaviors, it's also notable that sexual minorities reported more elaborated alternative narratives than heterosexual participants. As this continuous socialization process relates to the policing of sexuality, this finding suggests that non-heterosexual individuals face persistent reminders of their deviation(s) and may devote more effort to crafting alternative narratives to explain their deviation(s).

Below is a narrative example of how the socialization and policing of masculinity contributed to one male participant's reported deviation.

The most memorable experience of divergence for me has to be that I am a cis-gender male who wears makeup. I started to wear makeup about three years ago in order to hide the acne I would get. It became something that I really enjoyed and still love to this day. I can remember in particular though one day when I wore a 'noticeable' amount of makeup with a group of friends during high school. I was called out for not being a 'man', told that 'makeup is for girls' and in turn this resulted in what helped me gain self-confidence diminish it. It took some time to embrace that you can't always please everyone and the sooner I realized that, the better off I was.

Within this narrative, there are examples of both the mechanism for enforcing masculinity (e.g., being "called out") and the potential outcome for those who deviate (e.g., diminished self-confidence). While the narrator seems to have resolved his negative feelings regarding his deviation, his reporting of his makeup use as a deviation from the master narrative for his gender suggests that these norms remain highly salient.

In contrast to men's reported deviations from cultural norms for masculinity/femininity and sexuality, women were likely to report deviations in the form of discrete life events relating to their gender. Consideration of the specific content of these narratives is necessary to fully

understand why this pattern emerged. To reiterate what constitutes a gendered life course event in this coding scheme, these events were those that either pertain to specific life events that are related to gender (e.g., childbearing), are framed by the narrator in such a way that gender is a subjectively important part of the deviation, or deviations that are exacerbated by being male or female (e.g., not having a romantic relationship in high school is more defining to women than men). Women reporting these types of deviations were often discussing decisions or experiences relating to norms for motherhood, relationships, career, and independence, broadly.

One particularly relevant aspect of shifting cultural norms is the greater ability, and more recent encouragement, for women to work outside of the home (Lindsey, 2015; Moen, Erickson, & Dempster-McClain, 1997). Although this shift allows for greater financial independence for women, balancing work and persisting family responsibilities poses a unique challenge for women (Keene & Quadagno, 2004). In other words, women are more empowered in working outside the home, but are still subject to aspects of a more traditional master narrative (i.e., childrearing, housekeeping). Thus, it is unsurprising that decisions relating to this experience (e.g., deciding to focus on a career instead of having children) would be present in women's narratives of deviations from the biographical master narrative for women. Further, these findings coincide with women's more frequency of reporting devoting energy to childrearing in their expected life courses for someone of their gender, in comparison to men (23% of women reported and 7% of men).

Below is an example of how cultural expectations surrounding work and family life manifest in a female participant's deviation narrative.

Coming from a conservative Christian background, I felt the pressure to marry young, have children, and spend my life raising them. Though I did marry young, I am now pursuing higher education, consider myself fairly independent from my partner, do not plan to have kids in the near future, if ever, and have decided to

focus on my career for the time being. This transition made me feel incredibly isolated and conflicted, because although I was making choices that felt best for my life, there was a considerable amount of guilt that I needed to process. I had family members berate me for not taking my partner's last name. I have people ask when I'll finally face reality and leave my career to start having children. It's isolating to break a cultural norm, even when you know it's the right choice.

This example also illustrates three components of master narrative deviation processing: recognition of the cultural expectations contained in the traditional master narrative (“marry young, have children, and spend my life raising them”), a clear deviation from those expectations (“have decided to focus on my career for the time being”), and recognition of the consequences for that deviation (“made me feel incredibly isolated and conflicted”). Our narrator will likely continue working to reconcile the requirements of the biographical master narrative for women with her own desires for her life course.

Similar to the differences shown for reported deviations, men and women also differed in the types of conformity reported. Why are men more likely to report conformity to a traditional master narrative of gender, and women more likely to report conformity to a master narrative assuming gender equality? Master narratives are strong cultural forces that bestow privilege upon those who conform, and these narratives are maintained by those who benefit from them (i.e., those who conform; McLean & Syed, 2016). I argue that men and women report conformity to master narratives that benefit their genders in unique ways.

Indeed, the traditional master narrative of gender—emphasizing different roles and responsibilities for men women—benefits men, broadly. Although the toxic mechanisms for socializing masculinity have previously been discussed at some length, a traditional view of gender norms and expectations empowers men to become patriarchs in and out of familial contexts (Lindsey, 2015). In fact, men and women who conform to traditional conceptions of masculinity and femininity report higher life satisfaction (Matud, Bethencourt, & Ibáñez, 2014).

Thus, men would be more likely to conform, endorse, and maintain a narrative that places them at such an advantage.

Women's conformity to and endorsement of a master narrative affirming the existence of gender equality, also referred to as an equality master narrative, places them at a similar advantage—especially when considering the distinction between *felt* agency and *actual* agency. McLean and Syed (2016) describe one benefit of conformity to a master narrative as increased felt agency, or the feeling that you are in control of your life choices or actions. Actual agency in the context of a master narrative is not as simple—the existence of rigid, pervasive cultural expectations likely influences individuals' life choices and actions through social or structural consequences. By conforming to a master narrative, an individual is likely to *feel* agentic as their actions are not subject to continual scrutiny, or other potential consequences for deviation. Thus, greater felt agency may ease the strain of potentially experiencing reduced *actual* agency due to the constraints of a master narrative. Further, those who deviate may be acutely aware of the constraints placed upon them, leading them to grapple with their actual agency. In terms of the current study's findings that women are more likely than men to conform to and endorse a master narrative centering on gender equality, this equality master narrative allows women to benefit from the feeling that they are not limited by gender in any way. They are also relieved of the burden of actually working towards changing existing gender equalities in a way that women who do not endorse this narrative are not. For example, a woman who endorses the equality master narrative may not acknowledge a gender-based wage gap, or any form of gender discrimination. By not acknowledging these inequalities between men and women, she is exempt from the potential consequences of voicing any concerns about inequality, and she does not feel any obligation to work to change the culture that supports gender inequality.

In summary, gender differences in the content of reported deviations and conformity in relation to master narratives of gender suggest some critical differences in saliency of particular events and experiences for men and women. Gender socialization processes and shifting cultural norms for gender roles contribute to these differences. How do these findings relate to how individuals engage with the biographical master narrative for someone of their gender, and master narratives, broadly? The content of men's and women's reported deviations suggests that when individuals are asked to discuss how they deviate from cultural expectations, they will discuss events or experiences that are particularly salient to the identity being asked about (i.e., gender in this context). Further, the current findings relating to master narrative conformity support McLean and Syed's (2016) argument regarding the role of agency in master narrative conformity and maintenance, suggesting that individuals are likely to conform to and endorse master narratives that offer particular benefits to their identity or identities (e.g., men supporting traditional master narratives).

Contributions to the Study of Gender Identity

The current study sought to describe the content of biographical master narratives for American men and women, and to describe how men and women deviate or conform to these cultural expectations. General agreement can be seen among men and women for the expected life events comprising these biographical master narratives, supporting past findings on life script knowledge (Bernsten & Rubin, 2004). However, differences arose in the emphasis placed on certain events, particularly in men's assessment of the importance of choosing and pursuing a career. Similarly, distinct differences arose in the content of men and women's discussions of their individual deviations and conformity to the biographical master narrative for their gender—

men and women relaying narratives of deviations and conformity salient to their respective genders.

Broadly, these findings suggest that traditional conceptions of gender identity that emphasize traits (i.e., masculinity and femininity) and variations on identification (i.e., biological sex, self-identification) should be expanded to consider the content of one's gender identity—the cultural information and individual experiences individuals use to construct their identities as men or women. The current study demonstrates that issues of masculinity and femininity play a role in this process, and that individuals also draw upon other information and experiences (e.g., sexuality, career-related decisions, and family planning) when reflecting on their gender identity.

Narrative Processing of Master Narrative Deviations

In addition to describing the content of biographical master narratives, the current study examined the narrative processing of deviations from master narratives of gender, in relation to processes of identity development. As hypothesized, more developed alternative narratives (i.e., individuals' stories constructed to explain their deviations) were more likely to contain self-event connections than those that were less developed. Further, and also as hypothesized, individuals with more developed alternative narratives were also likely to express a higher degree of identity exploration.

As reviewed previously, these hypotheses were guided by past empirical work on narrative identity processing. The creation of self-event connections is established as an important component of autobiographical reasoning processes, connecting past events to current selves, and leading to a more meaningful and cohesive sense of self over time (Habermas & Bluck, 2000; Habermas & de Silveira, 2008; Pasupathi & Weeks, 2010). Similarly, constructing alternative narratives may be a component of autobiographical reasoning as they assist

individuals in making sense of their deviations from master narratives (McLean & Syed, 2016). Thus, both processes contribute to individuals making sense of current and past experiences. These processes may be especially important for making sense of disruptive or non-canonical events (Thorne & McLean, 2004).

Additionally, prior master narrative research observed that individuals who reported an alternative narrative pertaining to gender roles reported a higher degree of identity exploration (McLean et al., 2016). As theorized by McLean and Syed (2016), individuals constructing an alternative narrative reflecting their own deviation experiences are actively engaging with master narratives—acknowledging the content of relevant master narratives, and working to reconcile their non-normative experiences with those cultural expectations. In consideration of the current study's findings in regards to these processes, the development of an alternative narrative may be one manifestation of identity exploration.

Indeed, self-event connections, the development of an alternative narrative, and identity exploration are all components of identity processing. However, individuals with more developed alternative narratives represent a perspective that acknowledges the past, but is open to future change and possibilities. The increased likelihood for those with a more developed alternative narrative to also express explicit self-event connections suggests that these individuals have a more developed sense of how past experiences have contributed to their current sense of self. However, it is notable that 75% of deviation and conformity narratives did not contain a self-event connection—suggesting that gender may be an identity domain that is less salient than others (e.g., family) in broad contexts. Additionally, the positive relationship between an individual's development of an alternative narrative and their degree of identity exploration indicates that they are also actively engaged in the processing of current and possible

future identities. In other words, a highly developed alternative narrative may indicate an individual has a strong sense of who they are and how they came to be that way, and the connection to identity exploration indicates an eye to the future.

What do these findings say about identity formation in the context of master narratives? The construction of an alternative narrative is a unique opportunity for individuals to engage with their past and present future experiences in a way that forces consideration of current cultural norms and expectations. Further, this process encourages individuals to consider how their future experiences will be shaped by those norms. In sum, developing an alternative narrative is a way for individuals to contextualize their own identity and identity construction.

Master Narrative Deviations and Psychological Functioning

Finally, the current study sought to understand how identity processing in the context of master narratives and alternative relates to psychological functioning. Based on past research indicating deeper identity processing when sharing personal memories with an engaged audience (Pasupathi & Hoyt, 2009), as well as audience preference for narratives conforming to norms for storytelling (e.g., positive resolution; Thorne & McLean, 2003), I hypothesized that individuals with a more developed alternative narrative and report a positive telling experience, as well as those who resolve their narrative positively, should report lower psychological distress. Unexpectedly, I found no relation between the development of an alternative narrative and psychological distress.

One explanation for this finding is that the impact of developing of an alternative narrative on psychological functioning may be overshadowed by other aspects of one's identity. That is to say, a relationship between the two constructs may not be visible because other identity domains (i.e., not gender) may be more salient, or less context-specific than gender. As

discussed previously, gender or sex roles are identity domains that are not frequently present in individuals' domain-free autobiographical narratives, while other identity domains (e.g., family and mortality) are very common (McLean et al., 2016). This suggests identity content relating to gender may be less salient than other content when engaging in identity processing. Thus, identity processing of other identity content domains or deviations from master narratives pertaining to these domains, more specifically, may exert more influence on an individuals' psychological distress than gender-related deviations.

Limitations

The current study provides a relatively novel and nuanced examination of the content of the biographical master narratives for American men and women, as well as how individuals engage with these master narratives to form life stories. However, the current study is limited in multiple ways, including aspects of its design and implementation. In this section, I will discuss these limitations and how selected limitations may be rectified in future studies.

Although my initial proposal for this study anticipated the challenge of conducting research spanning multiple samples (i.e., both university and community college students), participants in the two settings did not experience exactly the same experimental procedure. Participants brought into the lab (university undergraduates and graduates) completed the survey in relative privacy—the survey was displayed on a computer in an otherwise empty room. However, participants at the community college completed their surveys on paper during their scheduled class time in the presence of their peers. The lack of privacy may pose a challenge for some participants who desire an environment more amenable to engaging in deeper identity processing.

Conducting research based on cultural norms and expectations, particularly research on master narratives, often limits the generalizability of a study's findings. As master narratives are complex cultural forces that apply to multiple aspects of identities and experiences (i.e., subgroups and discrete events), they are also subject to varying by one's location (McLean & Syed, 2016). That is, the biographical master narratives for American men and women attending a public educational institute in the Pacific Northwest may not be the same as the biographical master narratives for men and women across America. Thus, the current study's findings regarding the content of the biographical master narratives, as well as participant engagement with their deviations and conformity, is an incremental step forward in fully understanding biographical master narratives for men and women.

Similarly, another distinct limitation of the current study is the lack of examination of differences between men, women, and transgender or other-wise gender non-conforming (e.g., gender fluid) individuals due to a low sample size for this group ($n = 1$). However, increasingly there are calls for similar research that more comprehensively addresses the psychosocial outcomes of transgender youths (Olsen-Kennedy et al., 2016). While the current study succeeds in expanding the traditional methodologies for examining gender identity and gender identity construction, it does not adequately explore how individuals falling outside of the traditional gender dichotomy engage with the master and alternative narrative structures described. As only one participant identified as "Transgender/Other" in our sample, I was unable to explore potential differences in life course master narrative content or negotiation. In future studies of master narratives pertaining to gender, effort should be made to include members of this group as they represent a distinct alternative to the traditional master narrative that relies heavily on

gender assigned at birth (e.g., no participants reporting gender identity issues within life course event listings).

Undoubtedly, defining biographical master and alternative narratives is a complex issue—one that requires researchers to seek guidance from prior theoretical and empirical works (e.g., McLean & Syed, 2016; McLean et al., 2016), while also empowering the data to speak for itself. The current study defined the life course master narratives of gender for American men and women using data obtained through multiple methods (e.g., narrative prompts and event ratings) that allowed participants to provide both open-ended and closed responses regarding their knowledge of relevant cultural norms and expectations. However, our narrative coding of the data, particularly coding for the content and development of an alternative narrative, may be flawed in that it empowers the researcher in making assumptions about the participants' engagement in the negotiation with master narratives and construction of alternative narratives.

In identifying the presence of deviation/conformity content and alternative narratives, I was guided in part by participants own positionality to master narratives (see: Thorne & McLean, 2003; e.g., “Most men, I suppose don’t act or perform on stage...” and “I feel like my life, so far, aligns with the lives of other males my age.”). This strategy for ascertaining individuals' deviation or conformity aligns with McLean and Syed's (2016) broad argument that much of individuals' master narrative processing is subconscious and may not refer directly to a master narrative (i.e., individuals are likely not explicitly analyzing their experiences using specific master narrative language or in these contexts). However, this positionality may have been influenced by the deviation prompt that explicitly asks participants to consider how they may deviate or have deviated from cultural expectations. While these processes are to some degree subconscious, and thus individuals must be asked about them, one may still ask if these

responses reflect participants' pre-existing identity processes in regards to master and alternative narratives (i.e., cultural expectations), or are these responses overly-influenced by the researcher's instructions? Further development of procedures to elicit participants' identity processing in the context of master and alternative narratives is necessary, particularly procedures that might allow researchers to capture how these identity processes occur most naturally.

Future Directions

Describing the biographical master narratives for American men and women, as well as how individuals engage with master and alternative narratives of gender, is an important step in contextualizing narrative identity construction. I've discussed two directions in which future research can build upon the current study's findings: applications of the master narrative framework to examine other identities or identity domains, and examination of how master narratives of gender are socialized.

As discussed previously, the current study examined one identity domain (gender) for a particular subset of Americans. McLean and Syed (2016) discuss the potential multi-level structures of master narratives, such that master narratives may exist for larger cultures (e.g., American men or women) and smaller subgroups (e.g., Asian Americans, individuals with disabilities, individuals who identify as transgender). Further, Arnett (2016) recently argued the necessity for a new line of empirical research that would utilize current master narrative theory to examine indigenous life stage concepts on a global scale. I suggest future studies could broadly focus on defining biographical master narratives for any number of subgroups, or apply the master narrative framework to another identity domain (e.g., dating, religion, or occupation; McLean et al., 2014). For example, the recent surge in popularity of location-based dating

applications on mobile devices (e.g., Grindr, Tindr) might have a stronger place in master narratives of dating for some subgroups than others (Birnholtz et al., 2014; Blackwell, Birnholtz, & Abbott, 2015).

In consideration of master narratives for subgroups, additional work should be done utilizing the master narrative framework to examine the experiences of individuals with multiple subgroup identities or multiple distinct master narrative deviations. Prior psychological research has examined how social identities within individuals may work together or compete to produce experiences unique from those not possessing dual identities (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Settles, 2004). Similarly, subgroup identities are also shown to vary in salience. For example, children have been shown to rate gender as more important than racial identity (Rogers & Meltzoff, 2016). In terms of master narrative work, McLean et al. (under review) begins to address the issue of intersectionality in which members of a subgroup deviate from several established alternative or master narratives. Together, these subgroup experiences offer many opportunities for examining master and alternative narrative content and processes of negotiation.

Although describing existing master narrative content and processes of negotiation are important empirical tasks, they do not answer an important question: where does our knowledge of the content of master narratives come from? McLean and Syed (2016) outline multiple ways in which master narratives are conveyed (e.g., popular media), including person-to-person socialization (e.g., conversations). Parent-to-child transmission of cultural knowledge pertaining to master narratives of gender is the focus of McLean, Fordham, Haraldsson, Lowe, and Boggs' (in preparation) recent master narrative work. Preliminary qualitative findings from this conversation-based study point to multiple pathways for master narrative socialization, including

parental modeling of traditional gender roles in the household and implicit/explicit endorsement of gender-typical behavior. These findings suggest parents play an important role in the socialization of gendered master narrative content, but further research is needed to fully explore the process of master narrative socialization, broadly.

Conclusions

Findings of the current study show how individuals develop their identities in the context of biographical master narratives. The cultural expectations within biographical master narratives for men and women state they are expected to lead similar lives, but with some nuances regarding the variability in the importance of certain issues for men and women. In examining the content of self-reported deviations from these norms, the content of gender identity was shown to vary widely and included traits, interests, and experiences.

In an effort to incorporate these myriad deviations into existing identities, men and women employ multiple narrative identity processes (e.g., development of an alternative narrative, self-event connections). These processes not only allow individuals to justify discrete or isolated deviations from master narratives of gender, they facilitate broader identity processing that serves to integrate past, present, and potential future selves into a cohesive identity. Specifically, the development of an alternative narrative allows for the inclusion of multiple types of gender content in constructing a gender identity, and provides a cultural context for otherwise decontextualized identity processes.

References

- Alpert, L., Marsden, E., Szymanowski, K., & Lilgendahl, J. P. (2013, February). *Feeling different: The roles of social and personality factors in shaping self-defining stories of master narrative deviation experiences*. Poster presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Austin, TX.
- Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist, 55*(5), 469-480.
doi:10.1037/0003-066x.55.5.469
- Arnett, J. J. (2016). Life stage concepts across history and cultures: Proposal for a new field on indigenous life stages. *Human Development, 59*(5), 290-316.
doi: 10.1159/000453627
- Avison, W. R., & McAlpine, D. D. (1992). Gender differences in symptoms of depression among adolescents. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 77*-96.
- Balistreri, E., Busch-Rossnagel, N. A., & Geisinger, K. F. (1995). Development and preliminary validation of the Ego Identity Process Questionnaire. *Journal of Adolescence, 18*(2), 179-192.
doi: <https://doi.org/10.1006/jado.1995.1012>
- Berntsen, D., & Rubin, D. C. (2004). Cultural life scripts structure recall from autobiographical memory. *Memory & Cognition, 32*(3), 427-442.
- Best, D. L., & Williams, J. E. (2001). Gender and Culture. In D. Matsuo (Ed.), *The handbook of culture and psychology* (pp. 195-222). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Birnholtz, J., Fitzpatrick, C., Handel, M., & Brubaker, J. R. (2014, September). Identity, identification and identifiability: The language of self-presentation on a location-based

- mobile dating app. In *Proceedings of the 16th international conference on human-computer interaction with mobile devices & services* (pp. 3-12). ACM.
- Blackwell, C., Birnholtz, J., & Abbott, C. (2015). Seeing and being seen: Co-situation and impression formation using Grindr, a location-aware gay dating app. *New Media & Society, 17*(7), 1117-1136.
doi: 10.1177/1461444814521595
- Blau, F. D., & Kahn, L. M. (2016). *The gender wage gap: Extent, trends, and explanations* (No. w21913). National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Bohn, A., & Berntsen, D. (2008). Life story development in childhood: The development of life story abilities and the acquisition of cultural life scripts from late middle childhood to adolescence. *Developmental Psychology, 44*(4), 1135-1147.
doi:10.1037/0012-1649.44.4.1135
- Carver, P. R., Yunger, J. L., & Perry, D. G. (2003). Gender identity and adjustment in middle childhood. *Sex Roles, 49*(3), 95-109.
- Cohen, S., & Wills, T. A. (1985). Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis. *Psychological bulletin, 98*(2), 310-357.
- Egan, S. K., & Perry, D. G. (2001). Gender identity: A multidimensional analysis with implications for psychosocial adjustment. *Developmental Psychology, 37*(4), 451-463.
doi:10.1037/0012-1649.37.4.451
- Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity, youth, and crisis*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Fivush, R., Habermas, T., Waters, T. E., & Zaman, W. (2011). The making of autobiographical memory: Intersections of culture, narratives and identity. *International Journal of Psychology, 46*(5), 321-345.

doi:10.1080/00207594.2011.596541

Fivush, R., & Haden, C. A. (Eds.). (2003). *Autobiographical memory and the construction of a narrative self: Developmental and cultural perspectives*. Psychology Press.

Gamson, J., & Moon, D. (2004). The sociology of sexualities: queer and beyond. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 30, 47–64.

doi: 10.1146/annurev.soc.30.012703.110522

Gilmore, J. M. & Durkin, K. (2001) A critical review of the validity of ego development theory and its measurement. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 77(3), 541-567.

doi: 10.1207/S15327752JPA7703_12

Guimond, S., Branscombe, N. R., Brunot, S., Buunk, A. P., Chatard, A., Désert, M., & ...

Yzerbyt, V. (2007). Culture, gender, and the self: Variations and impact of social comparison processes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92(6), 1118-1134.

doi:10.1037/0022-3514.92.6.1118

Habermas, T. (2007). How to tell a life: The development of the cultural concept of biography across the lifespan. *Journal of Cognition*, 8, 1-31.

doi: 10.1080/15248370709336991

Habermas, T., & Bluck, S. (2000). Getting a life: The emergence of the life story in adolescence. *Psychological Bulletin*, 126(5), 748-769.

doi:10.1037/0033-2909.126.5.748

Habermas, T., & Silveira, C. D. (2008). The development of global coherence in life narratives across adolescence: Temporal, causal, and thematic aspects. *Developmental Psychology*, 44(3), 707-721.

doi:10.1037/0012-1649.44.3.707

- Hammack, P. L., & Cohler, B. J. (2011). Narrative, identity, and the politics of exclusion: Social change and the gay and lesbian life course. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, 8(3), 162-182.
doi:10.1007/s13178-011-0060-3
- Keene, J. R., & Quadagno, J. (2004). Predictors of perceived work-family balance: Gender difference or gender similarity? *Sociological Perspectives*, 47(1), 1-23.
- Köber, C., Schmiedek, F., & Habermas, T. (2015). Characterizing lifespan development of three aspects of coherence in life narratives: A cohort-sequential study. *Developmental Psychology*, 51, 260-275.
doi: 10.1037/a0038668
- Leaper, C., & Friedman, C. K. (2007). The socialization of gender. *Handbook of socialization: Theory and research*, 561-587.
- Lilgendahl, J. P. (2006). Narrative identity processing of difficult life experiences: Pathways of personality development and positive self-transformation in adulthood. *Journal of Personality*, 74, 1079-1110.
doi: 10.1111/j.1467-6494.2006.00403.x
- Lindsey, L. L. (2015). *Gender roles: A sociological perspective*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Lovibond, P., & Lovibond, S. (1995). The structure of negative emotional states: Comparison of the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS) with the Beck Depression and Anxiety Inventories. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 33(3), 335-343.
doi:10.1016/0005-7967(94)00075-u
- Matud, M. P., Bethencourt, J. M., & Ibáñez, I. (2014). Relevance of gender roles in life satisfaction in adult people. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 70, 206-211.
doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2014.06.046>

McAdams, D. P. (2001). The psychology of life stories. *Review of General Psychology, 5*(2), 100-122.

doi:10.1037//1089-2680.5.2.100

McAdams, D. P. (2006). The redemptive self: Generativity and the stories Americans live by. *Research in Human Development, 3*(2-3), 81-100.

McAdams, D. P., & Mclean, K. C. (2013). Narrative identity. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 22*(3), 233-238.

doi:10.1177/0963721413475622

McAdams, D. P., Bauer, J. J., Sakaeda, A. R., Anyidoho, N. A., Machado, M. A., Magrino-Failla, K., . . . Lilgendahl, J. P. (2006). Continuity and change in the life story: A longitudinal study of autobiographical memories in emerging adulthood. *Journal of Personality, 74*(5), 1371-1400.

doi:10.1111/j.1467-6494.2006.00412.x

McLean, K. C. (2008). The emergence of narrative identity. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 2*(4), 1685-1702.

doi:10.1111/j.1751-9004.2008.00124.x

McLean, K. C., Fordham, C., Haraldsson, K., Lowe, A., & Boggs, S. (in preparation). *Gender Identity in a Cultural Context: An Application of the Master Narrative Framework.*

McLean, K. C., Lilgendahl, J. P., Fordham, C., Alpert, L., Marsden, E., Szymanowski, K., & McAdams, D. P. (under review). *Identity Development in Cultural Context: The Role of Deviating from Master Narratives.*

McLean, K. C., & Pratt, M. W. (2006). Life's little (and big) lessons: Identity statuses and meaning-making in the turning point narratives of emerging adults.

Developmental Psychology, 42(4), 714-722.

doi:10.1037/0012-1649.42.4.714

McLean, K. C. & Syed, M. (2016). Personal, master, and alternative narratives: An integrative framework for understanding identity development in context. *Human Development*.

doi: 10.1159/000445817

McLean, K. C., Syed, M., & Shucard, H. (2016). Bringing identity content to the fore: Links to identity development processes. *Emerging Adulthood*. 1-9.

doi:10.1177/2167696815626820

McLean, K. C., Shucard, H., & Syed, M. (2016). Applying the master narrative framework to gender identity development in emerging adulthood. *Emerging Adulthood*.

doi: 10.1177/2167696816656254

McLean, K. C., Syed, M., Yoder, A., & Greenhoot, A. F. (2014). The role of domain content in understanding identity development processes. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 26(1), 60-75.

doi:10.1111/jora.12169

Moen, P., Erickson, M. A., & Dempster-McClain, D. (1997). Their mother's daughters? The intergenerational transmission of gender attitudes in a world of changing roles. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 281-293.

Olson-Kennedy, J., Cohen-Kettenis, P. T., Kreukels, B. P., Meyer-Bahlburg, H. F., Garofalo, R.,

Meyer, W., & Rosenthal, S. M. (2016). Research priorities for gender

nonconforming/transgender youth: Gender identity development and biopsychosocial outcomes. *Current Opinion in Endocrinology, Diabetes and Obesity*, 23(2), 172-179.

doi: 10.1097/MED.0000000000000236

- Pasupathi, M. (2001). The social construction of the personal past and its implications for adult development. *Psychological Bulletin*, *127*(5), 651-672.
doi:10.1037/0033-2909.127.5.651
- Pasupathi, M., & Mansour, E. (2006). Adult age differences in autobiographical reasoning in narratives. *Developmental Psychology*, *42*(5), 798-808.
doi:10.1037/0012-1649.42.5.798
- Pasupathi, M., Mansour, E., & Brubaker, J. R. (2007). Developing a life story: Constructing relations between self and experience in autobiographical narratives. *Human Development*, *50*(2-3), 85-110.
doi: 10.1159/000100939
- Pedulla, D. S., & Thébaud, S. (2015). Can we finish the revolution? Gender, work-family ideals, and institutional constraint. *American Sociological Review*, *80*(1), 116-139.
doi: 10.1177/0003122414564008
- Perry, D. G., & Pauletti, R. E. (2011). Gender and adolescent development. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, *21*(1), 61-74.
doi:10.1111/j.1532-7795.2010.00715.x
- Purdie-Vaughns, V., & Eibach, R. P. (2008). Intersectional invisibility: The distinctive advantages and disadvantages of multiple subordinate-group identities. *Sex Roles*, *59*(5-6), 377-391.
- Schwartz, S. J., Zamboanga, B. L., Luyckx, K., Meca, A., & Ritchie, R. A. (2013). Identity in emerging adulthood: Reviewing the field and looking forward. *Emerging Adulthood*, *1*(2), 96-113.
doi:10.1177/2167696813479781

- Sellers, R. M., Rowley, S. J., Chavous, T. M., Shelton, J. N., & Smith, M. A. (1997). Multidimensional inventory of Black identity: A preliminary investigation of reliability and construct validity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 73*(4), 805-815.
- Settles, I. H. (2004). When multiple identities interfere: The role of identity centrality. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 30*(4), 487-500.
doi:10.1177/0146167203261885
- Simpson, R. (2005). Men in non-traditional occupations: Career entry, career orientation and experience of role strain. *Gender, Work & Organization, 12*(4), 363-380.
- Singer, J. A., & Bluck, S. (2001). New perspectives on autobiographical memory: The integration of narrative processing and autobiographical reasoning. *Review of General Psychology, 5*(2), 91.
doi: 10.1037//1089-2680.5.2.91
- Slaatten, H., Anderssen, N., & Hetland, J. (2014). Endorsement of male role norms and gay-related name-calling. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity, 15*(3), 335.
doi: 10.1037/a0033734
- Syed, M., & Nelson, S. C. (2015). Guidelines for establishing reliability when coding narrative data. *Emerging Adulthood, 3*(6), 375-387.
doi: 10.1177/2167696815587648
- Raag, T., & Rackliff, C. L. (1998). Preschoolers' awareness of social expectations of gender: Relationships to toy choices. *Sex Roles, 38*(9), 685-700.
- Reese, E., Yan, C., Jack, F., & Hayne, H. (2010). Emerging identities: Narrative and self from early childhood to early adolescence. In *Narrative development in adolescence* (pp. 23-43). Springer US.

- Reigeluth, C. S., & Addis, M. E. (2016). Adolescent boys' experiences with policing of masculinity: Forms, functions, and consequences. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity, 17*(1), 74.
doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0039342>
- Rogers, L. O., & Meltzoff, A. N. (2016). Is gender more important and meaningful than race? An analysis of racial and gender identity among black, white, and mixed-race. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 23*(3).
doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/cdp0000125>
- Rosenfield, S., & Mouzon, D. (2013). Gender and mental health. In *Handbook of the sociology of mental health* (pp. 277-296). Springer Netherlands.
- Rosenthal, D. A., Gurney, R. M., & Moore, S. M. (1981). From trust to intimacy: A new inventory for examining Erikson's stages of psychosocial development. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 10*(6), 525-537.
- Thoits, P. A. (1991). On merging identity theory and stress research. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 54*(2), 101.
doi:10.2307/2786929
- Thorne, A., & McLean, K. C. (2003). Telling traumatic events in adolescence: A study of master narrative positioning. In R. Fivush & C. Haden (Eds.), *Connecting culture and memory: The development of an autobiographical self*, (pp. 169-186). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Thorne, A., McLean, K. C., & Lawrence, A. (2004). When remembering is not enough: Reflecting on self-defining events in late adolescence. *Journal of Personality, 72*, 513-542.

Umanath, S. & Bernsten, D. (2013). Personal life stories: Common deviations from the cultural life script. *Nordic Psychology*, 65(2), 87-102.

Weeks, T. L., & Pasupathi, M. (2009). Autonomy, identity, and narrative construction with parents and friends. *Narrative Development in Adolescence: Advancing Responsible Adolescent Development*, 65-91.

doi:10.1007/978-0-387-8982544

West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender & Society*, 1(2), 125-151.

Wood, W., & Eagly, A. H. (2015). Two traditions of research on gender identity. *Sex Roles*, 73(11-12), 461-473.

doi: 10.1007/s11199-015-0480-2

Table 1
Narrative Examples for Content Categories

Content Category	Narrative Example
Deviation	<p data-bbox="464 305 947 337"><i>Norms of Masculinity and Femininity</i></p> <p data-bbox="464 344 1766 565">Female: "I wasn't the type of kid to play with Barbie dolls and wear pink, typically what is associated with girls/females, and I wanted to do more of playing in the woods and biking and outdoor stuff like that. It was quickly shown to me that I was not supposed to act that way and I soon started dressing more "girly" and participating in more culturally deemed female activities. I didn't feel it much at the time, but now I can see a totally different path I would have taken had I continued with my original plan though life."</p>
	<p data-bbox="464 602 583 634"><i>Sexuality</i></p> <p data-bbox="464 641 1766 824">Male: "Identifying myself as gay was probably the most memorable experience of divergence for me. At first it made me feel scared, and alone facing the world. Most parents expect their kids to be straight. I know mine did. I felt like I wasn't quite what other people wanted me to be. As time went on though I came to realize being gay is nothing different from being heterosexual, except in sexual preference. Some people think otherwise but those are the people who aren't with your time."</p>
	<p data-bbox="464 862 659 894"><i>Gender Beliefs</i></p> <p data-bbox="464 901 1766 1154">Male: "Growing up I would hear about what it means to be a "man" mainly through media. This term brought so many assumptions: -Be a physically large person -Eat red meat -Shoot guns -Hold back tears -Never show emotion -Provide for a woman -etc. I hated thinkin that women would love it if I were like this. I am a sensitive person who experiences all sorts of emotions. I never wanted to be that type of guy. To me that type of thinking leads to arrogance and insensitivity towards people that are weak, or towards omen that don't do exactly as they are "supposed" to do. I wanted to create my own definition on what it means to be a "man"."</p>
	<p data-bbox="464 1192 869 1224"><i>Timing/Omission of Life Events</i></p> <p data-bbox="464 1230 1766 1409">Male: "As a Senior in High School, I did not want to go to college. I felt like school was not for me and that I would not succeed if I attended college because I did not have the drive/work ethic to do well. Culturally, I was expected to go to college because my family were all college graduates and my parents were financially capable of helping me pay. This feeling of not wanting to go to college due to lack of confidence made me feel inferior."</p>

Unexpected Events

Male: "When I was young my mom was a raging alcoholic and my dad was in prison this made me mature at a young age and gain a sense of independence that most people in the typical American culture lack."

Gendered Life Course Events

Female: "I don't feel that marriage and children or necessary, I've had many conversations with people who ask when I'm getting married and how many kids I want. I think marriage is something a relationship can evolve into. It's not some goal or benchmark to success and it's certainly not necessary for happiness. I haven't thought about having kids because I haven't met anyone I'd want to make that type of commitment/attachment with and it's not financially feasible. When others have this expectation of me I feel like they haven't bothered to listen or consider another point of view. It's frustrating."

Conformity

Non-specific

Male: "I feel my life has been normal and I'm tremendously blessed. Nothing in my life has been out of the ordinary thus far."

Traditional Master Narrative

Male: "I think my life has followed pretty closely to what society has shown us what males should look like and act like and that's a little scary to me because I don't do it voluntarily, it's just what seems to happen and I guess that's because I haven't seen it done any other way."

Equality Master Narrative

Female: "Growing up my parents said that I was going to grow up and go to college so that one day I could have an amazing job, have my own house, support a family. And so that's what I am working for."

Other

Male: "Growing up as a first generation Vietnamese-American, there were many times throughout my life where my traditional heritage would conflict with my Americanized culture. One memorable experience would be going to elementary school that was predominately white and Sunday school with predominately Vietnamese kids, the interactions between the two different cultures were very different."

On the English side, there was little emphasis put towards genuine respect towards our elders while in the Vietnamese side, here was a heavier influence.”

Table 2
Means (Standardized Deviations) and Frequencies (Percentages) for Demographic Variables

Variable		Male	Female	Sample
		<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
		<i>n (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>	<i>n (%)</i>
Age		20.15 (2.64)	20.63 (3.11)	20.39 (2.89)
Gender		200 (48)	204 (49)	404 (98)
Sample	WWU-Undergraduate	155 (55)	126 (45)	285 (69)
	WWU-Graduate	14 (27)	38 (73)	54 (13)
	Whatcom Comm. College	31 (44)	40 (56)	75 (18)
Race/Ethnicity	White or Caucasian	150 (48)	165 (52)	316 (76)
	Asian/Pacific Islander	17 (46)	20 (54)	37 (9)
	Latino or Hispanic	13 (68)	6 (32)	19 (5)
	Native American/American Indian	3 (38)	5 (63)	8 (2)
	Black or African American	3 (75)	1 (25)	4 (1)
	Other	13 (65)	7 (35)	20 (5)
Sexuality	Heterosexual or Straight	177 (52)	163 (48)	340 (82)
	Mostly Heterosexual/Straight	1 (25)	3 (75)	4 (1)
	Homosexual or Gay or Lesbian	10 (77)	3 (23)	13 (3)
	Bisexual	9 (25)	27 (75)	36 (9)
	Unsure	1 (100)	0 (0)	1 (.2)
	Other	2 (20)	8 (80)	11 (3)

Table 3
Descriptives for Participant-generated Life Course Event List

Event Category	Frequency (%)		
	Male	Female	Sample
Graduating High School	140 (75)	140 (77)	280 (75)
Graduating University	140 (75)	153 (85)	293 (79)
Having a Child	152 (81)	165 (91)	317 (85)
Choosing a Career	137 (73)	142 (79)	279 (75)
Caring for Parents in Old Age	1 (.5)	4 (2)	5 (1)
Purchase a Home	39 (21)	30 (17)	69 (19)
Travel to Another Country	17 (9)	23 (13)	40 (11)
Get Married	158 (84)	165 (91)	323 (87)
Devote Energy to Career Adv.	11 (6)	16 (9)	27 (7)
Devote Energy to Childrearing	14 (7)	41 (23)	55 (15)
Fall in Love	22 (12)	26 (14)	48 (13)
Retire	90 (48)	75 (41)	165 (44)
Have a Grandchild	25 (13)	43 (24)	68 (18)
Leave Home	12 (6)	13 (7)	25 (7)

Table 4
Means (Standard Deviations) for Narrative Codes and Variables

Code or Variable		Male <i>M (SD)</i>	Female <i>M (SD)</i>	Sample <i>M (SD)</i>
Narrative Code (Range)	Alternative Narrative Development (1-4)	2.51 (1.05)	2.69 (1.05)	2.53 (1.07)
Event Ratings (1-5)	Coherent Positive Resolution (1-5)	3.17 (1.22)	3.01 (1.16)	3.05 (1.19)
	Graduating High School	4.79 (.67)	4.83 (.44)	4.77 (.57)
	Graduating University	4.36 (.72)	4.47 (.73)	4.41 (.73)
	Having a Child	3.77 (1.11)	3.83 (1.21)	3.80 (1.16)
	Choosing a Career	4.72 (.61)	4.41 (.81)	4.56 (.73)
	Caring for Parents in Old Age	4.23 (.82)	3.99 (.98)	4.11 (.91)
	Purchase a Home	4.13 (.91)	3.86 (1.00)	4.00 (.96)
	Travel to Another Country	3.46 (1.19)	3.44 (1.25)	3.45 (1.22)
	Get Married	3.94 (1.15)	3.94 (1.23)	3.94 (1.19)
	Devote Energy to Career Adv.	4.29 (.83)	3.78 (.96)	4.03 (.93)
	Devote Energy to Childrearing	3.92 (1.0)	3.89 (1.18)	3.91 (1.09)
	Fall in Love	4.31 (.91)	4.26 (1.0)	4.28 (.96)
	Retire	4.18 (1.02)	4.15 (.96)	4.16 (.99)
	Have a Grandchild	3.65 (1.12)	3.64 (1.19)	3.65 (1.15)
	Leave Home	4.36 (.99)	4.35 (.86)	4.36 (.92)
DASS: Depression Anxiety Symptom Scale (1-4)		1.72 (.58)	1.84 (.69)	1.78 (.64)
EIPQ: Identity Exploration (1-7)		4.67 (.73)	4.76 (.71)	4.72 (.72)

Table 5
Frequencies (Percent) for Narrative Codes and Variables

Coding System or Variable		Male <i>n</i> (%)	Female <i>n</i> (%)	ASR (absolute value)
Content	Norms of Masc. & Fem. Sexuality	50 (25)	33 (16)	2.2
	Gender Role Beliefs	15 (8)	6 (3)	2.1
	Timing/Omission of Events	7 (4)	8 (4)	.2
	Unexpected Events	13 (7)	12 (6)	.3
	Gendered Life Course Event	37 (19)	35 (17)	.4
	Other	13 (7)	46 (23)	4.4
	Non-specific Conformity	7 (4)	9 (4)	.5
	Traditional MN Conformity	22 (11)	17 (8)	.9
	Equality MN Conformity	23 (12)	15 (7)	1.5
Self-Event Connection	Present	1 (<1)	11 (5)	2.9
	Absent	45 (26)	26 (15)	
Deviation Reported	Yes	128 (71)	148 (80)	
	No	125 (76)	125 (68)	
Listener Response	Positive	39 (22)	45 (24)	
	Neutral or Negative	83 (42)	78 (38)	
		40 (20)	56 (28)	

Table 6
Pearson's Correlations for Selected Variables

Measure	1	2	3	4	5
1. Dev. of an Alt. Narr.	--				
2. Coherent Pos. Res.	.10*	--			
3. Listener Response	.01	-.04	--		
4. DASS	-.03	-.05	.06	--	
5. EIPQ Id. Expl.	.26**	-.07	.05	.11*	--

Note. * = sig. at .05, ** = sig. at .01

Appendix

Master Narrative Definition Task (Part One)

This study deals with expectations of a typical life course within American culture. Your task is to decide which events are expected to take place in the typical life course for a male/female in this culture [**same gender as participant**]. You should not think about your own personal life when answering the questions below, but instead think about a typical life. Imagine a quite ordinary male/female. It cannot be a specific person that you know, but a prototypical person with a typical life course ahead. Your task is to write down the most important events that you imagine will occur during this person's life. Write the events in the same order they would occur. Give each event a short title that specifies its content. There are no right or wrong answers.

[space to write]

Master Narrative Deviation Narrative

Now that we have asked you to think about the typical life course for a typical male/female, we would like you to think more about your personal life.

We all have our own personal life story made up of our experiences and interpretations of those experiences. Sometimes stories from our lives, or aspects of our lives, do not completely match the storyline that others (society, culture, family, friends, etc.) expect us to have, or what is considered appropriate, normal, or accepted. Have you ever felt that your experiences as a male/female have diverged from what was considered to be normal, expected, or accepted? If so, please describe the most memorable experience of divergence from cultural expectations in the space provided below, including how it made you feel, and its significance to you (if any).

[space to write]

Thank you for writing about that experience.

Have you ever shared that experience with anyone else? Yes No

If no, why haven't you told it?

If yes, with about how many different people have you shared the above event, or memory? ____

To whom did you describe the event?

About how long after the event did you tell them about it?

Please vividly describe the most memorable telling experience of how you told them about the event: What led you to tell them about it, how did you tell them, what was their reaction, and your reaction?

[space to write]

Master Narrative Definition Task (Part Two)

Thank you for writing down these events. Below is a list of possible life events, which you may or may not have written about, but that might occur in a life course. For each event listed below, please rate how important it is for a typical male/female this culture to experience. Not important at all (1), A little unimportant (2), Neither unimportant or important (3), A little important (4), Very important (5)

_____ Graduate high school

- _____ Graduate college or university
- _____ Have a child
- _____ Choose a career
- _____ Take care of **[his/her]** parents in their old age
- _____ Purchase a home
- _____ Travel to another country
- _____ Get married
- _____ Devote energy to career advancement
- _____ Devote energy to childrearing
- _____ Fall in love
- _____ Retire
- _____ Have grandchildren
- _____ Leave home

Telling Ratings

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not at all			Somewhat			Very much

Please use the scale above to describe your experience.

1. To what extent was the person supportive/unsupportive?
2. To what extent did your audience validate your story?
3. To what extent did your audience challenge your story?
4. To what extent did your audience help create or change your story?
5. To what extent did your audience have the same story as you did, or a similar story
 to yours?
6. To what extent did the telling go according to your expectations?
7. How comfortable did you feel while telling the person your story?
8. To what extent was that goal achieved through telling?

9. What were your reasons for telling this person your story? [check all that apply]
 - To validate your feelings or opinions about the narrative
 - To get a better understanding of the narrative
 - To explain yourself to someone else
 - To get close(r) to someone
 - To gain comfort or support from another person
 - To entertain another person
 - To help another person or create a sense of solidarity with another person

10. Which of the above reasons was your primary goal? (select one – same options as above)

Gender Identity—Centrality Scale

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree		Neutral		Strongly agree

1. Overall, being a person of my gender has very little to do with how I feel about myself.
2. In general, being a person of my gender is an important part of my self-image.
3. My destiny is tied to the destiny of other members of my gender group.
4. Being a person of my gender is unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am.
5. I have a strong sense of belonging to people of my gender group.
6. I have a strong attachment to other members of my gender group.
7. Being a person of my gender is an important reflection of who I am.
8. Being a person of my gender is not a major factor in my social relationships.

6.

Some women don't feel that
their personality is similar to
most women's personalities

BUT

Other women do feel that
their personality is similar to
most women's personalities.

1

Very true for me

2

Sort of true for me

3

Sort of true for me

4

Very true for me

Ego Identity Processes Questionnaire (EIPQ)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Disagree strongly	Disagree moderately	Disagree a little	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree a little	Agree moderately	Agree strongly

Please use the scale above to indicate how to what degree you agree or disagree with each item.

- ___ 1. I have definitely decided on the occupation I want to pursue.
- ___ 2. I don't expect to change my political principles and ideals.
- ___ 3. I have considered adopting different kinds of religious beliefs.
- ___ 4. There has never been a need to question my values.
- ___ 5. I am very confident about what kinds of friends are best for me.
- ___ 6. My ideas about men's and women's roles have never changed as I became older.
- ___ 7. I will always vote for the same political party.
- ___ 8. I have firmly held views concerning my role in my family.
- ___ 9. I have engaged in several discussions concerning behaviors involved in dating relationships.
- ___ 10. I have considered different political views thoughtfully.
- ___ 11. I have never questioned my views concerning what kind of friend is best for me.
- ___ 12. My values are likely to change in the future.
- ___ 13. When I talk to people about religion, I make sure to voice my opinion.
- ___ 14. I am not sure about what type of dating relationship is best for me.
- ___ 15. I have not felt the need to reflect upon the importance I place on my family.
- ___ 16. Regarding religion, my beliefs are likely to change in the near future.
- ___ 17. I have definite views regarding the ways in men and women should behave.
- ___ 18. I have tried to learn about different occupational fields to find the best one for me.
- ___ 19. I have undergone several experiences that made me change my views on men's and women's roles.
- ___ 20. I have consistently re-examined many different values in order to find the ones which are best for me.
- ___ 21. I think what I look for in a friend could change in the future.
- ___ 22. I have questioned what kind of date is right for me.
- ___ 23. I am unlikely to alter my vocational goals.
- ___ 24. I have evaluated many ways in which I fit into my family structure.
- ___ 25. My ideas about men's and women's roles will never change.
- ___ 26. I have never questioned my political beliefs.
- ___ 27. I have had many experiences that led me to review the qualities that I would like my friends to have.
- ___ 28. I have discussed religious matters with a number of people who believe differently than I do.
- ___ 29. I am not sure the values I hold are right for me.
- ___ 30. I have never questioned my occupational aspirations.
- ___ 31. The extent to which I value my family is likely to change in the future.
- ___ 32. My beliefs about dating are firmly held

Erikson Psychosocial Stage Inventory (EPSI)

Circle the number that reflects if the statement is true or not true of you.	hardly ever true	some- times not true	neither not true or true	some- times true	almost always true
1. I am able to take things as they come.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I can't make sense of my life.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I wish I had more self-control.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I get embarrassed when someone begins to tell me personal things.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I can't make up my own mind about things.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I change my opinion of myself a lot.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I am able to be first with new ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I'm never going to get on my own in this world.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I'm ready to get involved with a special person	1	2	3	4	5
10. I've got a clear idea of what I want to be.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I feel mixed up.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I find the world a very confusing place.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I know when to please myself and when to please others.	1	2	3	4	5
14. The important things in life are clear to me.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I don't seem to be able to achieve my ambitions.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I don't seem to have the ability that most others have got.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I've got it together.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I know what kind of person I am.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I worry about losing control of my feelings.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I have few doubts about myself.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I rely on other people to give me ideas.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I don't enjoy working.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I think I must be basically bad.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Other people understand me.	1	2	3	4	5
25. I'm a hard worker.	1	2	3	4	5
26. I feel guilty about many things.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I'm warm and friendly.	1	2	3	4	5
28. I really believe in myself.	1	2	3	4	5
29. I can't decide what I want to do with my life.	1	2	3	4	5
30. It's important to me to be completely open with my friends.	1	2	3	4	5
31. I find that good things never last long.	1	2	3	4	5

32. I feel I am a useful person to have around.	1	2	3	4	5
	hardly ever true	some- times not true	neither	some- times true	almost always true
33. I keep what I really think and feel to myself.	1	2	3	4	5
34. I'm an energetic person who does lots of things.	1	2	3	4	5
35. I'm trying hard to achieve my goals.	1	2	3	4	5
36. Things and people usually turn out well for me.	1	2	3	4	5
37. I have a strong sense of what it means to be female/male.	1	2	3	4	5
38. I think the world and people in it are basically good.	1	2	3	4	5
39. I am ashamed of myself.	1	2	3	4	5
40. I'm good at my work.	1	2	3	4	5
41. I think it's crazy to get too involved with people.	1	2	3	4	5
42. People are out to get me.	1	2	3	4	5
43. I like myself and am proud of what I stand for.	1	2	3	4	5
44. I don't really know what I'm all about.	1	2	3	4	5
45. I can't stand lazy people.	1	2	3	4	5
46. I can stop myself doing things I shouldn't be doing.	1	2	3	4	5
47. I find myself expecting the worst to happen.	1	2	3	4	5
48. I care deeply for others.	1	2	3	4	5
49. I find I have to keep up a front when I'm with people.	1	2	3	4	5
50. I find myself denying things even though they are true.	1	2	3	4	5
51. I don't really feel involved.	1	2	3	4	5
52. I waste a lot of time messing about.	1	2	3	4	5
53. I'm as good as other people.	1	2	3	4	5
54. I like to make my own choices.	1	2	3	4	5
55. I don't feel confident of my judgment.	1	2	3	4	5
56. I'm basically a loner.	1	2	3	4	5
57. I cope very well.	1	2	3	4	5
58. I'm not much good at things that need brains or skill.	1	2	3	4	5
59. I have a close physical and emotional relationship with another person.	1	2	3	4	5
60. I stick with things until they are finished.	1	2	3	4	5
61. I'm a follower rather than a leader.	1	2	3	4	5

62. I can stand on my own two feet.	1	2	3	4	5
63. I find it hard to make up my mind.	1	2	3	4	5
64. I trust people.	1	2	3	4	5
65. I like my freedom and don't want to be tied down.	1	2	3	4	5
66. I like new adventures.	1	2	3	4	5
67. I prefer not to show too much of myself to others.	1	2	3	4	5
68. I don't get things finished.	1	2	3	4	5
	hardly	some-	neither		
	ever	times	not	some-	almost
	true	not	true or	times	always
		true	true	true	true
69. I like finding out about new things or places.	1	2	3	4	5
70. I don't get much done.	1	2	3	4	5
71. Being alone with another person makes me feel uncomfortable.	1	2	3	4	5
72. I find it easy to make close friends.	1	2	3	4	5

Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS)

Please read each statement and circle a number 0, 1, 2 or 3 which indicates how much the statement applied to you *over the past week*. There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any statement.

The rating scale is as follows:

- 0 Did not apply to me at all
- 1 Applied to me to some degree, or some of the time
- 2 Applied to me to a considerable degree, or a good part of time
- 3 Applied to me very much, or most of the time

1	I found it hard to wind down	0	1	2	3
2	I was aware of dryness of my mouth	0	1	2	3
3	I couldn't seem to experience any positive feeling at all	0	1	2	3
4	I experienced breathing difficulty (eg, excessively rapid breathing, breathlessness in the absence of physical exertion)	0	1	2	3
5	I found it difficult to work up the initiative to do things	0	1	2	3
6	I tended to over-react to situations	0	1	2	3
7	I experienced trembling (eg, in the hands)	0	1	2	3
8	I felt that I was using a lot of nervous energy	0	1	2	3
9	I was worried about situations in which I might panic and make a fool of myself	0	1	2	3
10	I felt that I had nothing to look forward to	0	1	2	3
11	I found myself getting agitated	0	1	2	3
12	I found it difficult to relax	0	1	2	3
13	I felt down-hearted and blue	0	1	2	3
14	I was intolerant of anything that kept me from getting on with what I was doing	0	1	2	3
15	I felt I was close to panic	0	1	2	3
16	I was unable to become enthusiastic about anything	0	1	2	3
17	I felt I wasn't worth much as a person	0	1	2	3
18	I felt that I was rather touchy	0	1	2	3
19	I was aware of the action of my heart in the absence of physical exertion (eg, sense of heart rate increase, heart missing a beat)	0	1	2	3
20	I felt scared without any good reason	0	1	2	3

21 I felt that life was meaningless

0 1 2 3

Demographics

1. How old are you? _____
2. What is your year in college?
 - a. Freshman
 - b. Sophomore
 - c. Junior
 - d. Senior
 - e. 1st year graduate student
 - f. 2nd year graduate student
 - g. 3rd year (or later) graduate student
3. What is your sex?
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Transgender/Other (Please describe if you wish to do so: _____)
4. Do you identify as:
 - A. Heterosexual/straight
 - B. Homosexual/gay/lesbian
 - C. Bisexual
 - D. Other _____
5. How do you describe your racial/ethnic background? (Please check all that apply):
 Black or African American
 White or Caucasian
 Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander
 Native American/American Indian
 Latino or Hispanic
 Other. Please describe: _____
6. What is your religious affiliation?
 Protestant
 Jewish
 Hindu
 Agnostic
 Catholic
 Muslim
 Buddhist
 non-denominational Christian
 Atheist
 Other. Please describe: _____
7. How often do you engage in religious practices?
 Daily
 Weekly
 Monthly
 On holidays

8. Do you identify as
Republican, Democrat, Independent, Other _____

9. Father's/Mother's Education (check all that apply):

- Some high school
- High School Diploma
- GED
- Some College
- Certification Program
- Associates Degree
- Bachelors Degree
- Masters Degree
- Doctoral Degree
- Professional Degree
- Other _____

10. Are your parents (check all that apply):

1. Married
2. Never Married
3. Divorced
4. Separated
5. Re-married
6. Widowed
7. Other _____

11. Were you born in the United States?

- Yes
 No

If not, where were you born? When did you move to the United States? _____