

Qualitative Exploration of the Undergraduate Experience as a Source of Meaning in Life

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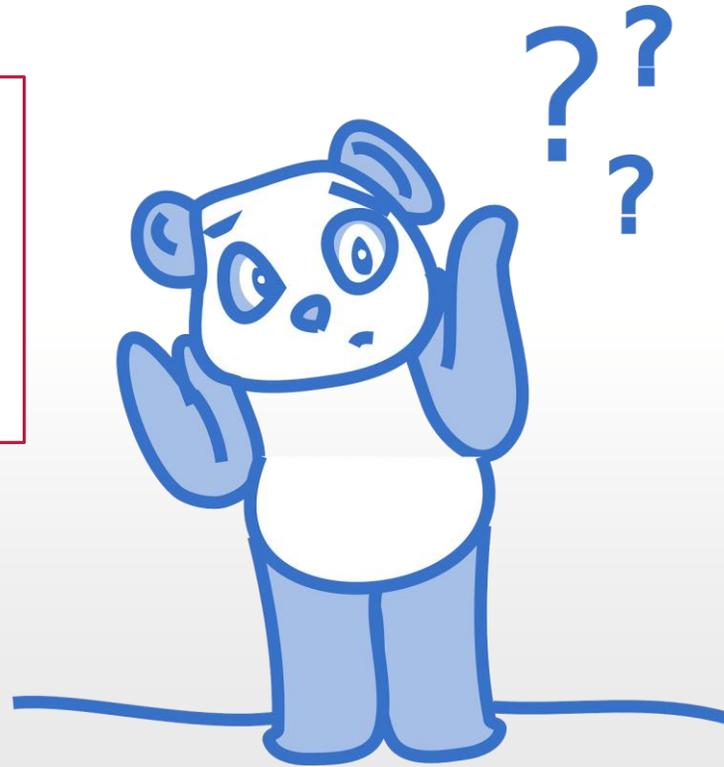


What is Meaning in Life?

- Emotional well-being
- Optimism
- Life satisfaction
- Self-esteem
- Longevity
- Academic achievement
- (Shin & Steger, 2016)



Where is the qualitative research about meaning making among university students, asks the blue panda?



Don't worry! Ben, Holli-Anne, and Michael are doing it! 😊

Image Source: <https://pixabay.com/vectors/panda-confused-questions-shrug-303949/>

How Does Emerging Adulthood Relate?

- Student Developmental Period
- Liminality
- Meaning-Making
- Positive Education

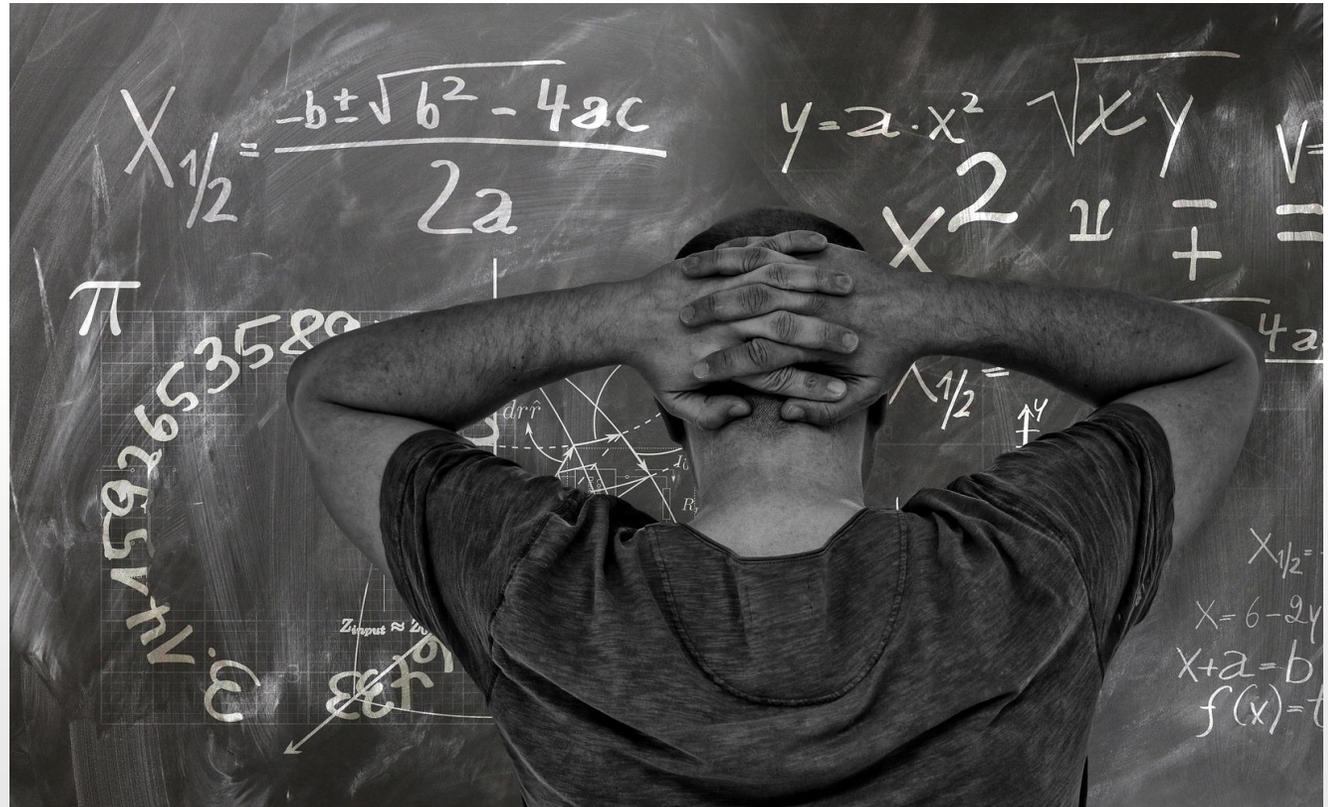


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Method

- We asked Students:

Over the next 6 days, we would like you to **spend at least 5 minutes each day thinking about why pursuing a university education is meaningful to you, how your role and path as a university student adds meaning to your life, and how a university education fits with your sense of who you are and your particular character strengths.** Be both specific and global in your reflections. Please **jot down your reflections** during the week.



Themes

- Career (63)
- Personal Growth (60)
- Education (58)
- Social (36)
- Self Transcendence (32)
- Family (26)
- Direction/Purpose (24)
- Goals (22)
- Sense of Accomplishment (20)
- Privilege (12)

$N = 113$

109 words
average/response

3 themes average/response

What are other professionals saying?

- Trichotomy of Coherence, Purpose, Significance (Martela & Steger, 2016)
- Modified Self-Determination Theory (Martela & Ryan, 2015)
- Six-Factor Model of Psychological Well-Being (Ryff & Keyes, 1995)



What are you going to talk about next, Ben?

- 3 most popular themes
- Putting all our themes to the test
- Why our findings matter
 - 'Positive Education'

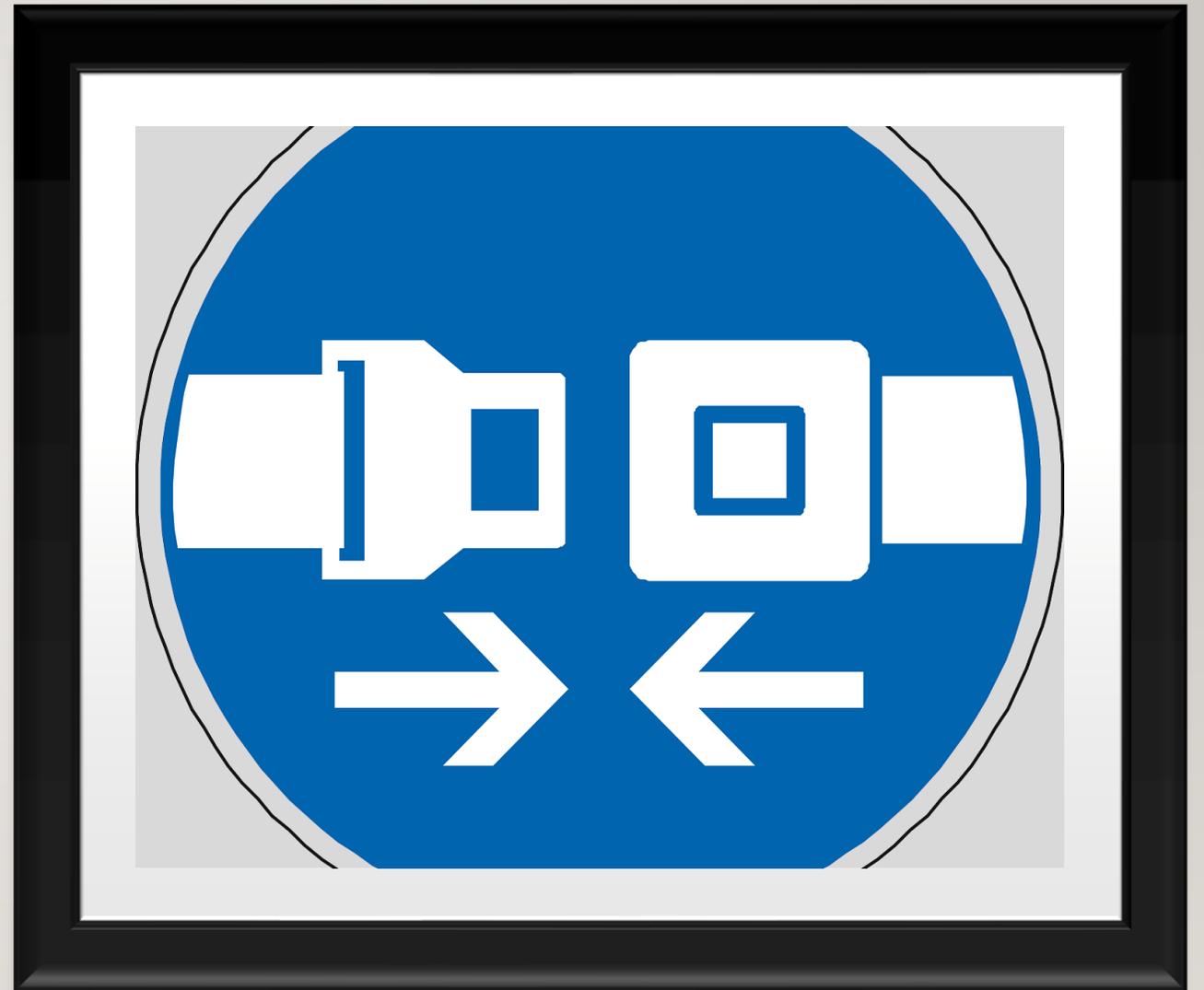


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Career

“The main reason why I want to pursue a university education is that I have a passion for nursing (Career). It brings me such joy when I make patients smile (Self-Transcendence) over such simple tasks, or to interact with others that may be lonely (Social), which will brighten up their day essentially.”

Personal Growth

*“Pursuing a university education is meaningful to me because it allows me to grow as an individual (**Personal Growth**). It provides me with challenges and difficulties to push myself further (**Challenge**). My role and path as a university student adds meaning to my life because it helps me critically think about the world and see things in many different perspectives and in ways I wouldn't necessarily have before.”*

Education

*“I have left every single class I have gone to so far this semester with a feeling that I have actually learned something new or understand something deeper. Gaining knowledge and striving to comprehend the world in a less selfish way are values that I deeply believe will help me in the future (**Education**).”*

Trichotomy of Coherence, Purpose, Significance (Martela & Steger, 2016)

- Coherence
 - (No explicit coherence or sense-making category)
- Purpose
 - Purpose/Direction, Goals, Career
- Significance
 - Self-Transcendence, Sense of Accomplishment



Modified Self-Determination Theory (Martela & Ryan, 2015)

- Relatedness
 - Social
- Competence
 - Personal Growth, Goals, Career
- Autonomy
 - Individual freedom in choosing future, unique aspirations
- Beneficence
 - Self-Transcendence, finding meaning in the act of helping others



Six-factor Model of Psychological Well-being (Ryff & Keyes, 1995)

- **Autonomy**
 - Individualized Goal and Career strivings
- **Environmental Mastery**
 - Education (Physical degree)
- **Personal Growth**
 - Personal Growth
- **Positive Relations with Others**
 - Social
- **Purpose in Life**
 - Purpose/Direction
- **Self-Acceptance**
 - Sense of Accomplishment



So What?

Implications for Education?

- Course and Coursework Structure
- Providing Opportunities for (Noble & McGrath, 2015):
 - Volunteer & Service Learning
 - Student Choice & Voice
- Student Well Being Programs (Noble & McGrath, 2015)
 - Meaning Focused Discussion Groups (Hill, 2013)
 - Meaning or PP Interventions
- Using What Was Said in Our Data
 - Work-Study
 - Friends
 - Clubs
 - Research



Geez Ben are you
Dunn yet?....



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