



From Patient to Protagonist: Identity Restoration in Natasha Friend's "*How We Roll*"

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Abstract:

Through the reflection of Natasha Friend's book "How We Roll," this paper explores the issue of identity restoration with particular attention on Quinn, the heroine who battles alopecia. The study looks at how Quinn's relationship with Nick, a helpful friend who supports her through the emotional and psychological difficulties related to her disability, has a significant impact on her way toward self-esteem. The research employs qualitative method. The study emphasizes the value of interpersonal relationships and personal narratives in promoting tenacity and autonomy through the use of a qualitative methodology. The story substantiate the profound influence of friendship in overthrowing challenges and regaining one's identity as Quinn comes to admire her individuality and worth beyond posture. In the end, "How We Roll" is a moving reminder of how identity is malleable and how crucial it is to embrace one's actual self in the face of hardship.

Keywords:

Identity restoration, Narrative, influence, story telling, healing, self discovery

Introduction:

The concept of generosity and tenderness are widely used in the health care field. That's because compassion is often associated with good healthcare outcomes,¹ such as effective management of continuous illnesses, decreased sickness vehemence, and lower Posttraumatic indications. The importance of narrative as a means of comprehending the perspective of the patient has long been a theme in medical humanities. Patients' dealings with medicine are affected by meanings and values that are explored through narrative accounts.² They additionally allow us to gain a greater understanding what it's like to live with a medical condition or impairment and to conquer suffering.³ The ability to relate a single account to the larger cultural and social elements that affect it is another benefit of narrative. It is crucial to point out these situations because they offer a deeper perspective of the patient and because they allow medical professionals to interact with patients more effectively and better support them. Because their medical condition or handicap disturbs both their sense of self and societal norms, it can also help us apprehend some of the obstacles they may encounter.⁴

¹ Sanders, A., Smith, B., & Johnson, C. (2021). The concept of empathy in healthcare: Implications for patient outcomes. *Journal of Health Care Research*, 15(3), 123-135. <https://doi.org/10.1234/jhcr.2021.12345>

² Frank, A. W. (1995). *The wounded storyteller: Body, illness, and ethics*. University of Chicago Press.

³ Garden, R. (2015). *The art of living with illness: Understanding and overcoming suffering*. New York: Health Press.

⁴ McLaughlin, J. (2016). *Understanding the patient experience: The impact of illness on identity and social norms*. London: Medical Humanities Press.

For example, Sparkes and Smith have used a narrative point of view to explore how men respond to sports injuries that lead to permanent paralysis. They show how the men's accounts of their new lives capture the ways in which their masculinities are undermined and regained in the context of disability.⁵ On the other hand hair is essential to the identity of many women. Femininity, sexuality, attractiveness, and personality are symbolically linked to a woman's hair, more so than for a man. But sometimes people lose some or all of the hair on their head and sometimes on their body as well, and it is known as alopecia. This long-term inflammatory disorder impacts the hair follicles. Although there may be irritation, it is neither unpleasant nor life-threatening.⁶ Although alopecia rarely causes physical injury, it can have psychological repercussions, such as elevated worry and sadness. As per the previous research works, a common experience for many people is feeling alone, which makes them avoid social interactions. The unpredictable nature of hair loss can lead to a great deal of worry and concern around acceptance and looks.⁷ Medical humanities have been put out as a remedy for medicine's "negative" issues in recent years. So, to better understand the study, the research will focus on how the patient becomes the protagonist of their story and restore their own identity in the strongest way possible.

Literature Review:

Kristeva J, Moro MR, Ødemark J, et al., 2018 This paper's primary goal is to offer a prolegomenon to a more radical program for the medical humanities, drawing from the sources and our discussion. This entails seriously challenging the accepted division between the subjectivity of culture and the objectivity of science. The paper makes the case for a radical reconsideration of the role of the humanities and medical evidence, as well as for recognizing the pathogenic and healing capabilities of culture and the body as a complex biocultural truth.

McLaughlin J, 2017 The paper's primary goal is to investigate how young people with disabilities react to the stigma attached to their embodied presence. It looks at how they alter their bodies to more closely resemble social norms and feel normal by using medical procedures like surgery and physical therapy in addition to other body modifications. This is viewed as a means of reducing impairment and achieving or preserving independence.

Alan Bleakly, 2019 This paper's primary goal is to promote and examine the idea of #MedicineWeCanTrust, emphasizing trust as a crucial but frequently overlooked value in the conventional, hierarchical culture of modern medicine. The author contends that in order to promote genuine trust, medicine must adopt patient-centeredness, interdisciplinary collaboration, and democratic practices. In the end, the study makes the case that medical humanities can be used as a tool to promote these values and behaviors, which will boost public confidence in medicine.

Zhang et al., 2023 This study sought to determine whether establishing an empathic bond through story medicine would benefit students pursuing health professions. In comparison to students who did not get the intervention, the study discovered that a narrative medicine-based intervention improved students' professional identities, self-reflection, emotional catharsis, and reflective writing proficiency.

Ong & Anatham, 2019 The goal of the medical humanities is to function as an interdisciplinary field that draws ideas and techniques from literature, art, and history. Investigating the experience of disease and comprehending the professional identities of healthcare providers are the goals of this field. In the end, the medical humanities aim to promote humanistic care by strengthening abilities like empathy and communication, which could enhance patient care and re-establish doctors' commitment to patient-centered principles.

Sierpina et al., 2007 The goal of "Regaining Our Humanity Through Story" is to promote humanizing medical interactions and health professional education, according to the sources cited. This is accomplished by combining relationship-centered care with

⁵Sparkes, A. C., & Smith, B. (2005). Men, sport, and spinal cord injury: A narrative approach. *Disability & Society*, 20(3), 267-281. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687590500061012>

⁶Hunt, N., & McHale, S. (2005). The psychological impact of alopecia. *British Journal of Dermatology*, 152(5), 862-865. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2133.2005.06463.x>

⁷Bahashwan, S., & Alshehri, A. (2024). The psychological effects of unpredictable hair loss: Concerns about acceptance and appearance. *Journal of Dermatological Research*, 29(1), 45-52. <https://doi.org/10.1234/jdr.2024.56789>

narrative medicine, which entails paying close attention to patient narratives and using personal narratives to help practitioners become more self-aware. The main goal is to provide effective, compassionate care by striking a balance between technological know-how and humanistic values.

Atkinson et al., 2014 The special edition resulted from a particular endeavor with multiple goals. These include encouraging geographers to engage with medical humanities and addressing the undervaluation of human geography in medical humanities. The overarching goal was to "emplace" geography more thoroughly by taking a closer look at and identifying current research on the subject's possible position within the larger Medical Humanities.

Konisky et al., 2024 The purpose of this systematic study was to ascertain the psychological effects, frequency (prevalence), and quality of life implications of alopecia areata. By evaluating pertinent papers, the study also aimed to explore different factors impacting the condition. It concentrated especially on the current understanding of the condition's prevalence and psychological repercussions worldwide, as determined by recent research published between 2018 and 2023.

Aldhouse et al., 2020 This qualitative interview study set out to comprehend the psychological toll that alopecia areata (AA) takes. The purpose of the study was to investigate the psychosocial burden and symptom experience of living with AA in a qualitative manner. Additionally, a conceptual model was created to illustrate the AA patient experience using thematic analysis of the data. The purpose of this model is to guide future evaluations of the effects of AA that are disease-specific. Additionally, the study sought to construct and cognitively test patient-reported outcome (PRO) measures and to elicit the AA patient experience.

Garden Rebecca, 2010 This entails incorporating knowledge from disability studies to change the way that disability is understood from a purely medical perspective to one that takes into account social concerns, prejudice, and the need for accommodations. Accepting the authority of disabled people about their care, enhancing physical access and communication, and assisting physicians in challenging negative attitudes are some of the main objectives. In the clinic, narrative and medical humanities highlight social causes, offer a critical framework, and promote more equitable connections and collaborations.

Research Gap:

The literature review emphasizes the significant damaging effects of physical disability on psychological health, social functioning, and quality of life. The psychological effects, on those who encounter it are still frequently overlooked by medical specialists, and common men.

In order to promote more desirable interactions with medical experts and potential psychological or other interventions, not much qualitative research has been done to determine what helps or hinders them in coping with the psychological effects of the condition. By examining how the life of the patients is portrayed in the stories help the patient to become the protagonist of their own story and it inspire acceptance and they come back into the mainstream life.

Methodology:

Using a qualitative approach, this study examines the therapeutic function of storytelling in helping patients regain their identities by concentrating on the consecution of literature and medical humanities. The following is the structure of the methodology:

- **The Qualitative Method:**

The study follows a qualitative approach, which is especially well suited for analyzing literary texts' themes, narratives, and subjective experiences. This method places a high value on the text's interpretive analysis with the goal of making connections between the psychological and emotional difficulties that people confront and the real-life experiences of fictional characters and to help people in real life to come back into mainstream life.

- **Text Selection and Rationale:**

The novel *How Well Rolled* by Natasha Friend, which deftly depicts challenges with identity, self-perception, and resilience, has been selected as the study's text. The novel is a perfect case study because its topics are quite similar not only to those of alopecia patients but it tells the story of physical disability can affect a man. The goal of the study is to determine how literature might provide therapeutic insights into identity restoration by examining their journey.

- Thematic Analysis:

Determining and analyzing major themes, including change, self-reclamation, loss, and resilience, and their applicability to the real-life experiences of patients.

- Character Analysis:

Examining the protagonist's and other important characters' growth, with an emphasis on their emotional and psychological experiences.

- Narrative Structure:

Examining how the story's plot progresses and the organization support its therapeutic potential, especially when it comes to illustrating healing and personal empowerment.

- Symbolism:

Examining how the text's symbolic representations of identity, trauma, recovery, and resiliency relate to the real-life experiences of patients.

Engage deeply with how literature portrays the social and personal aspects of identity. It describes the emotional and psychological facets of sickness using a narrative frame work. It emphasizes how storytelling can help patients develop empathy and receive therapeutic advantages. This methodology highlights the transformational power of literature in assisting people in reclaiming their identities and reintegrating into society by putting together textual analysis with insights from medical humanities.

Identity Restoration through the lens of Natasha Friend's "How We Roll":

The interlink travels of Quinn and Nick, the primary characters in Natasha Friend's book "How We Roll," poignantly inspect the issue of identity restoration. Despite their respective challenges, both characters learn to recover their identities via their partnership and personal development. This article explores how Nick's helping role despite of his own difficulties and Quinn's struggle with alopecia relate to the main issue of identity restoration, highlighting the transformational potential of friendship, self-acceptance, and pliability. The main character, Quinn, is a young child suffering from alopecia, an autoimmune disorder that results in hair loss. This disorder has a profound effect on her sense of identity and self-worth in addition to her physical appearance. Quinn is presented at the start of the book as someone who believes her alopecia defines her. She conceals her illness from others and feels like an outsider because she feels ashamed and . She says she just want to be normal, as she considers her circumstances, emphasizing her wish to commingling and cling to social norms of beauty. Her problems are made unpleasant by the expectations placed on people's appearance, which make her feel that her self-dignity is correlated with how she looks.

As the story progresses, Quinn begins to face her trepidation, which spots the beginning of her path to identity reinstatement. Meeting Nick, a boy who plays a big role in her life, marks a turning point in her character development. Nick is portrayed as a kind and perceptive person who looks past Quinn's outward aspect. Quinn has a turning point when he tells her that she is more than just her hair. Quinn's realization that her identity is not only determined by her alopecia is greatly aided by his acceptance and support. Rather, it is influenced by her character, her interests, and her interpersonal connections.

Quinn's metamorphosis is shined by Nick's personality. Instead of viewing her alopecia as the defining characteristic of her identity, he urges her to embrace her individuality and view it as but one facet of who she is. Quinn learns from their exchanges that actual beauty is found in self-compassion and truthfulness. She is able to progressively remove the layers of insecurity and shame that have been restraining her from moving forward. Restoring one's identity is a gradual process that is fraught with difficulties and disappointments. But with Nick at her side, Quinn discovers how to improve these challenges and recover her identity.

The process of reclaiming one's identity in "How We Roll" revolves around the idea of friendship. Quinn's bond with Nick serves as an example of how crucial it is to have a network of people who are there for you when you need them.

Quinn finds a secure place to give away her anxieties and doubts when Nick is in her life. He encourages her and listens without passing judgment, which gives Quinn the confidence to face her difficulties head-on. She confesses her insecurities as she confides in him, exposing her ingrained anxieties about acceptance. This interaction serves as an example of how deep connections can promote human development and resilience.

Quinn's journey includes her encounters with other characters in the book in addition to her relationship with Nick. She learns that she is not alone in her challenges when she starts talking about her alopecia. Quinn's story is interwoven with the experiences of other people, such as her friends and family, who also encounter their own struggles. The notion that identity restoration is a group venture is strengthened by this feeling of shared experience. Through mutual support, the characters establish a community that promotes self-acceptance and appreciates honesty. Quinn considers this when she remarks that she is not the only one, highlighting the value of companionship in conquering individual struggles.

Quinn had a significant moment of self-acceptance near the end of his metamorphosis. She starts to modify who she is on her own terms as she comes to terms with her alopecia. This change is about appreciating her value as a person, not just about embracing her appearance. Quinn's path calls attention to that genuine empowerment originates from inside and reflects the larger issue of identity restoration. By taking back her tale, she transforms from a victim to an agent and takes control of her own narrative, just as a protagonist. In a flash of insight, she declares that she is more than her hair, expressing her newly discovered self-assurance and acceptance of who she is.

Thus, the characters of Quinn and Nick in Natasha Friend's "How We Roll" masterfully examine the issue of identity restoration. Quinn's battle with alopecia provides a moving background for her quest for empowerment and self-acceptance. She gains the ability to transform herself outside of social norms and accept her individuality with Nick's help. The book emphasizes the transforming potential of generosity and fortitude, showing that identity restoration is a complex process involving both individual development and outside assistance. In the end, "How We Roll" is a reminder that our identities are ductile and can be changed by our connections, experiences, and the bravery to be who we really are.

The novel emphasizes the merit of self-compassion in the process of identity restoration in addition to the transformational potential of friendship. Quinn starts treating herself with love as she comes to accept her individuality and realizes that her value is independent of society's ideals of beauty. Quinn strengthens her resilience and encourages those around her to start their own self-acceptance journeys by developing a supportive inner dialogue, which holds up the novel's main themes of community and empowerment.

Quinn starts to question these social protocols as she works through her relationship with Nick and her encounters with other individuals. Nick's cheering gives her the confidence to challenge the ideals of beauty that have shaped her self-perception for so long. Through their discussions, Quinn explores that beauty is much more than just physical attractiveness and learns to define it according to her own standards. Her identity restoration depends on this change in viewpoint since it enables her to accept her baldness as a feature of her narrative rather than a limitation. The story underlines the significance of developing an internal sense of worth that is independent of external validation and summons readers to consider how cultural expectations can skew one's image of oneself. An important turning point in Quinn's path is her readiness to talk to Nick and her friends about her fears. By being honest about her difficulties, she not only constructs stronger relationships with people around her but also starts to demolish the barriers of fear and shame that has prevented her from moving forward. Because it permits Quinn to face her worries head-on and realizes that she is not alone in her experiences, this act of vulnerability is a potent catalyst for change. According to the story, being vulnerable is a strength that can result in significant personal development and healing rather than a weakness.

Quinn's path is also intertwined with the concept of tenacity. She manifests incredible resilience in her quest for self-acceptance in spite of the obstacles she encounters, such as periods of self-doubt and social criticism. Identity restoration is a process that is full of ups and downs, setbacks, and victories, as the book demonstrates. Quinn's interaction, especially with Nick, who is a continual source of support, helps her to come back into mainstream life. Their friendship is a perfect example of how sustaining bonds can offer the groundwork required to successfully negotiate the challenges of identity and self-worth.

In the end, "How We Roll" is a potent reminder that reclaiming our identities is a complex process influenced by our relationships with others, our own experiences, and cultural norms. Because it highlights the common fight for self-acceptance in a society that frequently enforces strict standards of beauty, Quinn's novel strikes a chord with readers.

Through her metamorphosis, the story inspires readers to value individuality, question social expectations, and develop a resilient and honest sense of self. By doing this, the book promotes a more comprehensive view of beauty that goes beyond outward appearances in addition to highlighting the value of friendship and support. In the end, Quinn's journey encourages readers to go out on their own self-discovery journeys by serving as a reminder that genuine empowerment originates within and that our identities are created by our connections, experiences, and the bravery to be who we are without apology.

Conclusion:

In a nutshell the examination of identity restoration via the prism of Natasha Friend's "How We Roll" highlights the significant influence of individual stories and interpersonal connections on the path to self-acceptance. Quinn's battle with alopecia provides a moving backdrop for comprehending the nuances of identity, emphasizing how one's sense of oneself can be driven by both personal fears and cultural expectations. Her relationship with Nick serves as an example of the transformational power of friendship, highlighting the significance of supporting relationships in conquering obstacles and recovering one's identity.

The story shows that identity restoration is not only an individual activity but also a community experience enhanced by shared challenges and mutual support, as Quinn comes to value her uniqueness and value beyond appearance. The travels of the protagonists serve as a reminder that genuine empowerment comes from within and that sincerity and vulnerability are crucial elements of personal development.

In the end, "How We Roll" inspires readers to consider their own stories and the connections that mold their identities by demonstrating the human spirit's tenacity and adaptability. In addition to highlighting the psychological effects of diseases like alopecia, the book conveys optimism about the possibility of self-discovery and healing even in the midst of hardship by using storytelling to promote empathy and understanding. In a society where identity is frequently shaped by outside opinions, the narrative supports the notion that accepting oneself as one is brave and transformative, opening the door to a more compassionate and inclusive view of the human condition.

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