

Identity Development Across the Lifespan: How Memories Become Selves

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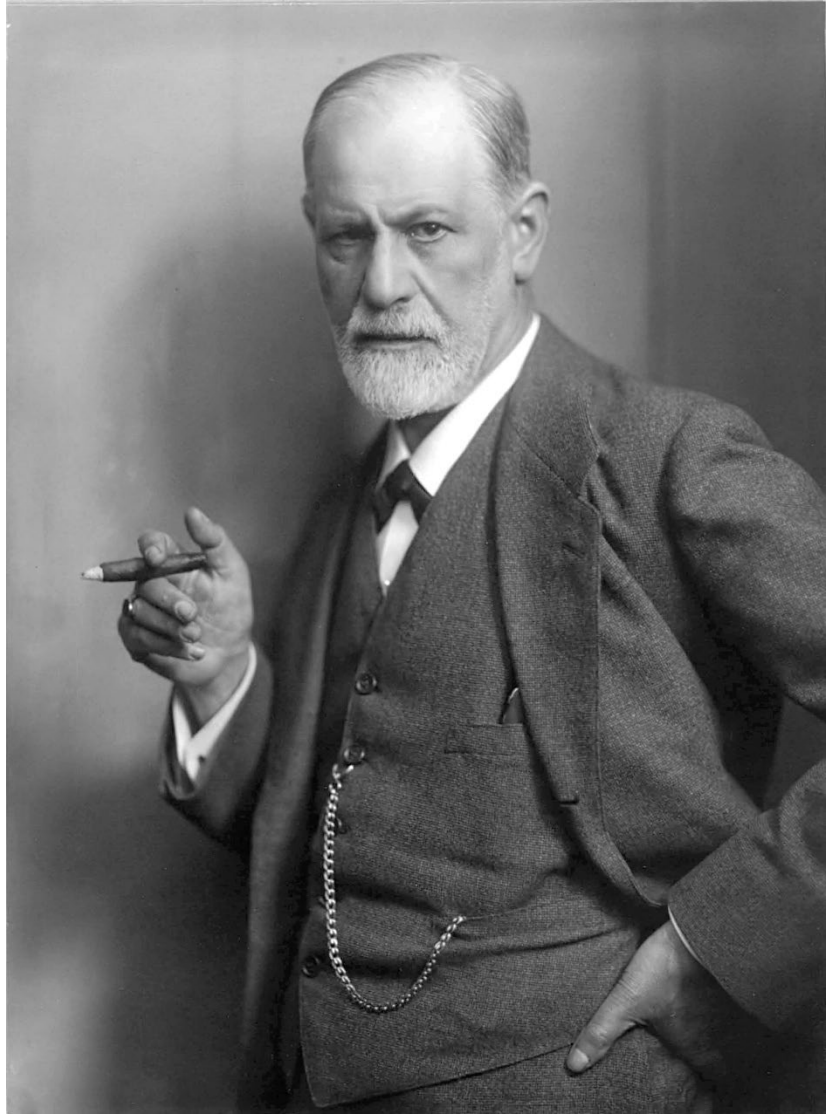


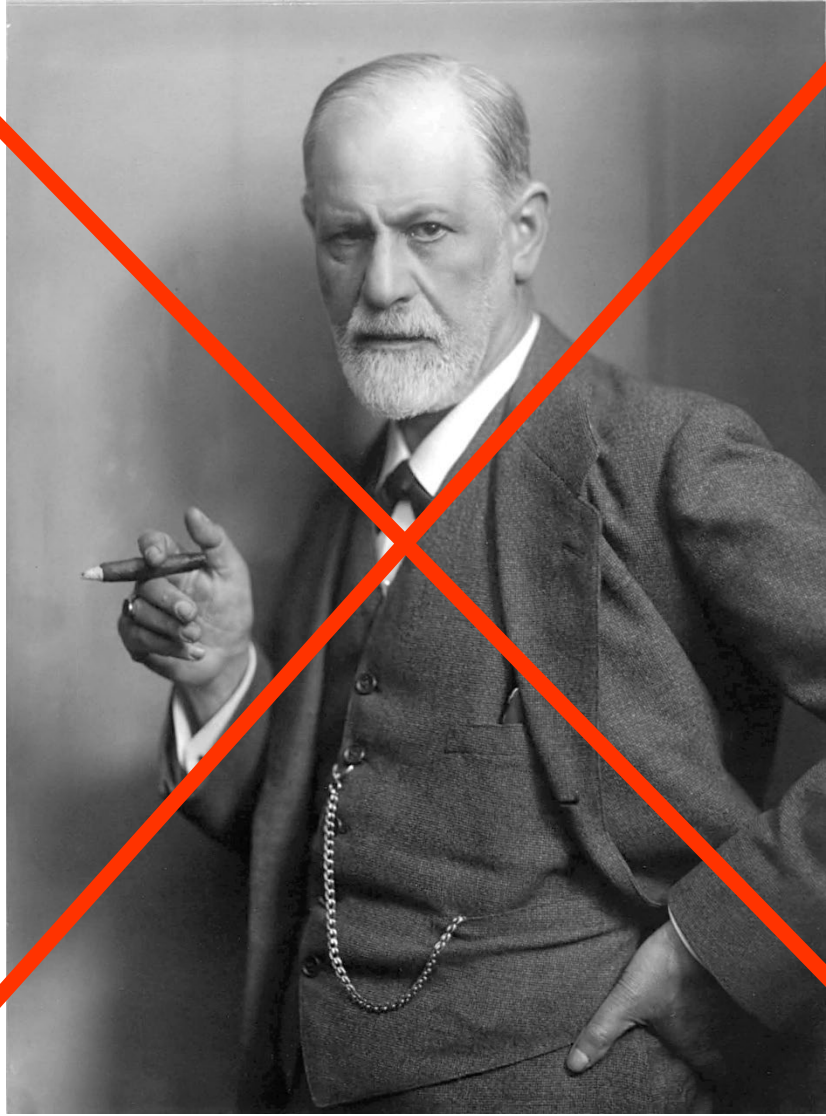
Moin Syed
University of Minnesota

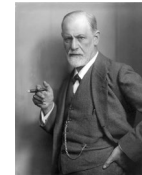
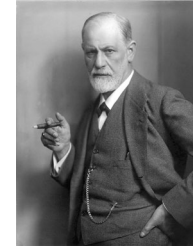
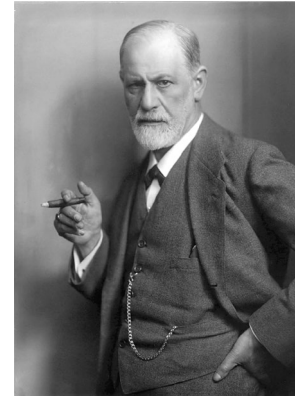
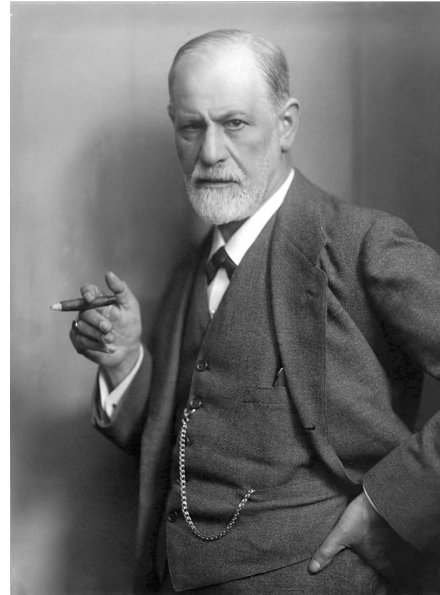
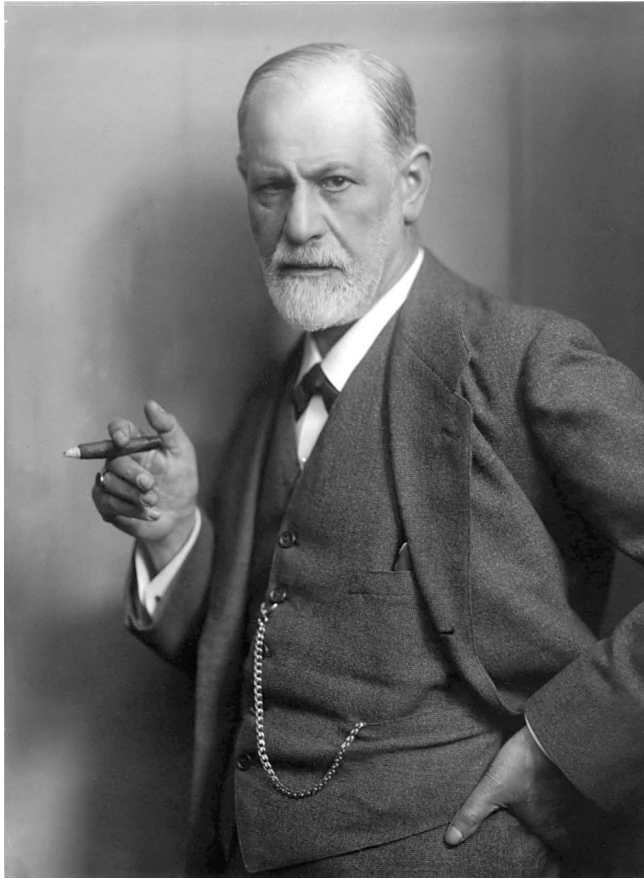


UMRA Living Well Workshop
January 20, 2026



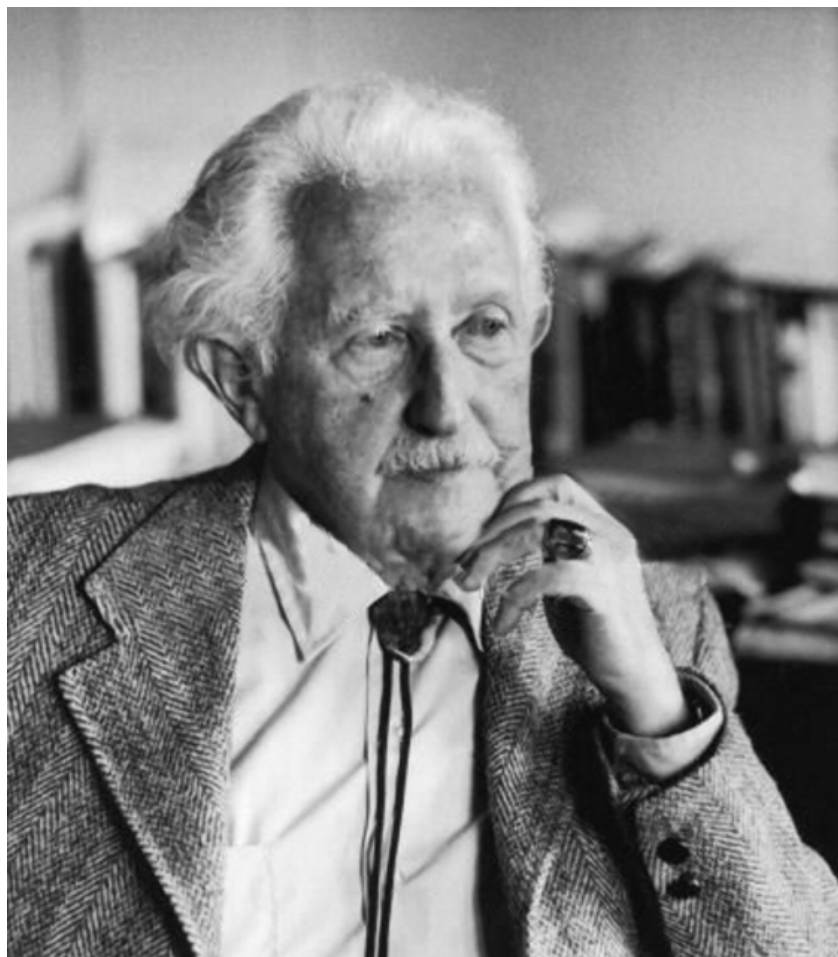




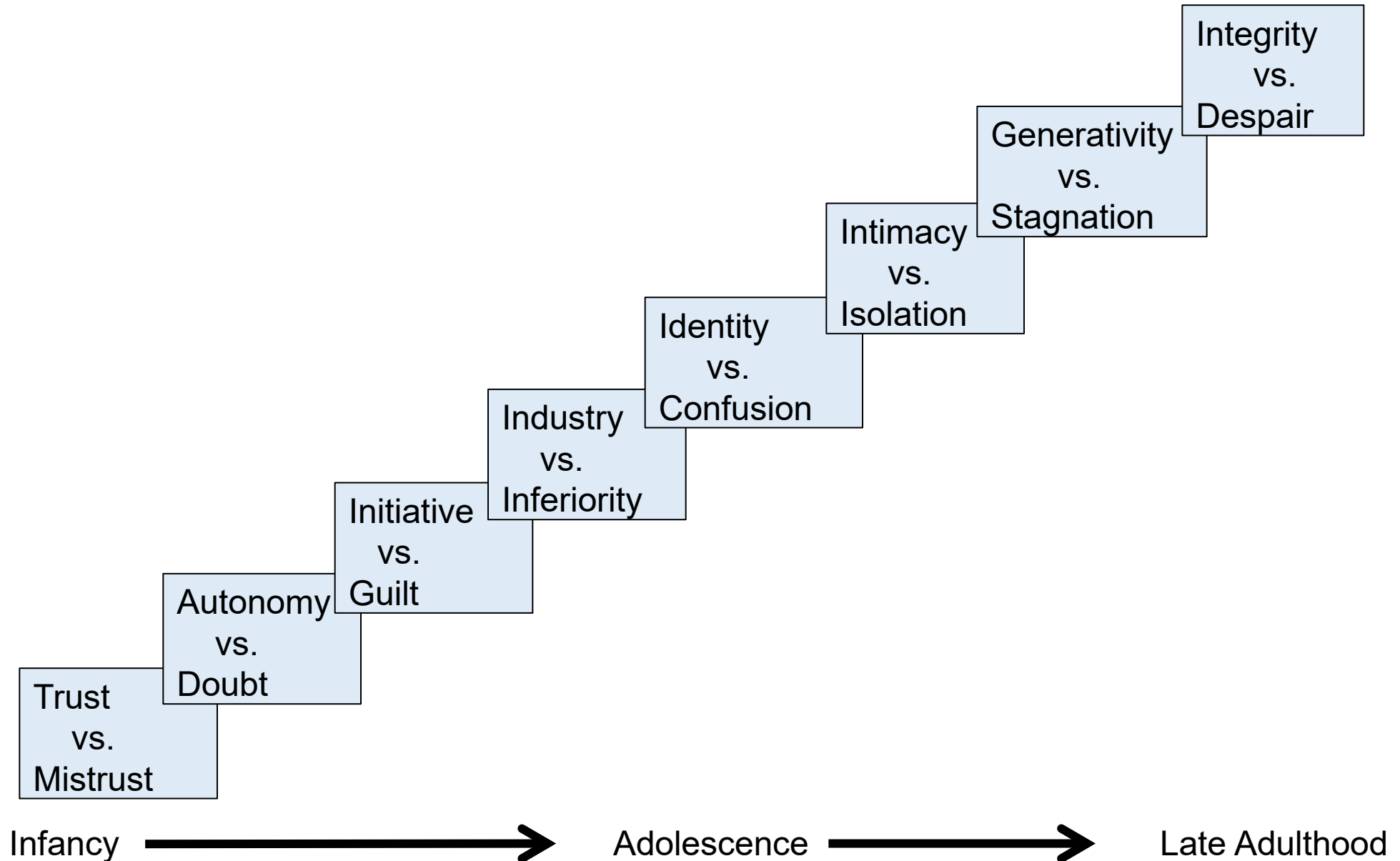


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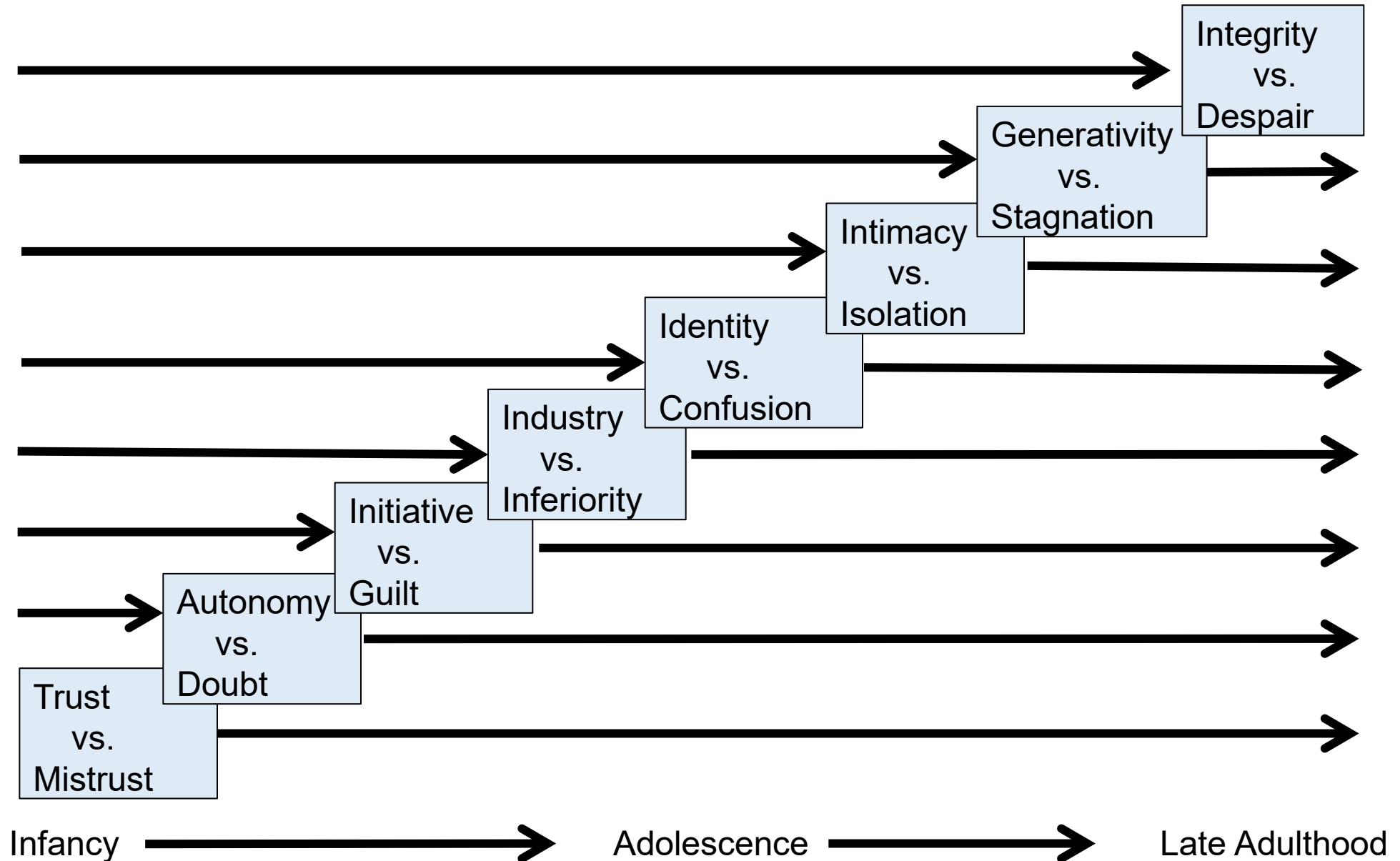
2026



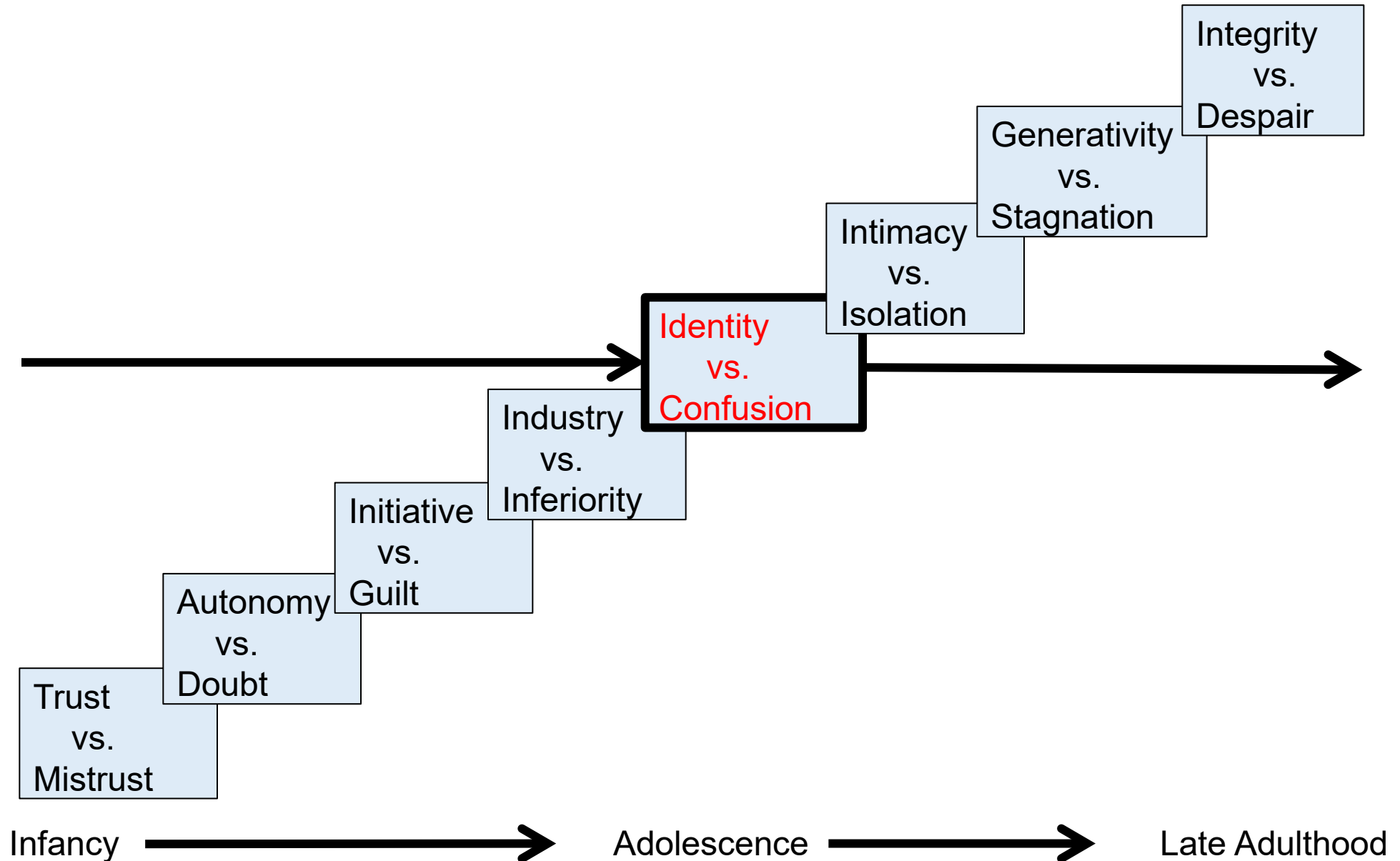
Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Theory of Development



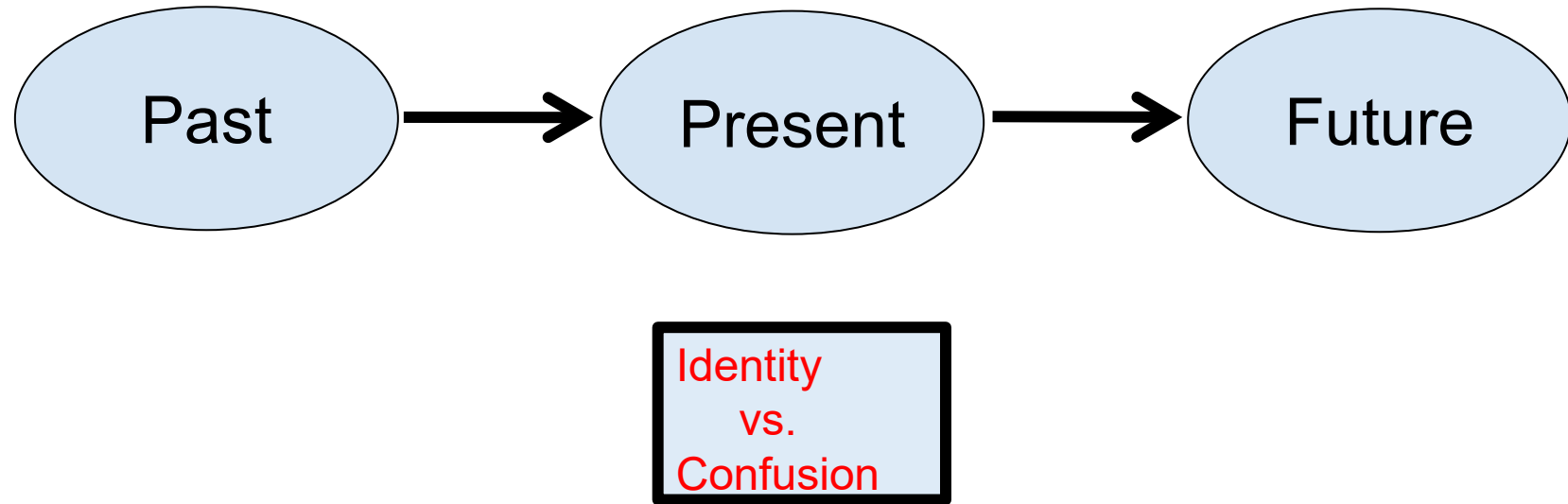
Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Theory of Development



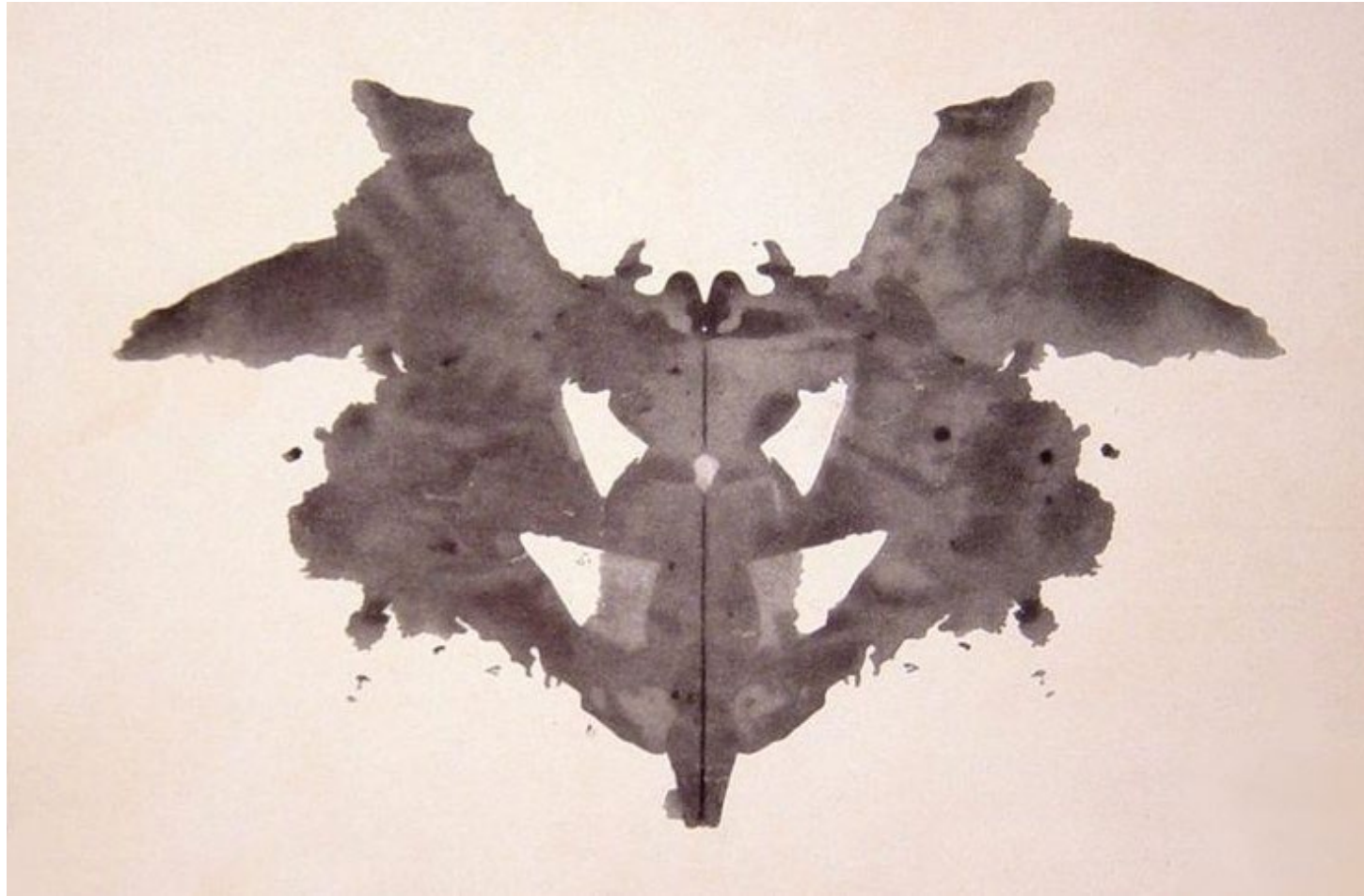
Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Theory of Development



Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Theory of Development



Rorschach Test

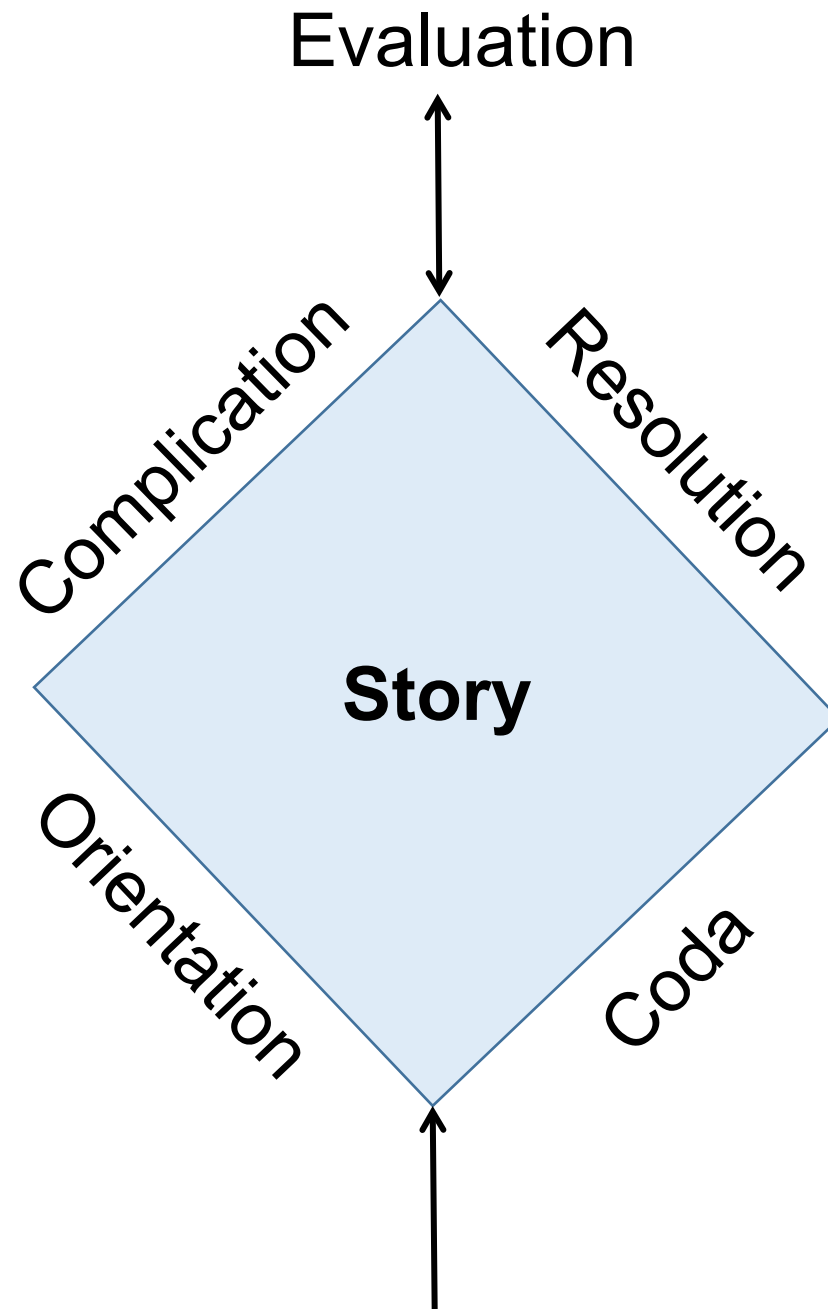


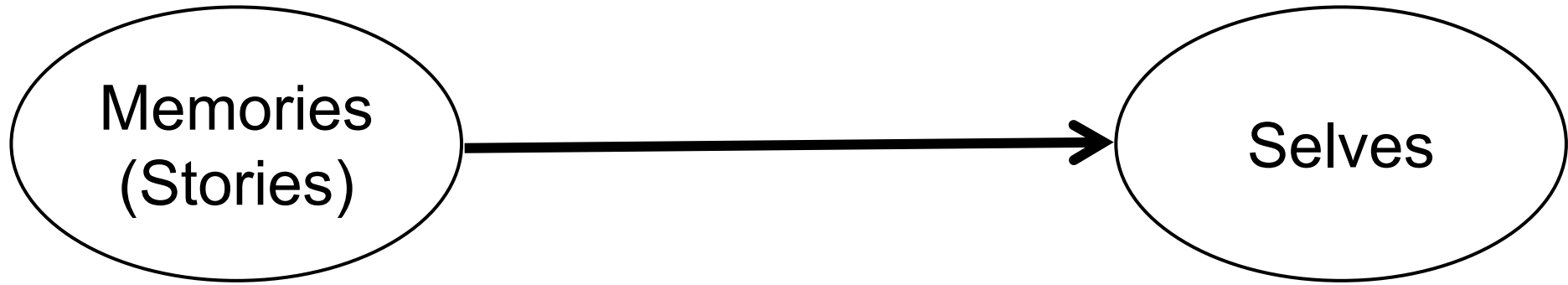
Rorschach Test



Thematic Apperception Test

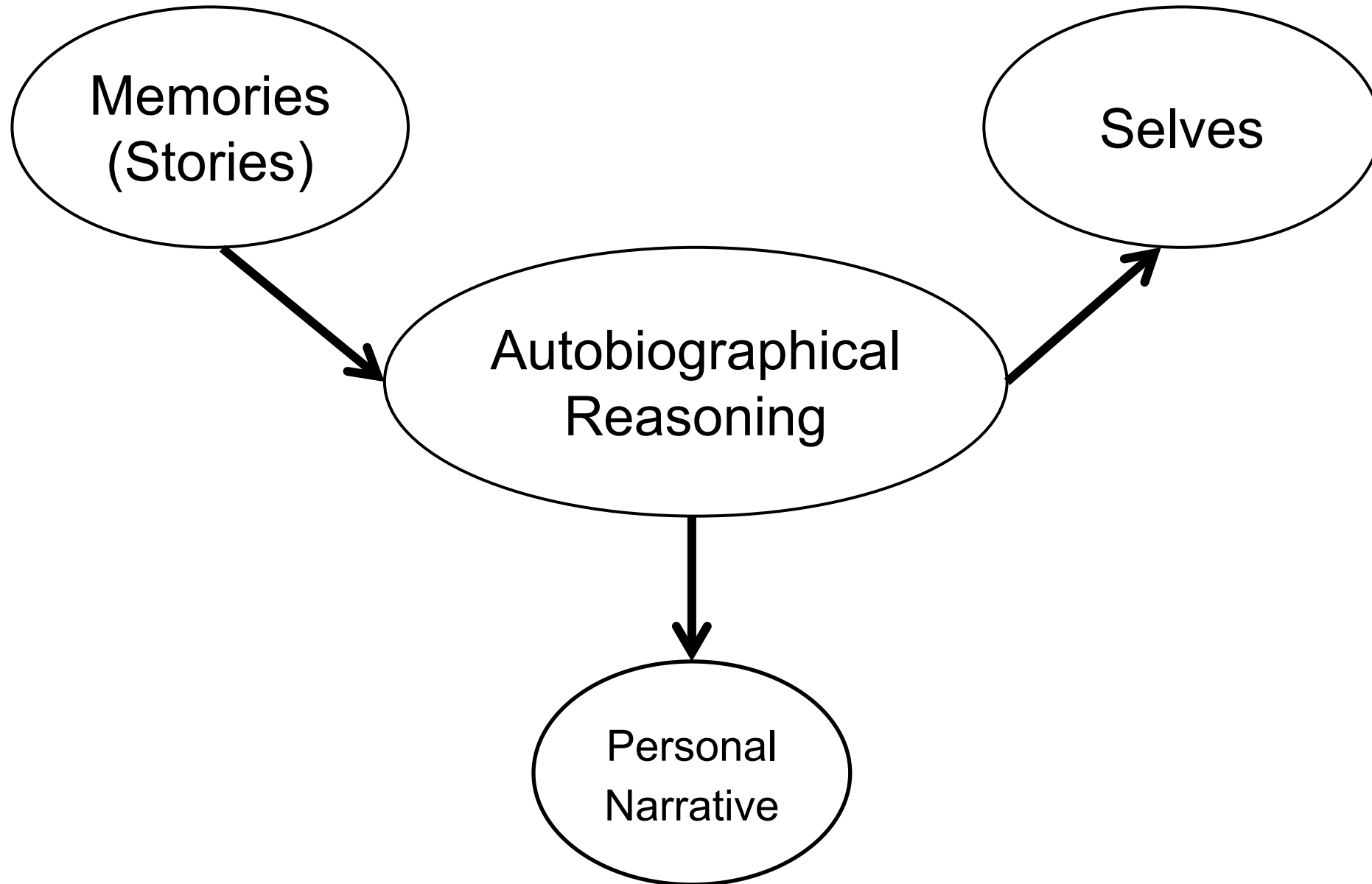


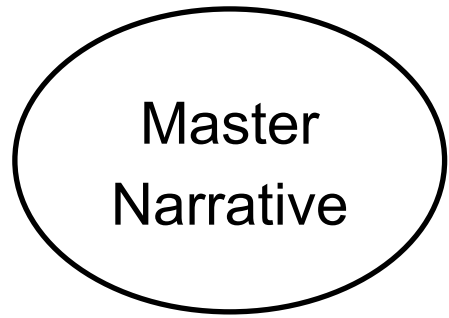




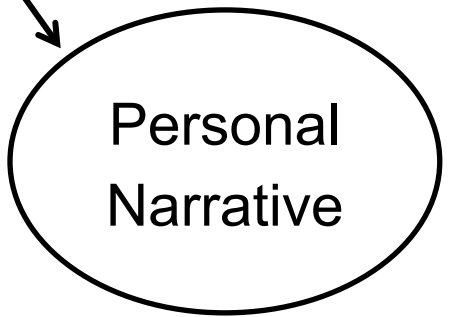
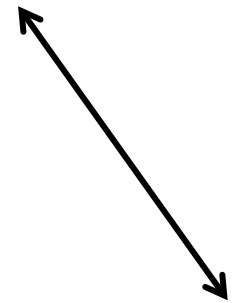
Turning Point Memory

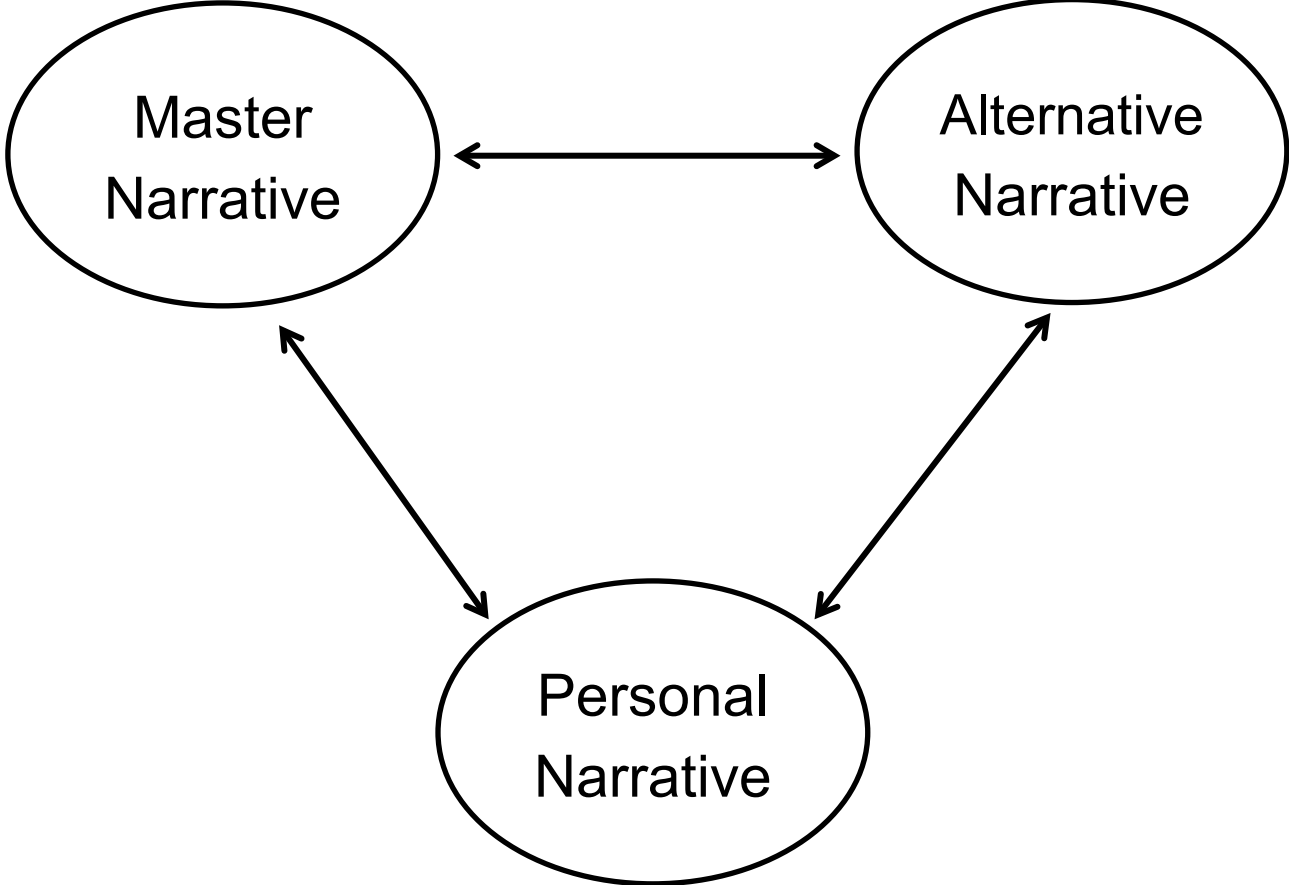
In looking back over your life, it may be possible to identify certain key moments that stand out as turning points -- episodes that marked an important change in you or your life story. **Please identify a particular episode in your life story that you now see as a turning point in your life.**



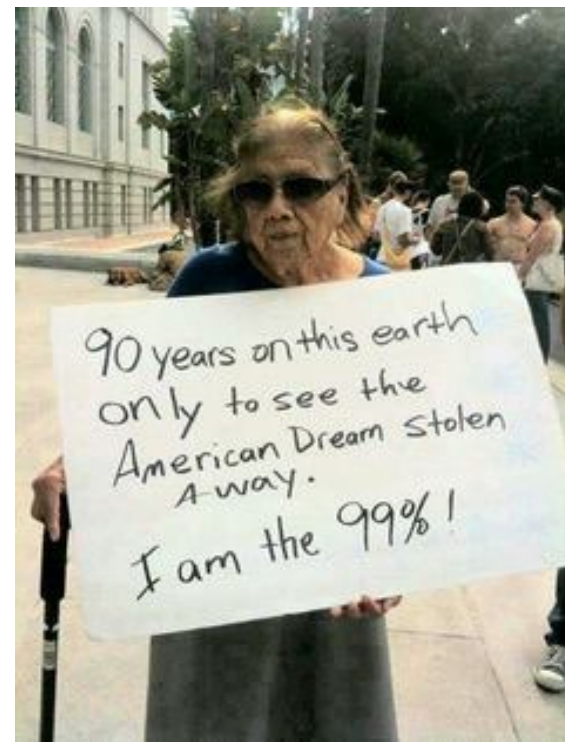
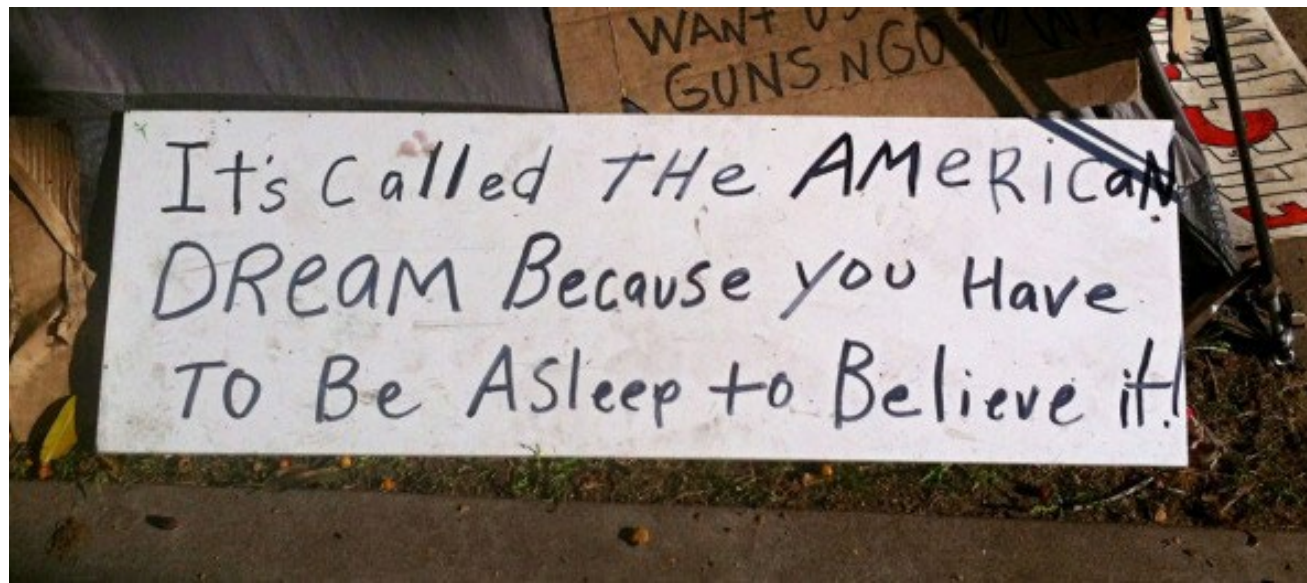


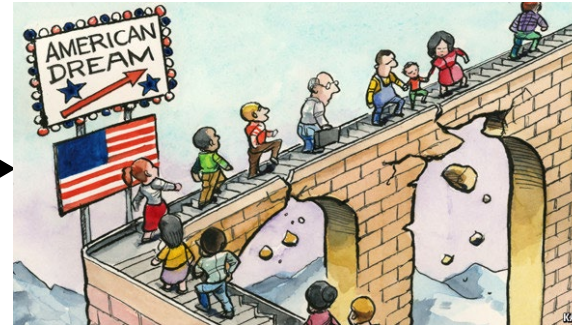
*culturally shared stories that
guide thoughts, beliefs,
values, and behaviors*



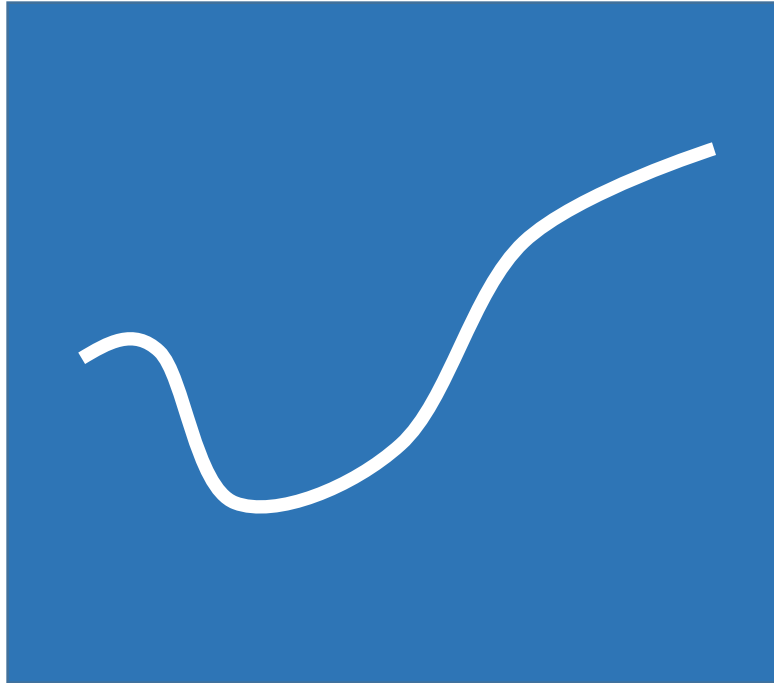








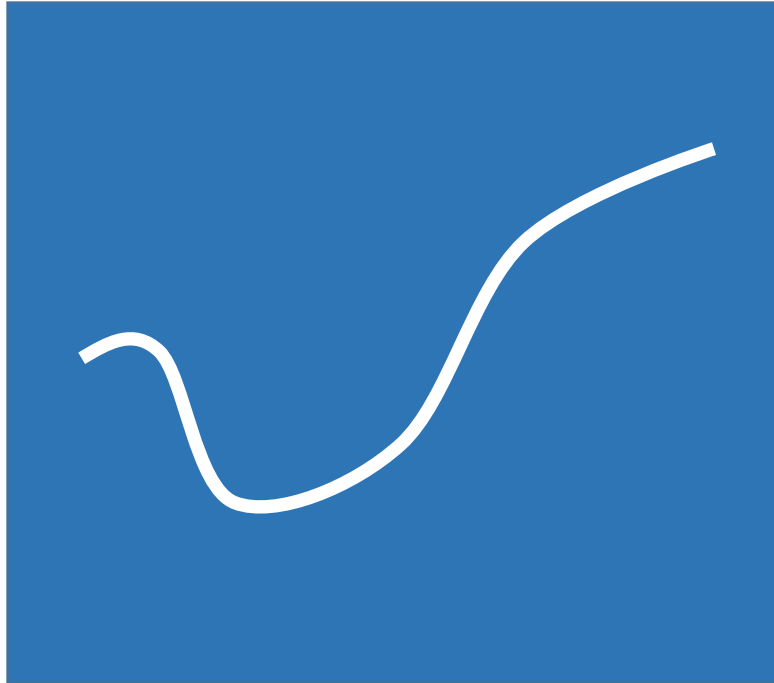
Personal
Narrative



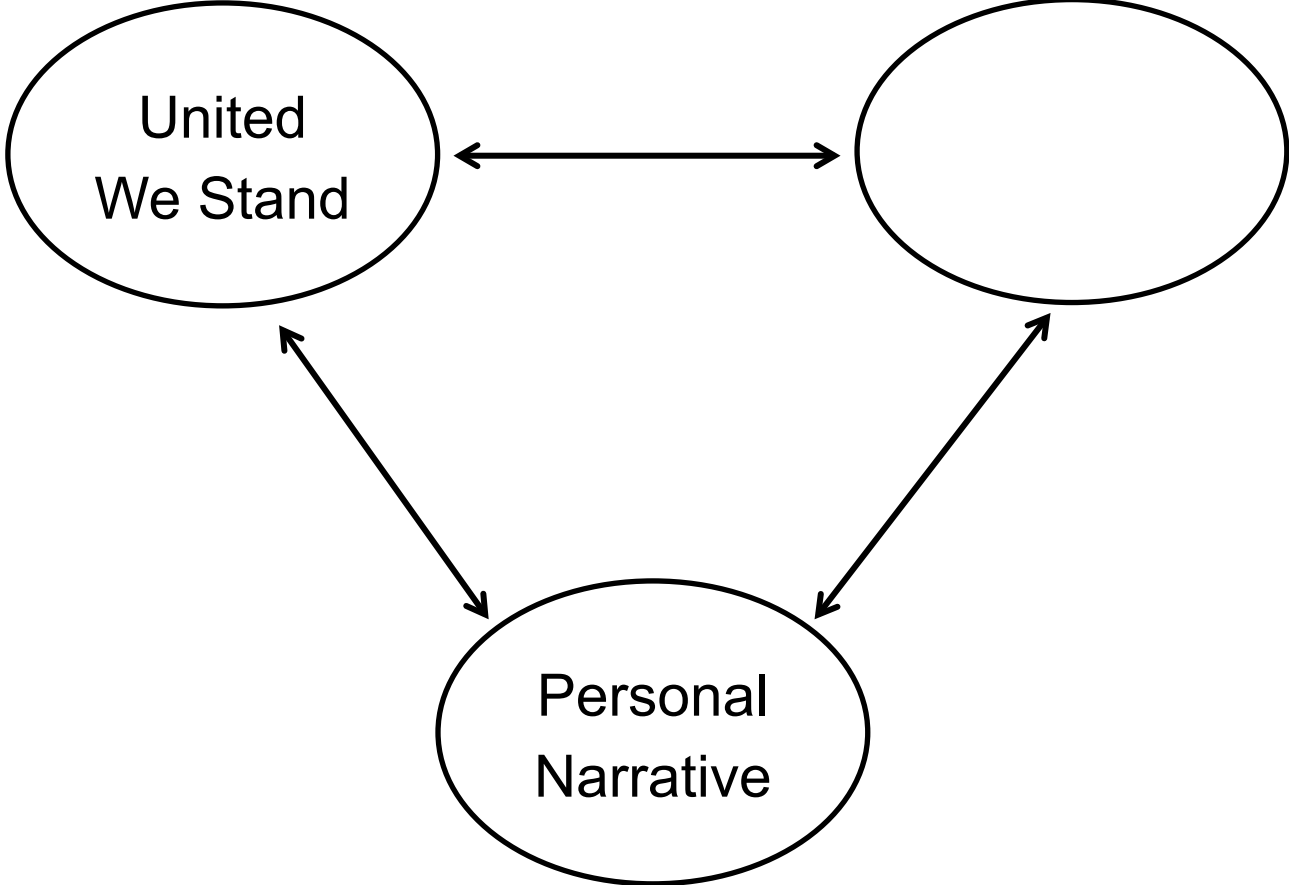
Redemptive Narrative

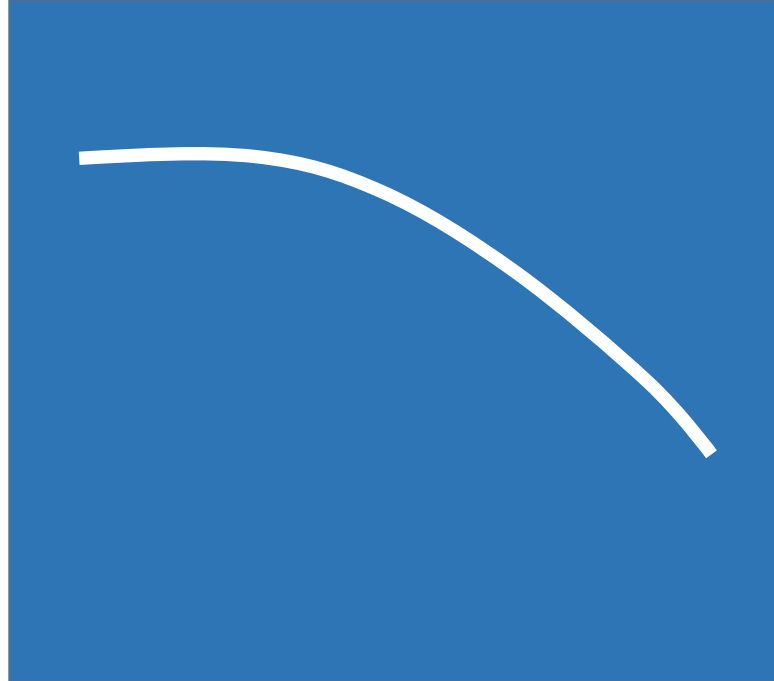
Think of your first memory of the attacks on 9/11. It is okay if you do not remember the event itself, just think of your first memory of 9/11.

- Describe the event in detail
- How did you react?
- What did you do to make sense of the event?
- How did you feel?
- Did the event affect what you think it means to be American?

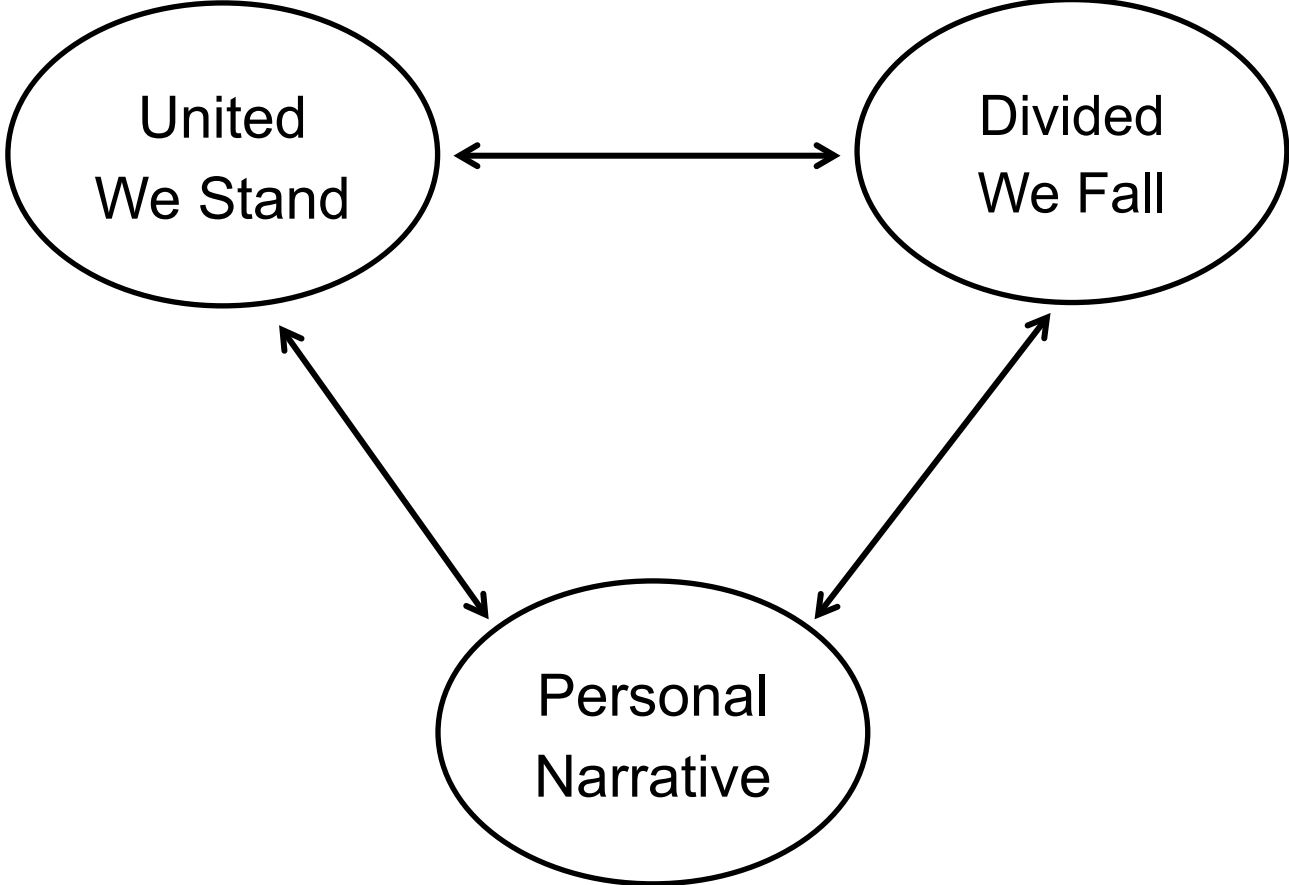


Redemptive Narrative

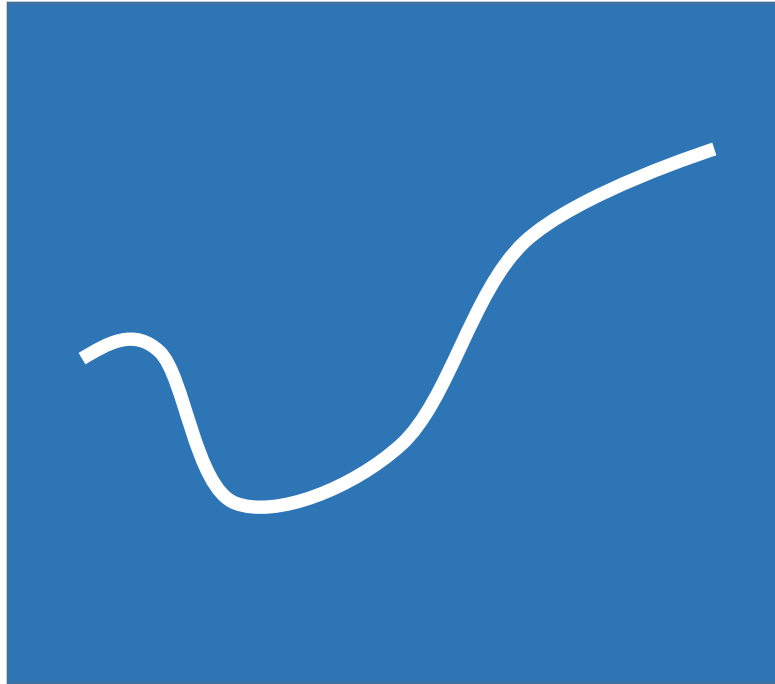




Contaminated Narrative



Israeli Youth

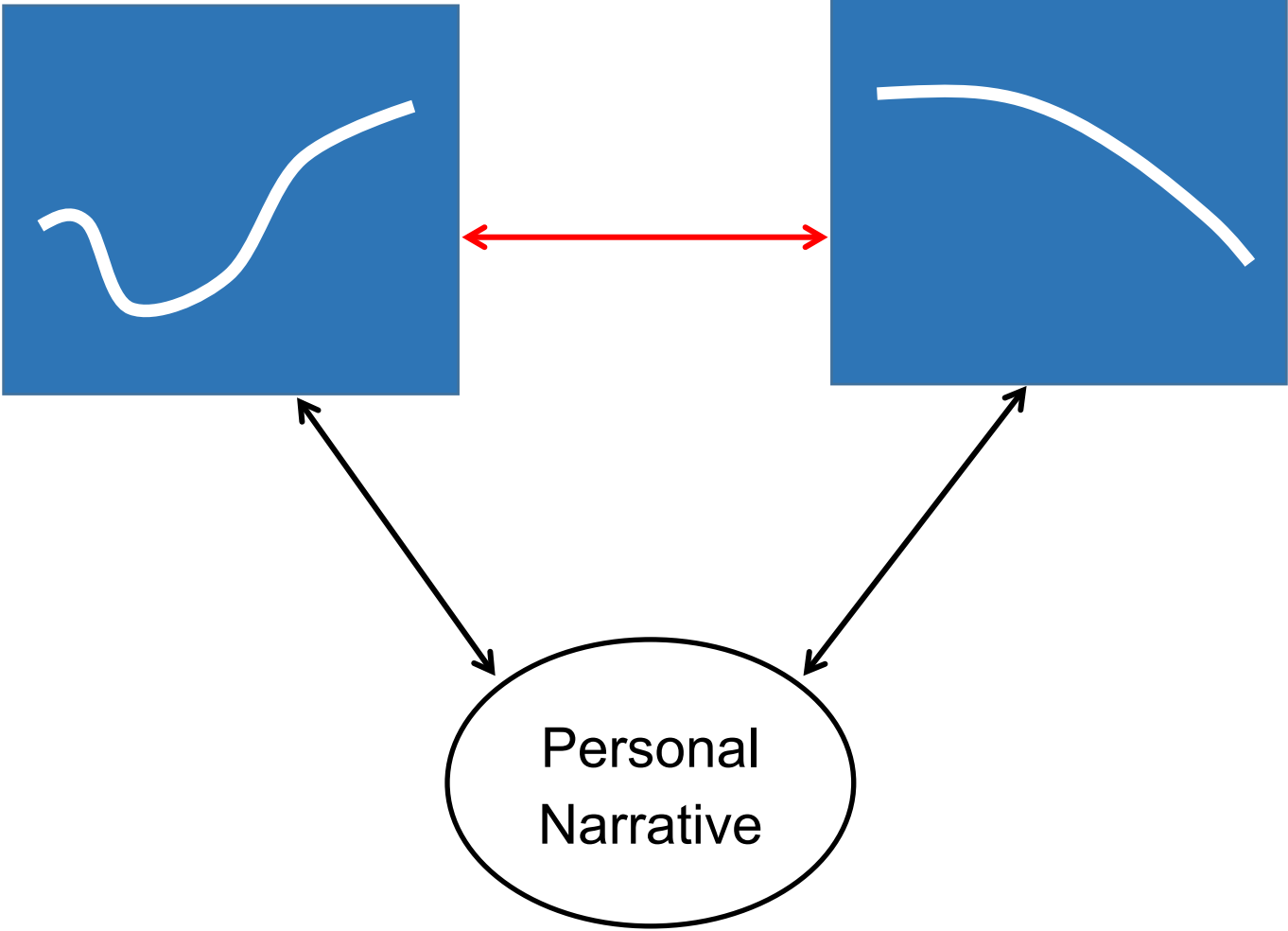


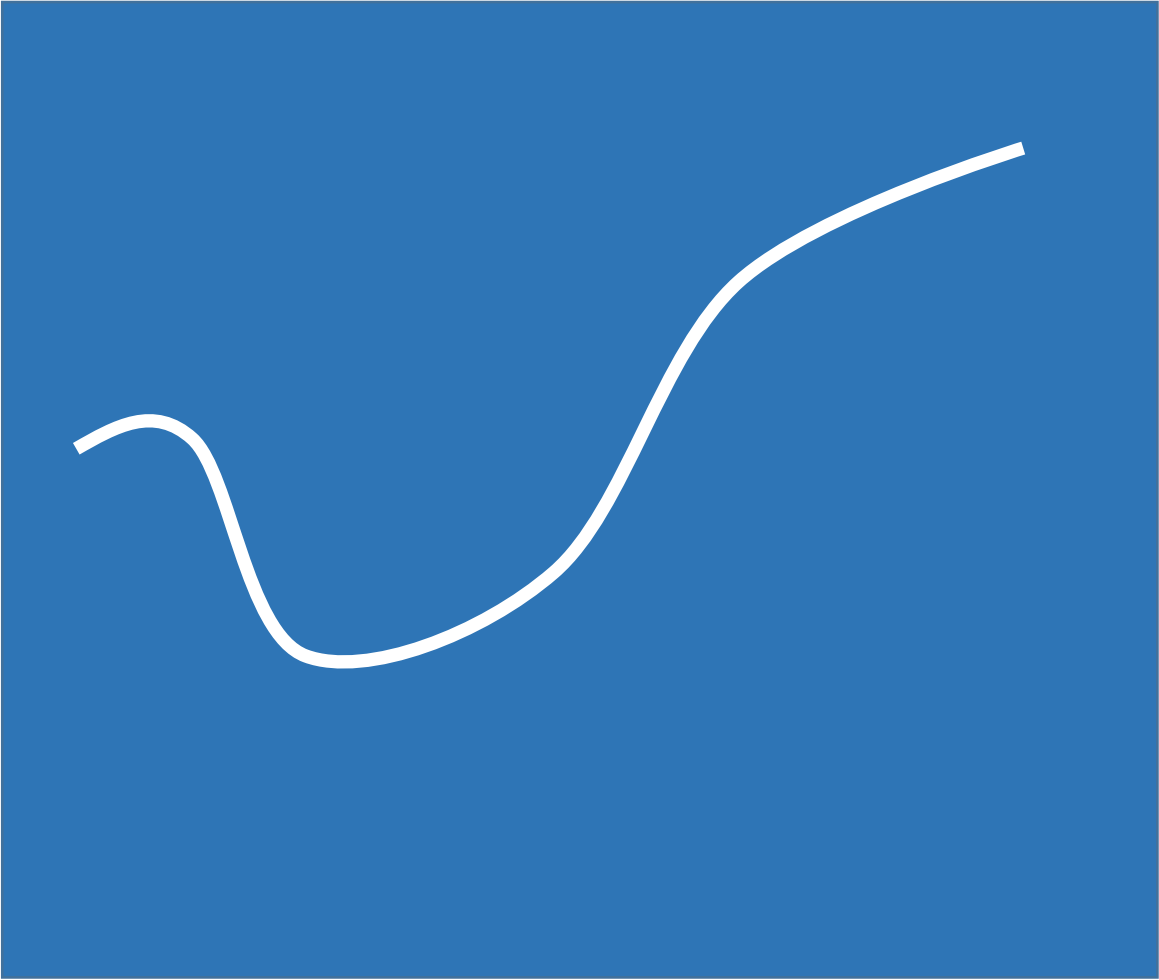
Redemptive Narrative

Palestinian Youth



Contaminated Narrative





Redemption

I was in Texas this summer, visiting my Grandparents, when Hurricane Harvey hit. At first it seemed like it was going to skip our neighborhood, but then then an evacuation was ordered. We only had a small car, and couldn't drive through the streets because the water was rising so fast. We all went into the bedroom, got on the bed, and watched the water start to seep in. It took 2 hours for my cousin to come with his truck. My grandma was so scared, and I was trying to keep it together, but I was scared too. When my cousin came we couldn't take anything with us because we had no time.

Negative Ending: In the end, we lost everything –clothes, books, photo albums, furniture. It totally devastated my family.

Redemptive Ending: Despite losing practically everything, I am so grateful that we all survived. The help our friends and neighbors gave was amazing –people showed us such kindness, and generosity. I have learned a lot about the importance of community.

Listeners Perceive Redemptive Stories as More Positive

Listeners Have a Preference for Redemptive Stories

Listeners Perceive Redemptive **Authors** More Positively

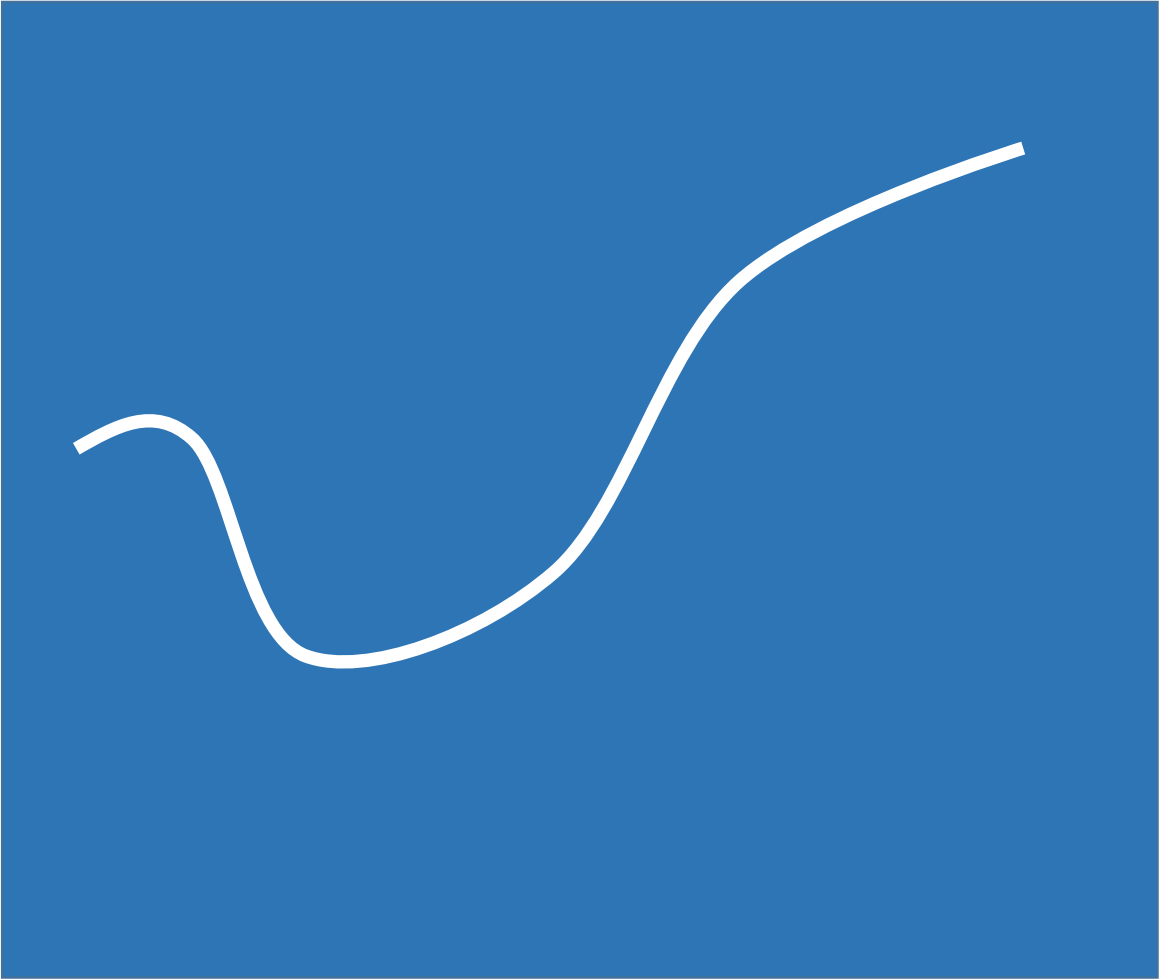
Higher extraversion

Higher agreeableness

Higher conscientiousness

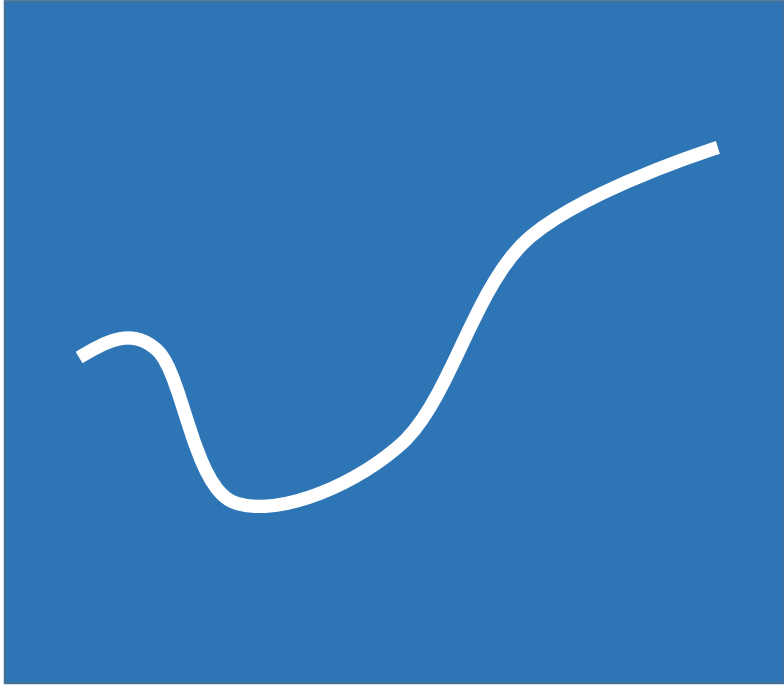
Higher openness

Lower neuroticism



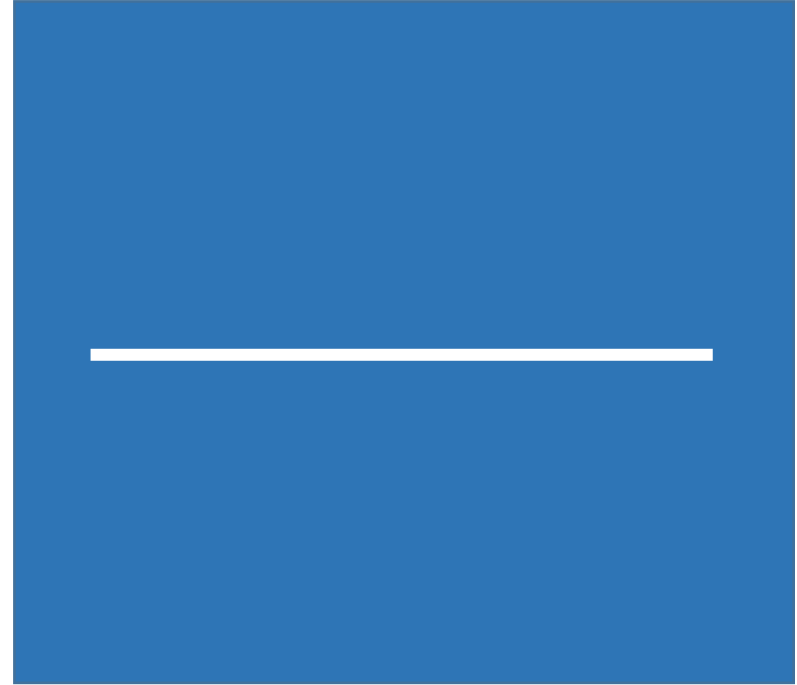
Redemption

U.S.



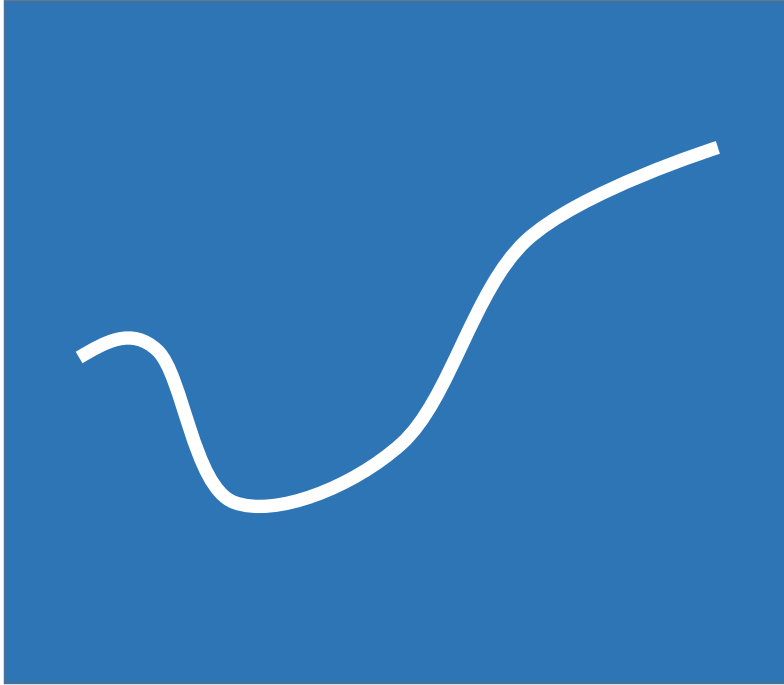
Redemption

Sweden



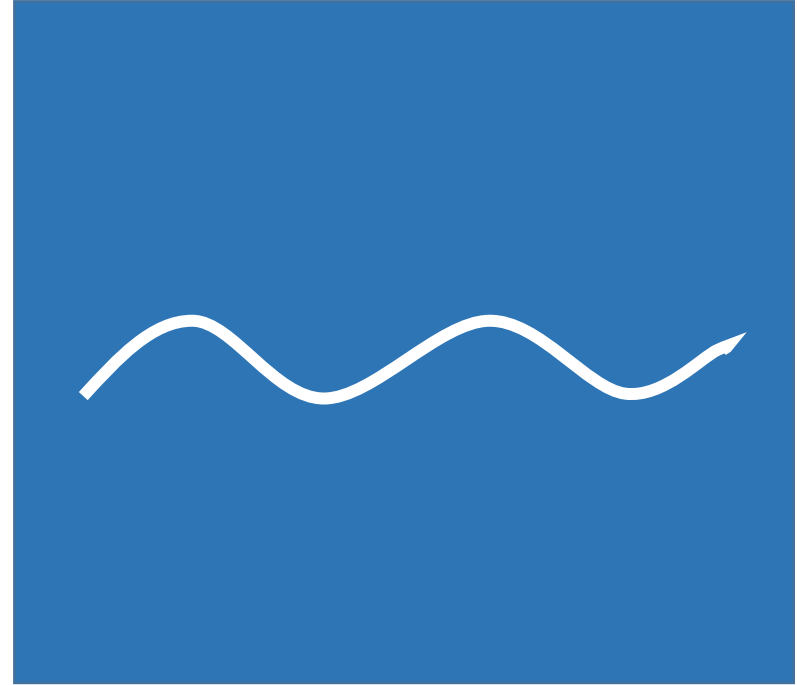
Balanced Affect

U.S.

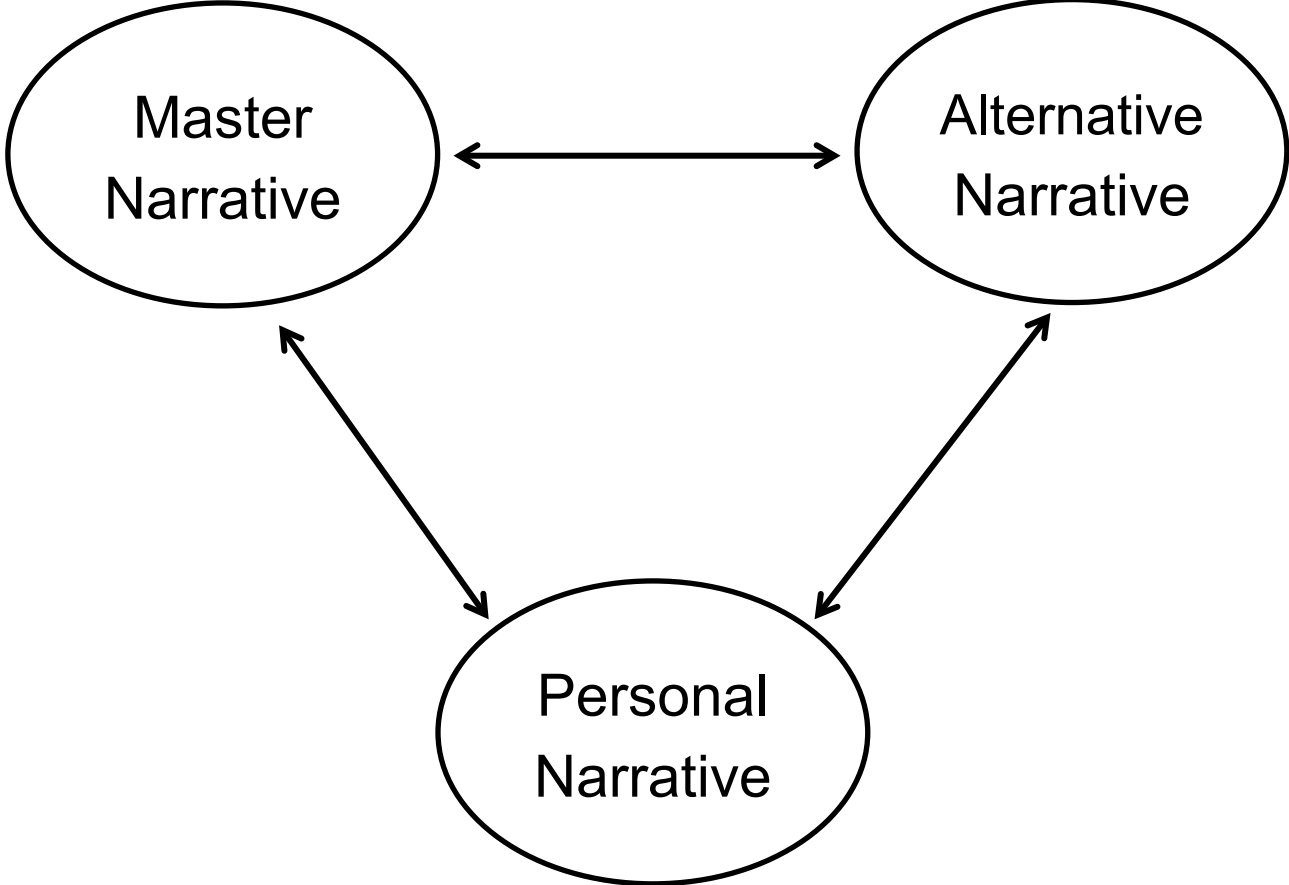


Redemption

Sweden



Balanced Affect



How do Swedish and American youth describe their self-defined ethnicities?

1. U.S. labels were much more complex
2. “Hyphenated identities” in U.S. vs. “and” in Sweden
3. National labels: “Swedish” very common, “American” not
4. Swedish labels are more “factual”
5. Complete absence of racial labels in Sweden

How do Swedish and American youth deviate from society, and in doing so do they find a sense of belonging?

Please describe a particular time in your life, either positive or negative, when you felt aware of your race/ethnicity. Tell us how old you were when this happened, where you were, whom you were with, what happened, and how you reacted. Include details that would help us see and feel as you did.

We were talking about what our summer plans were and I said I was going to visit the motherland. They were shocked that I was going to go at a time of such political volatility and they continued to ask me about the situation there. “Do you feel safe when you walk alone? Do the males always “cat-call” you? Is everyone there dressed in all black?” (They were referring to the Islamic hijab). I had to go on to explain every little aspect of the culture. I was shocked that they knew so little about the Middle East and what they did know was incredibly biased and untrue. I tried to enlighten them and show them pictures and help them grasp what it is like to live there. [I felt] A little disheartened that so few people know anything about the beauty of the region where the civilization flourished.

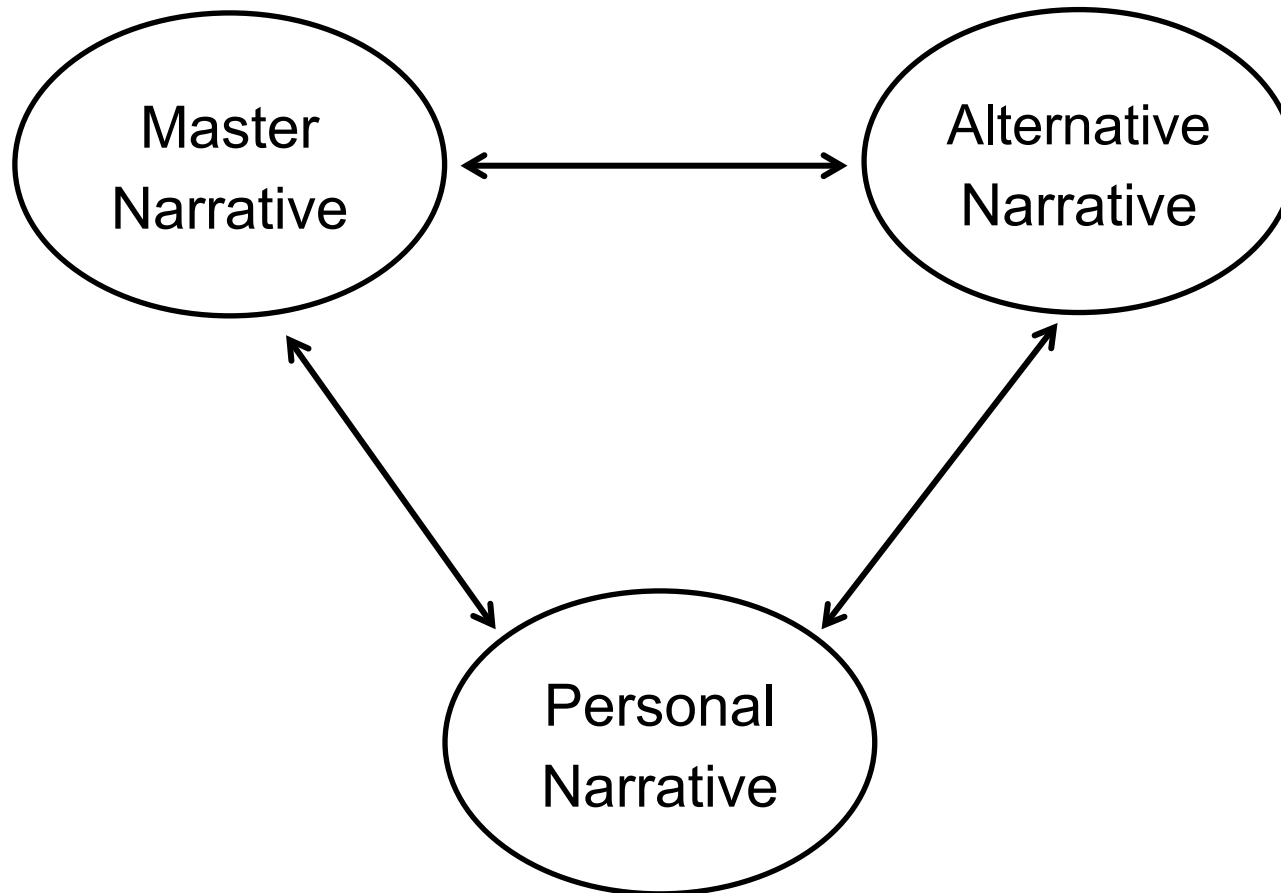
- U.S., second generation woman who self-identified as Caucasian and Middle Eastern

Second semester in the 7th grade when I was called the n-word, and was called “Svenne” by my friends with the same ethnic background. Because I improved my Swedish I was not Somali in their eyes anymore. But I was not good enough for the Swedes either who called me the n-word. 13 years old and confused. I did not react in any way. I was angry inside, especially at myself for allowing anyone to repress me. I was always the happiest in the class, slowly I was not happy anymore. [I felt] Tired. I was 13 years old and confused, I am 18 years old and equally confused.

- Sweden, first generation woman who self-identified as Somali

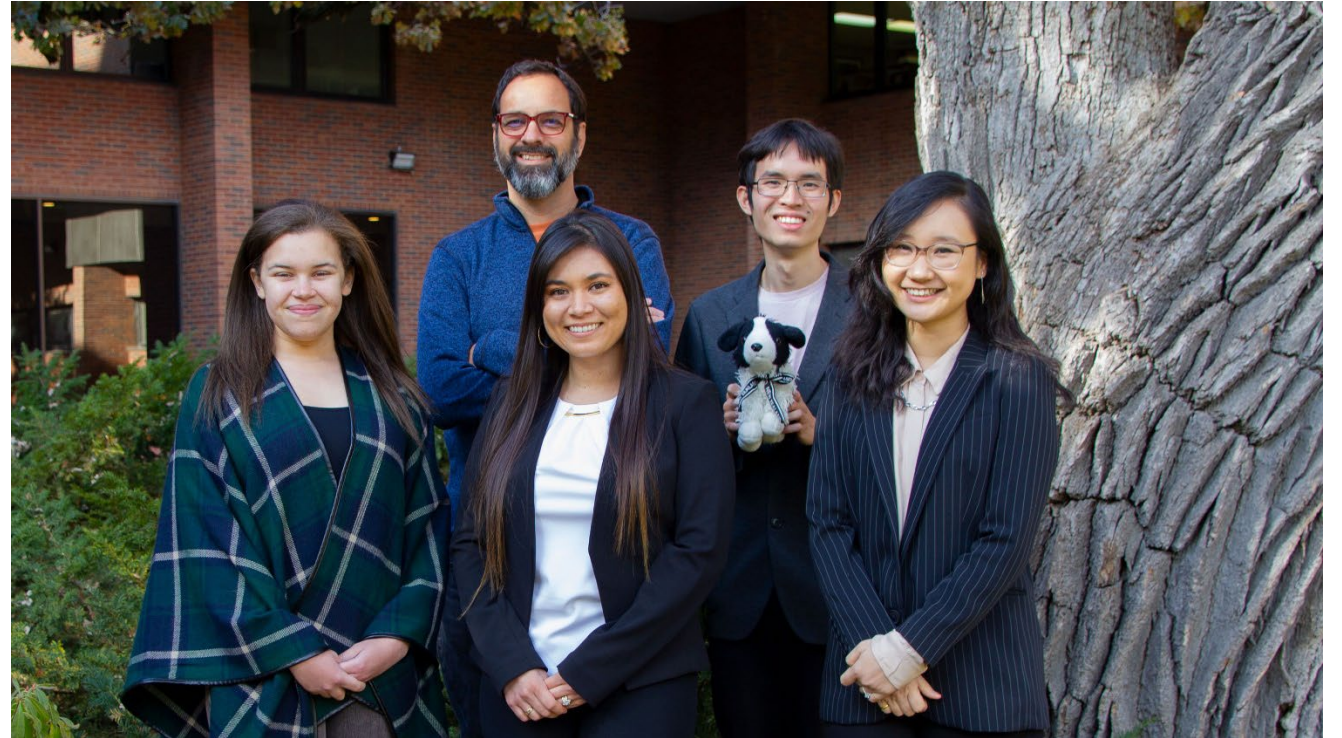
Master Narrative Framework

A structural-psychological approach



Thanks!

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The NICE Research Group

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