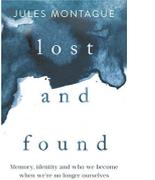


Lost and Found

Dr Jules Montague
Neurologist
@jules_montague



Identity

Identity



lost and found

Memory, identity and who we become when we're no longer ourselves



John Locke 1632-1704



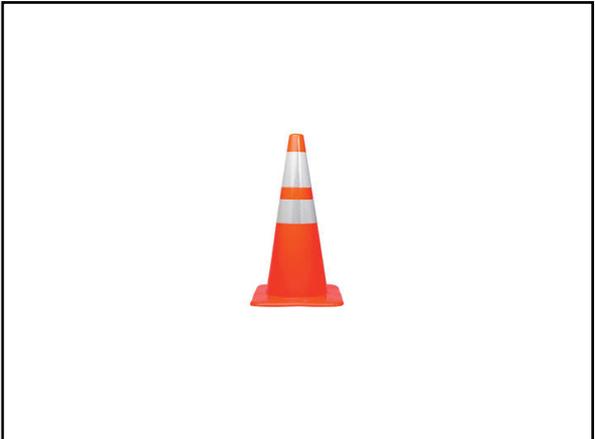

'As far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, **so far reaches the identity of that person**; it is the same self now it was then; and it is by the same self with this present one.'

—John Locke

Identity



Memory....but there are two issues



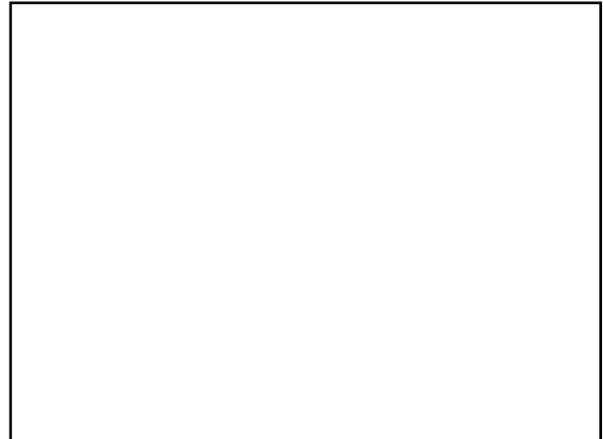
Derek Parfit 1942-2017



But switch the filter and another view emerges: it's not just that we have bodies; we *are* bodies, we are embodied. Bodies that interact with the world, engage with it, are embedded within it. Dementia does not annihilate these capacities. As French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–61) wrote, 'The world is not what I think but what I live through.'



John Bayley, writing about his wife Iris Murdoch's evolving dementia, describes how their communication persisted without words, 'like underwater sonar, each bouncing pulsations off the other, and listening for an echo'. Despite advancing dementia, 'Iris remains her old self in many ways.'



What do people with dementia think?

Identity - Sameness Over Time

- I'm still the same person I've always been, it's just that now I'm me with Alzheimer's.
- Well you know, I'm still the same person. I'm probably, I don't mean to say less of a person, but I mean I'm probably ninety percent of the person I was. Well, I'm not as handy as I was you know.
- There is less and less of me every day.

• Sources: Diana Friel McGowin 1993, Beard and Fox 2008, MacRae 2003

Most studies merge Self and Identity

- **Identity:**
 - Sameness over time
 - How we are seen by others as well as how we see ourselves.
- **Self:**
 - A sense of one's own being
 - Refers primarily to the experience of the individual

Self: a sense of one's being

- Self-reference: 'I' used frequently and coherently
- Awareness of change: 'I'm not able to remember things the way I used to.'

**I'm still the same person:
The impact of early-stage
dementia on identity**

Dementia
10(3) 379-398
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Lisa S. Caddell
Bangor University, Wales

Linda Clare
Bangor University, Wales

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

10 patients

Early stages

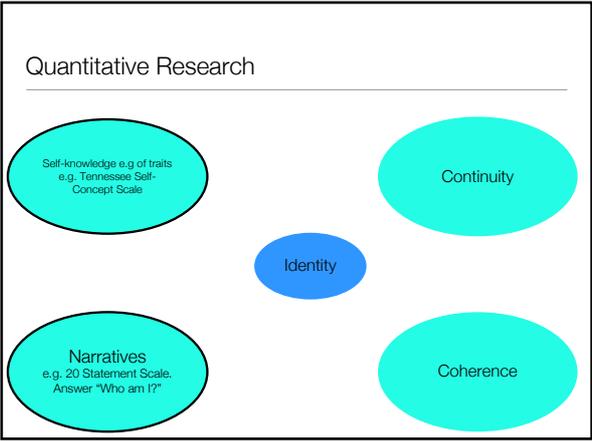
**I'm still the same person:
The impact of early-stage
dementia on identity**

Lisa S. Caddell
Bangor University, Wales

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- Overall it appears that all participants were able to think of ways in which they differed to their pre-dementia selves, but these tended to be very specific things related to symptoms and emotional reactions to the symptoms, **rather than feeling as though they had changed on the whole as a person.**
- Few people highlighted any major changes in personality and nobody mentioned changes in attitudes, opinions, beliefs or preferences since the onset of dementia.
- Key words: continuity and change in sense of identity (but not

Quantitative Research



Sense of identity in advanced Alzheimer's dementia: a cognitive dissociation between sameness and selfhood?

Marie-Lou Etard, Michael Laisney, Aurelija Juskaite, Odile Letort, Hervé Platel, Francis Etard, Béatrice Desgranges

Consciousness and Cognition, 2013

- Patients with AD, even when severe, had a well-defined sense of identity.
- Patients may access unchanged key personality features, probably thanks to their partly preserved semantic memory and automatic access to certain knowledge.

People with dementia are resourceful in response to identity threat

Managing Identity While Living With Alzheimer's Disease
 Hazel McRae¹

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 10.1080/136078610.529000
 http://www.informaworld.com
 DOI: 10.1080/136078610.529000
 www.informaworld.com

of previous research. They show that persons with early-stage AD can, with resilience and resourcefulness, respond to the threat to self the disease presents, finding ways to manage and preserve identity. In contrast to previous studies reporting issues of selfhood to be prominent, most of the participants did not believe they had changed very much, nor did they express a great deal of concern about potential changes in self. Reflecting the interac-

Patients are resourceful in response to identity threat

- **Normalising:** make the best of it, going to fight it, carry on regardless. "I'm still me, I've always had a bad memory."
- **Living in the present:** "Just live day-to-day"
- **Altering aspirations**
- **Social comparison:** "It could be worse; there are others in the same boat."
- **The life review**
- **Constructing new dimensions:** "I want to advocate for others and help with research."

McRae 2010

By listening to people with Alzheimer's, we see that identity construction is a deliberate, if shifting, accomplishment for people with dementia rather than simply an illness where self-identity increasingly vanishes.

Renée L. Beard

Family



© Giuseppe Miro

Family

Research Article

Neurodegeneration and Identity

Nina Strohminger¹ and Shaun Nichols²
¹Yale School of Management, Yale University, and Department of Philosophy, University of Arizona

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 Psychological Science
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SAGE

Family

Identity

Do you feel like you still know who the patient is?
 Do they ever seem like a stranger to you?
 Do you sense that they are still the same person underneath?

Alzheimer's

