

Narrative Identity & First Generation Students

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Objectives

1. to understand your life as a narrative which shapes your identity; and, as a corollary, to understand the relationship between one's present and one's past; and near future relative to a First Generation perspective;
2. to understand your story's power for self agency
3. to take time to write/discuss some narrative outlines

life is a story
what does yours say?



Consider your life as a personal story among stories

1. You are an embodied story; embodiment has a relationship to **Narrative Theory**:¹

We generally consider narratives taking various forms other than physical;

They engage story and discourse;

They may be expressed in the following forms of timelines:

- linear
- non-linear
- flashbacks

1. Narratology (literary theory).By: Kivak, Rebecca. Salem Press Encyclopedia of Literature. <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.drew.edu/>

We are always both 'being' and 'becoming'

1. First Generation lives are not static
2. The memories of your ancestors, near and far, are a part of who you are
3. You are engaging or reshaping those memories into a new but related story
4. Your interactions and experiences are part of who you are and what/who you are becoming

Understanding this becomes foundational to claiming your personal agency

Narratives allow the writer to ‘play’ with terms/definitions

For example, how do we define First Generation?

... “first-generation students are defined as undergraduate students whose parents had not participated in postsecondary education. ..designation is based on parents’ educational attainment and not on the student’s immigrant status. Parents’ highest educational level reflects the highest degree earned by either parent.”²

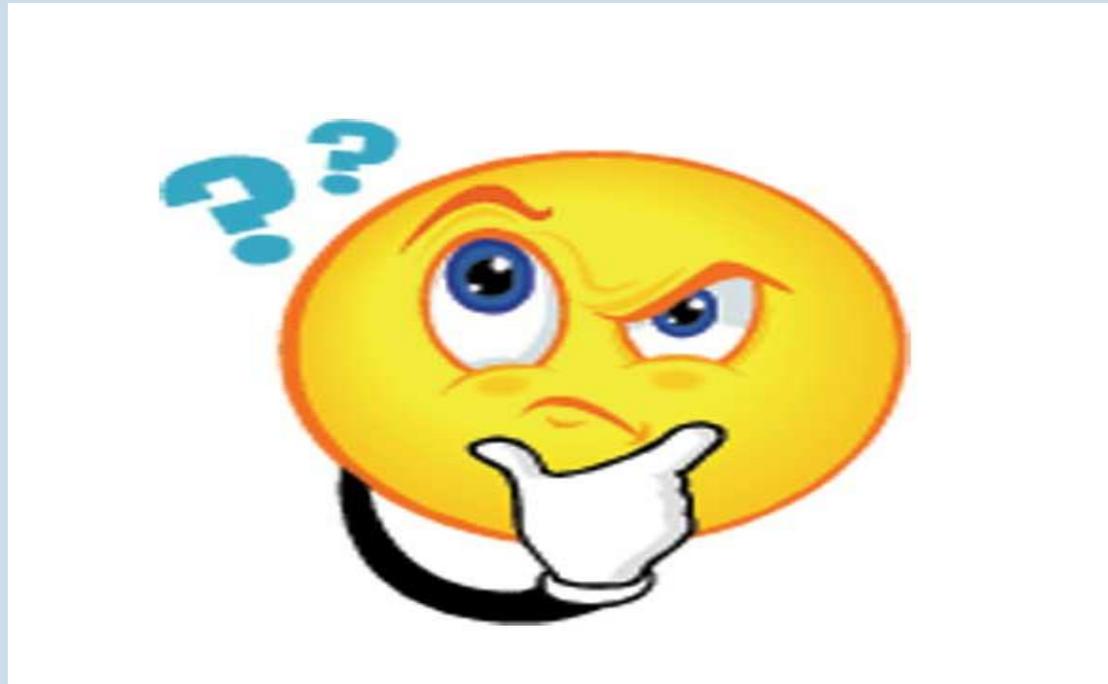
What does this definition assume about you and your capabilities?

What would you add ? [i.e.- what do you know to be your personal strengths?]

Narratives therefore include Worldviews

1. Narratives not only tell a story and engage discourse, but give a PERSPECTIVE on matters pertaining to what defines you.

...But whose perspective?



Narratology & Narrative identity for First Generation

1. The term 'First Generation' posits a social location—yours and your parents relative to education and income broadly written

However, being 'First Gen' is part of your personal **larger narrative** which adds structure to your understanding of who you are, and what it means to be you.

The term is a means sociologically and administratively to categorize individuals whose life stories **INCLUDE** certain place markers.

The term does not fully engage your personal narrative

Narrative Identity

2. Being an embodied [physical living breathing] story is closely linked to your self understanding—your narrative identity.

McAdams(1985) described life narrative identity as :³

A. an integrative autobiographical project; an anthology of small and larger stories;

B. a personal ‘myth’ (McAdams 1990) that provides purpose within/over time

C. engages a variety of situations, ongoing interactions/ relationships, and cultural milieu

Narrative identity is about personal integration— “..a story about how I came to be the person I am becoming”.⁴

³. McAdams DP. Narrative Identity: What Is It? What Does It Do? How Do You Measure It? *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*. 2018;37(3):359-372.

4. *ibid.* p. 364.

Pause...



Small groups Lets do the work

Let's now break into small groups [20 minutes]

1. within each group one or two [time permitting] persons [volunteers] will with the help of group members create an initial outline of :
 - A. The role/story of parent/grandparent [other] that ultimately led to you being in college;
 1. in other words, what in their story influenced you to consider further academic challenge
 2. what steps are you taking now to ensure the success of this new stage in your life (i.e.- what/who are your support networks—people, family, counselors, tutorial services, etc.); work-study placements, etc.; who/what is holding you accountable to your VISION for your future?
 3. what current steps are preparing your for your next year in college/graduate school; employment?

Closure & Thank you for Participating

