

Jeremy Vuong

Professor Emerson

English Composition

4-11-19

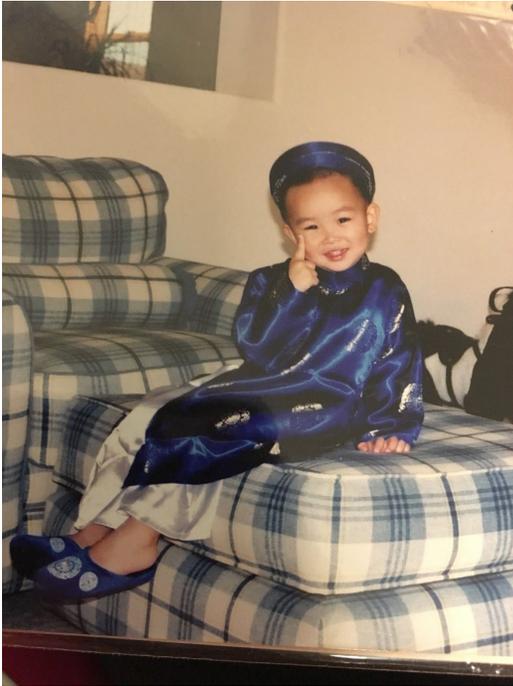
### The Multiple Stories to an Identity

Who are you? The universal question that is impossible to answer at most times. The answer usually comes much later in life than most answers you generally try to find. So, what is the answer then when the time comes? The answer is simpler than one may think. I am me. I am the stories that I carry with me from the moment I can remember to the present time, and I continue to develop these stories as time goes on so when that special time arrives, the experiences and events I have brought become who I am. Why multiple stories and not just one to home in on your overall identity? I do not think that anyone is capable of telling their life story in a single narrative. A person's life is too rich and plentiful to only have one central story arc. A person's identity usually consists of multiple layers or, as Galen Strawson would phrase psychologist Erik Erikson, "various selves... make up our composite Self." Because of this, I believe that narratives have the power to answer the impossible inquiry. In my life, the multiple narratives that I carry with me shape my identity and without them, I would be a tasteless being. The experiences gained from each story should be indirectly incorporated in your current and future identity.

With a single narrative, it promotes people to have a fixed mindset instead of a growth mindset. When a person claims to have a single life story because in reality, having only one

makes sense, it does not mean that this particular person is lying in any way. However, I do believe that this person is a little delusional and has a false sense of what to expect from life. As Julie Beck would put it, it would be similar to having a blueprint for an IKEA chair. Everything is laid out for you in your life story and you, as the protagonist, just need to go through life following the steps in order to achieve your identity. Although I agree that having narratives is a good thing, I do not agree with having a single narrative. By following these steps, one's mindset is always fixed to the positive side of life, striving for the happy endings most stories have. In Ben Pastore's interview with Gabe Johnson, Johnson said that because of his family, he was fixed to become introverted, which he feels is a negative aspect of his life. In this case, Johnson's single narrative caused him to have a fixed mindset that keeping it to himself is always the option and it should never be the case.

Multiple narratives give depth to a person's identity when it comes to retelling their life story. Especially in my life, I feel like my identity consists of many layers that unfold to reveal itself when appropriate. Because of my exposure to American culture through society and being provided the Vietnamese culture through my parents, who immigrated to the United States from Vietnam almost three decades ago, I have, as Strawson would put it, "multiple selves" that I would switch out when the situation calls for it. Strawson questions one of the authors in his article, Somerset W. Maugham, as he says "I recognize that I am made up of several persons and that the person that at the moment has the upper hand will inevitably give place to another. But which is the real one? All of them or none?" In my opinion, I believe that all of those "people" are real because depending on the situation, you can unravel more layers of your identity to show your friends than you would compare to another group of peers. In my case, when I am with my



parents, the more layers I close up to seclude how I truly feel to them because of my upbringing.

In my life, I was brought up by my Vietnamese parents, teaching me the values and morals of a typical Vietnamese. Little did I know how different it was compared to the values of Americans. It was always about the grades and academics from the time I walked to the point when my family moved from California to Maine. When I was in the junior high, that was when they introduced the idea that it was

okay to not become the smartest kid, but the kindest. I took this idea to heart from then to present day and I value that so much. I became very altruistic to everybody I came into contact with. It seemed great at first until I noticed that I was also sacrificing my happiness for the sake of others. I did not think much of it initially until it became overwhelming. I just wanted everybody to become [Happier](#). Ed Sheeran's song resonated so true to me that in a social and relationship sense that I still seem to put others first before my feelings. In my experience, it is tough. From



these events, I have made it a goal to achieve balance in everything. Whether it is others' happiness, my feelings and education, and especially family, to reach equilibrium is when become the most optimum.