Narrative, Identity, and Identity Statuses

Reflections on the Kaleidoscopic Self

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"I coulda been a contender, I coulda been somebody"—these famous lines spoken by Marlon Brando in *On the Waterfront* rather sum up a life in just nine words. They give us a sense of the character's identity and allude to a central theme in a life history. In nine words, with no measurement, we know quite a lot about this person.

McAdams's (2001a, 2001b) model of personality development includes, as a third level of analysis and integration, an autobiographical author who creates a story of his or her life, organizing events and inner experiences into some more or less coherent whole that links past, present, and future. The emphasis here is on meanings that the individual constructs, explanations for who the person is, and how he or she is living a particular life (and where he or she might be headed).

Ideas about narrative and about identity have converged in recent decades; both are somewhat fuzzy concepts that aim to encompass the complexity and multiple layers of human experience. Both narrative and identity integrate meaningful aspects of experience into some communicable shape that is both expressed and lived. How can we model the intricacy of dynamic processes that continually flow and change over time? (Consider how many layers of self experience and of time are present in the statement, "I coulda been a contender.")

In this chapter, I begin by setting out the premise that identity is best understood in a narrative framework that preserves context. I then try to summarize Erikson's ideas about identity, which were themselves grounded in narratives, and then show how these ideas have been reflected in identity status research. After broadly reviewing the empirical findings of identity status research, I explore aspects of identity and narrative as I have understood them in a 45-year longitudinal study of women's identity development. Integrating these various streams of work and theory, I wish to develop the idea that in the evolution of identity, over time are elements of both stability and change that may be understood as kaleidoscopic in the sense that elements may be stable (although new elements may be added) but their arrangement changes to create quite different patterns. In order to demonstrate the utility of the kaleidoscope metaphor, I use examples of people who have integrated fairly stable identities that nevertheless change over time, and a very detailed illustration of a woman with a fragmented identity.

Narrative

The so-called "narrative turn" has marked all of the social sciences. Over the last three decades, narrative research and the concepts of narra-

tive and life story have become increasingly prominent in a wide area of human or social sciences—psychology, education, sociology, and history, to name just a few. Besides being used to explore specific topics, narrative studies are flourishing as a means of understanding personal identity, life-course development, culture, and the historical world of the narrator.

In contemporary psychology, Jerome Bruner (1990) has most championed the legitimization of what he calls "narrative modes of knowing" that, in contrast to paradigmatic modes of knowing that privilege hypothesis testing and measurement, instead privilege the particulars of lived experience within their social and cultural context. Meanings are generated by the linkages the participant makes between aspects of the life he or she is, was, or hopes to be living.

Within the growing narrative research tradition, the approach is interpretive and hermeneutic; methods are largely focused on describing and understanding rather than measuring and predicting, concerned with meaning rather than causation and frequency, and recognition of the importance of language and discourse rather than reduction to numerical representation. These approaches are holistic rather than atomistic, concern themselves with particularity rather than universals, are interested in the cultural context rather than trying to be context-free and give overarching significance to subjectivity rather than questing for some kind of objectivity (Giddens, 1991; Polkinghorne, 1988; Smith, Harre, & Van Langenhove, 1995).

The stories people tell about their lives are presumed to have narrative rather than historical truth (Spence, 1984). In lieu of precisely accurate representation of the reality of one's past or present life, these narratives are viewed as constructions assembled from fragments of experience, thoughts, and feelings at a certain moment in time. They are constructions produced under quite singular circumstances (e.g., an interview) that must be taken into account reflexively. Yet despite their indeterminacy, which facts, ideas, or events are selected and formulated into a story may teach us something about the narrators' central concerns in life and the meanings they make of themselves in their social context and the progression of their lives (McAdams, Josselson, & Lieblich, 2006). Identity and the self have been reconceptualized as life narratives (Cohler, 1982; Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001; Lieblich & Josselson, 2013; Polkinghorne 1988; Singer, 2004). We *are* the stories we live by (McAdams, 1993; Randall, 2014).

Given that identity is a synthesizing, largely unconscious process, it cannot be described directly. Instead, we create narratives that construct and reconstruct our sense of self in the world, narratives that preserve continuity, provide some semblance of coherence, and link inner experience with sociocultural realities.

The stories we tell about ourselves and our personal experiences grow in complexity and detail as we move through childhood into the adolescent and young adult years. According to developmental research, it is not until adolescence that people are able and motivated to conceive of their lives as a full-fledged, integrative narrative of the self (Habermas & Bluck, 2000). Life-history narration requires enough reflexivity to separate narrator from protagonist; people need to have the cognitive and emotional capacity to take a view of themselves from outside the plot. Once the capacity to create a life history emerges (just before the psychosocial crisis of identity), people may produce and reproduce their life stories in a number of circumstances that require or motivate them to do so, as well as create an internal life history that describes the march of the self through social reality. The balance of past, present, and future events in one's life story changes as life goes on, and memories of the past are reworked to be consistent with evolving identity (Josselson, 2009).

Identity

Although many scholars over the past century have written about identity, Erik Erikson's (1968) effort to detail identity as a fundamental aspect of personality and as a developmental process has been most heuristic. Erikson described the construction of a coherent and purposeful self-concept, which he called "identity," as a psychosocial process (and frequently turned to case examples and narrative to demonstrate his meanings). Young people in modern societies are faced with the psychological challenge of constructing a self that provides their lives with unity, purpose, and meaning. They are challenged with the dual questions: "Who am I?" and "How do I fit into my society as an adult?" Identity is at the juncture of biological, psychological, and social dimensions of the individual, and although its challenges come to the fore during late adolescence, identity de-

velopment continues throughout adult life as it intersects with, influences, and integrates adult tasks of intimacy, generativity, and integrity (Kroger, 2015).

Identity is, as Erikson underscored, a complex concept, and identity formation and revision are elusive processes to study. Identity is ongoing, he emphasized: It is "always changing and developing . . . never . . . static or unchangeable" (1968, pp. 23–24), yet it is also marked by "two simultaneous observations: the perception of the selfsameness and continuity of one's existence in time and space and the perception of the fact that others recognize one's sameness and continuity" (p. 50). At the same time, it also includes, on a different level, "the *style of one's individuality,* and that this style coincides with the sameness and continuity of one's *meaning for significant others* in the immediate community" (p. 50, emphasis in the original). Erikson thus stresses the psychosocial nature of the identity concept: One can only have a workable identity if it is recognized by others.

Erikson (1968) returned again and again over his career to refining and reformulating his understanding of the identity stage, changing his mind (unlike with any of the other developmental stages) about whether its negative pole ought to be called "role confusion," "role diffusion," or "identity confusion." Although he offered many attempts to "define" identity, one of his clearest statements of the complexity of the process of identity formation is the following:

> In psychological terms, the process of identity formation employs a process of simultaneous reflection and observation, a process . . . by which the individual judges himself in the light of what he perceives to be the way in which others judge him in comparison to themselves and to a typology significant to them; while he judges their way of judging him in the light of how he perceives himself in comparison to them and to types that have become relevant to him. The process is . . . for the most part unconscious except where inner conditions and outer circumstances combine to aggravate a painful, or elated, "identity-consciousness. (pp. 22–23).

Identity, in other words, is fully recursive and only conscious when there is some mismatch between inner experience and outer reality. Barring that, the unconscious functioning of the identity structure leaves us taking our identity for granted, both in terms of who we are in the world and in the conviction that we will be the same tomorrow.

Identity reflects the meanings we are making of our lives, our sense of unity and purpose, and this is expressed in narrative form (see especially Bruner, 1990; Lieblich & Josselson, 2013; McAdams & McLean, 2013; Polkinghorne, 1988, Singer, 2004). As Kierkegaard famously said, we live life forwards and understand it backwards. Our life narrative, which encompasses our identity, both directs us forward and provides us a (more or less) coherent look back. Living involves continually constructing and reconstructing stories, revising the plot as new events are added, without knowing the outcome. Life progresses—the self and identity are not finalized—until our story ends and others fashion a story of who we were.

Viewing identity as a narrative marks its dynamic nature. It is a process, not an entity. Identity, as an ongoing story, evolves to encompass what comes into a life and omits what no longer seems at play in that life. The unity of the individual life resides in a construction of its narrative, a form in which hopes, dreams, despairs, doubts, plans, and emotions are all phrased.

To say that identity is organized narratively, though, doesn't imply that people "have" a life story that can be downloaded like a file on a computer. The synthetic work of identity is largely unconscious, holding all of the parts together, although we can usually create some chain of causation if called upon to do so (as in "How come you did *that*!?") People construct a more elaborate life story for someone else only rarely, and this is always tailored to the moment of the telling. We might tell our life story in segments to a new friend—in segments because few people have the patience to listen to an extended account; we may create one for a job interview—only including what may appear favorable in the eyes of the evaluator. Yet we have an internal life story that we don't tell, a set of memories of experiences that are meaningfully linked to one another, so that we have a sense of having started somewhere, lived through inner and outer events, and arrived at where we are, headed somewhere else. Life stories vary among people as to how much they reflect unity, coherence, and sense of purpose in a life. Some people construct life stories for themselves and for others, with clearly marked paths, as though the present were the inevitable outcome of the past, where all that led up to this

moment in time was prologue. Others have a fragmented life story, a story with threads that never unite and its fragmentation may or may not be recognized by the narrator, who may not expect that his or her life "adds up" or has consistent themes. And many people's stories lie between these extremes, with aspects of the story that have coherent threads over time and others with important subplots that seem to belong to some other story, that are not integrated into a central narrative.

Narrative, like identity, is a concept that refers to some kind of unity of the self, a unity that integrates past, present, and future, inner and outer reality, and the primary investments and experiences of the self. "Identity is a life story—an internalized and evolving narrative of the self" (McAdams, 2001a, p. 644). Identity can only be expressed in narration, and all personal narratives, whether small stories (Bamberg, 2006; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou, 2008) or whole life stories, always denote identity. Narratives, like identity, are embedded in the social and relational context in which both are rooted.

The Identity Statuses

The complexity of the identity concept seemed to elude measurement and instead necessitates some approach that would invite late adolescents to describe their experiences making (or not making) identity commitments during the college years. Jim Marcia (2007) took on the challenge to "measure the unmeasurable" (p. 4) by using a semistructured interview in which college students were asked to narrate their efforts to create an identity. From this, he observed patterns that eventually became the *identity status model* (Marcia, 1966), a model that has provided a conceptual platform for hundreds of studies. Recognizing that one cannot directly assess the internal configuration that Erikson called *identity,* Marcia was in search of indicators of its nature. In Marcia's reading of Erikson, and in his analysis of the interviews he conducted, two independent dimensions seemed to be at the heart of both Erikson's discussions of identity and the phenomenological experience of the participants: exploration (crisis in the earliest formulation) and commitment (see Figure 26.1). That is, some young people (Foreclosures), simply carry forth ideological, relational, and occupational commitments be-

queathed to them by significant others in their lives, thus foreclosing, without consideration of other possibilities, indicating a fairly rigid identity structure. Other people make commitments following a period in which they have considered, even experimented with, other ways of being or believing, and these Marcia called Identity Achievements (even while recognizing that Erikson did not think that identity could ever be finally "achieved"). Still other young people were found to be in periods of flux in identity (Moratoriums), without commitments but trying to forge them, still in the midst of the psychosocial period that Erikson called the "moratorium period," a time society allots for such exploration. Yet others were without commitments and seemed not to be trying to create them (Diffusions), indicating an identity structure without discernible boundaries. These latter individuals were close to what Erikson described as people diffuse (or confused) in regard to their identity formation. Hundreds of studies (in many Western and non-Western countries [Kroger, 2015]) have developed construct validity for the identity statuses by demonstrating that the statuses behaved in theoretically consistent ways on other indicators of personality development (Kroger, 2015; for a review, see Kroger & Marcia, 2011).

Both interview-based and psychometric studies making use of the identity statuses continue to strengthen our understanding that consolidating identity during the late adolescent years (i.e., being classified as Identity Achieved) is adaptive and indicative of general well-being and healthy development (Kroger & Marcia, 2011). Meta-analyses show that those who are Identity Achieved are higher in ego development (Jespersen, Kroger, & Martinussen, 2013), and that this is maintained over time. Both cross-sectional and longitudinal studies show, though, that relatively large proportions of young adults have not formulated an independent identity (i.e., become Identity Achieved) by age 36 (Kroger, Martinussen, & Marcia, 2010).

Individual studies, as well as meta-analyses, have shown that Foreclosure seems to be a more adaptive status than envisioned by Erikson or Marcia, although somewhat less so than Achievement. Foreclosures ground their identity in identification and look to authority figures for direction and security (e.g., Marcia, 1966; Marcia, Waterman, Matteson, Archer, & Orlofsky, 1993). and they base their moral reasoning on conventional thinking and are not open

EXPLORATION

		Yes	No
C			
O		*Pathmakers*	*Guardians*
M	Yes		
M		(Identity Achievement)	(Foreclosure)
I			
T			
M		*Searchers*	*Drifters*
E	No		
N		(Moratorium)	(Diffusion)
T			

FIGURE 26.1. Identity status classification. Names in italics are the renamed statuses (Josselson, 1994) but are conceptually the same as the original names that appear in parentheses.

to new experiences (Marcia et al., 1993; Skoe & Marcia, 1991). Short-term longitudinal studies (most longitudinal studies average about 3 years [Kroger, 2015]) indicate that people can return from other statuses to Foreclosure, a process still hard to theorize from Erikson's model. Josselson (1987) has suggested—and demonstrated—that for at least some late adolescent women, the searching they seemed to be doing during college evaporates if they return to their home and reintegrate themselves into their precollege familial and community environments.

The emerging portraits of those in Moratorium and Diffusion classifications in young adulthood crystallize around the description of these statuses as composed of people in more or less distress. We still don't know whether the distress is caused by the lack of identity resolution or whether distress not related to identity becomes a barrier to making identity commitments (see Marcia, 2006). In Erikson's theory, successful resolution of the identity versus identity confusion stage involves a positive *balance* between commitment and confusion. Identity formation always implies both consolidation of aspects of self-in-society that feel meaningful and purposeful, as well as aspects that are unformed, confused, labile, changeable, or inconstant. Erikson would likely assert that it is the very tension between what one feels committed to and what one feels uncertain about that fuels further growth. Marcia (2007) reminds us that in both his and Erikson's conceptualizations, individuals are admixtures of statuses, not necessarily fitting into just one.

The most general statement I can make about the nearly 600 studies of the identity statuses over 50 years is that they illustrate how complex identity processes are. Some scholars assess the statuses categorically, using interviews, as did Marcia (1966) in the original design; others have devised and utilized paper-and-pencil scales to assess statuses, then either assigned participants to categories or regarded scores on each status dimension in a linear fashion. These differences in assessment approach have made generalizations across studies difficult, if not impossible. And there are many intervening variables; gender perhaps is the most outstanding. Identity status is also sensitive to economic conditions (Fadjukoff, Kokko, & Pulkkinen, 2010). At the most simplistic level, one can say that, overall, Identity Achievement reflects and portends the highest functioning and psychological well-being, while Identity Diffusion, with the vast individual differences within this category, portends the least desirable psychological functioning. Moratorium, being an unstable period of exploration, is one that people generally move out of into one of the other three statuses, but MAMA cycles of Moratorium followed by Achievement and then other periods of exploration have been noted (Stephen, Fraser, & Marcia, 1992). The Foreclosure status seems to comprise "firm" Foreclosures, authoritarian in personality structure, who stay in this status indefinitely and "developmental" Foreclosures, who eventually, often because of external challenges, undergo exploration and change (Kroger, 1995).

Identity and the Life Cycle

Scholars are increasingly recognizing that the investigation of identity requires some phenomenological approach in the form of narrative (see Habermas & Köber, 2015; Hammack, 2015; McAdams & Zapata-Gietl, 2015), in which we may witness identity as a dynamic system that relates internal experience and the social world. To witness identity in its inception and development requires listening to, then interpreting, stories that people tell about their own becoming. Although identity develops within the individual, it is always evolving within a relational world, in which response from others is necessary to securing recognition that one is who one supposes oneself to be. As Jane Kroger (1993) detailed in a very insightful retrospective interview study, people choose a context consistent with their identity structure. She demonstrated how Foreclosures chose or created "insulated vocational, ideological and social contexts for themselves within whatever broader climate of social attitudes existed at the time" (p. 143). Moratoriums, by contrast, found contexts that expanded their range of opportunities or experiences. Over time, the Identity Achievements sought possibilities in their social world and chose contexts that supported their need for autonomy.

Identity, Erikson said, is the integrator that moves one toward wholeness (Hoare, 2001; Kroger, 2007). Identity is the overall pattern that results from arrangement of the elements of the self. Witnessing its changes over time is much like looking into a kaleidoscope: The elements rearrange, sometimes new ones are added, and some previous important elements seem to disappear. In some patterns, most likely the committed, stable statuses of Foreclosure and Achievement, there is predictability and incremental change; in others, Moratoriums and Diffusions, the configurations may change wildly, with patterns that seem unstable.

Identity as a "crisis" period moves from center stage at the close of adolescence and gives way to the challenges of adulthood, the later stages of "intimacy versus isolation," "generativity versus stagnation" and "integrity versus despair" in Erikson's model of development. Identity, however, continues to evolve and influence these later stages, while, in a mutual patterning, intimacy, generativity, and integrity all have implications for identity.

In Erikson's model of adult development, resolutions of the identity stage scaffold the next stage: the search for intimacy, the making of a deep commitment to another person with whom to share one's life. Having a sense of who one is and wants to be in life leads to a need to partner, and the society also presses with this expectation. Successful resolution of the intimacy stage yields the ability to love, to experience mutual devotion and respect toward a partner or selected others. The "I" enlarges to a particular "We."

Following resolution of intimacy issues, around midlife, generativity comes to the fore in Erikson's model. At this stage, adults turn their attention away from the self toward care of the next generation. This may mean care of children or the next generation more broadly construed, such as mentoring younger people, contributing to one's community or taking care of the environment for those yet to be born. The negative pole of this stage is stagnation and self-absorption. The virtue derived from successful resolution of the stage of generativity is that of "care." If these stages of identity, intimacy, and generativity are successfully traversed, the later life stage of integrity versus despair is likely to be resolved in favor of a sense that one's life has had meaning (Marcia, 2014).

Although each of these issues—intimacy, generativity, and integrity—are the focus of progressive life stages, identity continues its integrative function, shaping and being reshaped. Identity influences how one is generative, for example, and how one is generative becomes part of identity. Each later stage involves a reformulation of identity as one responds to the demands and rewards of each developmental era (Erikson, Erikson, & Kivnick, 1989; Marcia, 2010). Although there are sometimes dramatic transformations of identity, more often identity evolves slowly. Over time, identity broadens and deepens as the identity structure subsumes newly developed or newly realized aspects of the person. Other long-term longitudinal studies have similarly shown that well-formulated identity in late adolescence predicts healthy later adulthood (Helson, Soto, & Cate, 2006; Stewart & Ostrove, 1998). Difficulties in resolution of the challenges of the identity stage, however, may presage, or even create, difficulties in managing the ensuing stages of adult development (Marcia & Josselson, 2013).

To understand and conceptualize the *evolution* of identity requires longitudinal studies

that would detail how a person's identity transforms over time. Erikson (1969, 1962) attempted to detail these processes by turning to psychobiography, recognizing that identity could best be understood by analyzing the complexities of a life.

A Longitudinal Study of Women's Identity

My own work began with my enchantment with Erikson and my disappointment that his analyses of identity focused solely on men. In 1970, I initiated what has become a 45-year longitudinal study of 26 randomly chosen women whom I categorized into Marcia's identity statuses when they were college seniors and have interviewed intensively each decade since. I now have interviews at ages 21, 33, 43, 56, and 67 that narrate the development of each woman, with focus on her identity. The research method has relied on narrative analysis, an approach that thematically analyzes each interview, finds the links (or changes) between interviews of the same person at different ages, then makes cross-case comparisons (Josselson, 1996, 2017).

The women I have followed represent a diverse range of college-educated women from disparate backgrounds. Some grew up in large urban areas, others in small cities, towns, and rural areas—and there remains diversity in where they live now. Some were from well-to-do families; others put themselves through college by working while studying. Some had immigrant parents and are embedded in ethnicities that feel to them separate from the American mainstream. There is religious diversity—people who were raised as Catholics, Protestants, or Jews, although their religious affiliation and commitment has declined enough over the years that many now do not make religious identity very important. Many were the first in their families to go to college, getting themselves there either by forming their own dream or fulfilling their parents' hopes for them. In midlife, most of them feel comfortable materially, part of the middle- or upper-middle class, most of them having a higher standard of living than their families of origin.

Graduating from college in the early 1970s, these women were at the forefront of the changes in life possibilities for women and well aware of the opportunities they had to take meaningful roles in the workforce. When I first met them, when they were 21, about to take their college degrees, all envisioned the same outlines for the future. They would marry, have children, and work. But the particularities of the work they would do, the husbands they would marry, and the children they might mother remained obscure, as the future always is. By the time they were in their early 30s, the shape of the identities they would live out was firmer than it had been at the end of college, with some of the details filled in. By their early 40s, they were actively revising what was in place—in their work, their marriages, and themselves. And in their mid-50s, they were reaping the fruits of the dreams they had been striving to realize in their lives.[1] All but one of them has spent most of her life in the work world, either in professional careers or having a series of jobs. All but one married at least once and most, in their mid-50s, were still married to their first husband; just over half had children. In their mid-60s, they were either retired, thinking about retiring, or just figuring out identity commitments that had eluded them for decades. The nature of their relationships with their families continued to evolve and shape their sense of identity.

In terms of the identity status categories, although there is no reliable way to assess identity status in adulthood, the pathways of identity were clear. (In the early 1990s, reporting on this study, I changed the names of the statuses to make them less pejorative. I renamed the Foreclosures Guardians because they were guarding their past selves; Pathmakers replaced Identity Achievers, as identity is never "achieved," and these are people who were making their own paths. I called the Moratoriums Searchers to distinguish the status name from the developmental phase and to indicate that they were involved in searching for identity, while I renamed the Diffusions Drifters. (The names have changed but still denote Marcia's identity status model.) The six women who had been Pathmakers in college continued to make their own paths except for one who lost her way and began to drift. Of the five Guardians, three remained so,

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[1] In a study that included both cross-sectional and longitudinal data about women 12 years older than those I have studied, researchers found the early 50s to be women's "prime of life," in that life satisfaction was highest in this period (Mitchell & Helson, 1990). Increases in positive emotions over the course of midlife, using large samples, have been well documented (see Helson et al., 2006, for review).

while two had later crises that led them to create an identity on their own terms. The Searchers, whom we would expect to make changes, either forged an identity of their own and became Pathmakers (five women), went back to a previous way of being after college ended (two women), or began to drift and continued to do so (two women). Of the six college-age Drifters, all continued to drift except for one, who forged a workable identity in her early 50s.

These generalizations give an overview of the group of people I have been studying but do not engage the intricacies of identity configuration and reconfiguration over time. The very detailed and rich life histories, told and retold, offer us the opportunity to examine closely the kaleidoscopic nature of identity processes. In the remainder of this chapter, I wish to develop the idea that, when assessed through life narratives, identity is kaleidoscopic in that patterns remain stable and also change. What most changes over time are the meanings that are assigned to events and aspects of the self, and these meanings are the conscious and direct manifestation of the underlying identity. The metaphor of the kaleidoscope signifies the dynamic and integrative nature of identity and cautions us against reifying in time those we study.

The Kaleidoscopic Self

In reviewing what I've learned from my 45-year longitudinal study of women's identity, I came to the conclusion that identity and the self are kaleidoscopic. Parts of the self and its experiences are arranged in a pattern, a pattern that shifts over time. One can, perhaps, still find most of the elements of previous configurations, but they have different positions over time, and the overall pattern looks different. A kaleidoscope works on the principle of multiple reflections and, in terms of a life, central elements are indeed reflected in a variety of ways—these are what appear as overriding themes or values in a life. (When one assesses a life via questionnaire, the researcher is choosing an element to ask the participant to report on, but its positioning in the life is obscured.)

New experiences or social roles may lead to a quite different picture as events such as motherhood or chronic illness are included in the overall patterning of elements. The unforeseen happenings in life, sometimes called "accommodative challenge" in the literature (Helson & Roberts,

1994), often require adjustment and rearrangement. The particularities of these become central. Several of the women I have followed over time had, for example, children or a husband with special needs or stable jobs with companies that collapsed. Betty, a Pathmaker, in her late 30s, had to become expert in learning disabilities and mental health to help manage her seriously challenged son. This was a new identity element, previously unimagined, that she had to integrate into her ongoing identity configuration.

At age 21, Betty's identity was centered on becoming a physical therapist and living close to nature. Being "outdoorsy" and using her body were important to her. Her favorite daydream was to someday build her own home. (Betty was classified in college as a Pathmaker.) When I met her at age 33, her husband had become quite wealthy and retired; they were organizing a life in which Betty could work part of the year as a physical therapist (something she very much wanted to do) and travel for adventure the rest of the year, taking along their two young children. By age 43, Betty had recognized the serious problems of her younger child, and finding resources and help for him was a central concern, although she managed to maintain her pattern of working part of the year and traveling the rest.

When I met her at age 56, Betty's life was a kaleidoscopic arrangement of many of the elements that had been present all along. Her son was settled and needed less of her attention, so she was devoting herself to working as a physical therapist and traveling for philanthropic purposes. In addition, she now had the space to take up art projects, her art having taking a minor role when other concerns were more pressing. But these are still only some of the primary elements of the pattern of Betty's identity. Another set of pieces involved where the family would live. A major crisis occurred when Betty was in her mid-30s and her husband found some beautiful land in Maine on which he wanted to build a house. But the land, though Betty loved it, seemed too far from the medical services they needed for their son, so Betty made the decision to turn down this plan. Instead, they built—themselves—a house in the woods nearer to a city, and Betty was very proud of this house as an important expression of herself (and her husband) and a life accomplishment. I could not capture the essence of Betty's life and identity without discussing this

house (which I visited). It is also important to note that the philanthropic work that Betty and her husband do at age 56 involves helping others build houses. From the earliest interview, the elements of Betty's life are foreshadowed: Living close to nature, being of service to others as a physical therapist, and raising a family are the themes that reverberate throughout Betty's life. But at age 21, the aspects of life that are most prominent in Betty's later identity arrangement are yet to be—her disabled son, the wealth her husband created, the focus on travel. These are choices and constraints that she could not have imagined would be in her life story, but she integrates them into the emerging pattern of her life and identity. One can see stability here and also change, the pattern evolving kaleidoscopically in the sense of shifting arrangements.

Meanings of earlier selves or identities also change over time as the present reimagines and determines the personal past (Josselson, 2009). Maria, a Pathmaker, as a college senior was a conscientious and determined young woman whose identity struggles centered on a relationship she had with an African American boy she planned to marry despite the objections of her traditional Italian family. At this age, her identity was dominated by her sense of being principled and value-oriented, ready to stand up to conformity and racism. By age 33, when she had married someone else and had two children, she described her earlier self as misguided, someone who was overlooking her boyfriend's problems. He would not have made a good father, Maria said, and having a family was most important to her at this age. When she was 43, struggling with her daughter, who was dating someone Maria didn't approve of, Maria again narrated her late-adolescent self, now depicting her as being in rebellion against her strict family. And by age 56, the memory of her boyfriend had come to be cherished as a time of passion, which Maria was lacking in her current life. Thus, over time, Maria the narrator reshapes her story of Maria the protagonist, sequentially depicting herself as independent and principled, practical and goal-directed, rebellious, and passionate, and she uses these identity elements to define her relationship with her husband, then her daughter, and ultimately with herself.

In Maria's case, what changes is not the facts of the episode, but her interpretation of it and her perspective on the aspects of self that "lived" the experience. She was, perhaps, at one and the same time, principled and rebellious, idealizing her boyfriend and suspicious of him, excited by the intensity of her sexuality and fearful of it. Over time, she reworks the narrative to highlight aspects of all these partial selves, and the shifting arrangement of parts defines her current identity. Like a kaleidoscope, the same elements are recombined to show a different pattern. There are shifts in interior voices and therefore the experience of self, reflecting the "dynamics of inconsistency and tension" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 34) in the multilayered self. The personal past is reconfigured not so much to be consistent with the present, but to make it into a meaningful (though "unfinalized," in Bakhtin's terms) whole, the parts adequately justaposed. Discarded or disused selves *may* oppose the current self by forming counterpoints, but they may also exist on different dimensions or in different realms of experience from the contemporary self, neither consistent nor orthogonal. Hermans (1995) argues that memory is the wellspring of emergent selves, and this is often clear in longitudinal retellings. Discarded selves may eventually find a new place and will then be narrated to *seem* consistent with the present. But memory is also a container of selves that serve by staying in the wings, either witnessing or commenting on the action.

Deadends or disappointments in relationships or occupational commitments lead to changes that overlay (but don't erase) earlier syntheses of hopes or goals. The kaleidoscopic self can change dramatically, but most often it evolves—much like turning a kaleidoscope, in which the parts subtly rearrange until a new pattern is discernible. In some instances, especially in states of identity confusion or diffusion, the pieces are strewn somewhat haphazardly without unifying principles, leaving the person vulnerable to being blown about by the winds of fortune, with short-term agency perhaps, but little synthesizing direction.

We can, then, learn a great deal about identity when it does not cohere into an organized narrative, when, over time, the parts readjust even though causation is largely foregone. Things happen. Things are how they are because that's how they are. There is no organizing center to the self. This is the identity situation of the Drifters (Diffusions). For them, these issues of patterning of identity elements are most visible because the elements seem to be in a perpetual

process of motion, never quite settling into a stable pattern. Donna's narratives over 45 years, at 10-year intervals, are an instance of refractions and shuffling of elements. Such instances help us better understand the importance of the synthetic and integrative function of identity over time as it (flexibly) anchors the person in the social world.

Donna

I present Donna's repeated life narratives in a good deal of detail so that we can follow the kaleidoscopic elements—the ones that emerge, those that disappear, and the shifts in their balance over time. I am, of course, choosing a great deal to omit, shards that *I* didn't think were particularly important or necessary to how I tell her story, but still, I thereby interfere with her kaleidoscopic arrangement.

Donna was a particularly smart and talented young woman who excelled in a small elite women's college when I first met her in 1970. The first in her family to go to college, she took pride in her academic abilities. She had some interest in art conservation but felt that she could do anything she wanted and hadn't yet really figured out what she most wanted to do. She stood out for me among my participants at the time because of her personal life—she had eloped and married after her freshman year, divorced a year later, then moved in with another man to whom she was engaged as a college senior.

In her college interview, Donna could only describe herself in relation to what others wanted of her and whether she complied with or rebelled against their wishes. She married out of rebellion and then regretted doing so. She was drawn to her (ex-)husband because he had clear ideas about how she should be in their marriage. "I just fitted into his desires," she said, then she left him when she realized she didn't want to be the traditional wife he wanted. I was astonished that, although it was only 2 years later, she seemed to remember little of this marriage. Her memory was vague about most of her life experiences. She valued her fiancé, Dan, because he gave her "space" and also fit in with her family. She often spoke of her decisions in terms of what her mother, to whom she was very close but desperately trying to separate from, had told her. I was struck by her earliest memory: "In the third grade, my teacher asked us to write

a poem and I was convinced I couldn't write a poem, so I went and copied a poem from somewhere and when she confronted me with it, I denied it." I thought that was a theme of what Donna was doing at this age—trying to copy an identity from somewhere else, all the while denying that she was doing so—and not being comfortable with any possibilities that had so far presented themselves. At this point, though, Donna said that she wanted the freedom to try new things, whatever they might be. I had become accustomed, with the Drifters, even back then, to the folly of my wish for them to give a coherent account of themselves.

By age 33, Donna was quite settled but recounted a complex and confused journey. What steadied her was her engagement with a spiritual advisor who led a somewhat cult-like community that she and Dan (to whom she was now married) had joined. They found this community after their marriage almost collapsed following 6 years in their 20s, in which drugs, alcohol, and a philosophy of open marriage were driving them apart. During this time, Donna had been working in photography and for several years was commuting between Miami and Key West, where Dan was working in his family's construction business. She had learned to fly her own plane back and forth. When she decided to move back to live full time with Dan, she felt she had to give up a good job, a great apartment, and a good salary. "Giving up all these things was not because of any marital problems, but as a result of soul searching and realizing that I ought to get on with the more important aspects of growing together as a couple and a family." Their spiritual leader taught a path of meditation, prayer, chastity, and vegetarianism, and these became the central pillars of Donna's identity in her early 30s. I noted as she spoke that Donna did not say that she wanted a family, instead that "I ought to get on with it."

Donna had two young children when I saw her at age 33, and she was trying to be a full-time mother because this is what she felt her babies needed. Still, she tried to grab what time she could to work on her photography and still accepted a few assignments, finding her work in photography quite fulfilling. She hoped to devote more time and attention to her work once her children were older. She stressed the way in which her marriage was an anchor stabilizing her and credited her husband with support-

ing all of her endeavors. Motherhood, she felt, was stretching her, teaching her to respond to others' needs and helping her learn about herself. "It exposes you to the good and bad within yourself." Donna was struggling with the demands of being a mother and having "days of not accomplishing anything tangible."

In her interview at age 33, Donna spoke about herself in the language of spirituality, inner peace, and karma, none of which connected very directly with what she was doing in the world—at least I couldn't make these connections. Karma explained many of her decisions. She had been in quest of feelings, of expressing herself, and although she tried many things, nothing quite sufficed except for short periods of time. Her new religious awareness had created a lot of guilt about an abortion she had had in her early 20s, and no amount of prayer relieved her of that burden. Still, despite a lot of contradictions, Donna seemed quite settled in her early 30s, enlightened by her spirituality and her confidence in the wisdom of her spiritual advisor, as well as bound to the demands of motherhood, commitment to her marriage, and her frustrated wishes to return to her work. I might have thought of her at this age as having found the somewhat packaged identity, defined by others, that she had been ambivalently seeking while in college.

When I saw her at age 43, Donna told me that the last decade had been difficult and she seemed to me to have returned to her earlier turmoil. She was still primarily involved in raising her now early adolescent children but not enjoying them or motherhood very much. From time to time, she had home-schooled her daughter. Her most recent passion had been learning to play the *viola da gamba* and she was spending a great deal of time practicing and playing with an ensemble.

Reflecting on her life, she felt that she had lost everything to motherhood. She described herself at this age as "really trying to get to focus on who I am." She found herself revisiting her past and trying to make sense of who she had been, asking herself a lot of questions. Why had she married her first husband? Why had she divorced? She could remember so little of this time, as though she had left the happy home of childhood and been thrust into a fog. Why had she had an abortion? And how could she come to terms with a recent miscarriage? "I'm looking at things now with a different consciousness and can't reconcile them with my belief system now. Life just propelled me." She seemed to feel that accepting herself in the present involved coming to terms with a past that she couldn't specifically remember. I thought that she was experiencing and expressing the fragmentation of self that Drifters so often struggle with, a fragmentation that precludes forging a workable, integrated identity. The pieces of a self were there, but she wasn't very sure how some of them got there or how they fit together.

Donna was active in her life, but felt disconnected from what she was doing. When she stopped to think about what she was doing, she got mired in confusion. The story of the previous 10 years that Donna told me at age 43 contained continuing disjointed episodes. At some point, she had abruptly moved with the children to Italy for 6 months but could give no account that I could understand of why she had done this. Her response to my question about this gives the flavor of how Donna thought about her choices in life: "It was more the flow into something—more of an intuitive thing. I felt it and moved on it and pieces fell into place and it happened." While there, she spent some time studying the *viola da gamba* and looking at art. She told me that her husband, who was wonderful about giving her space, supported her doing this.

Over these years, she had also trained as a yoga instructor and an energy therapist, but hadn't done anything with these skills beyond the certification. Donna had taken membership for the family in a traditional church even though her spiritual life remained with her spiritual community. Home schooling "hadn't worked out." When the children were both in school, she had largely given up photography and wasn't sure what she wanted to do. Then, unexpectedly, she became pregnant. Donna didn't say she wanted another child, but she was "crushed" by the miscarriage. Around the same time, her husband's business was teetering and they were, for the first time, having financial worries. She had to help her husband in his work in her nonmothering time. Then she had a cancer scare. Donna was clearly quite stressed and somewhat depressed at this interview. The calm place was her *viola da gamba*. She was also directing the youth choir at church and building each year an elaborate Christmas village as a fundraiser. But when I asked her what had been the major good experiences in her life in the last 10 years, she told me that

"there weren't any." She felt she was still struggling with the question of "what do I really want to do? I just go on doing this and that." The last few years, she told me, had been years of feeling her feelings more intensely—anger and sadness particularly. "I never stopped doing things long enough to know what really makes me happy or feeds me on a deeper level." She thought she might like to reground herself in work, perhaps take on more photography projects. She knew she wanted to feel creative and artistic.

Donna felt that her marriage was a success, glued by their shared spiritual commitment, which still involved meditation, chastity, and vegetarianism, as well as intermittent spiritual retreats. I could not find a way to ask how she got pregnant if they were practicing chastity, but as with all such contradictions, Drifters live with them. Thinking back on the turbulence in their marriage when they were in their early 20s, Donna said, "We followed the times into something we didn't understand very well." Like so much in Donna's past, it was ancient history, poorly grasped, a faded episode of life quite disconnected from the present.

Dominating Donna's concerns at this age were her frustrations with herself as a mother. She felt she had chosen to stay home with her children out of her "perfectionistic" belief that that was the right way, but she felt that she had no training to be a mother and wasn't feeling that she had been very good at it.

Donna also told me of an intense relationship with her *viola da gamba* teacher, a relationship "of many levels and a lot of love," that ended when this woman abruptly distanced herself and rejected Donna. At 43, Donna was aware of a need to ground herself and still cautiously hopeful of doing so. She was exploring her inner world, trying to connect to her past and make sense of her life. While she was doing what she needed to do as a wife and a mother, she was feeling emotionally disconnected from these roles, and while her spiritual life gave her structure and moral stability, she was at a loss to know what to do with her sense of fragmentation.

Age 53

When I saw her at age 53, Donna was in pieces, alone and afraid, barely holding herself together. "Every way in which I had been attempting to provide myself the context to define myself,

went," she told me. Donna was now divorced, and both of her children were in college. She was not working, and all she had left was the large home in which she had lived most of her adult life. Oddly, this left her in the position of being both wealthy and poor, living in a very valuable property but having no income beyond some minimal alimony. Donna's recounting of the past 10 years was fractured by her distress, her wish to tell me all the details, and her hesitance to do so. Donna herself seemed not to quite understand just what had happened to her.

She could no longer find a connection to doing photography and, for most of the previous decade, was primarily using her time to help out in her husband's failing business. Although she had dabbled in a number of activities over the years, "I knew that I wanted to go to finding myself but I didn't have a clue and so I know I've kind of entered upon different relationships or fell into things."

Over the past decade, Donna had had a series of affairs, with men and women, hoping to find someone who would help her define herself. These intense relationships preoccupied her over these years, and all ended in heartache. "I was just totally raw and vulnerable, but really was looking for who I was." Through this time she had tried a number of therapies to help her understand what was happening to her as she became deeply enmeshed in one relationship after another.

In her mid-50s, without family or work, Donna found her life "excruciating." "There's just no, there is no, there's no place for me to go and gain my context from somebody or some other situation." The divorce was particularly painful, but it too was shrouded in fog. My best understanding of what Donna described is that she was involved with a woman and her husband began living with another woman part of each week, and it somehow all just came apart. "I never in a million years would have thought that I would not spend the rest of my life with Dan. That's who I was."

Listening closely to Donna's words, we hear that she felt "consumed," felt she was "giving myself over" and " trying to gain my context from somebody." She was well aware that she looked inside and couldn't find a reliable sense of self, but she couldn't find someone to create an identity for her.

Amid all the upheaval, Donna was still fulfilling her responsibilities as a mother. She ar-

ranged tuition for her daughter's college and drove her there—then came back to an empty house, alone for the first time in her life. She filled her days taking care of the house and gardens, trying at least to preserve her property, the only asset she could salvage from her marriage.

> "I could do anything. I'm a person that really doesn't do well with choices. And also just the not knowing, and feeling I'm not in a strong enough place, and I'm not in a place where I want to add any more regrets. I do regret the loss of family, I do regret being alone. . . . I've applied for a few jobs here and there, but it hasn't happened, and I guess my heart hasn't been pulled strong enough to really go after anything."

When Donna looked back at her life from the vantage point of age 53, she recalled being a good child who suppressed "any kind of connection with my own self or my own needs." Going to college was "escape" from the demands of being good, but she did so many things she now regrets, referring here to her first marriage and then the abortion in her 20s. For Donna, the best time was her 20s, when she went to graduate school and got an MFA and "did some amazing projects." And there was clarity in deciding to leave her job, live in Key West with Dan and become a mother. Through this time, in retrospect, she regards herself as having been a strong person.

> "My very strong sense of knowing exactly what I wanted for the children in their upbringing in terms of everything from music, diapers, just committed to all these things that I don't know where they came from. Things in terms of—we were strongly vegetarian, we have a strong spiritual discipline. . . . I was so immersed in . . . really providing teachers and people and experiences for them and really into listening to who they were as individuals and recognizing both as individuals. So even from the birth, studying and doing my own home birth, I just knew what was right and what wasn't, what was good and what was wrong. The whole home environment for them."

And then, in Donna's telling, came the "shadow self," the confused, frightened, emotionally overwhelmed and lonely self that asserted itself in her early 40s.

As always, Donna narrated mixed images of herself.

> "Some of what I love about where I am is the childlike innocence about life and possibility and mixing in elements of faith and spontaneity and synchronicity. I want to be flexible enough to allow the magical in life to happen. I can be so incredibly enthusiastic. Giving up possibility is painful and at the other end is too much possibility and I know there are too many things I can do. . . . The greatest fear of my life is that I will reach the end of my life and I will not have come to express who I am and I will have just wasted. . . . "

Age 67

At age 67, Donna's kaleidoscopic picture had settled into one dominated by her work as a photographer and her quest for "creative expression." Her spiritual path and her children were still present but as backdrop. In her late 50s, Donna had decided to return to school to study advanced techniques of digital photography and electronic media, and she moved across the country for 3 years to do so. Unfortunately, she graduated with a new degree in 2008, when the recession began, so it was difficult to find work. When I met her in 2016, she was still exploring, trying to find the right projects to work on, but she had some employment working with others. Donna was more content that I had ever seen her, having relegated the family and relationship struggles to the background. She felt, for the first time, that she could define herself—as a photographer. It was of no interest to her that she was starting out when others her age were retiring.

Donna had distant relationships with her children but was trying to be a good grandmother to her daughter's children, who lived far away. It was still a painful process to come to terms with the divorce and to make sense of why losing a marriage of 30 years was part of her karma. The romantic affairs of her 50s now seemed like "not me" and "How could you?" and she wondered how she could trust herself. She was no longer playing the *viola da gamba,* but she was still pursuing her spiritual path through meditation groups, vegetarianism, and prayer. Some elements of the earlier pictures were still there but were now repositioned, all in relation to the dominating focus on her work. For the first time since I have known her, Donna seemed focused and relatively content.

Looking back from age 67, Donna saw herself as waylaid from a career she had always wanted by the necessity of helping her husband

in his business. At age 43, she had seen herself as having been pulled away from her career goals by motherhood, and at age 57, thoughts of career had vanished altogether. So Donna's narrative of her past was continually revised as she reinvented herself at each age period. She thought of her decision to return to school at age 55 as a first marker of her capacity to make a decision for herself.

At age 67, most of the consistently important elements of her kaleidoscopic pattern have their place—spiritual life and photography at the center, friendship present but secondary, children at the periphery, with music (a center of her identity at age 43) and the quest for intimate relationships (which had dominated her sense of self at age 56) barely discernible in the pattern.

Identity is always in motion. For Donna, enthusiasm, conscientiousness, and openness to experience have been the dynamic forces that have lighted and moved her kaleisoscopic patterns, even though it took a long time for a consistent and satisfying arrangment to emerge. And Donna's story is not yet finished; I don't know where she might find herself years hence. Perhaps she will not be able to do the work she wants to do and will give it up; perhaps she will find a new partner and organize her life around him or her. These elements are present in her kaleidoscopic picture and could well reappear as prominent.

*   *   *

Of the nine women I classified as Drifters/ Diffusions at the end of college, eight remained so into late midlife. Of all the groups, they were most likely to experience regret (in their mid-50s) and to continue to feel that they hadn't yet settled on who or how they wished to be in their lives. As a group, the Drifters were among the most talented and privileged women I followed. More than half of the women in this group were attending a highly respected private women's college, which means that they came from families wealthy enough to send them there and were academically outstanding enough to be accepted. Their "drifting" in college was not for lack of talent or skill or resources. They were women of promise, who had the opportunity to choose their future.

Their college-age interviews revealed an inner world that didn't hold together, that was made up of pieces that didn't seem to fit, and a lack of concern about this inner fragmentation. The sense of their childhood or their parents was distant from them, irrelevant. But in abolishing their past, these women obliterated a core part of themselves, leaving only a space, an emptiness, a receptacle to be filled with whatever they might find. They were living "free"— either out of choice or anger. Few at this time could say much about what their parents were like. Their parents seemed to be shadow figures, ghosts without qualities, there only to be fled. For many different reasons, they were unable to identify with their parents or make use of them as templates for their own identities.

Over time, the Drifters' narratives, particularly of their early lives, shifted dramatically, which makes it impossible to say which early experiences may have been formative. Their development remains shrouded because, at each point in their lives that I have talked to them, they tell a different version of their histories. Even the facts of their early lives are transformed as they experience themselves differently at different phases of their lives.

The identity problem is difficult for them because they seem to internalize so little that felt good from their childhood, some good that felt foundational. Thus, they were starting from a blank slate, hoping that good things for them would appear in the future. From what I knew of them in college, the task before them seemed to be inventing themselves rather than reshaping bit by bit. With so much possible in the absence of valued existing structure, nothing was very realizable. With so little that felt solid taken in from the past, the building blocks were not there. The Drifters got stuck in the sense that they *could* be anything at all. There was little inside that felt fundamental or core against which to match or test external possibility. Being one thing or another, believing this philosophy or following that religion, all were equally likely. "Instinct" and "feeling" seemed to be reasonable sources of action. As a result, the self remained at the mercy of inner impulses and external claims.

These dramatic fluctuations in the kaleidoscopic pattern, typical of the Drifters, are counterpoints to the steady, slowly evolving identity that is seen in those who have been Pathmakers. For them, identity shifts in the sense that the kaleidoscope pieces rearrange or enlarge under the necessity of the developmental tasks of in-

timacy and generativity—and these shifts take place gradually. With these people, who have well-formulated identities, we are more likely to see the pattern as a whole at any given time rather than disconnected pieces that constitute the pattern.

The function of both identity and narrative is the integration of parts into a recognizable, reasonably coherent, relatively stable whole. It is perhaps when this synthetic work is compromised, as I showed in Donna's case, that we can best appreciate the complexity of the integrative process. The identity structure is largely unconscious and cannot be narrated directly, but it is manifest in the conscious integration of the various aspects of experience including roles, values, wishes, beliefs, feelings, worldview, and relational ties. Identity as a psychological structure relates the disparate parts of the self into some more or less coherent organization, leaving room for different kinds of self-experience, even contradictory ones. The stability of identity, which grows over time, reflects a relatively secure and affirmed awareness of a place in the world that is recognized by others; at the same time, identity changes. All of the major longitudinal studies have wrestled with the difficulties of keeping in focus simultaneously both stability and change (Block, 1971; Elder, 1974; Vaillant, 1995, 2008). Yet that is the nature of human life: People change and they also stay the same. The kaleidoscope metaphor is a way of containing both at the same time.

When we study identity narratively, preserving its kaleidoscopic, patterned nature, we see identity in its essential, dynamic form. We can then witness its multiplicity and multilayeredness (some notable studies that do this are Gregg, 2007; Halbertal & Koren, 2006; and Singer, 2016) and its place in the later stages of adult development. As Bakhtin (1981) detailed, the self is unfinalizable; it is continually evolving.

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