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# A Conceptual Framework of Narrative Persuasion

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**Abstract:** This article draws insights from several disciplines to propose an integrated perspective on mechanisms underlying narrative persuasion. One approach to narratives emphasizes a dietic shift into the narrative, resulting in an absorbed state of processing and a loss of one's sense of self (e.g., transportation, narrative engagement, identification). Another approach focuses on processes to construct meaning from a narrative, that is, how narratives are actively compared with and applied to one's life. The current work has conceptualized the relationship between these two broad processes as occurring in sequence, and as a pathway of narrative persuasion. A shift and absorption into the narrative leads to a process of reflecting on the narrative, which is antecedent to narrative influence.

**Keywords:** narrative, persuasion, transportation, narrative engagement, dietic shift

## Conceptualizing Narrative Persuasion

Every reader, as he reads, is actually the reader of himself. The writer's work is only a kind of optical instrument he provides the reader so he can discern what he might never have seen in himself without this book.

Proust, *Time Regained*, 1933

Research on persuasion has emphasized how an individual processes expository, argument-based messages, yielding a literature focused on cognitively oriented, dual-process models of influence (Johnson, Maio, & Smith-McClallen, 2005). This emphasis is at odds with lived experience, in which politicians, business, and public health workers frequently and intuitively use stories as a means to inform and persuade. In a world where attention is an increasingly scarce resource, stories are singular in their ability to attract the interest of, and exert influence on, their audience.

Recently, researchers in fields such as psychology, communications, and advertising have noted that narratives are an effective vehicle to persuade, and have sought to articulate and understand the mechanisms underlying narrative influence. As a result of concurrent, cross-disciplinary work, different constructs and different processes have emerged to conceptualize narrative persuasion.

Some proposed constructs overlap substantially, while others are distinct.

Research on narrative persuasion would benefit from a conceptual integration that organizes similar constructs and creates linkages among distinct processes to enhance theoretical development and substantive applications. The current work is an effort to develop a more comprehensive conceptualization of narrative persuasion.

## Background, Objectives, and Organization

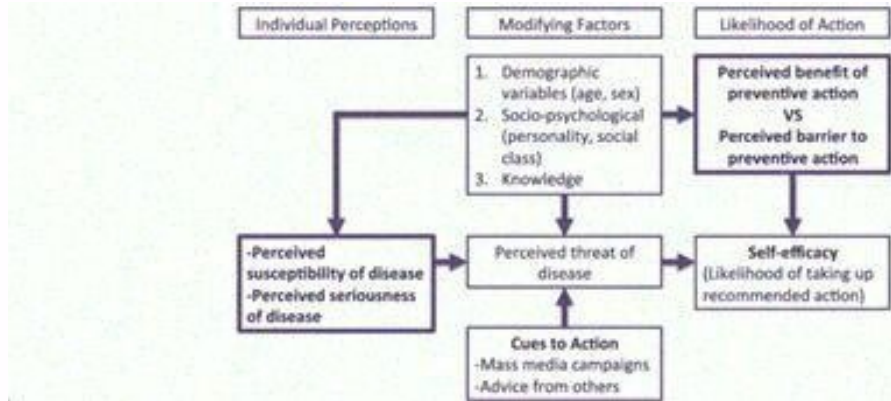
The term *narrative* encompasses communication efforts that vary across facets such as modality, format, length, emotional depth, and plotline complexity. This diversity is reflected in the multiple ways researchers have operationalized narratives. Hinyard and Kreuter (2007, p. 778) provide a useful definition that captures essential elements: "Any cohesive and coherent story with an identifiable beginning, middle, and end that provides information about some characters, and conflict; raises unanswered questions or unresolved conflict, and provides resolution." Recent attention to mechanisms of narrative persuasion have been explored across substantive fields such as advertising (Escalas, 2007), political science (Landreville & LaMarre, 2011), and health communication (Banerjee & Greene, 2013), using a range of modalities, including text (Appel & Richter,

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Theoretical Frameworks in Qualitative Research: Second Edition explores the theoretical frameworks that guided published qualitative studies by renowned researchers. The book delves into how these scholars chose their framework, its origins, what it posits, and how it influenced their study. Both novice and experienced researchers can benefit from the contributors' reflections on their experiences. The book also provides an introduction to theoretical frameworks in qualitative research, discusses differences in perspectives, and offers guidance on finding and using a framework. Chapters cover various topics, including understanding school culture, examining experiences of Black graduate women, transformational learning for HIV-positive young adults, and more. Authors Vincent A. Anfara, Jr. and Norma T. Mertz have assembled a diverse group of contributors who share their insights into theoretical frameworks. Meet Vincent A. Anfara Jr., Norma T. Mertz, and their impressive careers in educational administration. Both professors are part of The University of Tennessee's faculty, where they bring expertise to the field. Here's a brief overview of each: Vincent A. Anfara Jr. Associate Professor of Educational Administration and Policy Studies at The University of Tennessee Ph.D. in Educational Administration from the University of New Orleans (1995) Teaching experience: 23 years in middle and high schools in Louisiana and New Mexico before becoming a professor Research interests: - Middle school reform - Leadership in middle schools - Student achievement issues - Qualitative research methods Awards and affiliations: - Past-President of AERA's Middle Level Education Research Special Interest Group - Chair of the National Middle School Association's (NMSA) Research Committee - Board member of the Tennessee Association of Middle Schools (TAMS) Publications: Educational Researcher, Education and Urban Society, School Leadership, Leadership and Policy in Schools, and NASSP Bulletin Recent book: "From the Desk of the Middle School Principal: Leadership Responsive to the Needs of Young Adolescents" (2002) by Scarecrow Press Series editor: The Handbook of Research in Middle Level Education Norma T. Mertz Professor of Educational Administration and Policy Studies at The University of Tennessee Ed.D. in Curriculum and Teaching from Teachers College, Columbia University (collateral in anthropology and education) Teaching experience: - Taught language arts and social studies in grades 7-12 - Prepared teachers for urban, inner city-schools in Michigan and New York City as an assistant professor at Eastern Michigan University and Hunter and Brooklyn Colleges - Assistant director of the Race Desegregation Assistance Center and Director of the Sex Equity Assistance Center Research: Published in Educational Administration Quarterly, Urban Education, Journal of School Leadership, Planning and Changing, and Communications of the ACM Represents both qualitative and quantitative research designs