

INTRODUCTION

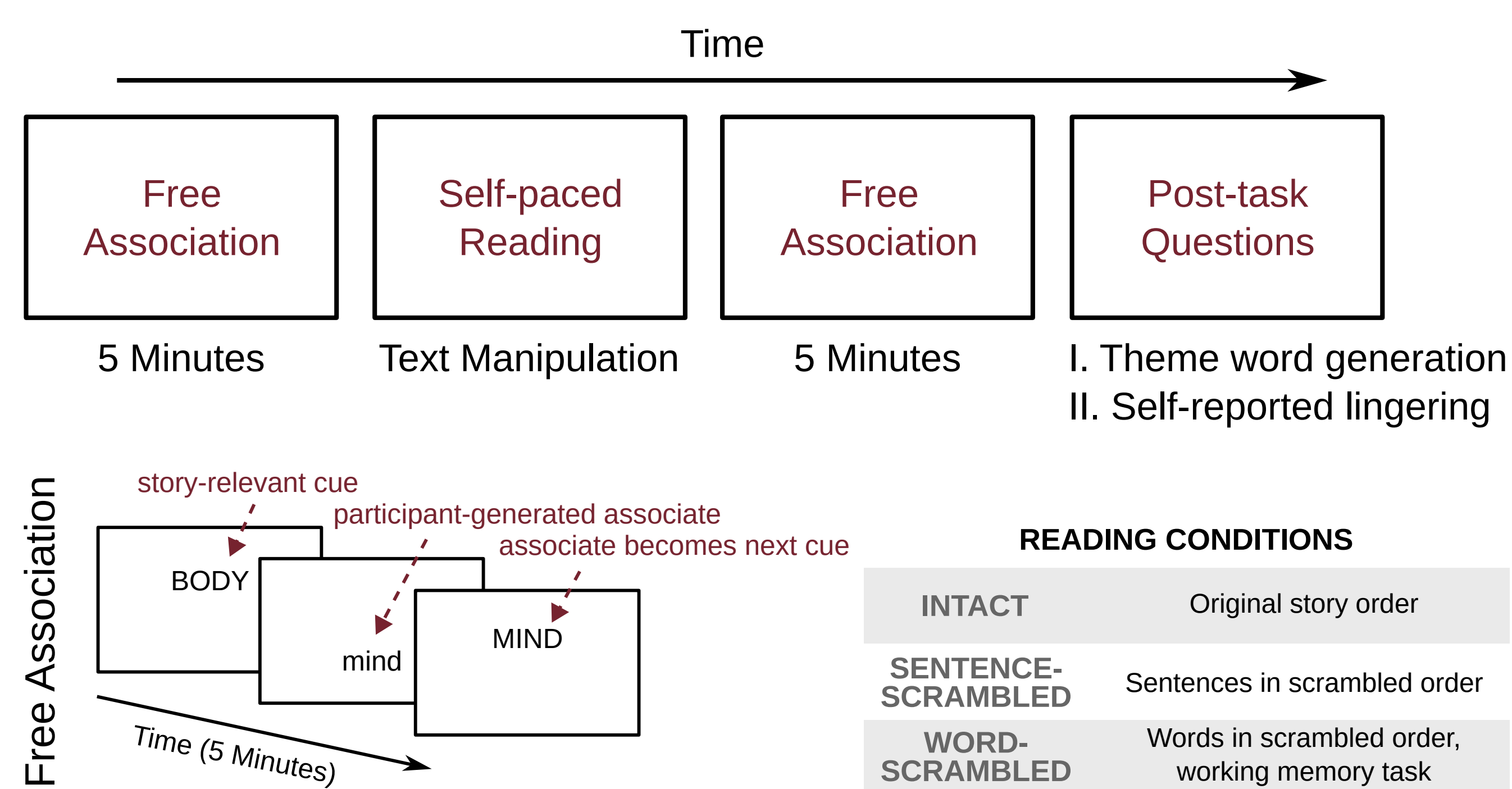
Past experiences shape our current thoughts, actions, and decisions. But which experiences resonate in mind and for how long? Persisting thoughts enable us to find creative solutions to problems (Gable et al., 2019) and are associated with depression and anxiety (Spinoven et al., 2018). We recently introduced a paradigm characterizing what content lingers in spontaneous thought after participants read a story (Bellana et al. 2022).

Is the subjective experience of lingering thoughts reflected in free-association word chains?

For how long is narrative content detectable in free-association word chains?

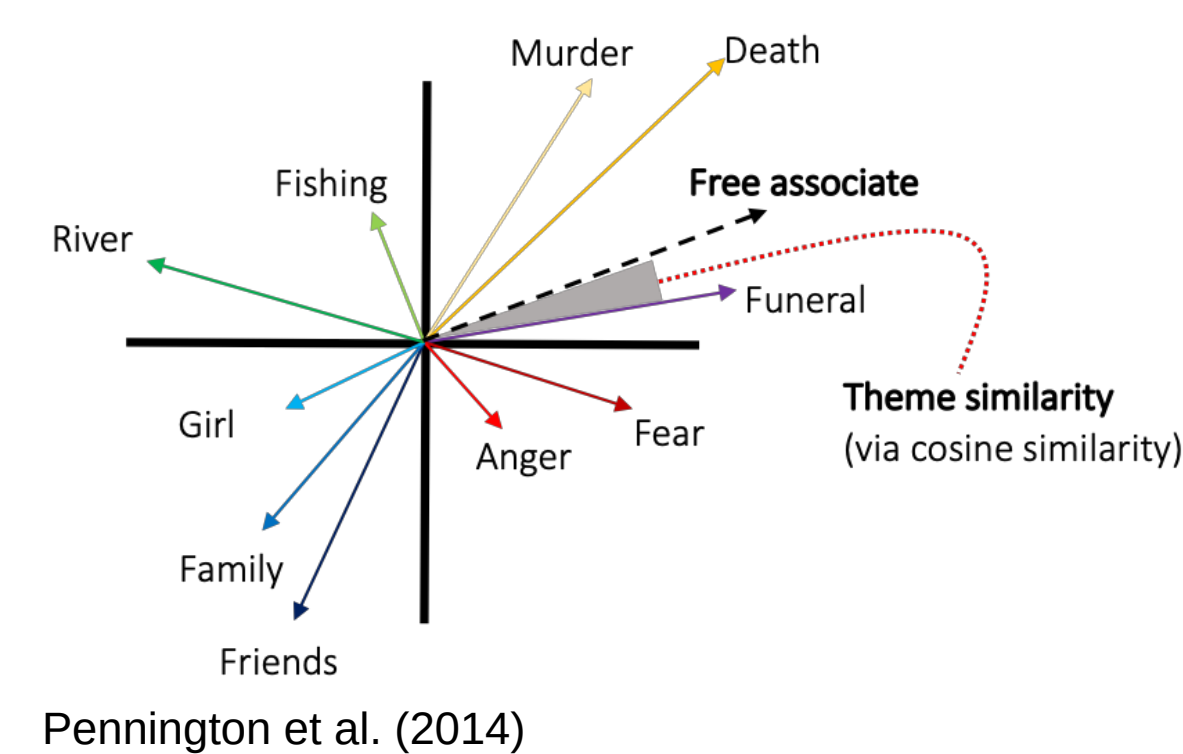
Why do individuals differ in the mental persistence of narrative content?

PARADIGM

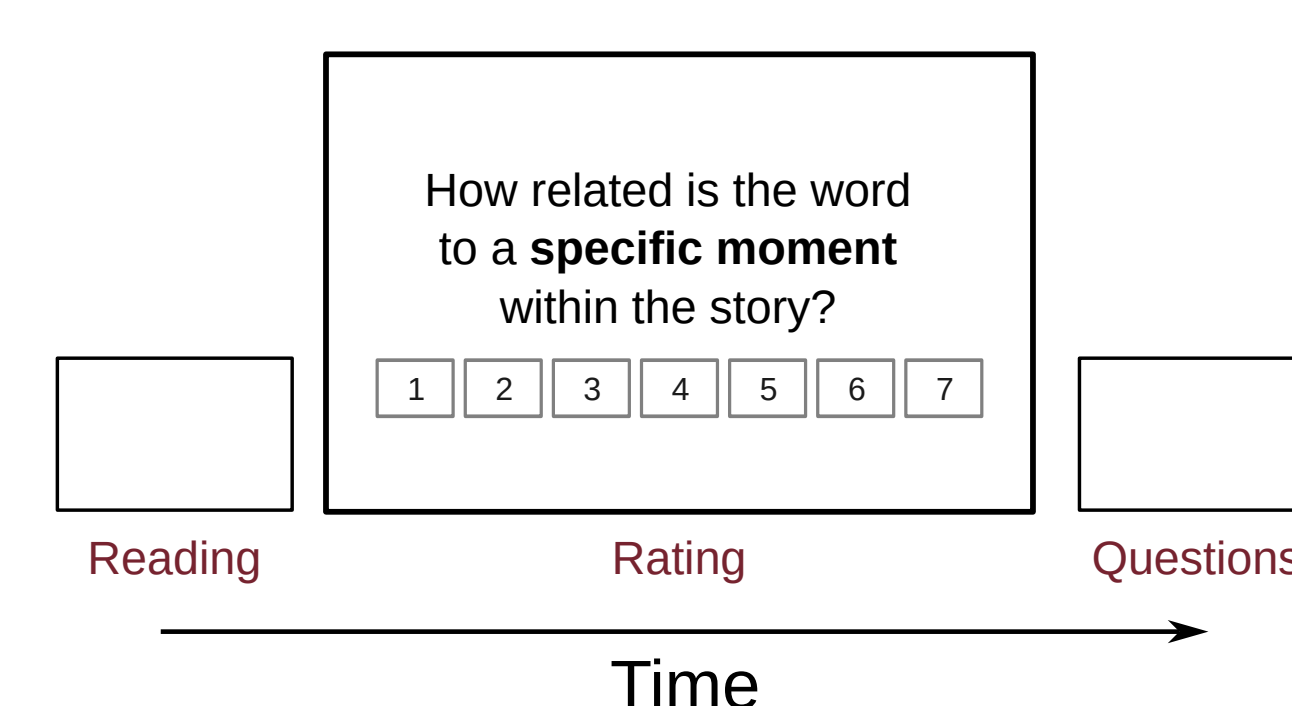


MEASURING MENTAL CONTENT

GLOVE RATINGS



HUMAN RATINGS



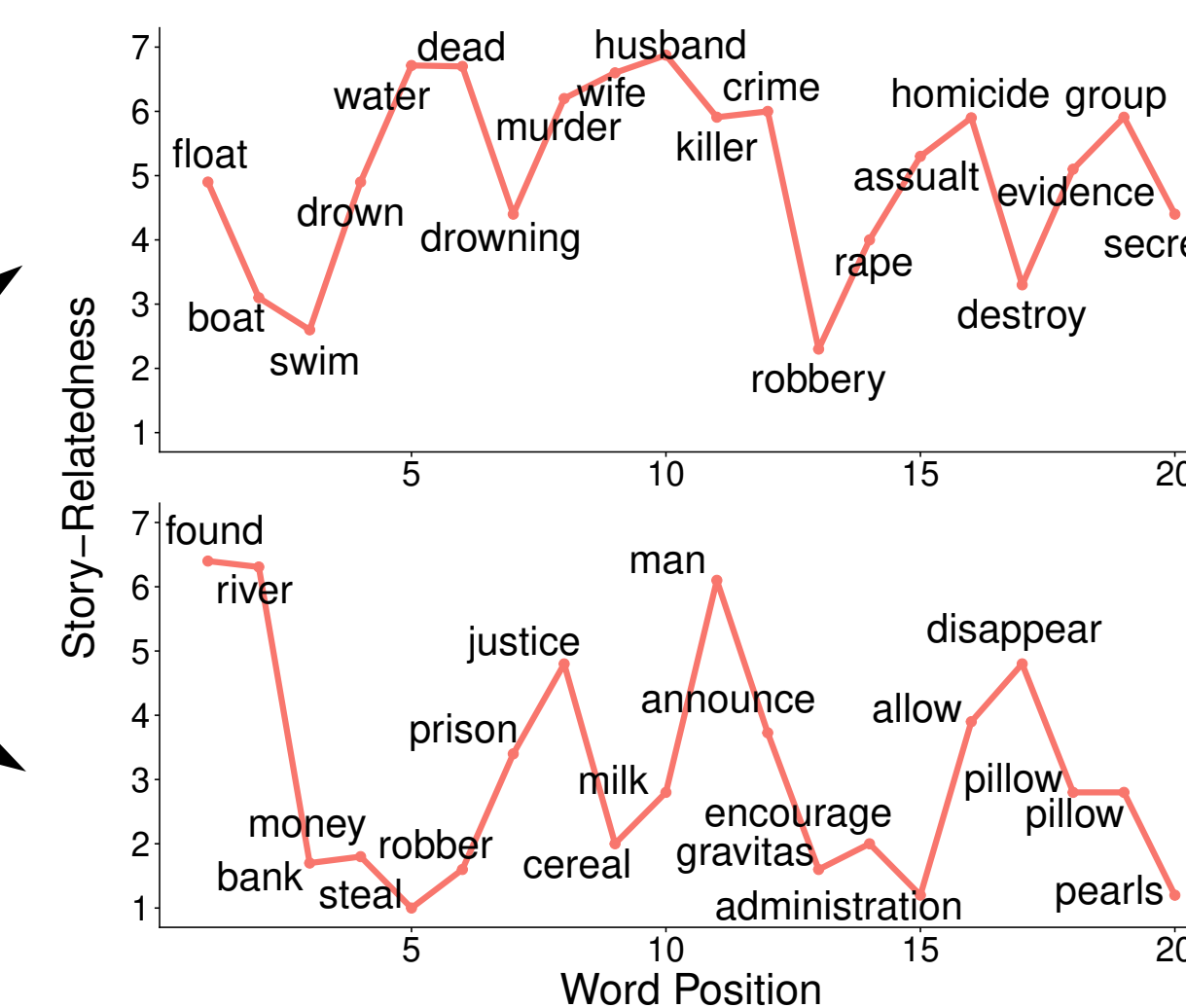
SUBJECTIVE AND OBJECTIVE MEASURES OF MENTAL PERSISTENCE

Subjective experience of lingering thought

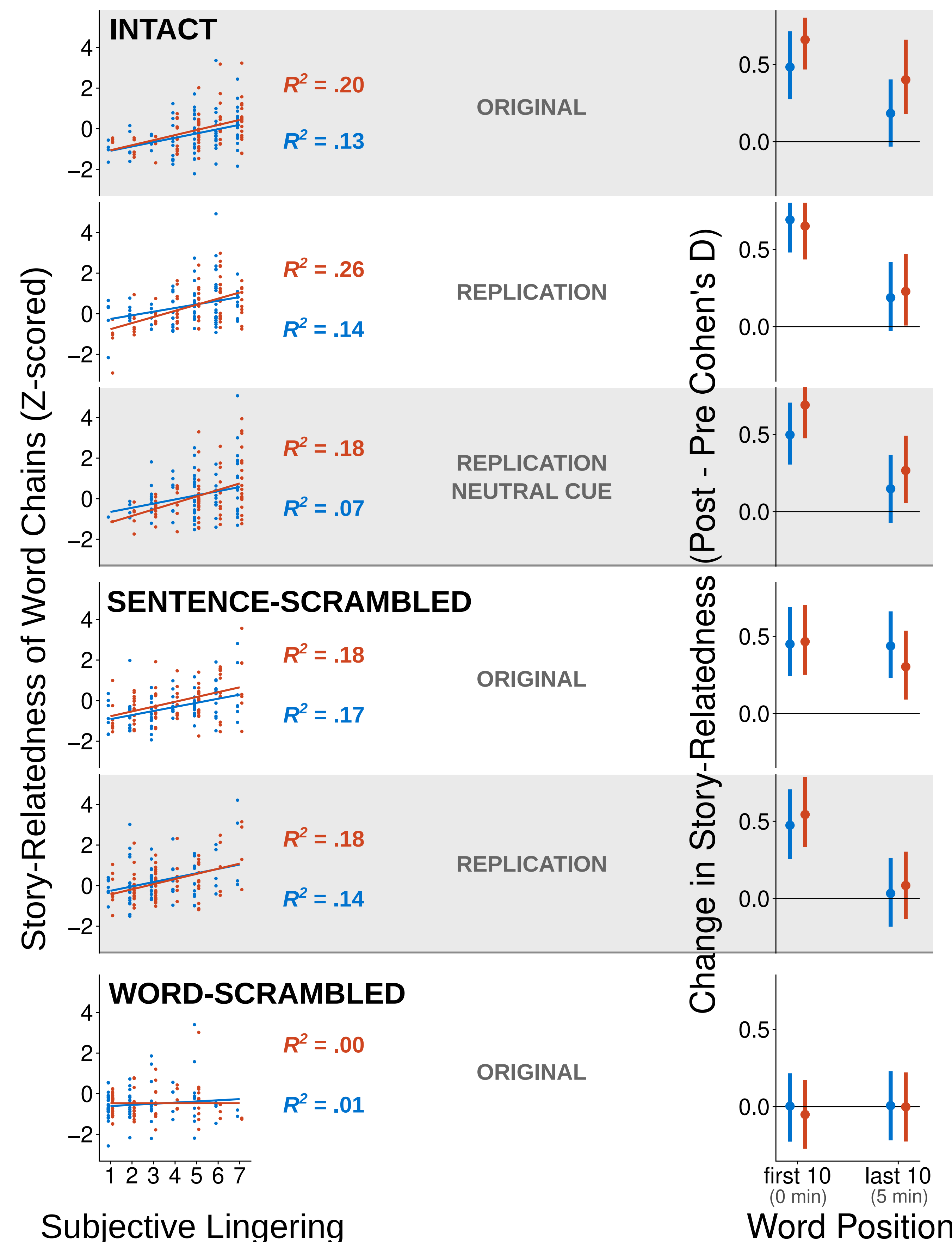
To what extent did the text linger in your mind after reading it?

1 (Not At All) to 7 (Very Much)

Objective measure of mental content



HUMAN RATINGS
GLOVE RATINGS



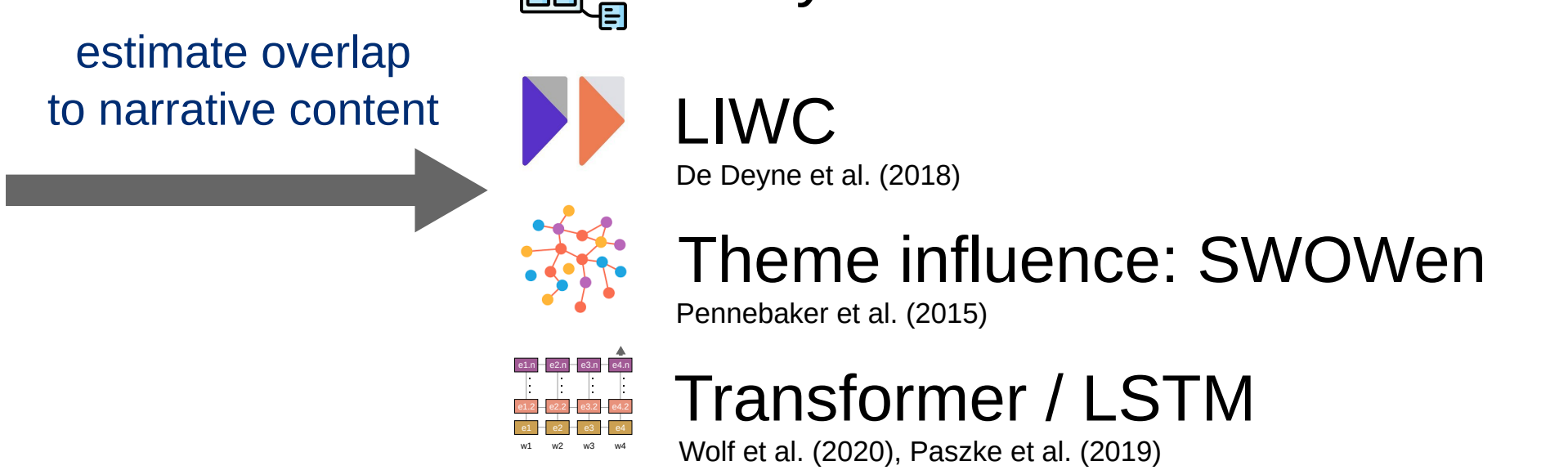
EXPLAINING INDIVIDUAL VARIABILITY

HYPOTHESIS



ANALYSIS

Estimate Personal Concerns with pre-story free associates. (Andrews-Hanna et al. 2022)



None of our methods using pre-story associates predicted the subjective experience of lingering thought or persisting narrative content.

CONCLUSIONS

Post-story word chains provide an objective correlate of the subjective experience of lingering thoughts.

Narrative content persisted in spontaneous thought for 5 minutes or more.

We did not find a link between pre-story free associations and lingering thoughts or persistent narrative content.

NEXT STEPS

Measure Personal Concerns by directly eliciting them.

Why does mental content persist? Identify rational/normative costs and benefits.

What neural mechanisms underlie persistence of content?

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