
Selves Creating Stories Creating Selves: A Process Model of Self-Development

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This article is focused on the growing empirical emphasis on connections between narrative and self-development. The authors propose a process model of self-development in which storytelling is at the heart of both stability and change in the self. Specifically, we focus on how situated stories help develop and maintain the self with reciprocal impacts on enduring aspects of self, specifically self-concept and the life story. This article emphasizes the research that has shown how autobiographical stories affect the self and provides a direction for future work to maximize the potential of narrative approaches to studying processes of self-development.

Keywords: *self; identity; narrative; autobiographical memory*

The universe is made up of stories, not of atoms.

—Rukeyser (1968)

This excerpt from Rukeyser's poem suggests that, as humans, our worlds are stories; we are made up of, engage in, and are surrounded by stories. The importance of stories is a proposition that is gaining prominence in empirical psychology, and we build on this trend by proposing a process model of narrative self-development that has at its heart the study of personal autobiographical narratives, or situated stories. We use the term *situated stories* to emphasize the fact that any narrative account of personal memory is created within a specific situation, by particular individuals, for particular audiences, and to fulfill particular goals. These facts

about situated stories provide the backdrop for our major proposition, which is that situated stories are used to develop and maintain the self. We view self-development through situated stories as a lifespan process, beginning in early childhood and extending to old age, and that process is situated in a larger cultural milieu that holds expectations of what makes a healthy narrative and a healthy self. The ideas that stories and self are intimately linked (e.g., Fivush, 2001; McAdams, 1993, 2001; Singer & Salovey, 1993; Thorne, 2000) and that stories are situated (e.g., Bamberg, 2004b; Pasupathi, 2001; Thorne, 2004) have separately received a great deal of attention in recent years. In this article, however, we propose to integrate these two ideas and propose a process model of how situated stories help people to make connections between their experiences and their selves. Specifically, we focus on how stories, such as high points, turning points, and a favorite Easter Sunday, become part of the self.

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DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Before we begin, it is crucial to be explicit on three issues: the definition of *self* that we employ, our definition of situated stories, and the relation between situated stories and the life story model, which we draw on for our conceptual framework.¹

In terms of the definition of self that we employ, we focus on two aspects of self: self-concept and the life story. *Self-concept* is defined as conscious beliefs about the self that are descriptive or evaluative (Kernis & Goldman, 2003; Markus & Wurf, 1987). We review concepts such as self-esteem, beliefs about one's skills, and typicality of self-relevant events as aspects of one's self-concept. The second realm of self that we discuss is the life story. The *life story* is an extended but selective autobiography of personal experiences and interpretations of those experiences that provides unity and purpose to the person (McAdams, 1993). We also include a brief review of some research on personality, which tests our questions about the impact of stories in a truly developmental time scale. We argue that through the telling of situated stories one develops and maintains both the life story and self-concept. Throughout the manuscript we will either use the term *self* to refer to both self-concept and the life story together for ease and because both can operate in tandem or we will specify to which aspect of self we refer.

Although what we have just described makes for clearer methodological designs (with self-concept or life story as the outcome variable), there is, of course, the question of the relation between these two constructs. The main question that arises is whether self-concept is always represented in the life story and whether the life story is always represented in self-concept. We suggest that, conceptually, the stories one tells about oneself represent different aspects of one's self-concept directly or indirectly, such as telling a story about when one behaved uncharacteristically (e.g., Rice & Pasupathi, 2006). In terms of the representation of self-concept in the life story, we suggest that whereas life stories might not contain all aspects of one's self-concept (partly due to methodological limitations) one should be able to tell a story to explain one's beliefs about the self. Without this kind of storied evidence, others may be less likely to believe that the characteristic under discussion is indeed a part of the self. Thus, while we will distinguish between self-concept and the life story in reviewing the literature for ease of understanding and for empirical applications of this model, we acknowledge and address, when necessary, how these constructs are related and when they work together.

The next definition we must tackle is that of *situated stories*, which we define as any narrative account of

personal memory that is created within a specific situation, by particular individuals, for particular audiences, and to fulfill particular goals.² Notably, situated stories can be created internally or externally; that is, a story does not have to be told to others for it to be situated. In defining what is situated about these stories, we focus on three issues in this article: the production of situated stories, the maintenance or integration of stories as part of the self, and the cultural context in which they are shared.

One reason we focus on situated stories as our unit of analysis for understanding the self is their ubiquity in daily life. For example, in a daily diary study in which people wrote about the most memorable event of the day and whether it was disclosed, we found that 62% of those events were already disclosed by the end of the day on which they occurred (Pasupathi, McLean, & Weeks, 2007). In 15-min conversations on pleasant and unpleasant topics, married couples bring up an average of 9 to 13 specific past events during those 15 minutes (Pasupathi, Lucas, & Coombs, 2002). Similarly, during family dinner-table conversations, stories about the past are brought up once every 5 mins (Bohanek, Marin, Fivush, & Duke, 2006). This kind of ubiquity goes beyond everyday storytelling to specifically include emotional and important events. Across cultures, genders, and types of emotion, 90% of emotional experiences are disclosed to other people within a few days of their occurrence (Rimé, Mesquita, Philippot, & Boca, 1991). Finally, 90% of self-defining memories have been shared at least once in the past (Thorne, McLean, & Lawrence, 2004). Thus, we have chosen to examine self-development from the vantage point of one of the most common behaviors in which humans engage.

We chose to focus on situated stories not only because of their ubiquity but also because of their hypothesized relevance to the life story and to self-concept. In terms of the life story, numerous studies have focused on characteristics of the life story such as themes and coherence (e.g., Baerger & McAdams, 1999; McAdams, Healy, & Krause, 1984), but the specific processes by which the life story develops remain underexamined. Recent theoretical contributions have emphasized more process-oriented ideas about how the life story is constructed. For example, Habermas & Bluck (2000) introduced the term *autobiographical reasoning* to illustrate the dynamic process of thinking about the past to make links to the self. The concept of autobiographical reasoning is centrally related to what we review, although we extend this concept by detailing evidence for the idea that such reasoning occurs in the construction of situated stories. We argue that while there are many situated stories and although, by definition, not all of them are selected into the life story, some will be. Therefore, beginning with

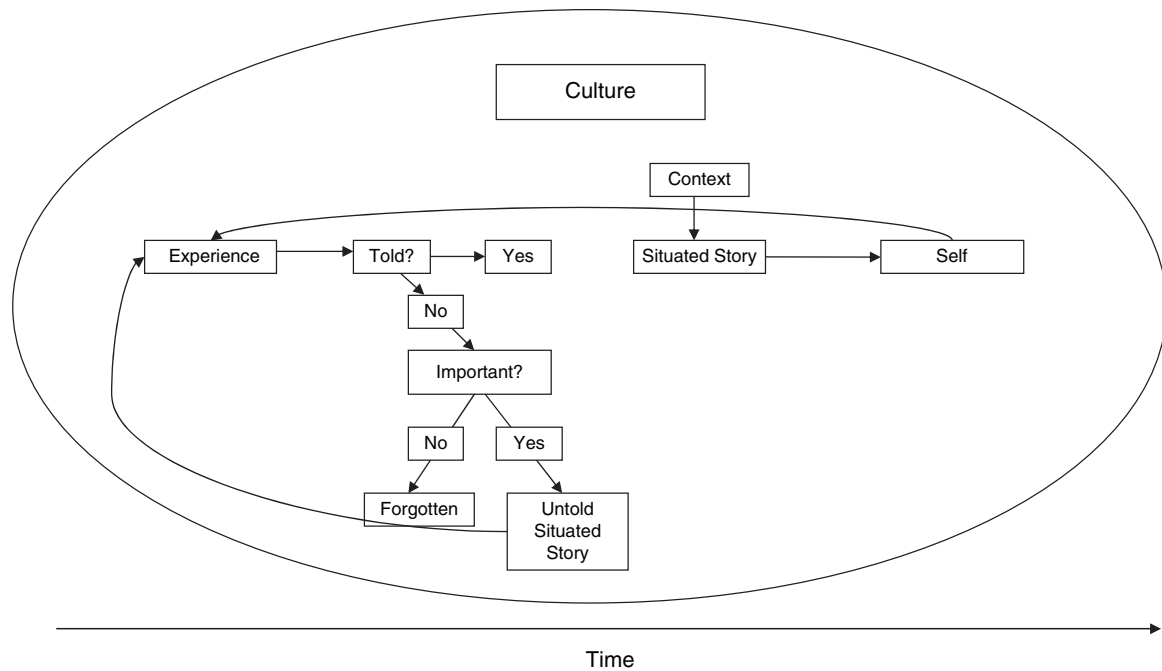


Figure 1 Process model of self-development.

the construct of situated stories allows us to look at life-story development because such stories are potential candidates for integration into this extended story. In terms of self-concept, we also review evidence to suggest that one way to maintain or to change self-conceptions is to tell stories about the self. Although evidence exists to support this claim, this conceptual link between situated storytelling and self-concept has not been clearly made before, and we emphasize storytelling as a major process for the development and maintenance of self-concept (cf. Pasupathi, in press).

Having clarified our definitions of self, situated stories, and the link between situated stories and the self, we turn now to our conceptual process model, which is reflected in Figure 1. The first part of our model, the arrow going from experience through storying to self, reflects the novel idea that some situated stories become part of the way individuals perceive themselves. The arrow going from self to experience reflects the phenomenon that people bring enduring aspects of themselves to the experience of events and to the construction of situated stories. Thus, one's self-concept and one's currently held life story affect the kinds of experiences one has and how those experiences are narrated, an idea on which we elaborate in this article. The central argument that we want to make, however, concerns the flow from experience to self. We propose that narratively induced self change happens through the incremental

telling of situated stories to multiple audiences and in multiple contexts. It is important that within this process approach we do not treat narrative as an assessment of internal representations but rather as an emergent product of representations and features of the context in which narratives are told—in our terms, situated stories (see also Bamberg, 2004b; Pasupathi, 2001; Thorne, 2004).

To contextualize our framework, we offer a fictional example of someone we call Laura who experienced the loss of her mother at age 20. Laura has talked about that experience many times since it happened 10 years ago. In her first tellings, Laura's story was one of vulnerability and uncertainty; she was often seeking support through the telling of her story. Indeed, she was seeking to shape the story, to find meaning in the loss and coherence in her life. Eventually, Laura developed a story of her mother's death that acknowledged the pain of the loss but incorporated a sense of personal growth: She lost her mother but she grew stronger as a result. Upon storying this event, Laura may approach other challenging events with a new self-concept (she is resilient) and two additions to her life story: a new event (the loss of her mom) and a new manner of processing self-information. That is, she has had practice at storying negative experiences into narratives of personal growth and may do so again. It is also possible that Laura has certain stable characteristics, such as openness to experience, which allow her to more deeply explore the meaning of the

event. These are the kinds of issues that we address in this article.

We begin by emphasizing how stories can contribute to stability and change in the self because this is crucial for our contention that narrative construction is an engine for self-development. We then, more briefly, consider how enduring aspects of the self contribute to the way people narrate their experiences. We also discuss how the cultural contexts in which stories are shared contribute to the construction of situated stories. We then close by considering questions for future research using this process model.

SITUATED STORIES AFFECT THE SELF

Our proposal that situated stories affect self-development across the lifespan is supported by three areas of research. First, research suggests that situated stories are linked to the emergence of narrative capacities and styles in childhood. Second, there is evidence to suggest that these stories are linked to the emergence of the life story itself in adolescence and to aspects of self-concept in childhood and adolescence. Third, situated stories are linked to change and stability in personality across adulthood.

The Emergence of Situated Stories

Parent-child reminiscence is one of the first contexts for children's developing understanding of the self as storied (e.g., Fivush, 2001; Harley & Reese, 1999; Reese, 2002b). Studies of parent-child conversations focus on the emergence of skills for and different styles of narrating the past. We focus our review directly on evidence that points to relations between situated storytelling and self-concept and on differences in narrative styles that we hypothesize will best predict autobiographical reasoning processes once the life story becomes a relevant task in adolescence (e.g., Habermas & Bluck, 2000). Specifically, we focus on characteristics of reminiscence styles that emphasize evaluative and emotional elaboration because these are especially important narrative skills for communicating a good or comprehensible story (Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Newcombe & Reese, 2004) and because they constitute ways of giving meaning to past experiences and articulating their relevance to one's life story (e.g., Fivush, 2001).

As it happens, parents socialize different patterns of emotional elaboration and evaluation with their children (e.g., Fivush, 1991; Fivush, Haden, & Reese, 2006; Haden & Fivush, 1996; Haden, Haine, & Fivush, 1997; McCabe & Peterson, 1991; Reese & Fivush, 1993). Parents who use a high elaborative style provide more

narrative structure for children through the provision of evaluative comments and questions, offering and eliciting more information, and being supportive of the child's view in the conversation. In contrast, parents with a low elaborative style tend to repeat questions, switch topics quickly, and do not elaborate on event details. These styles of reminiscing are related to the child's narrative style concurrently and over time in both shared (with parents) and independent assessments (with a researcher). Over time, children with highly elaborative parents provide more evaluative devices in their own narratives, even when controlling for earlier narrative skill (e.g., Haden et al., 1997; Harley & Reese, 1999; Hudson, 1990; McCabe & Peterson, 1991). Furthermore, children's developing narrative abilities and the parent's provision of narrative structure are reciprocally interrelated over time (Farrant & Reese, 2000). That is, mothers provide more elaboration as children get older at the same time as children are supplying more information themselves. Finally, Peterson, Jesso, and McCabe (1999) established this relationship as causal by showing that children of mothers who were trained to be more elaborative reported more complex narratives with an experimenter 2 years later compared to children in a control group.

These studies show that children learn to construct situated stories about themselves with differing emphases on autobiographical reasoning. That is, some parents, and as a result some children, emphasize evaluative and emotional information—hallmarks of autobiographical reasoning. We hypothesize that whether one is elaborative or repetitive in childhood may have consequences for one's later life story.

Gender is also related to the elaborative aspects of reminiscing. Parents are more elaborative with girls, and girls provide more unique details of past experience than do boys even when boys and girls are at similar language levels (Reese & Fivush, 1993). Studies of late adolescents and adults have shown that females create more complex narratives than do males (McLean, 2007), suggesting that these patterns of interaction may predict the formulation of life-story events years later.

These gender differences are linked not only to later life story development but also to emotional self-concept. Parents have been shown to either minimize emotion talk or emphasize the pragmatics of managing emotion with their sons, and they elaborate on the feelings about an event with their daughters (Chance & Fiese, 1999; Fivush, 1991); thus, girls are socialized into creating a more emotional and interpersonal self-concept than are boys (e.g., Buckner & Fivush, 2000, 2003; Reese & Fivush, 1993). Indeed, compared to boys, girls report more discussion of internal states and emotions in their

narratives (Fivush, 1998; Haden et al., 1997). Studies with older groups have shown that emotional and relational self-concepts persist in adolescence and early adulthood as girls are more likely to tell narratives of care for others than are boys (Thorne & McLean, 2003). Furthermore, females who have high self-esteem throughout adolescence, or who increase in self-esteem during this time, are more likely to have autobiographical memories in emerging adulthood that are relationally oriented than are those with low or decreasing self-esteem across adolescence (Thorne & Michaelieu, 1996). Finally, in fully formed life stories, women are more likely to discuss fear and sadness as well as themes of communion than are men (e.g., McAdams et al., 2004; McAdams et al., in press). Thus, self-conceptions about interpersonal relationships and emotional experiences that are socialized in early childhood manifest in the themes of life stories in adulthood. This is an example of the dynamic interaction between self-concept and life story; that is, the relation between self-concept and life story may be mediated by storytelling.

Turning to more traditional measures of self-concept, research has also shown that narrative development is related to the early development of self-concept. Harley and Reese (1999) found that both mirror self-recognition and parental reminiscence styles independently predicted narrative production concurrently and over time (see also Welch-Ross, Fasig, & Farrar, 1999). However, the initial importance of self-recognition to shared and independent narrative production was found to be later mediated by maternal reminiscing style at age two (Reese, 2002a). In other words, children who displayed earlier mirror self-recognition had more elaborative mothers at age two, and maternal reminiscing style more directly predicted children's later narratives than did self-recognition. Furthermore, in terms of emerging self-concept, Bird and Reese (2006) found that explanatory talk about negative events was associated with greater consistency in children's self-concept. In interpreting these findings, Bird and Reese suggested that explaining and resolving negative events allows children to understand the personal meaning of these events, thus providing for greater self-understanding and self-consistency. Therefore, the development of self-understanding (both self-concept and the personal meaning of events) is linked to the socialization of autobiographical reasoning processes in storytelling practices at the earliest stages of narrative development.

Narrative styles also have consequences for evaluative aspects of self-concept, such as self-esteem, particularly in relation to autobiographical reasoning processes. Specifically, Bohanek et al. (2006) found that parents who are more expressive and explanatory in talking about a negative past event with their 9- to 11-year-old

children have children with higher self-esteem 2 years later compared to parents who are less expressive and explanatory (cf. Bird & Reese, 2006). Furthermore, gender differences similar to the work in early childhood are seen. Specifically, girls who engage in earlier conversations with mothers who are emotionally expressive in late childhood have high self-esteem in early adolescence. Compared to those with low self-esteem, boys with fathers who are more explanatory in talking about negative past events in late childhood consequently have high self-esteem in early adolescence. It is interesting that similar predictive validity does not emerge for talk about positive events, and Bohanek et al. (2006) suggested that talk about negative past events is particularly important in understanding self-esteem because children need expert guidance and scaffolding for dealing with these events. This is a particularly important proposition because research on late adolescents and adults, which we subsequently review, has consistently found that the kinds of events that are deemed the most personally meaningful and important are more emotionally negative (see also Bird & Reese, 2006; Fivush, Hazzard, Sales, Sarfatti, & Brown, 2003; Sales, Fivush, & Peterson, 2003). This suggests a link between self-concept and life story development around negative events: Children who learn autobiographical reasoning skills for narrating negative events through the construction of situated stories in late childhood have higher self-esteem in early adolescence and may also have more elaborated, integrated life stories in adulthood, which have also been found to be related to self-esteem (e.g., McAdams, Reynolds, Lewis, Patten, & Bowman, 2001). Again, we see how self-concept and the life story operate together through storytelling.

Overall, research on parent-child reminiscence suggests that the construction of situated stories with valued others is related to early aspects of self-concept, specifically self-recognition, self-esteem, and emotional self-concept. Furthermore, the construction of these stories is related to narrative styles (elaborative or not), which we suggest will be important to developing a life story during adolescence. The research on children puts special emphasis on parents as conarrators in constructing situated stories and less emphasis on other contextual aspects of situated stories, such as goals. Looking to older age groups, research suggests that these styles of narration persist, and this research also puts more emphasis on goals and the kinds of stories that get told.

Emerging and Young Adulthood

As we have detailed, parents are crucial to the construction of situated stories, and we now describe a related line of work with older samples that also supports

the significance of other audiences as collaborators of the life story and self-conceptions. In understanding the construction of situated stories and their impact on the self, we review research on listener behavior, emotional storytelling, and storytelling goals.

Pasupathi and colleagues have conducted several studies on how listeners influence storytelling and by extension autobiographical reasoning processes, using both experimental and nonexperimental designs. In experimental studies, tellers either share a laboratory-provided event (experience with a computer game) or a recent personal past event, and this sharing occurs with a listener (either a stranger or a friend) who is directed to be either responsive or distracted. Distracted listeners are created via a dual task, for example, counting words beginning with "th." These studies have shown that listener behavior changes how elaborative the story is in the moment of telling, with effects that are evident on subsequent remembering occasions (Pasupathi & Hoyt, 2007; Pasupathi, Stallworth, & Murdoch, 1998). Distracted listening appears to lessen the elaborative aspects of remembering, which as we discussed previously are important to autobiographical reasoning processes. Thus, results from both adult and child studies suggest that autobiographical reasoning appears to be socialized and emphasized (or de-emphasized) by the people with whom we share our stories.

Other recent findings directly examine the mediating role of creating situated stories for the shaping of self-conceptions (Pasupathi, Alderman, & Shaw, 2007). For example, in one study, two friends participated in an experience involving a computer game. One friend, the player, played the game while his or her friend observed. Both were asked to privately assess the player's skill level. Then the two jointly told a third party about their experience playing the game. Although players generally contributed more information to this conversation, the more information that observers communicated, the more they were able to influence the player's postconversation self-perceived skill. In other words, the act of telling the story of the game acted as a process by which friends influenced one another's self-conceptions of game-playing skill. Other extensions of this work emphasize the importance of listeners for shaping self-conceptions via their role in the creation of situated stories. For example, people talking to distracted listeners later view the shared memory as less self-typical or, in the case of an activity like a computer game, as less interesting (Pasupathi & Rich, 2005; Thoman, Sansone, & Pasupathi, in press). This research is most similar to the parent-child research in that it specifically emphasizes coconstruction of stories and that these coconstructors influence not only stories but also related self-conceptions, as in the findings on early adolescent

self-esteem (Bohanek et al., 2006). Such studies are important as analogues of developmental process on a microgenetic scale, but clearly more evidence is needed on how responsive listening continues to play a role in storytelling and self-development during adulthood. For example, over time people may quickly turn to other audiences or change their stories if consistently encountering inattention, ameliorating the impact of unresponsiveness from a specific listener. Yet other audiences may not always be available, and consistent lack of support for some stories is likely to affect self-views and the life story over time.

Turning to the emotional aspects of storytelling, like results from the parent-child studies, research suggests that talking about negative past experiences is related to autobiographical reasoning processes that are centrally related to life-story development. For example, Pasupathi (2003) found that, whereas positive emotion does not change from the experience of an event to its later retelling, people report less negative emotion in the retelling than in the initial experience. Furthermore, recent evidence suggests that writing or talking about negative events (or storying them) is related to increased well-being, and simply thinking about negative experience (or not storying them) leads to decreased well-being (Lyubomirsky, Sousa, & Dickerhoof, 2006). Furthermore, thinking about positive events is related to increased well-being but writing or talking about them is not (Lyubomirsky et al., 2006). This suggests that the storying of negative, and not positive, events is particularly important to well-being.

As mentioned in discussing the literature on children, the apparent emotion regulation of negative events can be viewed as important to developing part of the life story. For example, one reason negative emotion may lessen in telling stories (e.g., Pasupathi, 2003) is that people are creating insights from their experiences, or making meaning of their experiences, as we suggested that Laura was doing in our fictional example. Indeed, a large body of work shows a relation between negative experience and meaning making (e.g., King, 2001; McAdams, 2006; McLean & Pratt, 2006; McLean & Thorne, 2003; Pals, 2006; Thorne et al., 2004), suggesting that when something disruptive happens people may be motivated to resolve the negativity or disruption by narrating the experience as provoking insight. Indeed, early results indicate that people report more meaning-seeking goals when talking about negative events than positive events (Pasupathi, unpublished data³). Those storytelling goals, like listener behavior, may influence the degree of autobiographical reasoning in which people engage. In fact, Pasupathi (2006) and McLean (2005) have both independently shown that having talked about an experience in pursuit of understanding on one occasion is

associated with more insight language and more frequent meanings in subsequent narratives of that experience. That is, having the goal of self-understanding in storytelling results in making more connections between the past and the self, and making these connections is centrally related to the development of the life story (e.g., Blagov & Singer, 2004; Bruner, 1990; McLean & Pratt, 2006; McLean & Thorne, 2003). These results also point directly to the idea that the process of autobiographical reasoning occurs in the construction of situated stories, particularly stories of negative experiences.

Although autobiographical reasoning is clearly associated with negative experiences, some readers might wonder about the utility of positive stories in self-development. The comparison of differentially valenced stories is somewhat new to narrative research, but some studies exist that shed light on this issue. In terms of telling stories, McLean and Thorne (2006; see also McLean, 2005; Pasupathi, 2006) suggested that more positive stories are used socially for entertaining and connecting with audiences and that, importantly, aspects of the self are communicated in those moments of shared fun. This kind of self-disclosure is safer than is disclosure of more personal and negative stories because the teller is less vulnerable and there is less of a burden on the listener. Thus, these “lite” stories are useful for connecting with others and communicating parts of the self without great risk. In another area of research, McLean and Pals (2007) have found that life story high and low points are differentially used for reminiscence functions. For example, compared to low points, high points tend to be more often used for social aspects of reminiscence, such as conversation and teaching others. Similarly, Pals (2005) found that reasoning about intimacy occurred in the narration of positive events more often than in the narration of negative events. Thus, the narration of positive events appears to lie in a realm of self-development more focused on relational domains.

Turning to storytelling goals and self-concept, Sanitioso, Kunda, and Fong (1990) have shown that people recall autobiographical memories consistent with self-conceptions they want to hold at that time (due to an experimental manipulation of the desirability of various traits). That is, people engage in motivated recruitment of stories to change or maintain self-conceptions. This relates to work on the working self-concept, which is defined as a part of one’s self-concept that is more susceptible to immediate influences such as goals (e.g., Conway, Singer, & Tagnini, 2004) but that can become part of a more stable self-concept through repetition (Kernis & Goldman, 2003). Therefore, if someone repeatedly tells stories about being extraverted, then one might begin to internalize those stories as part of

one’s self-concept. Situated storytelling should be a particularly important context for internalizing aspects of self-concept because it is a social situation (Tice, 1992). We note in comparing our model to that of Conway et al. (2004) that these authors have done a clear and sophisticated job of dealing with the dynamics of internal remembering, but there is relatively little work that addresses the social and interpersonal dynamics of remembering, which is the aim of our model.

People’s immediate storytelling goals may also be linked to the preferences of listeners. In creating stories to please listeners, people create a certain kind of self in that moment that may have a lasting impact on the self (Pasupathi et al., 2007). For example, when people hold the goal of entertaining rather than truth telling, they adapt their narratives in ways that have lasting effects on memory (Dudukovic, Marsh, & Tversky, 2004; McLean, 2005; Pasupathi, 2006; Pasupathi, in press). Furthermore, although this explicit possibility has not been tested, some research suggests that listeners’ responses shape emotional and meaning-related aspects of stories. For example, Pasupathi (2003) showed that listener agreement was related to the lessening of negative emotion in recalling a past negative event and that listener responsiveness was related to telling a more emotionally negative story, suggesting that listeners encourage certain kinds of storytelling. However, whereas responsive listeners may encourage talk about negative events, they have preferences for the manner in which negative events are storied. For example, Thorne et al. (2004) found that listeners prefer self-defining stories about gaining insight than about learning when one has done wrong. Similarly, audiences do not like to hear stories of vulnerability but of managing traumatic events (Thorne & McLean, 2003). These findings are likely related to the culture in which stories are told, which in these studies was the United States, where redemption, when stories turn from bad to good, is highly valued (McAdams, 2006).

Although the focus of our model is on public situated storytelling, for a complete discussion of our model, we must address the issue of stories that are not told (see Figure 1). Although the study of forgotten and untold experiences is empirically difficult for obvious reasons, we can draw some conclusions from the work we have reviewed and from some of our own recent work. However, it is important to recall from our introduction that most of the stories people retain are shared, so we are talking about a very small slice of one’s autobiographical store in the discussion of untold stories. Based on existing data, we argue that experiences that are forgotten are likely to be those that were not important, not told, or told to a distracted listener (e.g., Pasupathi & Hoyt, 2007; Pasupathi et al., 2007; Pasupathi &

Rich, 2005). Experiences that are not told but not forgotten are a bit more complex. Recently we have found that untold memories are deemed, on average, less important than are told memories, similar to our proposition about forgotten memories (Pasupathi et al., 2007). However, we have also found that untold stories are more emotionally negative than are told stories, particularly socially negative. We speculate that over the longer term people are likely to forget most of what they do not tell, particularly when the reason they are not telling has to do with low importance. What people retain are stories linked to negative social consequences, such as shameful stories about personal transgressions, or highly traumatic memories that create more vulnerable telling contexts, such as sexual abuse (e.g. Fivush, 2004a; Thorne & McLean, 2003). We return to this issue in addressing future directions for research with this model.

In sum, all of the work reviewed thus far suggests that creating a situated story affects both self-concept and the life story and that storytelling may mediate the relationship between the two. First, situated stories affect self-concept when storytelling serves to express the event as being highly self-relevant, as having changed the self in some way, or as reinforcing existing self-views. Second, creating a situated story can affect a participant's subsequent stories; that is, when one constructs a particular situated story in a specific context, that story influences the degree of elaboration and the nature of the evaluations one has about that event subsequently, similar to the work on parent-child reminiscence. Furthermore, when one is often in a position to engage in deeper autobiographical reasoning processes by constructing elaborative stories, the life story will consequently be more elaborated, vivid, and full, although this remains to be tested empirically. The extant literature is clear on the causal links between contextual factors such as listener behavior and immediate goals and their impacts on situated stories. The evidence for long-term impacts is less strong. Primarily, the parent-child reminiscence work shows that the construction of situated stories has long-term relations to narrative style and self-esteem, but it has not examined the possibility for effects on the life story. The young adult work, in contrast, tends to document only short-term effects.

Our process model suggests other avenues for future research. For example, researchers should begin to examine the ways that situated stories change the self as a process that is incremental, involving accumulated constructions of the same or similarly themed stories across time. That is, as a person tells a story over and over to different audiences, the story is gradually shaped into a part of the self. With repeated tellings, the image of the self (either self-concept or the life story) that it

embodies is strengthened or de-emphasized. Whether people engage in repeated tellings may depend quite a bit on one's listeners and whether the story is relevant to one's current goals. The final area that we review, which provides evidence that stories affect the self, concerns the effect of narrative construction on personality development.

Can Stories Shape Personality on a Truly Developmental Time Scale?

The work just reviewed documents the short-term effects of storytelling on self-concept; however, there is no research that directly tests long-term effects beyond childhood. To provide evidence for this important implication of our process model, we turned to personality research, where long-term relations with storytelling have been well documented. Although the aspects of personality we address here (traits, ego development, goals) go beyond a strict definition of self-concept, self-concept and storytelling are intimately connected to these constructs, making personality centrally relevant to our model. Methodologically, personality research often involves testing one's beliefs about the self, particularly assessments that ask for conscious self-assessments, such as traits and current goals. It is more important, however, that the self-concept has long been implicated conceptually in theories of both stability and developmental change in personality. For example, Caspi and Roberts (1999) argued that, to the extent that traits may change in adulthood, changes in how people conceptualize themselves is one critical mechanism, with changes in self-concept preceding more enduring patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving. Another prominent theory of development that has self-concept at its conceptual center is ego development, a stage model of personality maturity that assesses the complexity and psychological sophistication of how people conceptualize the self in relation to the world around them. To the extent that there are relations between storytelling processes and personality change, we see this as supportive and compelling (albeit indirect) evidence for our assertion that stories shape the self.

Ego development was originally conceptualized by Loevinger (e.g., 1976) and is particularly important to our model because it is not only a major part of the self but it is also conceptualized as a process. Ego development focuses on the level of complexity with which people view the relation between themselves and the world and how that complexity changes over time. As such, ego-development captures not the content of self-conceptions but the complexity and abstraction that characterizes self-conceptions. Ego development is fairly stable once adulthood is reached (see Cohn, 1998), and

when ego levels do change in adulthood it is presumed that experience, usually of a disruptive sort, prompts revision of one's self and world views (e.g., Helson, 1992; Helson & Roberts, 1994; Helson & Wink, 1987), which brings us to storytelling as a mechanism for change in ego development.

As parents may provide the contexts for children to learn to elaborate and evaluate their past experiences, ego development may provide the abilities for different levels of autobiographical reasoning in adulthood. King has found that one process by which ego levels may increase is through certain narrative devices used to story disruptive experiences (e.g., King, Scollon, Ramsey, & Williams, 2000). She has looked explicitly at accommodation, defined as altering existing cognitive schemas to fit new information (Block, 1982). Specifically, accommodation within parents' narratives about having a child with Down's syndrome predicted increases in ego development over a 2-year period after controlling for ego level at the time of the narrative telling, and this was particularly the case for those who began at lower levels (King et al., 2000). Thus, constructing stories about a family challenge in which one adapts to new demands is associated with becoming more cognitively complex over time.

Pals (2006) took a long-term longitudinal approach to the question of narrative processing and self-development. She defined exploratory processing in narratives as grappling with the complexity of an experience, exploring its meaning, and actively interpreting its transformative impact. In examining 52-year-old women's narratives of difficult life experiences, she found that exploratory processing of those difficult experiences mediated the relation between self-reported coping openness at age 21 and emotional maturity at age 61. In other words, those who described themselves as open and flexible in their approach to experiences in early adulthood told more exploratory stories about difficult events in midlife and subsequently showed more emotional maturity, which is also one sign of ego development (Loevinger, 1976).

With respect to changes in personality traits, there is only a small amount of suggestive evidence available at this point. For example, in Pals' (2006) study, women whose stories of difficult experiences showed coherent resolution at age 52 increased on ego resiliency from age 21 to age 52. Similarly, Sutin and Robins (2005) showed that affective and motivational qualities of 3rd-year college students' self-defining memories were predictive of change in traits from the 1st to the 4th year of college. For example, achievement motivation expressed within memory narratives was predictive of an increase in conscientiousness. In both of these studies, it is impossible to determine whether narrative

characteristics caused trait change, but the association is intriguing and warrants further investigation. As Sutin and Robins argued, such findings suggest how situated stories, which reflect the social-cognitive processes of memory encoding and recall, may constitute mechanisms of personality change.

Sutin and Robins (2005) also found continuity in motives in self-defining memories over time, and they suggested that the mechanism for that continuity might be a reciprocal interaction between motives and stories. For example, people may recall memories because of their motives but that recall may also reinforce these motives. The same process may also work for traits. In this way, aspects of personalities may serve as an overarching guide for narrative construction, but narrative construction may also serve to maintain or alter personality.

Although there are few longitudinal studies that explicitly examine the potential for stories to shape personality, the few studies that do exist suggest that narrative processes may have a role in shaping some aspects of personality. First, narratives may themselves act as forces for changing personality; second, narratives may mediate links between personality at one point in adulthood and subsequent change in personality. This latter idea is important for considering narratives as an engine for both stability and change. At a broader level of analysis, it is important to recognize that people have profoundly different ways of organizing and processing experience. These ways of organizing experience reflect personality traits as well as goals, schemas, and differences in cognitive orientations, such as ego development. These different patterns of organization should be directly related to how people construct and tell stories about themselves, how they engage in autobiographical reasoning, and how others react to their stories.

Having documented the potential for stories to shape selves, we turn to the other arrow in our process model because stories are also influenced by enduring characteristics that storytellers bring to their creation.

THE SELF AFFECTS THE CONSTRUCTION OF SITUATED STORIES

There is a wealth of evidence that people bring enduring aspects of themselves to the creation of situated stories, which we briefly review. We start with connections between trait levels of personality as a result of the marked stability of traits in adulthood and the assumption that traits are partly heritable and, thus, precede experience (Costa & McCrae, 1994; Roberts & DelVecchio, 2000).

Personality traits are linked to basic emotional and evaluative qualities of narratives. For example, neurotic individuals construct more negatively toned and linguistically negative narratives (McAdams et al., 2004; Pals, 2004; Pennebaker & King, 1999). In contrast, people who are agreeable, open to experience, and optimistic tell more positively toned and linguistically positive narratives (McAdams et al., 2004; McLean & Pratt, 2006; Pals, 2004; Pratt, Hunsberger, Pancer, Allard, & Alisat, 2006).

Traits are also related to the structural and interpretive qualities of narratives. For example, openness to experience is associated with creating more structurally complex narratives (McAdams et al., 2004). Similarly, Pals (2006) found that coping openness was associated with high levels of exploratory processing within narratives. Those who are open to experience, more extraverted, and less neurotic are more likely to interpret the past as bringing about growth than are those who score lower on these dimensions (Bauer, McAdams, & Sakeda, 2005; see also McLean & Fournier, 2007).

In terms of more contextually oriented approaches, McLean and Pasupathi (2006) recently showed that more extraverted individuals tell personal stories more often, especially in situations involving the mutual sharing of the past. Thus, traits are also related to whether and how often narratives are shared and created socially, affecting the frequency of constructing situated stories. Moreover, in this particular case, narratives might again mediate between a trait (extraversion) and outcomes, such as social network size, because the sharing of personally important stories in reciprocated exchanges is a means for creating intimate connections with others (Alea & Bluck, 2003).

Enduring motives and goals are also related to the construction, recall, and organization of stories. Agency and communion are the most well studied motives, and predictably, agentic and communal people tend to report motive-congruent narratives across multiple methods, age groups, and types of narrative elicitations (e.g., McAdams, 1982, 1985; Woike, 1995). As mentioned previously, such findings suggest that people's enduring goals or motives shape their situated stories, and those stories then in turn provide for continuity in such goals and motives over time (see also Moffitt & Singer, 1994; Sutin and Robins, 2005; Thorne, Cutting, & Skaw, 1998). Finally, a large body of work from experimental social and cognitive psychology supports the idea that goals play a causal role in shaping situated stories (e.g., Dudukovic et al., 2004; McGregor & Holmes, 1999; Tversky & Marsh, 2000).

The life story itself may also reveal how selves shape stories because already established themes of one's life story may influence situated stories (Singer & Blagov,

2004). For example, if one has a consistent pattern of redemption in one's life story, a new and negative experience may likely become a situated story of redemption, as in Laura's story with which we began. Indeed, Singer and Blagov (2004) suggested that the life story serves as an overarching guide in the process of story development.

Although these findings are not new—nor is it surprising to find continuity in people's voices for telling their own stories—they point to the ways that situated stories can reflect but also maintain and reinforce those enduring characteristics. For example, motives, such as agency and communion, and traits are fairly stable across adulthood but this does not mean that stories are irrelevant to understanding these aspects of personality. Rather, stories may help people understand why this stability exists, because they may be an important mechanism for reinforcing this stability. Moreover, when situated stories are constructed in conversation, that repetition is coupled with social reinforcement (see also Baumeister & Newman, 1994; Pasupathi, 2001; Tice, 1992).

THE PRODUCTION AND IMPACT OF SITUATED STORIES

By now we hope to have convinced our readers that stories and selves are reciprocally related in important ways. We now discuss the kinds of stories that researchers should privilege in their studies, in terms of the stories that are most likely to be produced and the stories that are most likely to have a long-term impact on the self. We propose that both production and impact of situated stories are affected by the kind of experience one has. Long-term impact is also further related to speaker goals, listener behavior, and autobiographical reasoning processes.

Certain characteristics of experience appear to make that experience more likely to be storied, and the clearest marker of what makes a good story and what makes a memorable story is a disruptive or unresolved experience (Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Zeigarnik, 1935). Experiences that challenge one's sense of self (Pals, 2006), that are emotionally disruptive (Rimé et al., 1991), or that are self-defining (Singer & Salovey, 1993; Thorne, 2000) all create the starting ingredients for a situated story to be produced. One reason that such disruptive events are important is that disruption actually makes a good story (Labov & Waletzky, 1967). As many masters of the literary tradition make clear in the topics of their books, it is difficult to tell stories about good things, such as happy marriages (e.g., Updike, 1960). In other words, a story with no problem or predicament is boring; problems

make stories tellable. Furthermore, once a problem emerges, narrative is the process used to make sense of the problem; narrative is the process by which humans are able to render the uncanonical (i.e., experience) canonical (i.e., story) (Bruner, 1990).

People do not only tell stories about negative experiences because they make good stories, however, but also because these stories are at the heart of autobiographical reasoning processes. In discussing parent-child reminiscence, we emphasized research showing that talk about negative experience is related to self-esteem and self-concept. In discussing emerging and young adulthood, we emphasized that the events from which people draw meaning and engage in autobiographical reasoning processes are those that are negative. Finally, in discussing personality change, we focused on the importance of reasoning about negative events. Thus, these negative events are privileged for their story qualities as well as for their relevance to the development of self-concept and self-understanding.

Turning to the impact of these stories for later integration into the self, or story maintenance, we propose that situated stories can provide incremental support for one's self-concept, and some of those stories will also be selected into the life story. Again, we see the dynamic relation between these two aspects of self and how at some points they work in tandem instead of operating as distinct outcomes. Specifically, events that are more likely to be storied and told, that are told repeatedly, and that contain personal meaning should all be more likely to have an impact on self-concept and the life story than do stories that do not contain such characteristics.

The characteristics of what makes an experience likely to be storied are also related to telling that story repeatedly; if it made a good story once, it is likely to do so again. Repeated story tellings play a crucial role in the development of both self-concept and the life story because stories that are told more frequently should reflect enduring motives or themes of one's life (Moffitt & Singer, 1994) and should also be acceptable to one's audiences. If not, they would either not be told or would be constructed into a more acceptable story (e.g., Pasupathi et al., 2007; Thorne & McLean, 2003). Consequently, stories that represent enduring aspects of one's self and that hold currency one's self and one's audiences are those that are most likely to be told and retold.

Characteristics of events that make an experience more likely to be storied and told repeatedly also make it more likely to become part of the life story, perhaps because of the opportunity such experiences afford for meaning-making. For example, stories about disruptive experiences are more likely to contain special characteristics of well-developed life stories, such as the presence of self-event connections (Pasupathi & Mansour, 2006),

exploratory processing (Pals, 2006), or life lessons or insights (McLean, 2005; McLean & Pratt, 2006; McLean & Thorne, 2003; Thorne et al., 2004). These narrative characteristics should be especially important for selection into the life story.

THE CULTURAL CONTEXT OF SITUATED STORIES

Our process model is situated within a cultural framework, given that the development of the life story presupposes acceptance from both proximal audiences and the culture at large. Despite some recent strong empirical work, there is a deficit in our knowledge of the relation between narrative and culture, relative to research on other aspects of narrative, and there is far less research on cultures other than Western-American culture. Our goal is for this process model to be applied to studies of different groups because culture is the overarching framework in which self-construction occurs (see Figure 1) and any situated story should reflect cultural influences on the teller and on the storytelling context. However, future research remains to be done to determine if the configuration of experience and the function of stories is the same across cultures (see Wang & Brockmeier, 2002, for a discussion).

To emphasize how culture may be important to storytelling, we return to Laura's story of the loss of her mother. This story is an example of what McAdams (2006) has called "a cultural narrative of redemption," which is highly valued in American storytelling practices. In thinking about how Laura formed this story, it is possible that her original audiences may have turned her toward redemption as a possible motif for her story. Because redemption reflects the specific values of one culture, Laura's story will contrast in important respects with someone who grew up in a different culture. For example, Wang (e.g., 2001, 2004) has argued that East Asian and Western cultures differ on several characteristics that would make Laura's story less likely to emerge in China, such as the propensity for Chinese participants to report more script-like narratives with fewer details, less emphasis on the self, and more emphasis on morality than their American counterparts (e.g., Wang & Conway, 2004). Indeed, Wang and colleagues (Wang & Brockmeier, 2002) suggested that the function of narrative practices for Westerners is to create a self-history for the purpose of self-continuity, whereas the function of such practices for Chinese individuals is to develop connectedness with others and adherence to moral guidelines. Speculatively, an Asian Laura might tell a different story about her mother's death, with less emphasis on her own responses to the event or on

personal growth and more emphasis on her new responsibilities in the family.

Cultural differences have also been seen in studies focused on socioeconomic class rather than ethnicity or country of origin per se. Miller and her colleagues (e.g., Wiley, Rose, Burger, & Miller, 1998) have examined how working- and middle-class mothers use narrative for socialization practices. First, working-class families engage in more storytelling than do their middle-class counterparts, suggesting that the opportunities afforded by storytelling to shape selves may differ by culture. Findings also suggest that mothers from both socioeconomic classes were socializing a valued trait in the American culture from which the sample was drawn, autonomy, but through different mechanisms. For example, working-class mothers appeared to view autonomy as something that is earned and thus they engaged in more challenging narrative practices with their children (see also Heath, 1983), whereas middle-class mothers saw autonomy as a gift to be bestowed on their children, allowing more leeway in their children's narrative accounts. The authors interpreted these different ways of socializing autonomy as reflecting beliefs about the place of each group in society. For example, teaching children of working-class families that they must earn their rights may be an adaptive strategy. Overall, both country of origin and social class appear to affect the kinds of stories one tells, and it appears that these stories are socialized in culture-specific ways in childhood. How these cultural differences map on to the construction of life stories in adulthood is an exciting avenue for researchers to explore.

We suggest that one way researchers might continue to explore cultural differences in narrative construction is to examine master narratives and how people use them and respond to them. Researchers have coined the term *master narrative* to address how people engage in discourse under the umbrella of the norms and expectations of a given culture (Bamberg, 2004b; Boje, 1991; Schiffrin, 1996; Thorne & McLean, 2003). Redemptive sequences can be viewed as one such narrative, but there are others. Boje (1991) argued the master narratives are tools for sense making; they help people understand how they are to behave and interpret their experience. It is important that cultures embody different expectations for different members, such as men and women. For example, Thorne and McLean (2003) discussed a master narrative of care and concern—of relations—employed by women (see also Gilligan, 1982) and of stoicism and bravery employed by men in response to life-threatening situations. Laura's choice of a relational event as a landmark in her life story is thus consistent with feminine master narratives.

How master narratives are negotiated between those with power differentials in society is particularly important in considering the role of culture and narration.

For example, Michaels (1991) provided an account of the dismantling of a young African American girl's narrative style by her Caucasian and well-meaning teacher. The dismantling occurred for the style and content of narrative that the girl used and the yearlong ethnography shows how part of her narrative style, part of her self, was silenced in the classroom. The consequence of socialization into the dominant master narrative is only beginning to be explored by researchers interested in self. Clearly, however, engaging in storytelling to any extent involves voicing and silencing some aspects of self in response to greater cultural norms, listener demands, or personal motivations (Fivush, 2004a; see also Bamberg, 2004a, for a discussion of counternarratives). Master narratives are an interesting venue for future research on situated storytelling because researchers cannot only examine the norms and expectations about certain cultures that are revealed by such narratives but can also better understand the dynamics between personal stories and the broader cultural narratives under which people learn to construct these stories.

FROM STORY TO SELF: NEW DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH

Thus far, we hope to have convinced the reader that storytelling is related to both the development and maintenance of the self. However, at this point we believe there are several important questions to be raised. First, extant evidence consists overwhelmingly of correlational data, so we suggest that there are important longitudinal and experimental studies to be done to test the causal pathways that we have articulated to comprehensively test our model. Second, we return to the issue of untold stories.

In terms of the first issue, we suggest that long-term process relations between self-concept and narratives need to be unequivocally established. For example, our model would predict that self-esteem would change over time because of the way one narrates experience and the kind of listener one has. Both of these aspects of a conversation can be manipulated to test for causal pathways by building on prior work that has successfully manipulated listener behavior and by manipulating the goal of telling, for example, to elicit different kinds of narration from the speaker. Furthermore, extending some of the childhood work to adults and testing some adult correlational work, comparing people who are encouraged to engage in more elaborative reminiscing to a control group in terms of outcomes in self-development, are also important studies to be done. Finally, the cumulative practice of telling stories in a certain way to certain audiences should affect the life story over time, which

involves using a multiwave longitudinal design. In short, explicitly establishing how change in aspects of self-concept and the life story are mediated by different kinds of storytelling is crucial in long-term designs.

The second issue of untold and fragmented stories is important for future research to address, but as we mentioned earlier, this is an empirically challenging area of study given that any story told in the lab is being told. Instead of specific empirical plans, we raise theoretical issues here to drive the conceptual planning of future studies. The first question is whether untold and told stories are similarly situated. We argue that the primary difference between constructing stories privately and publicly is that public storytelling opens the self up to social shaping because of the real reactions of and interactions with live people. More specifically, the social telling of situated stories may make the impact of the story on the self stronger than untold story construction as a result of social reinforcements that occur only when publicly telling one's story (e.g., Tice, 1992). That is, stories may be situated in one's mind (such as when one plans to tell a story), but the actual storying involves social processes that are absent or less strong in the imagined scenario. Nevertheless, private storying should also shape the self in social ways because of cultural expectations of stories or imagined audiences, for example, but these differences are contingent on how people imagine their social worlds, not how they actually are.

We note here that the scope of untold experiences is broad and may include experiences that are forgotten because they are unimportant, and experiences that people story for themselves but don't want to disclose, such as suppressed stories or experiences people are unwilling to face. Although these issues are beyond the scope of this article, they are clearly important for researchers to investigate. We reiterate that most of what people story is told (Pasupathi et al., 2007), at least in relatively healthy populations, so we are not addressing a large piece of the puzzle of storied self-development in talking about untold stories.

In raising issues for future research on untold stories, there are three kinds of storying processes that need to be investigated: how stories that are important and not told fit into the self, particularly those that are socially negative; how partially told or fragmented stories fit into the self; and on a related note, how stories that are told differently in different contexts fit into the self. We find some guidance on these questions from social psychological literature, to which we now turn.

As mentioned earlier, our recent research suggests that people are less likely to disclose socially negative events (Pasupathi et al., 2007). In terms of the consequences that this lack of disclosure has for the self, we

suggest that whereas socially negative stories are likely to have an effect on the self through emotional experience or behavior (see Fivush, 2004a), not being able to tell these kinds of stories means that they do not have the opportunity to be fully integrated into the self. Indeed, finding a greater usage of past tense, or distance, in disclosed events suggests that disclosed events "are more integrated into a person's sense of history" (Pasupathi, *in press*, p. 17). Along with Fivush (2004b), we view the opportunity to voice stories as a central process for the highest level of self-integration. This is because people not only need social validation for themselves and their stories, but people also need personal validation, and giving voice to their stories is a way of providing personal validation of the self, a way of owning experience (Fivush, 2001). Of course, this claim about self-integration is one to be addressed in future studies not only in terms of its validity but also in terms of how much voicing is necessary for integration and in what manner. For example, more clinically oriented research suggests that in some populations (e.g., those with posttraumatic stress disorder and manifestations of hyper arousal symptoms) the storying of traumatic events is not adaptive (e.g., Pennebaker, & Seagal, 1999; Sijbrandij, Olff, Reitsma, Carlier, & Gersons, 2006). Similarly, research on repressors shows that in their recall of negative emotional experiences they remember a disproportionate number of over-general self-defining memories (e.g., Blagov & Singer, 2004; Davis, 1987; Davis & Schwartz, 1987). Thus, if self-development occurs through telling stories about negative emotional events, our model would predict that these populations might be limited in terms of narrative self-development. As such, theories of narrative should take into account the consequences of processing such emotionally laden material for different groups.

Extending the issue of voicing and silencing, we see this as somewhat analogous to chameleon effects, which manifest as moderated self-presentations, often in ways that self-enhance (e.g., Chartrand & Bargh, 1999; Leary et al., 1994; Paulhus, 1998; Schlenker, 2003). Interestingly, some have suggested that in comfortable settings people have scripts for how to act that they can more automatically call on (e.g., Leary et al., 1994), and we argue that the same might be true for stories in that people have some script-like stories to fulfill certain contextual demands (e.g., the story of how you met your spouse for the cocktail party circuit). This might also include the fragmenting of stories, that is, the voicing of some details and the silencing of others to fit the context.

This discussion of untold stories also needs to be linked to theorizing and research on public and private selves. The public self manifests as cognition or knowledge of the self as a social object and is more influenced by social demands, and the private self is reflected in more

internalized, ruminative, or reflective behavior about more personal aspects of the self and is more influenced by personal demands (e.g., Carver, 2003). Along with others (e.g., Carver & Scheier, 1987; Leary, 2006), we view these two aspects of self not as separate or distinct parts of the self but as engaged in a dynamic interaction; one cannot exist without the other. Telling stories involves the management of both the public and private self because both can be revised or maintained through storytelling. Clearly, responses to one's stories can change how one later tells other stories, affecting the public self (e.g., Pasupathi & Rich, 2005; Thorne & McLean, 2003). We also suggest that the private self is given the opportunity to develop through storytelling in two ways. First, reactions to stories can cause internal revision or confirmation of one's stories (e.g., Leary, Terdal, & Downs, 1995; see also Pasupathi & Rich, 2005). Second, reactions can allow one to create (or not create) self-concept socially (e.g., Gollwitzer & Wicklund, 1985; Pasupathi & Rich, 2005). However, to fully understand the self, as researchers we need to be mindful of the complexity of story fragmentation and work hard to understand all of the stories that our participants have in all of the ways that they have them (Pasupathi, in press). It is only when we understand how the many stories and their derivatives fit together that we can more equivocally say what researchers should focus on in studying story and self. Overall, there is a great amount of work to be done to further understand how untold and partially told stories fit into self-concept and the life story. Lacking more data, we can only offer these ideas and hope that others will be inspired to take on this important and interesting, but also quite challenging, path of empirical investigation.

Returning to Rukeyser's (1968) words with which we started, stories are the substance of the self. Along with many other researchers and theorists who see the value of stories, we hope that this model will encourage others to pay attention to stories and their role in self-development. Specifically, we suggest that research will advance not only by examining the processes of self-change from the construction of situated stories that we have detailed but also other elements of our process model, such as the impact of situated stories for self-stability, the specific characteristics and processes that turn experiences into stories, and the aspects of persons that color experience and, consequently, stories. To witness the construction of situated stories is to understand the dynamic development of the self. Indeed, sharing stories is the mechanism through which people become selves.

NOTES

1. We also note Alea and Bluck's (2003) model of the social function of autobiographical memory has relevance here. However, we are

proposing a process model of self-development, and we do not distinguish between self and social functions as separate entities (see also McLean, 2005; Nelson, 2003). Their model, however, is a useful starting point for thinking about models of the social sharing of autobiographical memory from which we draw.

2. We note that the definition of *stories* has wide variation between studies. We focus, most broadly, on stories that are about the personal past and are told with some sort of point in mind (e.g., Labov & Waletzky, 1967).

3. An analysis of the same data presented in Pasupathi (2003) compares the degree to which people retold the event to seek insight from it as a function of the valence of the experience. The results show that negative events were significantly more likely than were positive events to be told for insight-seeking purposes.

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