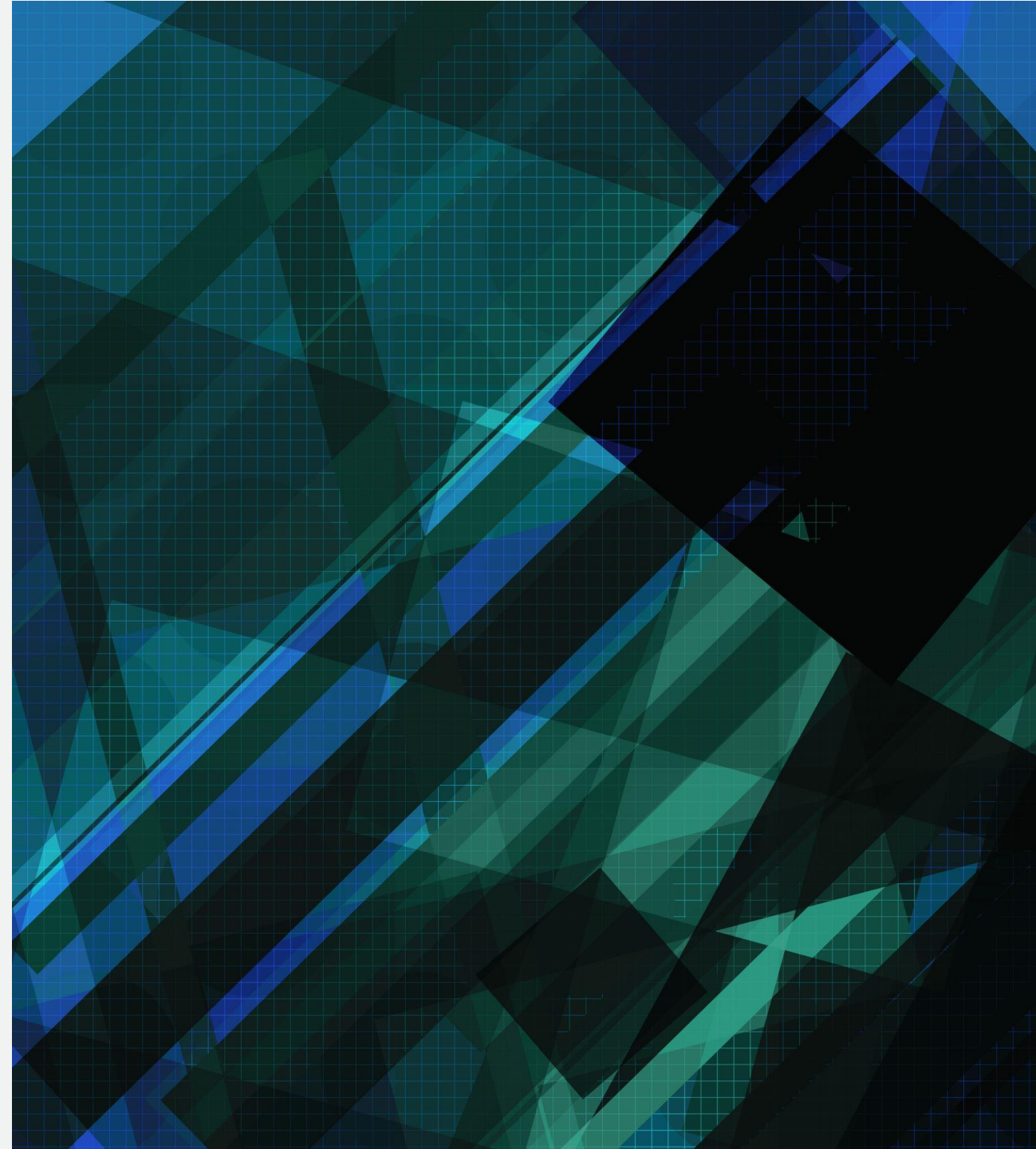


“Standing Under”
Stories: Narrative
Research Methods for
Anticipatory Intelligence



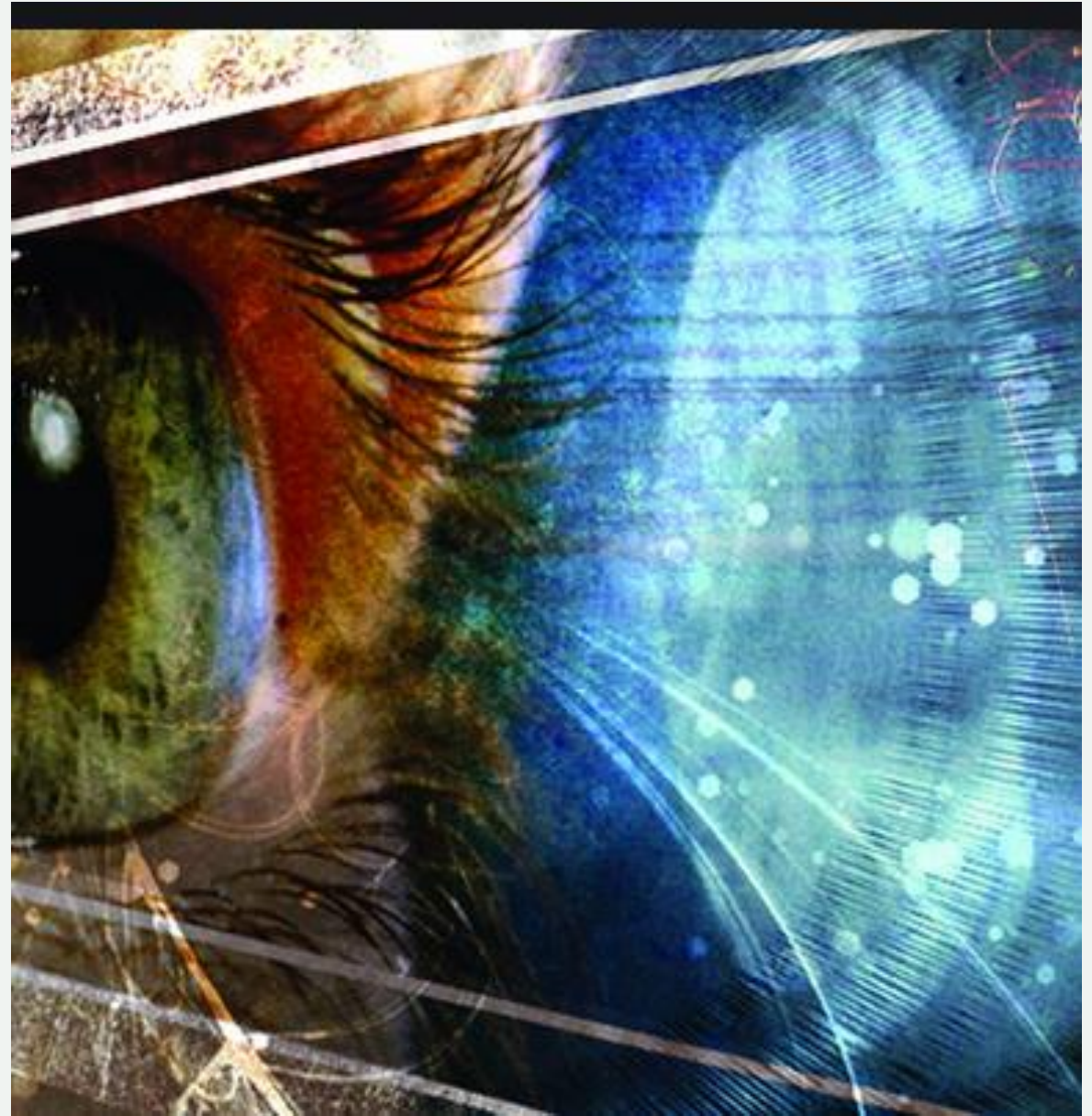
Sara Cobb, Ph.D.

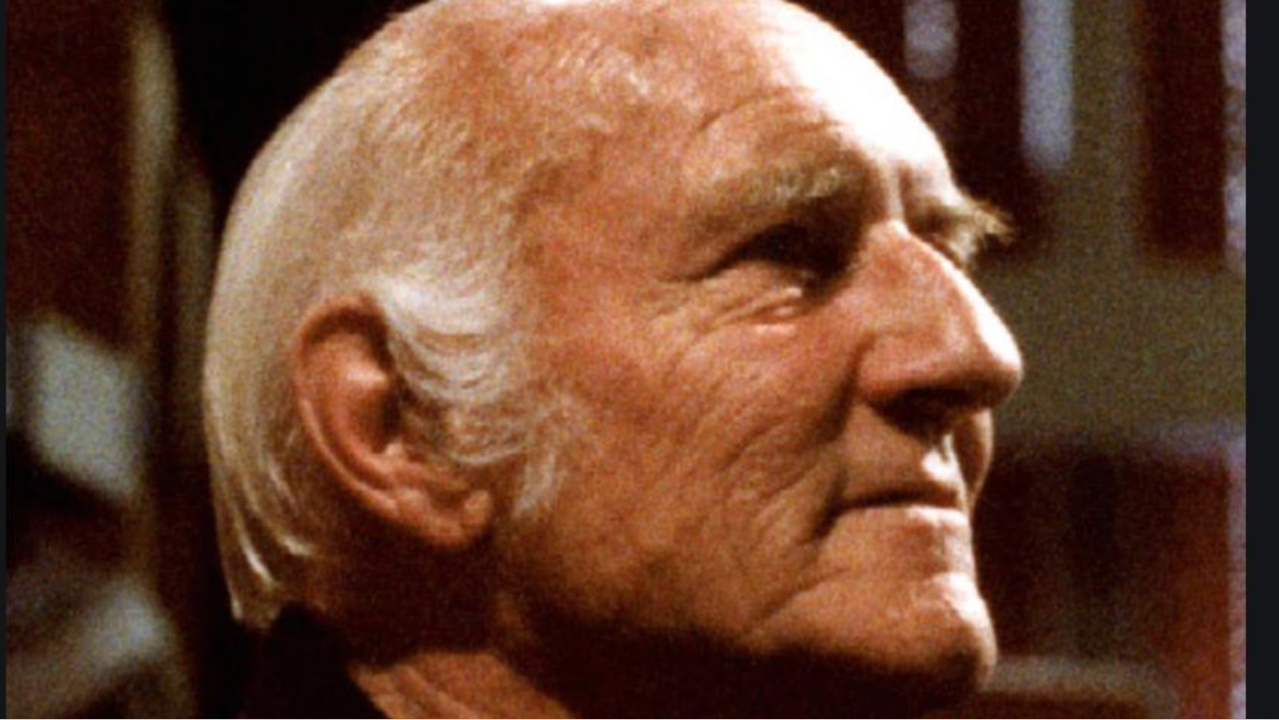
Carter School for Peace
and Conflict Resolution,
George Mason University



“Foresight” thru *Reflexivity*

- Kinney (2020), building on Kerbel’s (2019) concept of “anticipatory intelligence,” calls for a focus on narratives
- This calls for a focus on the “Observing System”

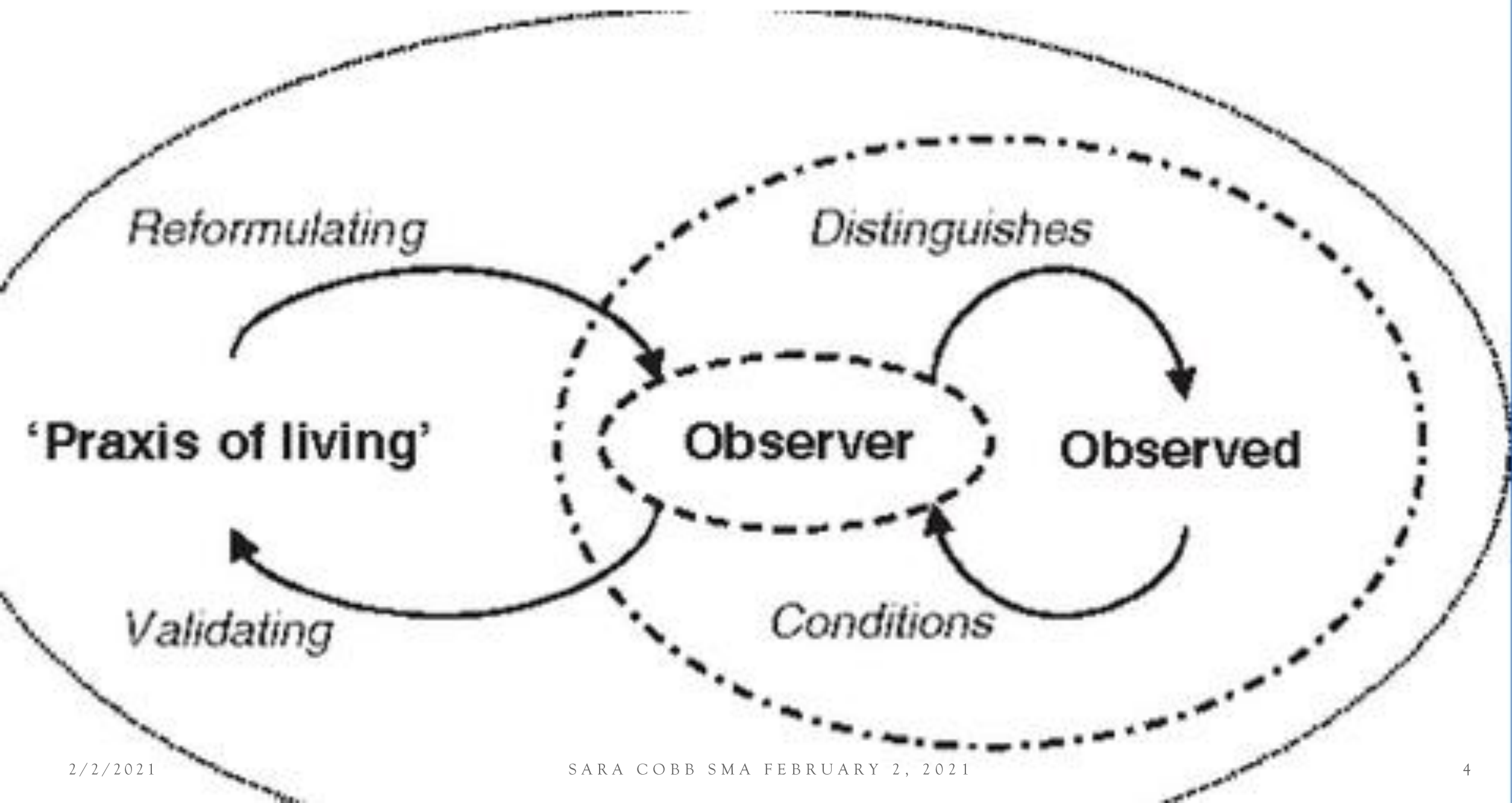




The Observing System by Von Foerster

First-order cybernetics is the
science of observed systems;
Second-order cybernetics is the
science of observing systems.

Heinz von Foerster



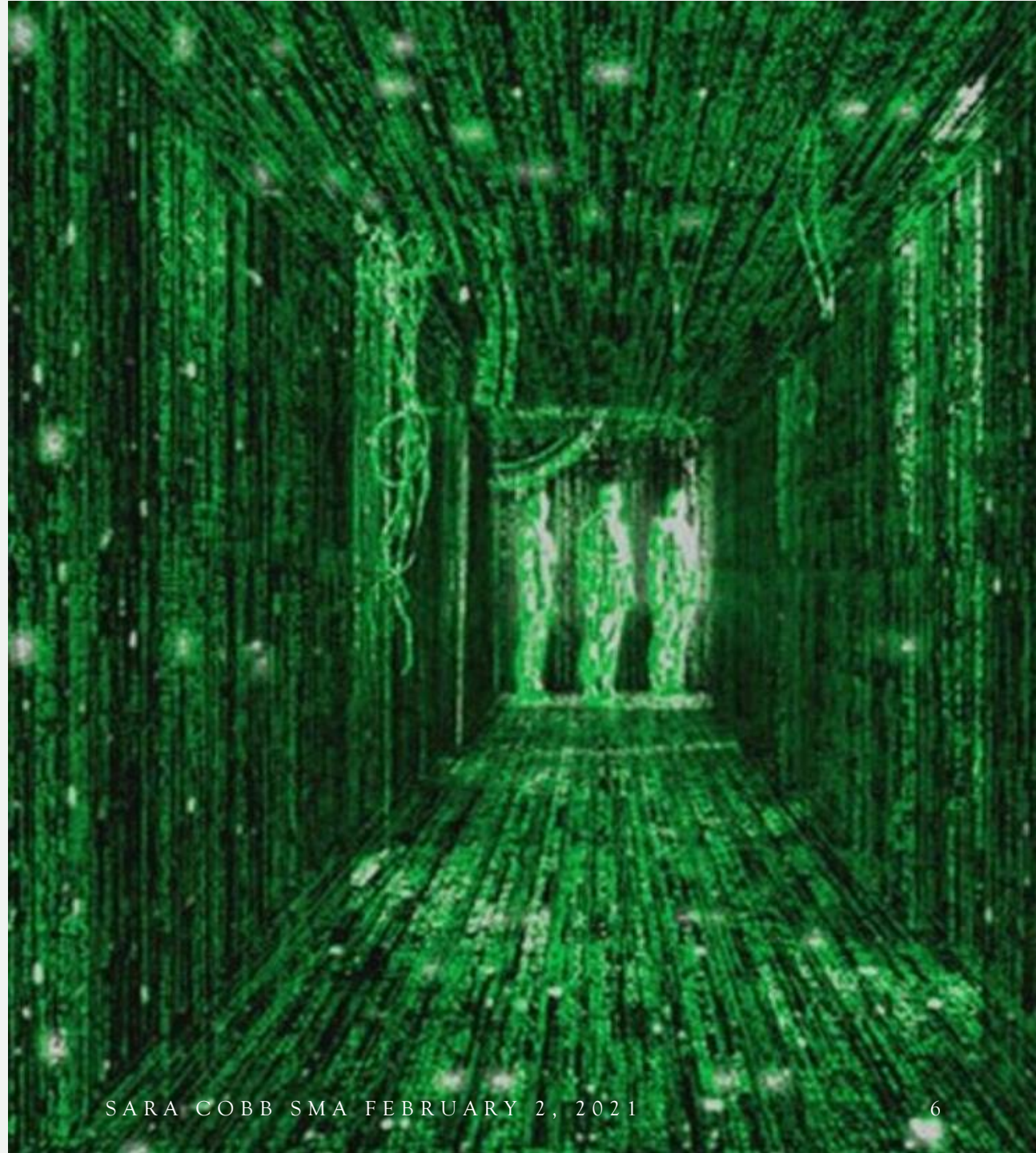
The Content IS the Form: AN Underlying Grammar

Hayden White argued that the emplotment of events takes place within existing narrative (literary) forms or conventions, such that the content IS the form. The story we tell IS the history....

Mode of Emplotment	Mode of Ideological Implication	Mode of Argument	Associated Trope
Tragedy	Radical	Mechanistic	Metonymy
Comedy	Conservative	Organicist	Synecdoche
Romance	Anarchist	Formist	Metaphor
Satire	Liberal	Contextualist	Irony

1355 x 384

Seeing into the Narrative Matrix





Implications for Intelligence.... Foresight Foreclosed

Rhian McCoy's (2017) [A Critical Analysis of Intelligence Support to the Dayton Peace Agreement](#)

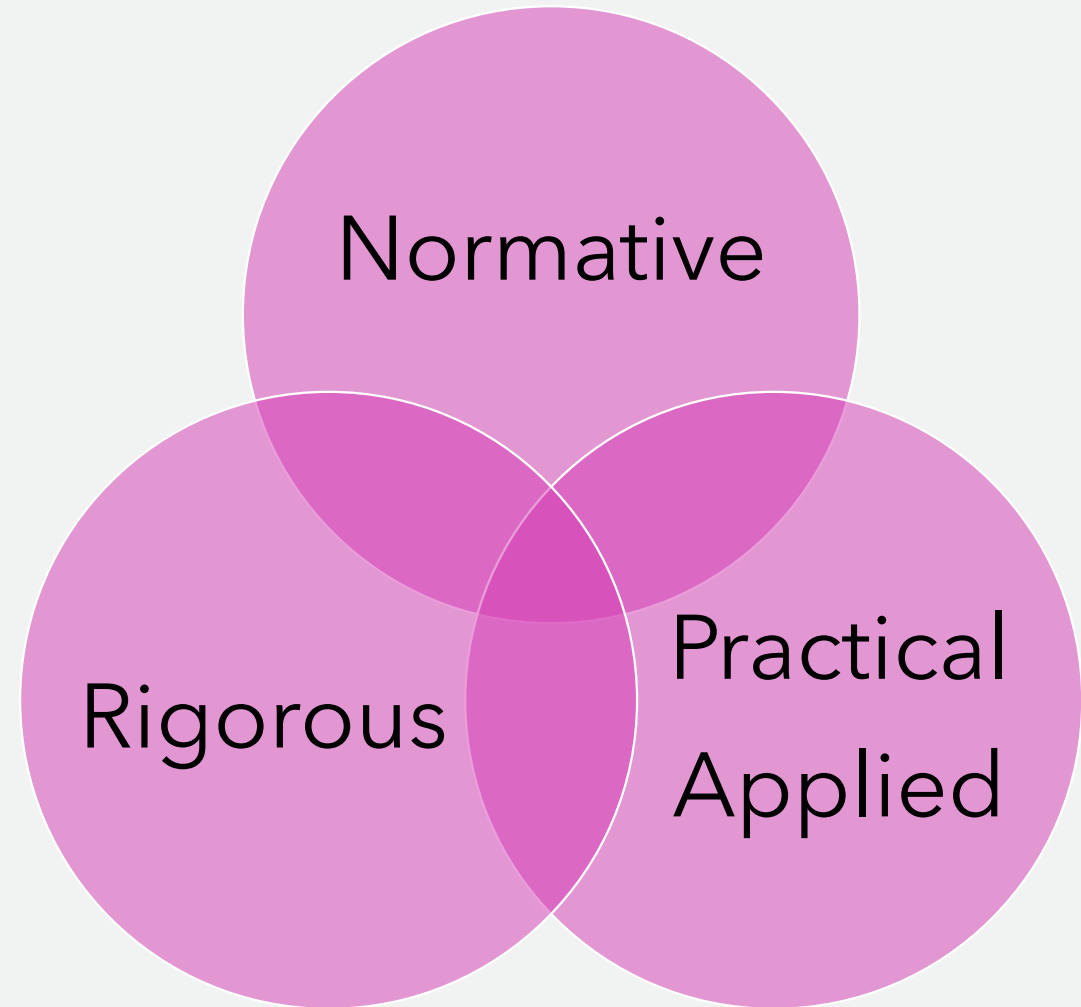
- "The Alamo"
- "A Poker Game"
- "The New Sheriff"

Goldilocks Solutions: Three Research Methods

Root Narrative Theory

Critical Narrative Theory

Genre Theory



Root Narrative Research (Simmons, 2020)

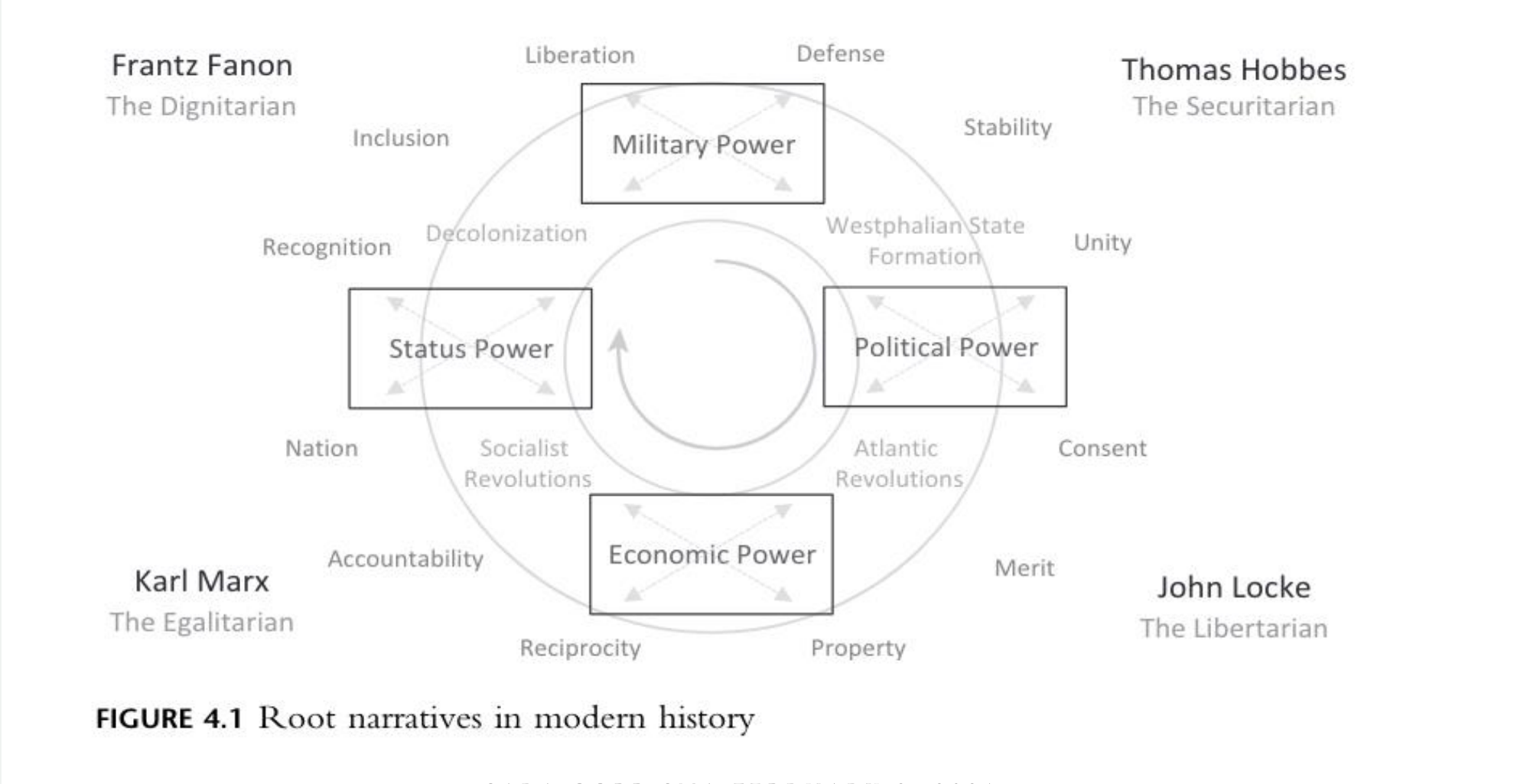
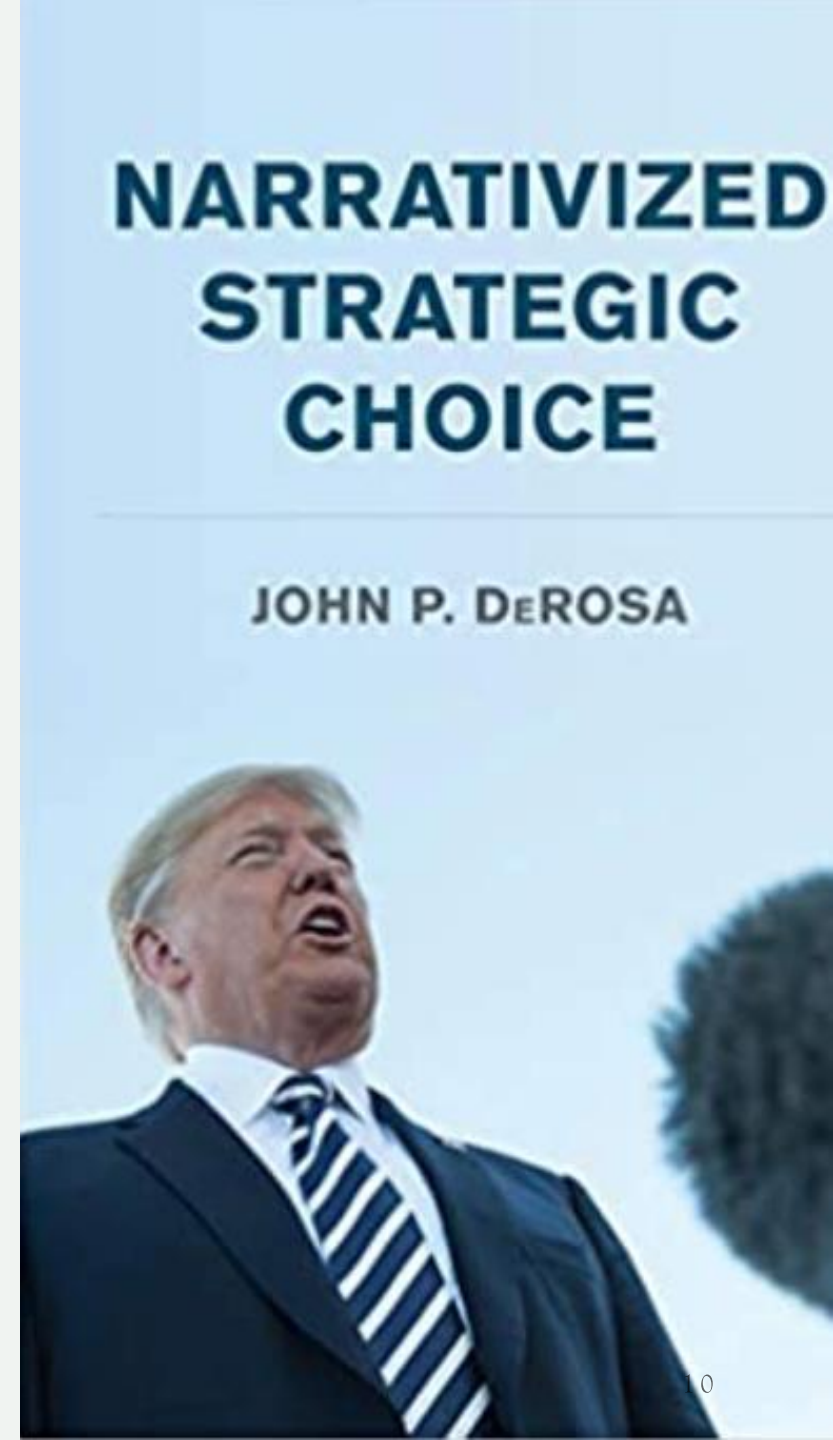


FIGURE 4.1 Root narratives in modern history

DeRosa's *Narrativized Strategic Choice*

Strategy a function of narrative components (*motives, perceptions, preferences*) which can become indicators for changes in the evolving scenario

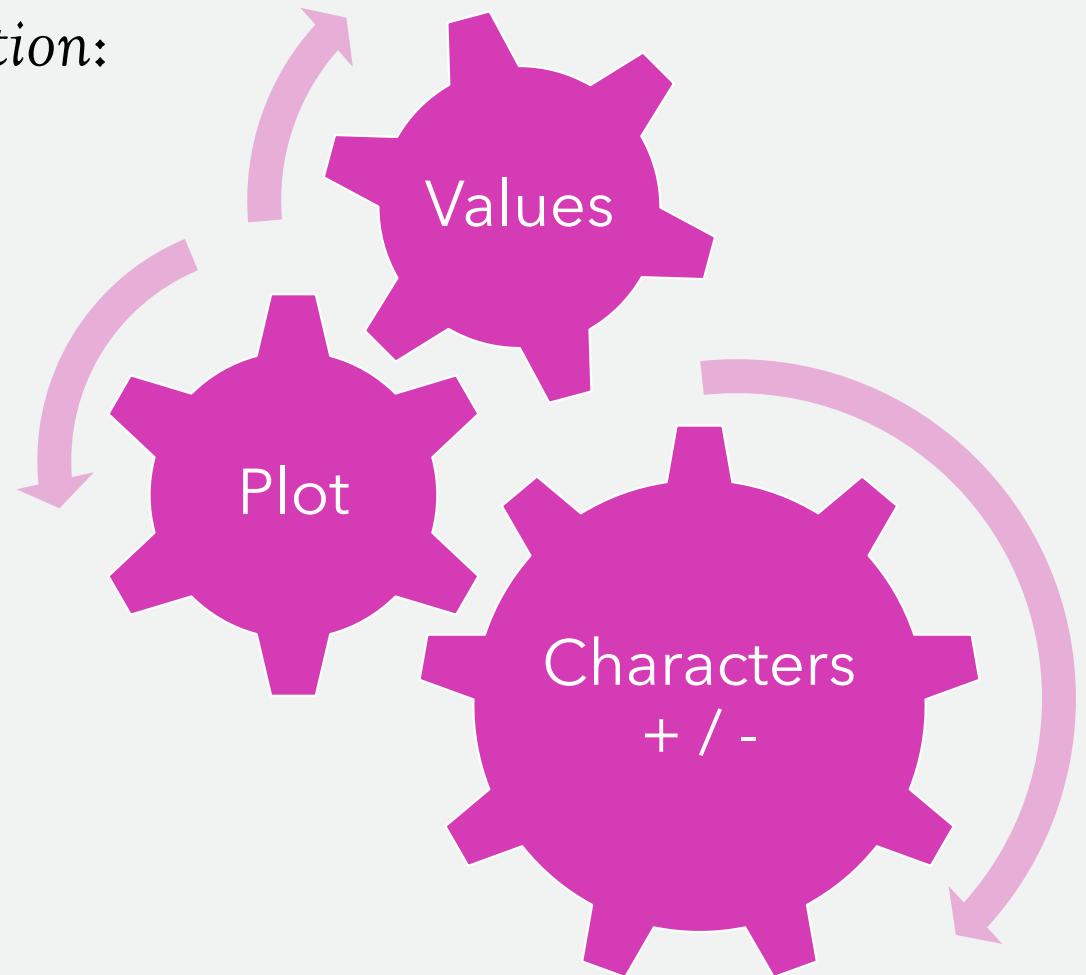


Understanding **for** Conflict Transformation: Critical Narrative Analysis

Plot: the sequence of events

Characters: Roles and positions

Moral Orders: Value Systems



Narrative Closure

- Reduces Learning
- Confirms Biases
- Increases Certainty

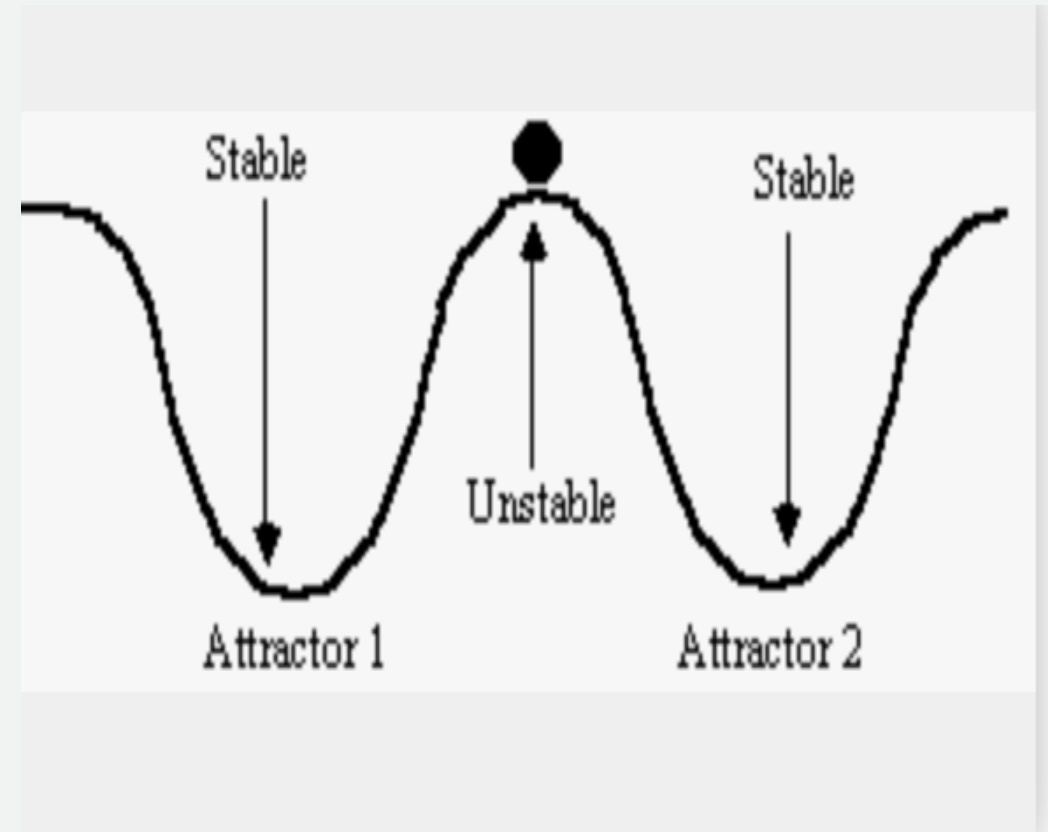


Conflict Narratives: Components/Dynamics

COMPONENTS

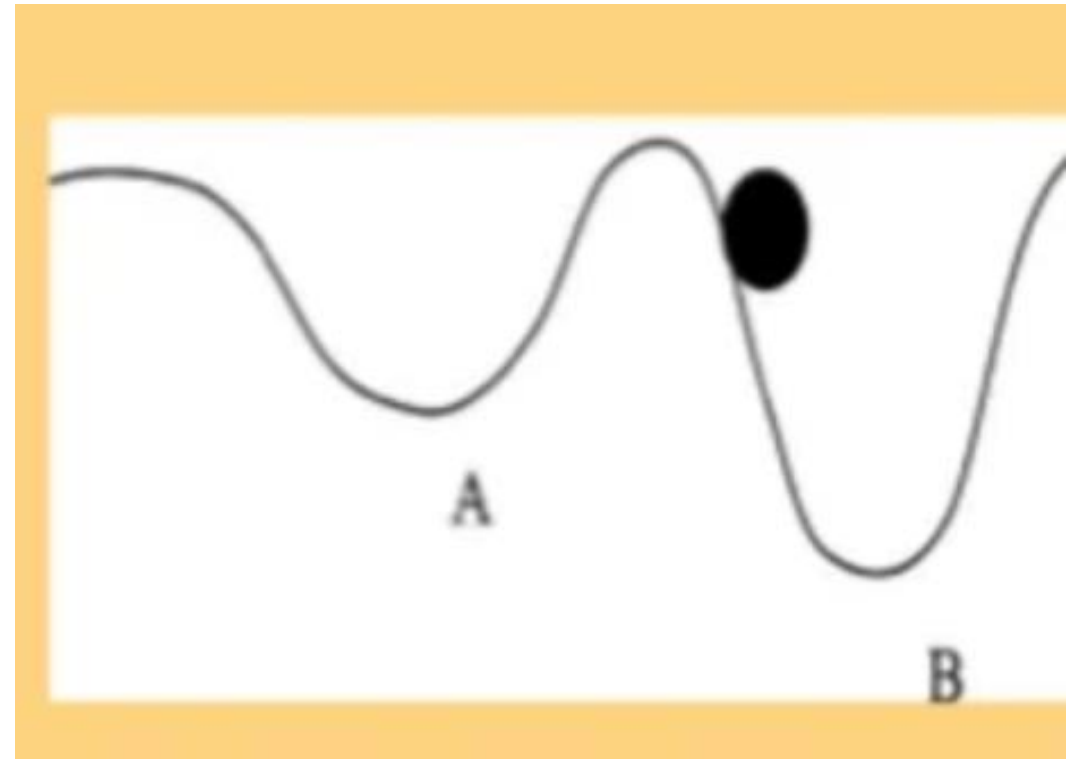
- *Simplistic character constructions*
- *Use of binary (either or) value system*
- *Linear causality*

DYNAMICS



Reducing Conflict, Reducing Delegitimacy: A Theory of Change

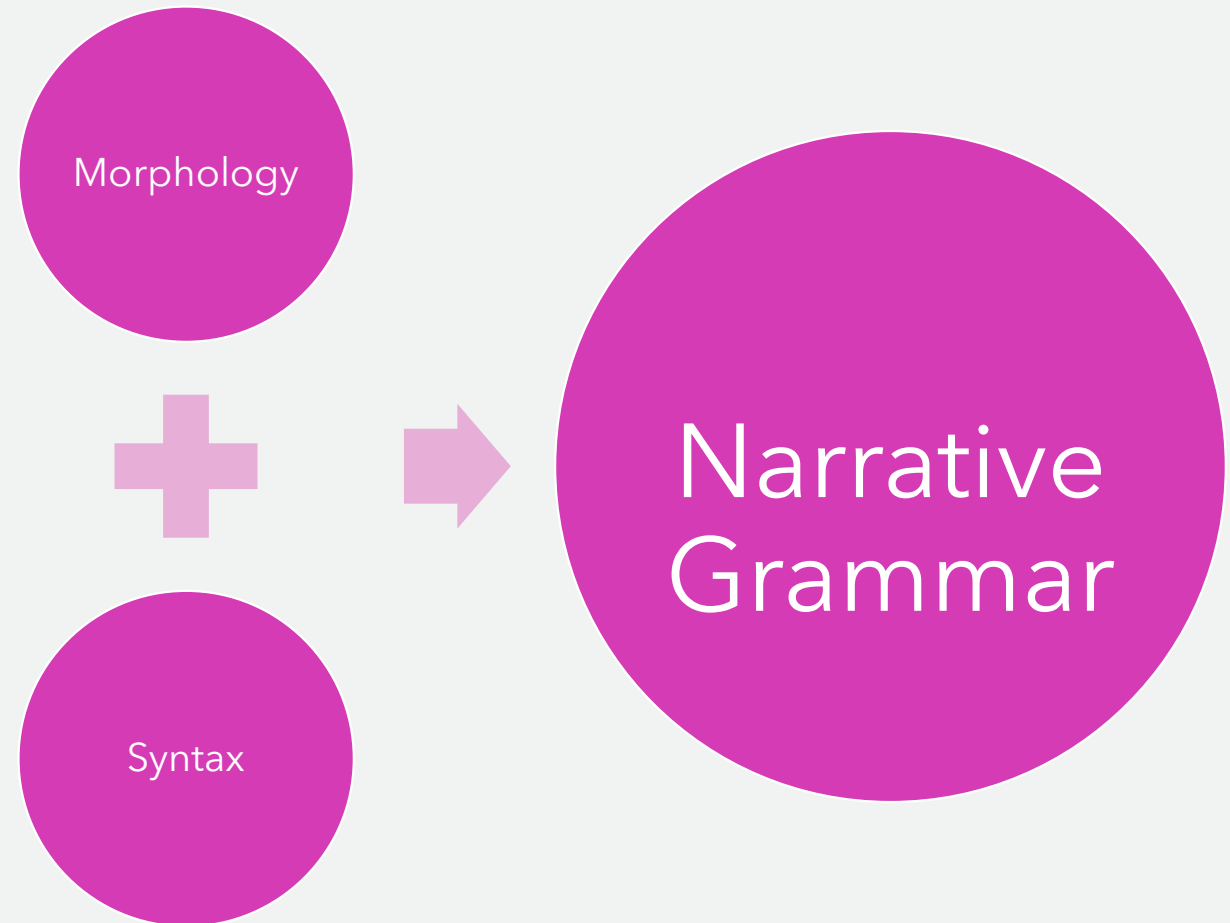
- More complex construction of Self & Other (Shadow)
- More complex moral frameworks
- More circular plotlines



Narrative Grammar (Greimas, 1977)

Morphology: units of
meaning

Syntax: Rules that
govern/regulate
combination and
transformation of meaning



Exploring the Narrative Grammars

- Van Languge & Joireman's (2008) typology of "social moves"
- Deconstructed as a set of narrative components (plot, characters) as a framework for categorizing deep grammar
- Role play of Prisoner's Dilemma negotiation (audio/videotaped)
- Collected "storyboard" data depicting negotiation process
- Analysis of narrative syntax

	Agression Syntax	Individualism Syntax	Competition Syntax	Collaborate Syntax	Equality Syntax	Altrusim Syntax
Plot	Forced into violence	Ends Justify Means	Survival of the Fittest	Engage for mutual gain	Promote equality; respect difference	Duty to sacrifice self
Roles	Other Evil ones	Suckers	Losers	Difficult Complex	Flawed humans	Worthy/Blessed
	Self Righteous	Entrepreneurs	Winners	Smart Fair	Allies	Dutiful/Strong
Values	+	Survival	Self-interest	Adaptation	Problem-solving	Symmetry/justice
	-	Death/loss	Stupidi/Zombie	Slow Unrepsonsive	Trickery Corruption	Injustice

Findings

- Narrative grammar has path dependency, structuring interaction, unfolding scenarios
- Competition syntax evolved toward Individualism/Aggression
- However, when parties frame competition as “normal” it generates a collaboration syntax
- Individualism syntax is the gateway to Aggression
- Once Individualism or Aggression emerge in either party, there is no evolution toward collaboration, or conflict transformation

Genre Research

Narrative genre (tragedy, comedy, romance, satire, melodrama)

Conflict is often framed as
Melodrama

Heroine: passive, voiceless

Father: paternalistic "fixer"

Villain: absolute evil, zombie

Hero: well-meaning, fallible



Table One
Contrasting Features of Melodrama and Tragedy

Melodrama	Tragedy
One-dimensional, morally polarized characters	Complex, internally divided characters
Focus on <i>what</i> the characters do and the impact of their actions	Focus on <i>why</i> the characters act as they do and their conflicting intentions
Individualized and externalized blame	Acknowledgment of conflicting imperatives, social and contextual factors, mutual contributions
Passive protagonist, dependent on others for resolution, submission to outcome	Active protagonist, capable of self-determination, interdependence, choices
Focus on the past and restoring the status quo, dream justice	Focus on the future and embracing change, paradoxical union of victory and defeat
Conflict upsets the moral order, suffering must be avoided / alleviated	Conflict is an opportunity for acceptance of and growth through suffering

Implications for “Foresight”: Shaping Our Futures

Focus analysis on OUR narrative grammars, to reduce closure, and conflict escalation;

- *Our root narrative*
- *Strategic choice components of our narratives*

Increase the complexity of Our narratives

- *Circular plotlines (internalizing responsibility)*
- *Complex characters (good and problematic)*
- *Complex value systems*

Design tragic narratives / avoid melodrama

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