

2 Growth is not just for the young: growth narratives, eudaimonic resilience, and the aging self

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Abstract

In this chapter we present the case that growth is a central concern in older adults' self-identity, facilitating dispositional well-being and resilience in older adulthood. Contrary to the view that "growth is for the young and loss is for the old," research on personal goals and memories demonstrates that older adults are at least as concerned with gain and growth as they are with loss. As for personal memories, we turn to quantitative research on narrative self-identity. Growth-oriented narratives are common in older adulthood. They predict well-being, differentiate hedonic from eudaimonic well-being, and differentiate two forms of eudaimonic well-being. Finally, we present a framework for studying resilience: hedonic resilience involves affect regulation in the wake of loss or potential trauma, whereas eudaimonic resilience includes affect regulation but additionally considers meaning regulation.

Introduction

Psychological resilience in old age, like in any period of adulthood, is intimately tied to self-identity. Some forms of self-identity are more likely than others to facilitate resilience across the lifespan (Greve and Staudinger, 2006). For example, growth-oriented identities are more likely than others to precede increases in meaning-making and adaptation (e.g., Adler, 2009; Bauer and McAdams, in press; King and Smith, 2004; Pals, 2006b). In this chapter we argue that a growth orientation in one's self-identity serves as a central feature of the aging self and in doing so facilitates resilience. We make three claims about resilience and the aging self. First, *growth is a normative, often central concern in older adults' personal goals*. Contrary to the common view that "growth is for the young and decline is for the old," we provide evidence from goals research to show that the concept of growth serves as a prominent source of meaning in the lives of older adults, even amid escalating concerns about loss. Second, *growth is a prominent feature of the aging, narrative*

self. Older adults focus on growth not only in their personal goals but also in their autobiographical memories. By interpreting themselves as having grown in their narratives of the personal past, adults of all ages construct a personally meaningful self-identity. Quantitative measures of growth narratives have established ties to meaning, happiness, and adjustment – a connection that may be especially strong for older adults. Third, *hedonic resilience can be distinguished from eudaimonic resilience, which has implications for resilient aging*. We first provide a perspective on eudaimonic well-being that includes hedonic well-being (affect) as well as concerns for meaning and growth. We then propose that hedonic resilience involves the regulation of affect, whereas eudaimonic resilience combines affect regulation and meaning regulation. Older adults' heightened capacity for meaning-making, and possibly growth-oriented meaning-making, may well facilitate eudaimonic resilience, as suggested by quantitative, narrative research. A conceptual overview of the chapter appears in Figure 2.1.

Theoretical/conceptual bases

We first establish that older adults are very much concerned with the idea of growth. We then describe how people use the idea of growth as a theme in their life narratives – something older adults are especially good at doing. Finally, we examine research on eudaimonia and its relation to growth narratives. This section is an attempt to lay an empirically based foundation for the study of eudaimonic resilience.

Who says growth is just for the young? Not the data

Personal losses naturally accumulate, at an accelerated pace, with age. Physical abilities, friends and family, peak income, some psychological abilities, and more tend to fade away in one way or another in older adulthood. Adults of all ages have been shown to believe that such a portrait accurately depicts the aging process (Heckhausen, Dixon, and Baltes, 1989). In response to all this loss, older adults shift their personal priorities and goals to accommodate and deal with these losses (Ebner, Freund, and Baltes, 2006; Freund and Riediger, 2006; Greve and Staudinger, 2006; Heckhausen, 1997; Ogilvie, Rose, and Heppen, 2001). This shift in priorities amounts to an increasing number of goals oriented toward maintenance and prevention with age as well as a decreasing number of gain-oriented goals, all of which is consonant with the Selection–Optimization–Compensation (SOC) model of lifespan development (Freund and Baltes, 1998). These findings have been

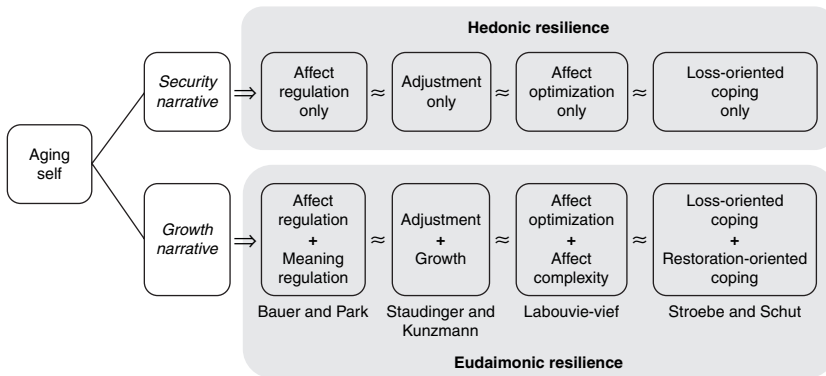


Figure 2.1. Conceptualizations of the aging, narrative self in relation to hedonic and eudaimonic resilience. When the aging self is narrated in terms of security, that self is focused on maintenance, recovery to baseline, or the acquisition of mere pleasure, which are characteristics of hedonic resilience. When the aging self is narrated in terms of growth, that self is focused on concerns of not only maintenance and affect regulation but also personal meaning-making and prosocial development – a combination that is characteristic of eudaimonic resilience. Growth narratives interpret the individual’s life as involving progressive, prosocial development both the past (autobiographical memories) and the future (personal goals). The aging self may be especially prone toward growth narratives – despite the mounting losses that come with age – as the older adult increasingly recognizes the finitude of time and increasingly places meaning on psychosocial life instead of extrinsically meaningful concerns. Not only do older adults’ goals seem as least as likely to focus on gains as on losses, but older adults also seem especially capable of interpreting themselves as having grown in the past.

replicated with different methods, and we take no issue with this research to this point. However, we do take issue with a message that is typically extracted from the data – that older adults focus primarily on loss, maintenance, and prevention but not on growth. We view this as a misrepresentation of the data’s fuller story.

The gain orientation of older adults

The reporting of this research, particularly in discussion sections, overwhelmingly emphasizes only one of two important findings on aging and gain-versus-loss orientations in personal goals. The finding that gets more attention involves two shifts in adulthood: older adults focus less

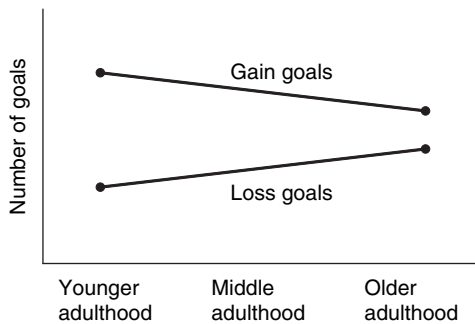


Figure 2.2. Growth – or at least gain – is not just for the young. This figure approximates the findings across several studies reported in Ebner *et al.*, (2006), Heckhausen (1997), and Ogilvie *et al.* (2001). Over the course of adulthood, gain orientation decreases and loss orientation increases, but gain continues to be an important concern in older adulthood – at least as much of a concern as loss. In some studies older adults emphasize significantly more gain goals than loss goals, whereas in other studies older adults report gain and loss goals equally. Thus older adults are at least as concerned with making gains as with preventing losses.

on gain-oriented goals than younger adults do, and older adults focus more on loss-oriented goals than younger adults do. The published interpretations of these findings often mistake these shifts to mean that older adults do not focus on growth. The problem with this interpretation – in addition to the fact that “gain” is not necessarily the same as “growth” (see below) – is that this interpretation does not consider the other important finding that comes from the same data: despite these two shifts, older adults still have as many gains goals as loss goals. In other words, older adults’ focus on gain goals may have decreased since young adulthood, and their focus on loss goals may have increased since young adulthood, but they started off in young adulthood having a great deal more gain goals than loss goals. Even after “decreasing” in their gain orientation and “increasing” in their loss orientation, older adults are still placing at least as much emphasis on gain as on loss (see Figure 2.2). (We use quotation marks around “decreasing” and “increasing” because all these findings come from cross-sectional studies, so interpretations of individual development are made tentatively and only after careful consideration of generation effects, as these studies point out.)

Perhaps the clearest depiction of this finding appears in Heckhausen’s (1997) study of 510 younger, middle, and older adults’ goals, where older adults report almost twice as many gain-oriented than loss-oriented goals.

The article reports neither exact means of gain and loss goals at each period nor whether the gain-versus-loss means at any one age period were significant. However, a graph on p. 180 portrays the following mean levels of gain and loss goals reported for a total of five goals measured per person. Older adults had a nearly 2:1 gain-loss ratio for their goals (means of approximately 3.0 gain goals to approximately 1.6 loss goals, judging from the graph), whereas younger adults had upwards of a 4:1 ratio found in young adulthood (approximately 3.9 gain goals to 1.1 loss goals). Thus, even though this ratio was significantly different – suggesting a “decline” in gain goals and an “increase” in loss goals (quotes to note the study was cross-sectional, not longitudinal) – the clear majority of older adults’ goals in this study still dealt with concerns for gains rather than losses.

Similarly, in two more studies, Ogilvie *et al.* (2001) measured four kinds of goals – acquire (gain), keep (maintain), cure (recovery), and prevent goals – of adolescents, midlife adults, and older adults. Acquire goals comprised older adults’ highest percentage of goals (51 percent and 46 percent in the two studies). These percentages of acquire goals were statistically the same for midlife adults but were significantly lower than for adolescents (71 percent in both studies). Keep goals were more common for the older group than the other two groups (20 percent and 29 percent for older adults; 9 percent and 8 percent for midlife adults; 1 percent and 4 percent for adolescents). However, cure goals were more common for midlife adults, and then in only one of the studies (28 percent and 19 percent for midlife adults; 17 percent and 14 percent for older adults; 19 percent and 19 percent for adolescents), suggesting perhaps that in midlife, problems are still thought to be correctible whereas in older adulthood the focus is less on corrective measures and more on maintaining what strengths one has.

In a third set of studies, Ebner *et al.* (2006) found similar results. In the first study, older adults placed as much importance on gain goals as on maintenance and loss goals. Means for gain, maintenance, and loss goals for older adults were not reported, so in the words of the authors (p. 668), “older adults rated their goals to similar degrees as being oriented toward growth, maintenance, and loss prevention.” In the second study, “younger and older adults did not differ regarding their orientation toward growth” (p. 671). With this finding, we note that we do not wish to overemphasize this reversal in trends from previous findings – only to note that older adults do in fact place importance on growth in their lives.

These three sets of studies (Ebner *et al.*, 2006; Heckhausen, 1997; Ogilvie *et al.*, 2001) are similar in two ways. Older adults had generally

fewer (or the same number of) gain goals and generally more loss goals than did younger adults. However, this does not mean that older adults had fewer gain goals than loss goals *per se*; indeed they tended to have at least as many gain goals as they did loss goals. The continued (albeit diminished) focus on gain goals is important as a starting point for studying the self-identity and subjective experience of older adults. Despite the mounting losses and depleting resources that come with age, older adults seem to place at least as much personal importance on gain as they do on loss. Thus the idea that “growth is for the young, loss is for the old” ignores important empirical findings and oversimplifies the mindsets of older adults’ personal concerns.

Toward a fuller model of the aging self: perspectives on growth

The presentation so far just scratches the surface of the role of growth in older adults’ capacity for resilience.

Growth versus gain

The studies on gain goals that are presented earlier focus exclusively on people’s subjective focus on gains versus losses, or else on gains versus maintenance and prevention/recovery. However, published reports on gain goals frequently use the word *growth* to interpret and summarize the findings. We wish to note that, whereas growth is a form of gain, growth has specific meanings that involve not merely “moving in a positive direction” or “boosting affect.” Growth can refer to a progressive, prosocial form of gain. Whereas a gain goal might involve accumulating more wealth or achieving higher status, a growth goal might involve deepening one’s relationships or improving personal skills that are personally meaningful (Bauer and McAdams, 2004a; Kasser and Ryan, 1993).

Growth as a value

Gain goals may concern any desired good, hedonic or eudaimonic. A common view of gains and losses in older adulthood is couched in mechanistic or economic terms: older adults’ “resources” are depleted and require more “investment” (e.g., Freund and Riediger, 2006). Without dismissing an economic metaphor outright, we counter that implications of rational self-interest and balance-sheet analysis are not apt metaphors for how people plan and evaluate their lives. To start, not all personal resources are valued personally on the same scale (see Sheldon and Elliot, 1998). What matters is the way in which individuals *identify* with those resources (e.g., the relatively intrinsic versus extrinsic or hedonic versus eudaimonic value placed on a goal; Bauer, McAdams, and Pals,

2008). With this in mind we call for a fuller, less mechanistic portrait of the aging self – one that includes the processes by which older adults create meaning in life. In this chapter we focus on the process of associating the concept of growth with their lives in the past, present, and future. Still, it is important to note that, even when just looking at the numbers of gain versus loss goals, older adults seem to be at least as concerned with gains as they are with losses.

Growth as an orientation of self-identity

Brief descriptions of goals may reflect self-identity by revealing personal values, but this is a step shy of knowing how the person values and integrates life events into a coherent and meaningful identity (McAdams and Pals, 2006). Indeed older adults may be especially prone toward getting meaning in life from narrative descriptions of their personal memories: not only is life review important at this time of life (Staudinger, 2001), but older adults also seem to have a heightened capacity to make meaning out of their personal experiences (Pasupathi, 2001).

Growth versus security in the narrative identity of older adults

Personal memories (in addition to goals) play an important role in the construction of a growth-oriented self-identity in older adulthood. Life review – largely a narrative endeavor in creating meaning in autobiographical memories – is itself a central concern for older adults (Erikson, 1968; Staudinger, 2001). Indeed, most of the research on narrative meaning-making in adulthood focuses not on goals but on memories (Bluck and Habermas, 2001; McAdams, 2008; McLean, Pasupathi, and Pals, 2007; Pasupathi, 2001; Singer, 2004; Staudinger, 2001). Furthermore, as adults experience major life changes, such as the loss of loved ones and personal resources, the sense of personal continuity is threatened. Resilience is facilitated by the capacity to make sense of the loss by constructing a sense of continuity, connection, and purpose in one's personal narratives and life story (Bauer and Bonanno, 2001a; McAdams, 1993; Pasupathi, Weeks, and Rice, 2006).

Themes of growth and personal meaning-making in life narratives constitute a central feature of meaning-making in older adults' lives (e.g., Ardelt, 2008; Bauer, McAdams, and Sakaeda, 2005b; Carstensen, Isaacowitz, and Charles, 1999; Gluck *et al.*, 2005). In this section we describe growth narratives, which are contrasted with narratives that focus on security, maintenance, and the merely acquisition of pleasure. We claim that older adults (like younger adults) commonly use the concept of growth to endow their self-identity with meaning.

Growth narratives

A growth narrative is a personal story that frequently emphasizes some form of progressive development (Bauer *et al.*, 2008). A growth narrative emphasizes developing, learning, exploring, expanding, deepening, or strengthening in a prosocial domain of one's life. A growth narrative can be contrasted with a security narrative. A security narrative emphasizes safety, preserving, conserving, protecting, maintaining, or defending the self. The following two excerpts come from narratives about a high point in life (Bauer *et al.*, 2005b):

- "I was by the lake at night ... I was able to formulate all my values and beliefs into one comprehensive system ... At that moment I understood and more importantly felt my relationship with the rest of the living world."
- "My daughter's bat mitzvah ... our whole family was very proud of her ... the months of preparing for the event were very strenuous both emotionally and financially. It is certainly a big relief that it is over."

The first excerpt uses growth themes. It involves an improved conceptual understanding of one's life as well as an improved felt experience of it, both as an individual and in relation to others. The second excerpt does not portray progress or improvement; indeed it emphasizes escape and mere recovery to baseline. These excerpts illustrate the difference between a growth orientation and a safety or security orientation in interpreting life events (Maslow, 1968).

Growth may be found in the structure (i.e., integrative complexity) or content (e.g., narrative themes) of a narrative. The present chapter focuses primarily on themes of growth. Life stories, like stories generally, have themes that give the story a sense of coherence and a specific value orientation (McAdams, 2008). The two most common narrative themes deal with power or achievement on one hand and love or intimacy on the other – or more broadly, agency and communion. Here we argue that life stories with themes of growth hold particular promise for facilitating resilience. Like themes of agency and communion, growth themes are not found in every narrative.

Also like other themes, growth themes can serve as a source of continuity among the myriad autobiographical memories that constitute a life story (Bauer *et al.*, 2008; Bluck, 2003). In other words, growth themes in personal narratives often involve growth that has happened already but that continues to serve as an important source of meaning in the present. The more a person's life story uses the concept of growth to give meaning to various life episodes (e.g., high points in life, low points,

turning points), the more growth-oriented that person's self-identity is. A life story that consistently emphasizes growth has been called a growth story (Bauer *et al.*, 2008).

Two kinds of growth themes

Two general kinds of growth themes have been studied routinely: experiential (or social-emotional) and cognitive (or social-cognitive) growth themes. Experiential growth themes involve intrinsically motivated, humanistic concerns, such as the importance of doing personally meaningful activities, cultivating personally meaningful relationships, and contributing to the development of society and future generations (Deci and Ryan, 2000; Kasser and Ryan, 1993). Experiential growth themes emphasize a deepening or strengthening in the felt experience of one's psychosocial life, but *not* necessarily with an emphasis on gaining a deeper *conceptual* understanding of it. In contrast, cognitive growth themes emphasize the importance of differentiating and integrating new conceptual perspectives on the self and others. Cognitive growth themes focus on the personal value of differentiating and integrating perspectives on the self and others. Examples of cognitive growth themes in personal memories include accommodation in meaningful life events (King *et al.*, 2000; King and Noelle, 2005), causal connections between life events and one's broader concept of self (Pals, 2006a), and various forms of gaining insights, learning lessons, exploring new perspectives, integrative memories, and wisdom (Bauer and McAdams, 2004b; Bauer *et al.*, 2005b; Blagov and Singer, 2004; Bluck and Gluck, 2004; McLean *et al.*, 2007; Pals, 2006a). Narratives of personal goals, particularly major life goals, also have themes of cognitive growth, measured as goal complexity (McAdams, Ruetzel, and Foley, 1986), elaboration of possible selves (King and Smith, 2004), and exploratory goals (Bauer and McAdams, 2004a). Any one narrative may have themes of both experiential and cognitive growth, and indeed the two correlate moderately (Bauer *et al.*, 2008). However, experiential growth themes are much more common than cognitive growth themes (in Japan as well as in the USA; Kamide and Daibo, 2008). Furthermore, narrative themes of experiential and cognitive growth differentiate happiness and psychosocial maturity, as discussed later.

Examples of cognitive and experiential growth narratives

It is easy to oversimplify what growth narratives are. A growth narrative is not simply a rosy view of life, not merely a narrative emphasizing positive affect. A growth narrative emphasizes change – and progressive change at

that. In older adults, the concept of growth may well involve concerns for loss, but the thrust of the narrative is on growth. For example, a narrative about a peak experience, from a study of life stories (Bauer *et al.*, 2005b):

I was about 55–56 years old. My granddaughter Mandy (note: name changed) was at my house. She was approx. 3 yr. old. We were lying on my bed and she had asked me to “nice” her – translation: gently scratching her back. I suddenly felt this incredible love for her and almost simultaneously I felt a surge of deep pain and sadness and I became conscious, I feel, for the first time, that the price of loving so completely, so unconditionally is that the other side is that I would feel excruciating pain if she were to die or be separated from me forever. This event is significant because I felt so alive – so capable of being loving without consciousness about acceptance/ nonacceptance and other self-centered thoughts. The awareness of the other side of connection is loss – and I know this – have felt this since, and the knowing has greatly enhanced my life – much more freely able to love and to understand why I have been so fearful of this kind of loving in the past.

This narrative was coded as expressing both cognitive and experiential growth. Cognitively, the narrative revolves around an insight. The narrative explicitly states a newer, more adaptive, psychosocially more mature awareness of herself and of love. Experientially, the narrative explicitly describes a deepened sense of being alive, loving generally, and loving her granddaughter in particular. The narrative describes a peak experience that happened approximately 10 years ago (in midlife), but the growth-oriented meaning of the memory continues to provide meaning in old age. Interestingly, this narrative integrates growth and loss, such that the newfound awareness of loss allowed for a more mature perspective. We note that this new awareness (of loss) is portrayed in the narrative as a form of growth.

As another example, a narrative of a turning point in life, from the same study:

It is my 40th birthday, and I am with some friends playing bridge. I look outside and it is too beautiful a day for one to be inside playing cards. I leave early and get out our old bicycle and go for a ride. This is the beginning of my cycling, a hobby which takes me all over the country. I make a conscious decision to begin to do things I want to do with my life. I don't want to play the role of lady any more. I don't want to dress in good clothes and go to a lot of charity organization meetings. I wanted to break free of doing things with my life that I felt I should be doing and do things with my life that I wanted to do. This even marked the beginning of the end of my pretending I was something or someone I really wasn't comfortable being.

This narrative also revolves around a life insight. It conveys cognitive growth through the “conscious decision” to take a path of experiential

growth, which takes the form of leading a more intrinsically motivated life rather than a life that is dictated by social convention. The narrative, also about a memory in midlife, continues more than 20 years later to be a self-defining moment (Blagov and Singer, 2004).

A growth-oriented, aging self? On the prevalence of growth in older adults' narratives

We do not claim that older adults' life stories are more growth-oriented than younger adults' life stories. Some empirical studies support this claim, while others do not. However, research has demonstrated that the growth story is alive and well in older adulthood, playing an important role in well-being and resilience. Pasupathi and Mansour (2006) found that aging adults are prone toward focusing on personal meaning-making as a way to organize self-identity. Socioemotional selectivity theory claims that older adults are especially prone toward identifying with goals with emotional and personally meaningful social implications (Carstensen *et al.*, 1999). In the studies that follow (as with all the narrative studies presented in this chapter, unless otherwise noted), narratives were coded quantitatively for expressing greater or lesser degrees of particular kinds of growth.

In a cross-sectional study of adults' life stories, older adults were significantly more likely to construct growth memories (Bauer *et al.*, 2005b) than were younger adults. Participants were instructed to write narratives of high points in life, low points, and turning points – approximately one page for each. An analysis of these data not reported in Bauer *et al.* (2005b) revealed that 61 percent of the older (over age 60) adults' narratives made reference to either cognitive or experiential growth (or both), whereas only 36 percent of the younger adults' narratives did so (those under age 45). Similar emphases on growth were found in participants' narratives of their major life goals – even more noteworthy given that these were “long-term” goals, not the medium-term goals that are typically studied in goal research (Bauer and McAdams, 2004a). In other words, despite the assumed losses that mount with age, these older adults were more likely than younger adults to have growth narratives. While the experiential-growth focus corresponds to socioemotional selectivity theory (Carstensen *et al.*, 1999), the increased emphasis on cognitive growth narratives seems to run counter to that theory, which predicts a decrease in knowledge-focus. However, the cognitive growth narratives here largely emphasize a growth in the knowledge of one's life. The broader issue seems to be an increasing focus on intrinsically motivating or humanistic concerns – rather than

extrinsically motivating or materialistic or status-oriented concerns – with age.

Two more studies revealed that the personal narratives of middle-aged and older adults contained more autobiographical reasoning (i.e., explicit connections tying the event to one's broader understanding of self) than did the narratives of younger adults (Pasupathi and Mansour, 2006).

In a narrative study of personal events that participants thought to deal with wisdom, three forms of wisdom narratives were identified: giving empathy and support, self-determination and control, and knowledge and flexibility (Gluck *et al.*, 2005). Of the three, knowledge and flexibility dealt most squarely with the theme of growth; the others dealt squarely with themes of communion and agency, respectively. Whereas empathy-and-support narratives were more common in adolescence than older adulthood, knowledge-and-flexibility narratives were more common in older adulthood than younger adulthood – again suggesting that older adults do emphasize the role of growth in their lives. In another study of wisdom narratives, older adults were more than three times more likely than college students to emphasize the importance of learning life lessons from the event, though older adults were about one-third less likely than younger adults to do so (Bluck and Gluck, 2004).

A narrative study of reminiscence demonstrated that growth-oriented narrative memories were more common than loss-oriented narrative memories (Wong and Watt, 1991). A purely qualitative narrative study (the studies above involved the quantification of narratives) found that narratives of stroke victims frequently emphasized growth and exploration in the future (Faircloth *et al.*, 2004). Such narratives were ones that emphasized an interpretation of the stroke as a “wake-up call” and plans to gain new experiences that one had always wanted but never pursued.

Overall this sampling of studies shows that older adults, despite onslaught of losses that come with aging, commonly think about their lives – in the past as well as in the future – in terms of growth. This is consonant with the research presented earlier on gain and loss goals and sets the stage for demonstrating how older adults' use of growth narratives in their self-identity relates to well-being.

Eudaimonia, aging, and growth narratives

Eventually we wish to demonstrate that growth narratives may facilitate a particular kind of resilience that involves the reconstruction of meaning in addition to the restoration of affect – what we propose to be “eudaimonic resilience.” But first we must establish that eudaimonia and growth narratives have a connection. In this section we review research

on eudaimonia, particularly in older adulthood. We also aim to demonstrate that older adults with growth narratives tend to report a happier, more meaningful life and are likely candidates for resilience.

Eudaimonia (or as it is more commonly called in psychology, eudaimonic well-being) is often contrasted with hedonic well-being. Hedonic well-being emphasizes maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain. It deals with how good one feels about one's life. Eudaimonia also deals with pleasure and how good one feels about one's life but additionally involves an explicit concern for meaning-making and growth. For example, a measure of hedonic well-being or happiness might simply ask participants to rate on a Likert-type scale how happy they are. A measure eudaimonic well-being might ask questions about happiness but also specifically about particular sources of meaning in life (e.g., personal growth, purpose in life; Ryff and Singer, 1998) or ask short, open-ended questions to assess the psychosocial maturity of the responses. Psychological research has historically studied happiness in its more hedonic forms, notably in terms of positive and negative emotionality and global life satisfaction (Ryan and Deci, 2001). However, the study of eudaimonic well-being has become increasingly valued, as evidenced by recent, special issues in the *Journal of Happiness Studies* (Deci and Ryan, 2008) and the *Journal of Positive Psychology* (Kashdan, Biswas-Diener, and King, 2008). As the research on eudaimonic well-being mounts, so do definitions of it.

Eudaimonia as meaningfulness

Some researchers study eudaimonic well-being as meaningfulness, that is, as a subjective sense of satisfaction with various sources of meaning in one's life. For example, a commonly used measure of eudaimonic well-being, psychological well-being (Ryff and Keyes, 1995), asks participant essentially to rate how much they have six qualities in their lives: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. This measure is framed explicitly in eudaimonic theory and has been shown to be distinct from – while still related to – measures of hedonic well-being (Ryff and Singer, 1998). For example, experiential growth themes correspond more closely to eudaimonic-as-meaningfulness well-being than to hedonic well-being (Bauer *et al.*, 2005b).

Different dimensions of eudaimonic well-being appear to have quite different, even opposite trajectories across adulthood (some of which differ for males and females; Ryff and Singer, 2008): in general, self-acceptance, environmental mastery, and positive relationships appear

to increase by later adulthood, or at least remain constant. In notable contrast, personal growth (i.e., satisfaction with one's personal growth) and purpose in life appear to decline for older adults. However, we find the same kind of pattern here as in the gain-goal research: this research clearly shows that older adults score the personal-growth dimension of well-being *most highly* among the six dimensions. So despite the fact that levels of personal-growth well-being decline from younger to older adulthood, those levels start off so much higher than the levels of the other dimensions that they can continue to retain their strength in older adulthood, relative to other dimensions. In other words, personal growth is a keystone of older adult's well-being.

As suggested by numerous researchers of eudaimonic well-being, a focus on intrinsically motivating activities is essential to eudaimonic well-being (e.g., Bauer *et al.*, 2008; Ryan, Huta, and Deci, 2008; Waterman, Schwartz, and Conti, 2008). One study found that older adults' personal reasons for listening to music differentiated hedonic and eudaimonic well-being (Laukka, 2007). Listening to music for the purpose of emotion regulation correlated more strongly with measures of hedonic well-being (positive and negative affect). In contrast, listening to music for the purpose of enjoyment (an intrinsic motivation; Deci and Ryan, 2000) correlated more strongly with various dimensions of eudaimonic well-being (Ryff's measure) – and correlated with positive but not negative affect.

Eudamonia as happiness plus psychosocial maturity

Other researchers study eudamonia as the combination of hedonic well-being plus psychosocial maturity, where maturity involves heightened levels of integrative complexity in meaning-making (e.g., Bauer *et al.*, 2005b; King and Noelle, 2005; Pals, 2006a). Loevinger's (1976) measure of ego development serves as perhaps the most comprehensive measure of psychosocial maturity, charting levels of complexity and integration by which people think about the self and others. However, ego development is not typically considered to be a facet of well-being, which is typically defined strictly in terms of affect (even in the case of eudamonia as meaningfulness). Indeed, measures of ego development tend not to correlate with measures of hedonic well-being in adulthood (e.g., Bauer and McAdams, 2004a, 2004b; Helson and Roberts, 1994; King and Noelle, 2005; King and Raspin, 2004). In other words, people who think complexly about their psychosocial lives seem about as likely to be happy as unhappy. Furthermore, experiential and cognitive growth themes map differentially onto well-being and psychosocial maturity (Bauer and

McAdams, 2004a, 2004b, 2009; Bauer *et al.*, 2005b; King and Noelle, 2005; King and Raspin, 2004; King *et al.*, 2000; King and Smith, 2004; Pals, 2006b). Experiential growth themes correlate predominantly with well-being but not maturity. In contrast, cognitive growth themes correlate predominantly with maturity but not well-being. Thus, researchers who take the happiness-plus-maturity claim that eudaimonic well-being involves two distinct qualities in life – *how good one feels* about one's life as well as *how integratively one thinks* about one's life.

Research has shown that older adults have at least as high – if not higher – levels of hedonic well-being and desirable emotionality as younger adults do (Mroczek, 2001). As for psychosocial maturity, older adults show heightened capacities to create an integrated sense of meaning in life (Pasupathi, 2001). However, old age may well involve a decrease in the differentiation or complexity of that integration of self-identity from the peak levels in midlife (Labouvie-Vief, 2003). Some of this decrease may come from decreased activity levels, which correlate with lessened complexity of self-identity, as well as from a lesser tendency to focus on negative affect (Labouvie-Vief, 2003). Some research on Loevinger's (1976) ego development also shows a decline of *peak levels* of psychosocial maturity in old age (Pfaffenberger, 2005). However, a normative decline in peak levels of maturity or integrative complexity does not mean that older adults have bottomed out in these categories. Furthermore, some research shows increases. For example, in further analyses of data presented earlier (Bauer and McAdams, 2004a; Bauer *et al.*, 2005b), older adults had higher levels of ego development than younger adults – and the same levels as those of midlife adults.

Older adults' heightened capacity for meaning-making (Pasupathi, 2001) suggests a heightened capacity for integration. We argue that older adults may simply be better at stating their highly integrated meanings in life more simply – such that measures of differentiation simply do not capture the differentiation that at one time was more conscious but with age and experience became more automatic. In other words, measures of integrative complexity do not measure exformation – the information behind the information, that is, the information that is not presently referenced but that the individual did grapple with earlier in the process of arriving at more simple, elegant, and integrative meanings (Norretranders, 1991). Perhaps older adults' lower scores of measures of complexity reflect their heightened capacity, gained over years of experience, to integrate the subtler complexities of life.

Finally, even if psychosocial maturity does on average decline in adulthood, it is important to consider whether older adults were still *personally concerned* with the integrative complexity of meaning-making.

Narrative data suggest they are concerned with it. In further analyses of data reported above (Bauer and McAdams, 2004a; Bauer *et al.*, 2005b), older adults were approximately twice as likely as younger adults to use themes of *cognitive* growth in their personal narratives. In other words, older adults were more likely to emphasize – subjectively, *thematically* – the importance of conceptual integration (which is different to having narratives that are *structurally* more complex).

*Growth narratives, eudaimonic personality development,
and aging*

Eudaimonic well-being can fluctuate across adulthood (Ryff and Singer, 2008). So can hedonic well-being, even if it tends toward a baseline (Diener, Lucas, and Scollon, 2006). Psychosocial maturity can increase as well as decrease across adulthood (Helson and Roberts, 1994; Labouvie-Vief, 2003). An increase in eudaimonia over time – most fully evidenced by simultaneous increases in hedonic well-being and psychosocial maturity – has been called “eudaimonic personality development” or “eudaimonic growth” (Bauer, 2008; Bauer and McAdams, *in press*). Research is showing a tie between growth narratives (as well as other growth orientations) and eudaimonic personality development. In the following studies (unless otherwise noted), quantitative measures of narratives were compared to quantitative measures of resilience, maturity, and happiness.

Drawing from the Mills Longitudinal Study, women at the age of 52 wrote narratives about a difficult life event (Pals, 2006b). Narratives that emphasized coherent positive resolution (which falls under the category of experiential growth) predicted increased ego resiliency from the ages of 21 to 61. Narratives that emphasized exploratory narrative processing (i.e., cognitive growth) not only predicted psychosocial maturity at the age of 62 but also mediated the relation between the trait of coping openness at the age of 21 and maturity at the age of 62. Furthermore, themes of positive self-transformation (a combination of cognitive and experiential growth) predicted high levels of both maturity and happiness.

In a two-year longitudinal study, divorced women (mean age of 54 years, SD = 9 years) provided narratives of their lost (pre-divorce, retrospectively) and found (present) best possible selves (King and Raspin, 2004). Highly elaborated found possible selves (a form of cognitive growth narratives) correlated with psychosocial maturity both concurrently and two years later, but not with increases in maturity over that time. Highly elaborated lost possible selves did predict increases in maturity for participants whose divorce occurred further in the past.

In cross-sectional research on growth memories and growth goals (Bauer and McAdams, 2004a; Bauer *et al.*, 2005b), participants' age correlated with well-being, such that older adults reported higher levels of both happiness and eudaimonia-as-meaningfulness than younger adults did. However, experiential growth memories and growth goals mediated the relation between age and life satisfaction. Similarly, older adults were marginally more likely to score higher on psychosocial maturity, but this age-maturity relation was mediated by cognitive growth goals. In other words, older adults had higher levels of eudaimonia, but this was explained by the fact that older people were more likely to have eudaimonic growth narratives.

In another study reported above, growth-oriented narratives also corresponded to psychological and physical health in older adulthood (Wong and Watt, 1991). The integrative and instrumental styles emphasized linking one's past, present, and anticipated future. However, the integrative style was more growth-oriented, focusing on increased self-understanding and personal meaning-making, whereas the instrumental style focused on more hedonic forms of coping and successful recovery.

Related, non-narrative studies also demonstrate the presence of growth in adulthood and its tie to well-being. In a study of non-narrative growth goals in adulthood, growth goals mediated the relation between age and well-being (Sheldon and Kasser, 2001). In the Terman study, participants rated whether they were living up to their abilities. Those who showed an increase in this self-assessment between the ages of 48 and 85 – that is, people who by the age of 85 had grown in their beliefs of their own self-actualization – also reported higher levels of health well-being compared to people who showed decreases in this self-assessment (Holahan, 2003).

Erikson's (1968) final stage of psychosocial development, ego integrity versus despair, involves a growth orientation in several respects, not the least of which is that ego integrity is facilitated by a sense of generative self-transcendence in midlife. Ego integrity involves the acceptance and integration of one's life as a whole, as it unfolded over time, both good and bad. A story of such an acceptance and integration is likely to involve a movement from at one time not accepting (or even recognizing) certain, undesirable or unknown aspects of oneself to at a later time developing the capacity and wisdom to accept and integrate them. An aging self of such integration and growth holds great promise for resilience.

Some evidence, though with young adults, suggests that growth narratives can predict eudaimonic personality development in the strong sense, that is, increases in both happiness and maturity. The combination of experiential and cognitive growth in narratives has predicted

simultaneous increases in both well-being and maturity three years later (Bauer and McAdams, in press).

In all, these studies suggest that growth narratives facilitate eudaimonic personality development and resilience, notably in older adulthood. Only one of these studies addressed resilience directly, but psychosocial maturity is known to facilitate adjustment during difficult times (Bursik, 1991). Furthermore, eudaimonia is viewed an enduring, adaptive form of well-being, at least compared to hedonic happiness, suggesting that eudaimonia serves a buffer against difficult times. It also seems that the relation between a growth orientation and eudaimonia are especially strong after the age of 60 (Bauer and McAdams, 2004a; Bauer *et al.*, 2005b; King and Rospin, 2004; Pals, 2006b; Sheldon and Kasser, 2001). Given that older adults have been shown to have higher capacities for narrative integration and meaning-making as well as levels of happiness and maturity (Mroczek, 2001; Pasupathi, 2001), it seems that older adults are more likely to experience eudaimonia than younger adults.

Discussion: the study of eudaimonic resilience

We now wish to integrate the previous sections by proposing a framework for studying resilience that is based on eudaimonia. Briefly, hedonic resilience is a process that, following a potential trauma or loss, involves a quick rebound or maintenance of affective balance (as in Bonanno, 2004). Eudaimonic resilience is a process that involves the qualities of hedonic resilience but additionally includes the quick rebound, maintenance, or growth of personal meaning in one's self-identity. In other words, hedonic resilience involves affect regulation, whereas eudaimonic resilience involves both affect and meaning regulation. A growth-oriented self-identity is a likely candidate of individual differences to predict eudaimonic resilience (see Figure 2.1).

First, is there really a difference?

Discussions of resilience generally involve the regulation of both affect and meaning (Greve and Staudinger, 2006): it would be hard to imagine people being resilient if they could make no sense of a loss or potential trauma. So it might appear that hedonic resilience implicitly demands meaning regulation, and thus eudaimonic resilience. However, theories and measures differ in terms of the emphasis placed on the role of affect regulation versus meaning regulation. For example, approach-versus-avoidance theories (see below), which tend to be more hedonic, focus less on *how* people subjectively construct meaning after a difficult event,

focusing more on merely *whether* they do. Other theories elaborate on the structure and/or content of meaning-making after a difficult event.

As for measurement, researchers may assess merely whether a person has returned to affective balance or may assess adaptation by considering specific forms of meaning-making. When hedonic resilience ensues, chances are that a certain degree of meaningfulness returns (i.e., eudaimonic resilience) as well, regardless of whether meaningfulness was assessed. For example, in the wake of a significant loss, the individual person is likely to sense that a significant source of meaning has been lost; this is what makes the loss *feel* like a loss. Thus measures of hedonic resilience may depend on an underlying eudaimonic resilience that is implicit and simply not measured. What matters for the distinction between hedonic resilience and the “meaningfulness” definition of eudaimonic resilience, then, is whether the researcher (or anyone thinking about) the person in question is explicitly considering a return to baseline levels of both affect and meaningfulness (e.g., Neimeyer, 2001).

We view eudaimonic resilience as a framework for thinking about and conducting research on adaptation that attends more to the individual’s self-identity and development, which includes affect regulation – rather than attending to affect alone. The findings on eudaimonia presented earlier suggest that eudaimonic resilience serves as an important resource for adults as they age. If, as stated earlier, older adults are more prone toward eudaimonia than younger adults, then older adults are more likely to exhibit eudaimonic resilience. But eudaimonic resilience is at this point a proposition. Below we outline a framework for studying eudaimonic resilience.

*The dual process of eudaimonic resilience and related models
of adaptation*

Eudaimonic resilience can be framed as a dual-process model of adaptation. On the one hand is affect regulation, and on the other is meaning regulation. Affect regulation involves the capacity to regulate positive and negative emotionality, notably the hedonic concerns of approaching pleasure and avoiding or escaping pain. Meaning regulation involves the capacity to focus on, construct, and reconstruct meaning in one’s life – that is, one’s self-identity. For example, meaning regulation in the wake of a loss might involve a shift or increase in the importance (i.e., meaning) of an interpersonal relationship, thereby keeping one’s sense of meaningfulness afloat (and possibly turning into a new, enduring, or otherwise heightened form of meaning in life – as in posttraumatic growth; Calhoun and Tedeschi, 2001).

Whereas hedonic resilience involves merely a concern for affect regulation, eudaimonic resilience involves concerns for both affect regulation and meaning regulation. Meaning regulation can facilitate affect regulation after a difficult life event (Bursik, 1991), just as affect regulation (e.g., impulse control) can facilitate meaning regulation (e.g., as psychosocial maturity and perspective-taking; Loevinger, 1976). However, as noted earlier, measures of affect and conceptual meaning-making tend not to correlate. Thus eudaimonic resilience incorporates two processes of adaptation. This dual-process model of resilience is related to other dual-process models that focus on affect and meaning-making in self-identity development (Bauer *et al.*, 2008; Labouvie-Vief, 2003; Staudinger and Kunzman, 2005). Each model approaches health from a more eudaimonic than merely hedonic perspective, so the two processes of affect and meaning-making are both essential to healthy adaptation (see Figure 1.1).

Adjustment and growth

Staudinger and Kunzmann's (2005) model of positive adult personality development distinguishes adjustment processes from growth processes. Adjustment processes, which are largely avoidance oriented and hedonic (i.e., they aim to escaping pain) would be necessary for resilience or recovery and are most likely primary to growth processes. Growth processes are largely approach oriented and emphasize social-cognitive meaning-making. As described earlier, growth processes are largely a matter of individual differences in motivation and self-identity, expressed explicitly in people's descriptions of their goals (e.g., Bauer and McAdams, 2004a; Sheldon and Houser-Marko, 2001). "Optimal development" in Staudinger's and Kunzmann's model involves both adjustment and growth. As such, hedonic resilience maps onto Staudinger's and Kunzmann's adjustment, whereas eudaimonic resilience involves both adjustment and growth.

Affect optimization and affect complexity

In another dual-process model, Labouvie-Vief (2003) distinguishes affect optimization from affect complexity. Affect optimization deals with emotional adjustment and the capacity to maintain and enhance levels of hedonic well-being. Affect complexity deals with cognitive-affective growth, including the ability and willingness to understand, differentiate, and integrate emotional experiences – including their psychosocial dynamics, causes, and consequences – into one's self-understanding. Whereas hedonic resilience maps onto Labouvie-Vief's affect optimization, eudaimonic resilience involves both affect optimization and affect complexity.

Loss-oriented and restoration-oriented coping

In a third dual-process model with eudaimonic concerns, Stroebe and Schut (2001) present a model of adaptation via meaning-making. After a significant loss in life, the individual's attention and actions oscillate between loss-oriented coping and restoration-oriented coping. Loss-oriented coping focuses on making sense of the loss, whereas restoration-oriented coping (which might sound avoidance-oriented and hedonic at first) focuses on the reconstruction of a new, personally meaningful understanding of the self after the loss. Whereas hedonic resilience maps onto Stroebe's and Schut's loss-oriented coping, eudaimonic resilience involves both loss-oriented and restoration-oriented coping. As demonstrated in research on goals, older adults appear to have a balanced focus on recovery and growth (e.g., Ebner *et al.*, 2006), suggesting that older adults are likely to be engaging in both forms of coping.

Contrast: dual-process models of hedonic resilience

Other dual-process models of adaptation focus not on affect and meaning but on approach and avoidance motivations. Brandtstadter, Wentura, and Rothermund (1999) outline a model with one process for counteracting losses and another process for preference adjustment. Counteracting losses involves making changes in actions and priorities in life that minimize the losses associated with aging. In contrast, though working in conjunction, preference adjustment involves setting new goals to attain and new understandings of self-identity, but these new understandings are largely measured in terms of positives and negatives, gains and losses. This model is consonant with the SOC model of aging, where growth is defined explicitly as gains, which may merely mean an increase in positive affect or a decrease in negative affect. While these models offer an important portrait of the affective and approach-avoidance orientations of older adulthood, they tend not to address value-based meaning-making in self-identity, adjustment, and resilience.

*Growth narratives and eudaimonic resilience**Resilience versus recovery: the role of individual differences*

Resilience is commonly associated with recovery in that they both involve dealing with difficult life events, but they are not the same thing (Bonanno, 2004). The difference is largely a matter of the degree and the endurance of psychological disruptions: resilience involves milder, relatively shorter periods of disruption than does recovery. Bonanno frames the difference between resilience and recovery in terms of personality,

citing the adaptive benefits of individual differences in characteristics such as hardiness and positive emotionality. In a prospective, longitudinal study, people who showed resilience entered an interpersonal loss with more adaptive characteristics (Bonanno *et al.*, 2002). Also, more resilient individuals interpret the events surrounding a loss in a more adaptive manner. For example, resilient individuals showed an “optimal balance” of mostly positive yet some negative self-evaluations in their personal narratives (Bauer and Bonanno, 2001a). In contrast, those who had exclusively positive self-evaluations adapted as poorly as those who had many negative self-evaluations, suggesting an inability to incorporate the loss – much less learn from it – in their life story. In addition, more resilient individuals showed a capacity to exercise relatively more behavioral than characterological self-blame, to integrate important events surrounding the loss with their broader self-identity, and to express a greater degree of self-efficacy (Bauer and Bonanno, 2001b, 2001c). Thus it seems that resilience (and adjustment more generally) is tied to individual differences in growth-salient interpretations of their lives.

Recovery versus growth: focusing on the past versus the future

Recovery generally involves returning to baseline, reestablishing equilibrium, and “bouncing back” (Bonanno, 2004; Davidson and Roe, 2007). Thus recovery emphasizes an escape or avoidance orientation. Merely ending the pain is enough for the person. What happens in the future, after the cessation of pain, is not of primary concern. In contrast, a growth focus is primarily concerned with what happens in the future, after the pain has ceased and even in the meantime. A growth orientation allows the person to interpret the adversity from a future-oriented perspective. For example, a desire to “get better” is found in both recovery and growth orientations. However, “getting better” is the endpoint for the recovery focus, whereas “getting better” is merely part of the process for the growth/approach focus. Similarly, a focus on prevention emphasizes avoidance, albeit avoidance with foresight. A focus on prevention is largely a focus on avoiding having to escape. Even maintenance involves a focus on maintaining the past more so than on possibilities for the future. A narrative study of adults’ decisions to make major life changes distinguished the crystallization of desire from the crystallization of discontent (Bauer, McAdams, and Sakaeda, 2005a). Almost all decisions involved making a change from an undesirable life circumstance. A crystallization of desire was defined as a decision that was made primarily because one wanted to move toward a desired future. A crystallization of discontent was defined as a decision that was made primarily because one wanted to escape an undesirable past and present (i.e., to recover). Participants

who expressed a crystallization of desire had higher levels of well-being (hedonic and eudaimonic) than did participants who expressed a crystallization of discontent – even when controlling for how well the transition turned out. Overall, a growth-oriented self-identity is more likely than a recovery-oriented self-identity to facilitate eudaimonic resilience.

Questioning the need for considering eudaimonic resilience

Is hedonic resilience not enough?

Eudaimonic resilience may well be a luxury when one is faced with trauma, severe illness, or interpersonal loss. Even if one lacks a recovery of meaningfulness in life, having one's emotions stabilized is certainly desirable. We are certainly not making an argument against hedonic resilience as a human good! Again, hedonic satisfaction is an essential part of eudaimonic well-being and resilience. We are merely stating that there is more to managing life's difficulties than stabilizing one's emotions. This becomes an important measurement issue when considering the specific course of resilience of the individual person.

Posttraumatic growth? Not necessarily

At first glance, our description of eudaimonic resilience might sound like posttraumatic growth (Calhoun and Tedeschi, 2001). However, posttraumatic growth deals with only growth and therefore does not correspond to all facets of eudaimonic resilience, namely the recovery or maintenance of past levels of eudaimonic well-being. Plus, posttraumatic growth corresponds primarily to the facet of eudaimonic resilience that deals with the growth of *meaningfulness* (“I feel my relationships are stronger”) but not necessarily to eudaimonic resilience as growth in psychosocial maturity. However, the growth element of eudaimonic resilience may involve primary characteristics of posttraumatic growth, such as the subjective sense of a strengthened sense of self, the subjective sense of strengthened relationships, and the subjective sense of a strengthened philosophy of life (Calhoun and Tedeschi, 2001). To the degree eudaimonic resilience and posttraumatic growth overlap, recent critiques of posttraumatic growth raise important empirical questions and limitations for eudaimonic resilience. For example, a meta-analysis shows that the effects of posttraumatic growth might not be as strong as they appear in individual reports (Helgeson, Reynolds, and Tomich, 2006), though a close examination of the meta-analytic methods suggests that aggregated variables were couched in predominantly hedonic, not eudaimonic, terms (namely “benefit-finding”). As a possible underlying

determinant of posttraumatic growth, which is primarily a retrospective, self-report variable, self-enhancement and other “positive illusions” may be driving people’s perception of growth (Westphal and Bonanno, 2007). Still, subjective appraisals of one’s life – illusory or not – are important predictors of behavior, well-being, and resilience (Bonanno, 2004; Wirtz *et al.*, 2003). Thus it remains noteworthy that people who adapt well to life’s difficulties have been found to talk spontaneously about their lives in terms of integrated meaning-making and growth, as discussed earlier. In other words, growth is a prominent feature of the self-identity of those who adapt well to setbacks in life.

Is this not too simplistic? Dismissing the Pollyanna problem

The presence of growth – assessed subjectively or objectively – does not simply erase the negative feelings that follow the trauma or loss. The growth merely helps the individual to adapt, perhaps by focusing the individual’s attention on something specific and desired to live for, rather than on the pain from which one wants to escape. A subjective focus on growth does not mean that the individual does not acknowledge the immense difficulties of trauma, loss, or aging. Furthermore, it is likely that eudaimonic resilience is not a matter of oversimplifying one’s life, self-enhancement, or ignoring one’s own anxieties (as in repressive coping; Bonanno, 2004) – even though these tactics do correlate with adaptation and well-being. Indeed, people with a high degree of growth motivation are more likely to acknowledge the negatives in their lives than people with low growth motivation (Park, Bauer, and Arbuckle, 2009). People – perhaps especially older adults – with a growth orientation are precisely the people (1) who directly deal with life’s difficulties maturely and (2) who achieve affective balance sooner (Bauer and Bonanno, 2001a). The narrative that we presented earlier (the one that turned the awareness of loss into a life insight) exemplified this sort of integrative complexity. A personal focus on growth merely means that growth is perceived as a notable object of self-identification. Such a view of self is likely to facilitate eudaimonic resilience.

Conclusions

In this chapter we argue that growth is a central concern in older adults’ self-identity and that growth narratives facilitate (or are at least indicative of) a eudaimonic form of resilience, particularly in older adulthood. First, we reinterpret published data to show that older adults are at least as concerned with gains as with losses in their personal goals. We then provide evidence that older adults are particularly prone toward

constructing growth narratives in their life stories. In other words, despite the mounting losses in their lives, older adults persist in using the concept of growth to make sense of and plan their lives – noting that growth here comes in the form of not only goals but also personal memories in which one perceives personal growth. When it comes to well-being, older adults may have an age-related advantage by virtue of the fact that older adults are more prone than younger adults to define themselves in terms of intrinsically motivated, humanistic concerns – rather than extrinsically motivated, materialistic or status-minded concerns. Furthermore, a greater prevalence of growth narratives in older adults' life stories help explain the relation between age and well-being – an important fact, given that levels of well-being serve as a key source of resilience. Because a growth-oriented aging self sounds intuitively contrary to many people, we note first that an aging, narrative self – like narrative identity at any point in adulthood – is predominantly focused on stories of the past. So a growth-oriented, aging self is one that perceives growth in one's past. Having said that, we also wish to keep in mind that older adults' goals for the future are also weighted at least as much toward gains as losses. Finally, we outline a framework for studying eudaimonic resilience following loss or potential trauma. Whereas hedonic resilience involves merely affect regulation, eudaimonic resilience involves a dual process of affect regulation and meaning regulation. We pay particular attention to the psychological models that researchers use; a purely hedonic orientation necessarily ignores an analysis of the myriad ways that meaning-making and growth might facilitate resilience and longer-term forms of adaptation. We suggest that a growth orientation in the aging self, measured with narratives or otherwise, is a likely facilitator – or at least predictor – of eudaimonic resilience.

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