

Discovering Your Discrete Selves

A WORKSHEET IN SELF-PHYLOGENETICS AND EXPERIENTIAL MEL-TIPLICITY

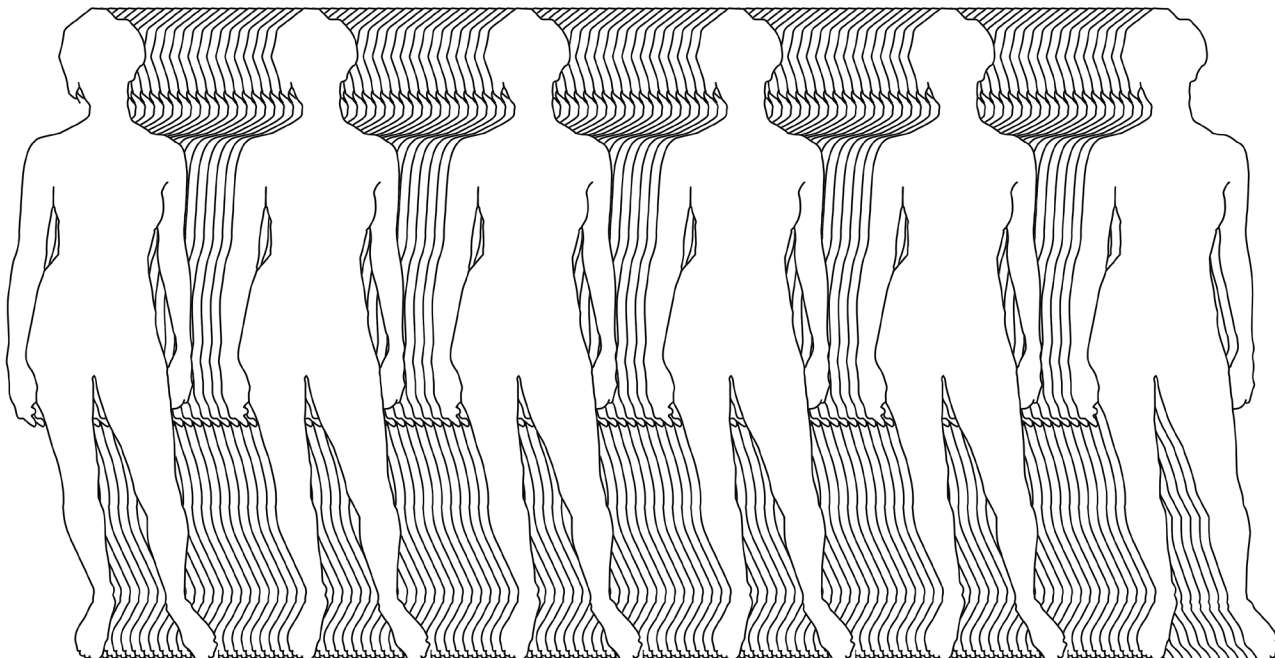
Traditionally, the disciplines of taxonomy and evolutionary biology have been restricted to cataloging physical variation passed from parent to offspring.

However, in 2014, researcher Melga Blank discovered **phenomenological evolution**. Phenomenological evolution is the linear evolution of discrete selves, contained in a single physical body. In an individual known colloquially as “Mel Keiser,” Blank identified a linear progression of one Mel phenomenologically begetting another. She termed this clade of selves **The**

Mels. By looking inward as opposed to outward, Blank uses The Mels as a case study proving that cohesive narrative identities, formulated to support fulsome self-sameness, mask the births and deaths of discrete selves, of selves begetting selves.



With this worksheet, you will investigate whether you, too, are a clade of discrete individuals, rather than a singular cohesive self. Using Blank’s system of self-identifiers, you will catalog your self-phylogenetics and attempt to identify **the approximate number of discrete selves in your clade, the approximate timeline for each self-version’s existence, and how they differ from each other**. Through these topics, the origins and substance of your identity will be redefined.



PART 2: Liminal Events of Identity Mutation

IDENTIFYING CAUSES FOR YOUR PHENOMENOLOGICAL EVOLUTION

Physical evolution creates diversity in a species to ensure successive generations are better adapted to survive challenges created by its environment. Functional traits are preserved, and outmoded traits are discarded. The same is true in phenomenological evolution, whereby each of your successive self-versions is better adapted to the challenges created by your experiences. Each of these self-versions are born out of mutations in your self-identifiers, which are caused by external events, called liminal events of identity mutation. These are events which force you to adapt, changing your self-identifiers either gradually or suddenly.

2A. On the next page is a timeline. On the left, add your birth year. Add a mark on the timeline for each year in between your birth year and the current year, already noted on the right. This is a timeline for your clade, from its origin to the present moment.

2B. Now, begin adding major life events to this timeline, which will be potential liminal events of identity mutation. Start with the big events, the main markers of your life, both positive and negative. For example, major accomplishments, when you moved to new environments, moments of trauma.

2C. Then, start to fill in the smaller events you think may have had some effect on the development of your clade by using the categories of self-identifiers. Remember, an event is simply “something that happened,” and does not need to be considered culturally significant to affect phenomenological evolution. Examples may include:

Knowledge-identifiers: when you learned to play baseball/knit/write poetry/etc., when you saw your first play/heard your first concerto/traveled to a different country, when you encountered your favorite books/music/movies/etc.

Relationship-identifiers: your boyfriends/girlfriends, your break-ups, the birth of a sister/brother/daughter/son, mentors, jobs that have given you a new role (employee-you, boss-you, teacher-you, babysitter-you), the entrance or exits of friends/family

Belief-identifiers: when you started or stopped believing in certain ideas associated with religion/politics/morals, things you've believed about yourself or others, things you've believed about your place in the world, things you value or despise

Appearance-identifiers: moments you've changed your appearance, i.e. cut/dyed your hair/piercings/tattoos, how you dress, surgeries/injuries

Feeling-identifiers: general trends of disposition, feelings associated with relationships or jobs

Action-identifiers: major actions that have defined you, jobs you've had or wanted

Write small and use branching lines to add as much about yourself over this timespan as possible.



PART 3: Births and Deaths

DETERMINING THE NUMBER OF SELF-VERSIONS IN YOUR CLADE

3A. Now study the events you've added to your timeline. Begin by looking at the beginning and end of your timeline, keeping in mind some of the larger mutations identified in the first exercise. Can you find events which contributed to these larger changes in who you are today versus who you were when you were young? Working your way inward to the middle of your timeline, circle the events which you think affected larger change.

3B. Use these events to estimate the possible births and deaths of different self-versions in your clade. This is just an estimation—data can always be re-examined. Mark these possible self-births and self-deaths on your timeline. Melga Blank identifies each of the Mel-versions in The Mels clade as Mel(v.1), Mel(v.2), Mel(v.3), etc.; label each of your self-versions as [YOUR_NAME](v.1), [YOUR_NAME](v.2), etc. You've now successfully hypothesized the existence of your own clade of self-versions.

GLOSSARY: Self-identifiers

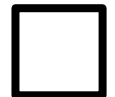
DEFINING THE CATEGORICAL DATA MARKERS OF SELF-IDENTITY



Fact-identifier: substantive demographic or statistical data. Example: birth year: 1985; family structure: nuclear; ordinal family position: second-born.



Action-identifier: particular action-type essential to identity. Example: Artist-Mel; Writer-Mel; Actor-Mel.



Belief-identifier: statements held to be true, which only rigorous proof might disprove. Example: Intelligence and goodness are the highest values; I can do everything perfectly if I try hard enough; The right thing is usually the hard thing.



Feeling-identifier: statements about subjective states/reactions, primarily correlated to external contexts. Example: I feel I am socially awkward; I feel I have no true self; I feel I am essentially good.



Knowledge-identifier: acquired facts, information, or skills (subordinate, aggregate) Example: tenacity can be affected by the effect of food on serotonin levels; Humanism, how to stretch a canvas.



Relationship-identifier: durational roles defined by specific interactions and behaviors, primarily correlated to specific interpersonal contexts. Example: friend-mel, girlfriend-mel, sister-mel, daughter-mel.



Appearance-identifier: derived and/or agential character states of detectable physical attributes. Example: blond, shoulder-length hair, muted clothing.