

# EFFECTS OF NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES IN NEWS ARTICLES

## **The effects of narrative story telling in journalistic articles on readers' behavioral intentions**

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The effects of narrative story telling in journalistic articles on readers' behavioral intentions

### **Abstract**

Journalistic texts contain more and more narrative writing techniques these days. News as a 'story' seems to be the new trend. Traditional and narrative news articles result in different effects on the reader. Narrative news has proved to be positively related to reading enjoyment and to change of attitudes. The current study aims to provide insights into the influence of narrative news articles on reader's behavioral intentions. It was investigated whether the readers of narrative news were more likely to copy the behavior of the main character. A two-by-two between subject experiment was used to measure the effects of four different versions of journalistic crime news articles on the behavioral intentions of the reader. The article could be either a narrative news article or a traditional news article. Both the narrative and the traditional news article had a version in which the witness of a shooting either hid or ran away. All 150 participants were native speakers of Dutch. Only the traditional journalistic articles had positively influenced the participants. Respondents who had read the traditional news article proved to be more likely to copy the action they had read about in the article when they had to choose between the behavioral intentions to jump up or to duck down than the readers of the narrative article. Readers of the narrative news article showed to choose the opposite of the action described when having to choose between behavioral intentions to jump up or to duck down. This study does not lend sufficient support to the assumption that narrative techniques used in journalistic crime news articles positively affect the behavioral intentions of the reader.

*Keywords:* crime news, narrative, journalistic articles, behavioral intentions, influence

## **1. Introduction**

Journalistic texts contain more and more narrative writing techniques these days (Sanders, 2010). News as a 'story' seems to be the new trend. In order to compete with all other media, newspapers are looking for ways to become more appealing to the audience. Newspapers need not only to inform, but they also have to entertain readers in a way. If they do not succeed in doing so, they risk losing their audience to other sorts of media in the future. This new way of presenting a news event should increase factors like readers' enjoyment and excitement when reading an article. It also aims to increase the attractiveness of an article. Narrative news allows the reader to become more involved with the news event described (Tal-Or & Cohen, 2010).

### *1.1 Differences between traditional and narrative news articles*

Narrative news differs from the traditional journalistic writing style in a number of ways. First, the order in which the events in a story are presented is different. Brewer and Liechtenstein (1982) separated event- and discourse structure. They made a distinction between what is told (the chronological order of the actions), and how the story is told (the order of the actions as presented in the narrative). This results in three possible discourse structures. First, a linear discourse structure has a structure in which the event and discourse structure are parallel. Second, the reversal type, in which the event and discourse structure are the exact opposite. Finally, the structure which is used most in traditional journalistic texts, the inverted discourse type. The most important elements take place at the beginning of the article, and less and less important elements follow toward the end.

A second difference between narrative news and traditional journalistic texts is the narrative perspective which is used. A story can be told from different perspectives. The point of

view can be internal or external, and in first or third person. In traditional articles, an external perspective is often used, only a person's observable behavior is described. An internal point of view, most common in narrative articles, includes thoughts, beliefs, intentions and emotions as well (Van Peer & Pander Maat, 2001).

### *1.2 Effects of narrative techniques on the reader*

These differences between traditional and narrative news result in different effects on the reader.

The use of narrative techniques has proved to be positively related to reading enjoyment and change of attitudes (Shen, Ahern, & Baker, 2014). First, narrative techniques affect the reading enjoyment of the reader. This is why newspapers nowadays see narrative techniques as a way to appeal to the audience. Knobloch, Patzig, Mende and Hastall (2004) found that the discourse structure most used in traditional news articles (the inverted type) resulted in lower suspense, curiosity and reading enjoyment when being compared to the other discourse structures, more common in narratives (the linear or reversal type). The findings were independent of factuality of media content.

Van Peer and Pander Maat (2001) found that as a result of the narrative perspective used, readers' sympathy for a character in the story had the ability to shape their interpretations of the actions of the character. When internal points of views are used, readers are more likely to feel for the character. This might result in a better understanding of why one might engage in inappropriate or unappealing behavior in certain circumstances. Findings of Kotovych, Dixon, Bortolussi and Holden (2011) are in line with this assumption. They found that readers have a greater opportunity to attribute their own experience to the narrator when reading an implicit preamble than when reading an explicit preamble. As a result, the narrator's thoughts and

behavior are easier to appreciate and understand. Oliver, Dillard, Bae and Tamul (2012) add to this. They found that narrative-formatted stories produce more compassion toward the individuals in the story. Having sympathy towards a character and having a better understanding of the character's behavior contributes to reading enjoyment (Green, Brock & Kaufman, 2004).

A second effect of narrative techniques is the change in attitudes of readers. De Graaf, Hoeken, Sanders and Beentjes (2012) found participants copied the attitudes of the characters in a story. Research of Green (2006) also revealed that narratives had effects on readers' real-world beliefs and attitudes. Seeing the narrative through the characters' eyes causes experiences of the character to alter the beliefs of readers (Green, 2006). Moreover, research of Murphy, Frank, Chatterjee and Baezconde-Garbanati (2013) revealed the narrative leads to shifts in knowledge, attitudes and behavioral intentions. They found the fictional narrative was more effective than the nonfictional non-narrative. Ajzen and Fishbein (1972) found attitudes to predict behavioral intentions. When a narrative has the ability to alter the real-world attitudes and beliefs of a reader this might also hold for behavioral intentions, since behavioral intentions were shown to be largely controlled by attitudinal considerations.

### *1.3 Narrative engagement*

The effects of narrative story telling described above can be explained by the mechanics of narrative engagement (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009). People who are involved with a narrative, pay closer attention to details and become absorbed by it. Tal-Or and Cohen (2010) state that narrative engagement consists of two components. They found transportation and identification to be two distinct processes which occur when reading a story. First, identification describes involvement with a specific character. Readers identify more with characters they perceive to be

similar to themselves (Murphy et al., 2013). Most witnesses and sources used in news articles are normal, everyday people. This should increase the ability of the reader to identify with the witness in a journalistic article. The second component of narrative engagement is transportation, which refers to involvement with the story (events). When a reader is transported, he is completely absorbed in the world of the narrative (Green & Brock, 2000).

#### *1.4 Simulation*

Next to narrative engagement, simulation is an important aspect of understanding how it is possible that narrative techniques in journalistic articles have certain effects on the reader. First, Zwaan (1999) provided insights into how the imagined world of a narrative is constructed. He states that while reading, we build a rich and extensive situation model of the narrative world. The comprehension of space, time, goals and causation, and people and objects shows great similarities to how we make sense of these layers in the real world.

Second, Bergen (2007) provided important evidence to come to a greater understanding of how people understand language. When reading about actions, the same specific brain regions are used as when perceiving or performing those actions. We understand language through memories of our own experiences, by simulating in our minds what it would be like to experience the things that the language describes. When we read about a phone ringing, we activate those brain regions which are related to actually hearing a phone ring. The same goes for reading about an action, the brain regions responsible for actually performing that particular action are activated. Simulation enables readers to experience how it feels like to perform the actions described in the narrative in a certain way. Taken this all together, it might be expected that narrative news allows readers to experience and feel what it is like to act when being present

at a scene similar to the one described in the news article. These effects could be increased by the processes of transportation, identification and simulation, which occur when reading narratives. It enables readers to learn from a text and to develop a better understanding of the situation and the characters.

### *1.5 Learning from the narrative*

Taken this all together, news articles could be seen as a valuable tool in learning. Bandura's (1989) social cognitive theory provides evidence for the assumption that narrative reading may result in observational learning. Individuals generate new ways of thinking and behaving by observing a model. They may come to understand what it is like to experience the described events. This might give them a better insight in how they would react in a certain situation similar to the news event covered in the story. Altmann, Bohrn, Lubrich, and Menninghaus (2012) found readers put themselves into the situations of characters when reading fiction, whereas reading about factual events is about relating the readers to actions in the real world. A narrative news article could result in an interesting combination of the two. Research of Gerrig and Rapp (2004) supports the claim that readers may use their literary experiences to apply to their own life experiences. It is known that readers can learn from fiction and that they use their literary experiences to apply to their own life experiences. These findings suggest that, through the processes of transportation, identification and simulation, readers might learn from narrative news articles.

### *1.6 Future behavioral intentions*

This learning effect might influence the future behavioral intentions of readers. This could be

interesting when looking at the use of narrative techniques in journalistic crime articles.

Journalistic crime narratives allow readers to experience a criminal event from up close, as a mediated witness (Peelo, 2006). They invite readers to experience the news event as if he or she actually witnessed the event. Van Krieken, Hoeken and Sanders (in press) found readers of narrative crime news identified more strongly with eyewitnesses of the crime in comparison to the readers of the non-narrative article. They also had a stronger sense of being present at the shooting.

Based on the findings of Bergen (2007) on embodied cognition, one could argue that narrative crime news allows readers to really experience how it is like to act when being present at a scene similar to the one described in the news article. The same brain regions are being activated as when actually performing the actions described. It might be that readers who are reading about a witness hiding during a shooting, simulate the action in their minds. It could be possible that readers will then copy this behavior when being present in a future real-life situation which is similar to the one described in the news article. Findings of Bandura (1989) support this assumption. According to his social cognitive theory, individuals generate new ways of thinking and behaving by observing a model.

This research should provide insights into the influence of narrative techniques used in journalistic articles on reader's behavioral intentions to advance our knowledge about the effects of narrative news. Narrative crime news could fulfill functions for society and to the individuals of the society. The average reader of a newspaper has not experienced a situation similar to the ones described in the news articles, although it could be that they will find themselves in a similar situation one day. Readers will come to a better understanding of what it is like to act in a dangerous situation. This could possibly be helpful in future experiences, since readers will be



better prepared for situations similar to those discussed in the narrative crime news. This way, the narrative does not solely serve as entertainment, but actually teaches us something. We hypothesize that narratives in journalistic crime articles have the capacity to prepare the reader for similar real-life interactions in the future.

Specifically, We expect narrative techniques in crime news articles to influence the behavioral intentions of the reader. When a witness is sharing how he reacted while being present at a crime scene from an internal perspective, readers may learn from the story. Although narrative news has proved to be capable of changing the attitudes of the reader, the effects have not yet been tested to the endpoint of behavioral intentions. To investigate this matter, the following research question was stated: What are the effects of narrative techniques in journalistic crime news articles on future behavioral intentions of the reader?

## **2. Method**

### *2.1 Research design*

A between-subject design was used in this study. Subjects were divided into five groups. Four groups received a different version of the journalistic news articles. The article could be either a narrative article or a traditional article. In addition, both the narrative and the traditional news article had a version in which the victims of a shooting either hid or ran away. Finally, a fifth group was not exposed to a text. This control group only filled in part of the questionnaire.

### *2.2 Materials*

The independent variables were the genre of the article and the action described in the crime news article. This resulted in four different conditions of the journalistic article. Full versions of

the news articles can be found in appendix B. All four articles reported the same shooting and consisted of approximately 400 words. The article could either be a narrative news article or a traditional news article. In addition, both the narrative and the traditional news article had a version in which the witness of a shooting either hid or ran away. Participants know how it is to make movements like crawling and ducking down or running and jumping up, therefore they should be able to imagine how it is like to make the movements of running away and hiding.

In the narrative versions, the story is told from an impersonal perspective. Throughout the story the reader discovers what the main character thought, felt and how he reacted on the situation. The story was told in chronological order.

An example of condition 1 (narrative, running away):

*Op dat moment **sprong** Adam **omhoog (jumped up)** en begon hij **weg te rennen (running away)**.  
Zigzaggend **rende (ran)** hij langs de bioscoopstoelen omhoog terwijl hij hoorde dat er opnieuw geschoten werd.*

An example of condition 2 (narrative, hiding):

*Op dat moment **dook** Adam **omlaag (duck down)** en begon hij **weg te kruipen (crawling away)**.  
Tijgerend **kroop (crawled)** hij tussen de bioscoopstoelen door terwijl hij hoorde dat er opnieuw geschoten werd.*

In the traditional news article the news was reported and the one of the victims was quoted. The victim explains how he felt, and how he reacted on the situation. An external perspective was

used. The most important elements took place at the beginning of the article, and less and less important elements follow toward the end.

An example of condition 3 (traditional, hiding):

*Ik sprong omhoog (jumped up) en begon naar de uitgang van de bioscoopzaal te rennen (running). Terwijl ik de trap op rende (ran) brak de paniek in alle hevigheid uit.*

An example of condition 4 (traditional, hiding):

*Ik dook omlaag (duck down) en begon langs de bioscoopstoelen te kruipen (crawling). Terwijl ik over de grond kroop (crawled) brak de paniek in alle hevigheid uit.*

### 2.3 Subjects

A total of 150 Dutch participants took part in this study. The percentage of female participants was 60.7%. The age of the participants ranged from 18-30 ( $M = 21.69$ ,  $SD = 2.50$ ). The most frequent educational level was university (86.7%) followed by higher professional education (Dutch HBO) (12%). Two of the participants indicated high school as their educational level. To check whether gender was distributed equally over the four conditions of the article, a Chi-square test and an Anova were conducted. No significant relation was found between version and gender ( $\chi^2(4) = 3.00$ ,  $p = .560$ ) or version and age ( $F(4,145) = 1.823$ ,  $p = .128$ ).

### 2.4 Instruments

To measure the dependent variables, participants filled in a questionnaire. The level of identification, action simulation, narrative presence, and emotional engagement were measured.

For all items of these four dependent variables, participants were asked to indicate their agreement on a 7-point Likert scale. Moreover, it was measured what the behavioral intentions of the participants were after reading the article. Finally, the personal traits of the participants were measured as well. The level of identification, narrative presence, and emotional engagement were measured with items based on De Graaf et al. (2012). In appendix C, the full questionnaire can be found.

First, the behavioral intentions were measured with the question, ‘What would you do in this situation?’ Three situations were shortly described, to not reveal the true intention of this study to the participants. Only situation B measured the relevant behavioral intentions. Situation A and C were added to distract participants. In situation A, a child was drowning. In situation B, a shooting took place in a cinema. This situation was comparable to the one described in the news article the participants had read, In situation C, someone threw a brick through the window of a shop. For each situation, the behavioral intentions were measured with three 7-point semantic differentials. In situation B, the three semantic differentials ranged from 1 jump up to 7 duck down, from 1 crawl away to 7 run away and from 1 run away to 7 hide.

The level of identification was measured with six items such as ‘‘While reading, I imagined what it would be like to be in the position of Adam’’ and ‘‘When I was reading the news article, it felt like I was going through the same things as Adam was going through’’. The reliability of the scales was good ( $\alpha = .90$ ).

The level of action simulation was measured with four items, such as ‘‘While reading, it felt like I was moving through the spaces described just like Adam did’’ and ‘‘While reading, I felt like I was making the same movements as Adam did’’. The reliability of the scales was good ( $\alpha = .89$ ).

To measure the level of transportation, the level of narrative presence was measured with seven items, such as “During reading, I had the feeling as if I was present at the events in the news article” and “When I was reading the news article, it seemed as if I was there in my thoughts”. The reliability of the scales was good ( $\alpha = .92$ ).

The level of emotional engagement was measured with four items such as “The article affected me” and “The article brought up emotions in me”. The reliability of the scales was good ( $\alpha = .89$ ).

Finally, the personal traits of the participants were measured based on a 10-item measure of the Big-Five dimensions based on Gosling, Rentfrow and Swann (2003). Each item consisted of two descriptors, separated by a comma, using the phrase, “I see myself as:”. Each of the ten items was rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (disagree strongly) to 7 (agree strongly). The five dimensions were extraversion ( $\alpha = .78$ ), agreeableness ( $\alpha = .40$ ), conscientiousness ( $\alpha = .42$ ), emotional stability ( $\alpha = .43$ ), and openness to experiences ( $\alpha = .21$ ). The reliability of most scales were quite low, therefore the items measuring the personal traits were left out of consideration.

### *2.5 Procedure*

The procedure was the similar for all participants. The experiment was conducted on an individual basis. Versions of the news article were randomly assigned to all participants. Participants were told not to talk to anyone while filling in the questionnaire. After reading the article, participants filled in a questionnaire on paper. If the participants were finished, they received a scratch card.

### *2.6 Statistical treatment*

To answer our research question, a Univariate Analysis of Variance (a Two-Way Anova) and a One-Way Anova were used.

### 3. Results

Narrative techniques used in crime news articles were expected to influence the behavioral intentions of the reader. To investigate this matter, the following research question was stated:

What are the effects of narrative techniques in journalistic crime news articles on future behavioral intentions of the reader?

Table 1. All means and standard deviations of the dependent variables per condition.

(1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree, unless stated otherwise)

Dependent variables	Narrative news article				Traditional news article			
	Run		Hide		Run		Hide	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Behavioral intention 1 (1=jump up, 7=duck down)	6.52	0.79	6.23	1.10	6.23	0.81	6.67	.76
Behavioral intention 2 (1=run away, 7=crawl away)	5.31	2.02	5.30	1.69	4.55	1.65	5.86	1.08
Behavioral intention 3 (1=run away, 7= hide)	4.10	2.19	4.33	1.83	4.42	1.82	5.03	1.61
Identification	4.92	1.13	4.69	1.485	3.89	1.20	4.33	1.49
Narrative presence	4.89	1.46	4.82	1.27	4.20	1.30	4.75	1.27
Action simulation	3.66	1.60	3.18	1.31	2.75	1.23	3.34	1.23
Emotional engagement	4.97	1.19	4.61	1.45	4.40	1.34	4.80	1.36

### 3.1 Behavioral intentions

For the behavioral intentions to jump up or duck down, a two-way analysis of variance with genre and action as factors did not show a significant main effect of genre ( $F(1) < 1$ ) or of action ( $F(1) < 1$ ) on the behavioral intentions. The interaction effect between genre and action did show a significant effect on the behavioral intentions to jump up or duck down ( $F(1,116) = 5.15$ ,  $p = .025$ ) (see figure 1). Participants who have read about the action ‘run away’ in a traditional article ( $M = 6.23$ ,  $SD = 0.81$ ) were shown to be more likely to ‘jump up’, so to run away, than readers of the narrative article who read about the action ‘run away’ ( $M = 6.52$ ,  $SD = .79$ ). Participants who have read about the action ‘hide’ in a narrative article ( $M = 6.23$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ), where shown to be more likely to ‘jump up’, so to run away, than readers of the traditional article who read about the action ‘hide’ ( $M = 6.67$ ,  $SD = .76$ ).

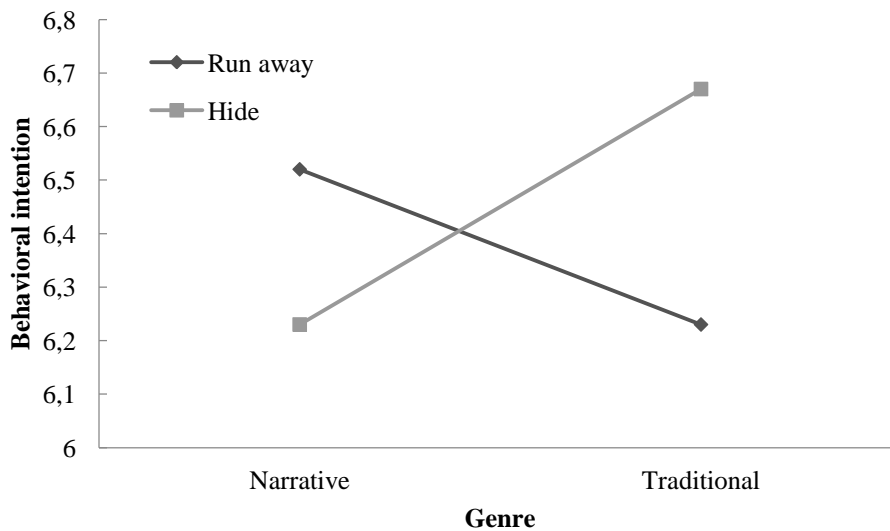


Figure 1. Interaction plot for genre and action on behavioral intention to jump up or duck down (1=jump up, 7=duck down).

For the behavioral intentions to crawl away or to run away, a two-way analysis of variance with genre and action as factors did not show a significant main effect of genre ( $F(1) < 1$ ). Action was proved to have a significant main effect on the behavioral intentions ( $F(1,114) = 4.57, p = .035$ ). Participants who have read about the action ‘hide’ in a news article ( $M = 5.57, SD = 1.44$ ) were shown to be more likely to crawl away than participants who had read about the action ‘run away’ ( $M = 4.92, SD = 1.86$ ). The interaction effect between action and genre was statistically significant ( $F(1,114) = 4.72, p = .032$ ) (see figure 2). Participants who read the narrative article, were more likely to crawl away after reading about the action ‘run away’ ( $M = 5.31, SD = 0.31$ ) than they were after reading the article which included the action ‘hide’ ( $M = 5.30, SD = 0.30$ ). Participants who read the traditional article, were more likely to crawl away after reading the article about the action ‘hide’ ( $M = 5.86, SD = 0.31$ ) than participants who read about the action ‘run away’ ( $M = 4.55, SD = 0.30$ ).

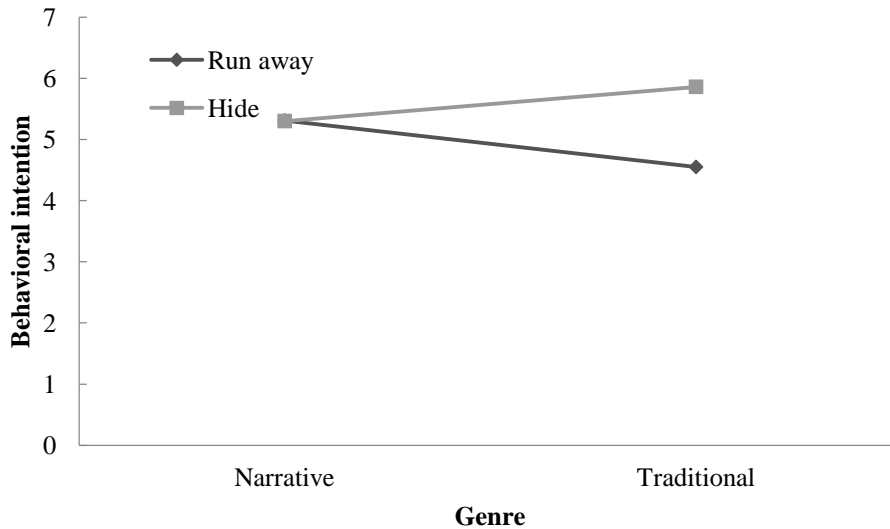


Figure 2. Interaction plot for genre and action on behavioral intention to run away or to crawl away (1=run away, 7=crawl away).



For the behavioral intentions to run away or to hide, a two-way analysis of variance with genre and action as factors did not show a significant main effect for genre ( $F(1,116) = 2.21, p = .140$ ) or action ( $F(1,116) = 1.53, p = .219$ ). In addition, the analysis did not show a statistically significant interaction effect ( $F(1) < 1$ ).

### *3.2 Identification*

A two-way analysis of variance with genre and action as factors showed a significant main effect of genre on the level of identification ( $F(1,116) = 9.26, p = .003$ ). Participants who have read the narrative journalistic article ( $M = 4.81, SD = 1.17$ ) were shown to identify more with the main character than participants who have read the traditional journalistic article ( $M = 4.10, SD = 1.36$ ). Action was not found to have a significant main effect on the level of identification ( $F(1) < 1$ ). The interaction effect between action and genre was not statistically significant ( $F(1,116) = 2.04, p = .156$ ).

### *3.3 Narrative presence*

A two-way analysis of variance with genre and action as factors showed no significant main effects of genre ( $F(1,116) = 2.47, p = .119$ ) or action ( $F(1,116) = 1.02, p = .316$ ) on the level of narrative presence. Furthermore, the interaction effect between action and genre proved not statistically significant ( $F(1,116) = 1.61, p = .206$ ).

### *3.4 Action simulation*

A two-way analysis of variance with genre and action as factors did not show a significant main

effect of genre ( $F(1,116) = 2.02, p = .158$ ) or action ( $F(1) < 1$ ) on the level of action simulation. The interaction effect between genre and action was statistically significant ( $F(1,116) = 4.25, p = .041$ ) (see figure 3). Within the narrative journalistic articles, participants who read about the action ‘running away’ ( $M = 3.66, SD = 1.60$ ) had a higher level of action simulation than participants who read about the action ‘hiding’ ( $M = 3.18, SD = 1.31$ ). Within the traditional articles, participants who read about the action ‘hide’ ( $M = 3.34, SD = .26$ ) had a higher level of action simulation than participants who read about the action ‘running away’ ( $M = 2.75, SD = .26$ ).

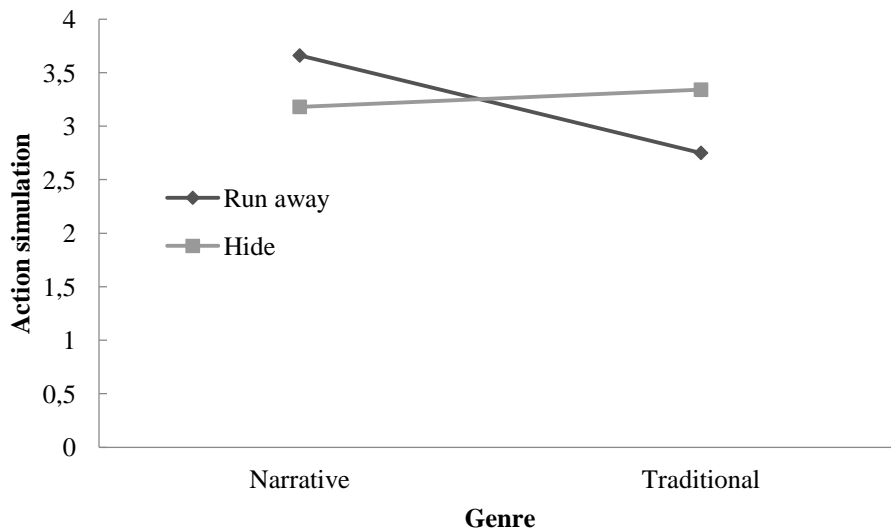


Figure 3. Interaction plot for genre and action on the level of action simulation.

### 3.5 Emotional engagement

A two-way analysis of variance with genre and action as factors did not show a significant main effect of genre ( $F(1) < 1$ ) or action ( $F(1) < 1$ ) on the level of emotional engagement. The interaction effect between action and genre proved not statistically significant ( $F(1,116) = 2.44, p = .121$ ).

### 3.6 Baseline

A control group, consisting of a group of participants who were not exposed to a journalistic text, also filled in part of the questionnaire. A one-way analysis of variance showed a significant main effect of condition (version 1, 2, 3, 4) on the behavioral intentions to run away or to crawl away ( $F(4, 143) = 2.46, p = .048$ ). Participants who read about the action 'hide' in the traditional news article ( $M = 5.86, SD = 1.08$ ) were more likely to copy the behavior than when reading about the action 'run away' ( $M = 4.55, SD = 1.65$ ) or who had read the narrative article ( $M = 5.31, SD = 2.02$ ) (Bonferroni correction,  $p < .05$ ). No significant main effects of the condition (version 1, 2, 3, 4) on the behavioral intentions to jump up or duck down ( $F(4, 145) = 1.30, p = .272$ ) or on the behavioral intentions to hide or run away ( $F(4, 145) = 1.06, p = .0379$ ) were found.

## 4. Conclusion

This research provides insights into the influence of narrative techniques used in journalistic crime news articles on reader's behavioral intentions, to advance our knowledge about the effects of narrative news. Findings of the current study are not in line with the expectation that narrative crime news articles positively influence the behavioral intentions of the reader. In contrast to this expectation, only the traditional article proved to have positively influenced the behavioral intentions. Although narrative news has proved to be capable of changing the attitudes of the reader (De Graaf et al., 2012; Murphy et al., 2013), it cannot be stated that it also influences the behavioral intentions of readers based on this study. Narratives techniques do not seem to prepare readers for situations similar to those discussed in news articles.

When looking at the behavioral intentions to jump up or duck down, reading the traditional article leads to copying the behavior, whilst readers of the narrative article show behavioral intentions opposite to the actions described in the article. Moreover, readers are more likely to copy the behavior when the main character is hiding. When having to choose between the behavioral intentions to run away or to crawl away, readers of the traditional article with the action 'hide' were most likely to crawl away. Hardly any difference in behavioral intentions was found concerning the readers of the narrative article.

Although readers of the narrative news article proved to have a higher level of identification, no significant results were found for the level of transportation (narrative presence) or the level of emotional engagement. Readers of the narrative article had a higher level of simulation after reading about the action 'running away', whilst readers of the traditional article had a higher level of simulation after reading about the action 'hide'.

## **5. Discussion**

### *5.1 Explanations*

Results indicate that only the traditional journalistic articles have positively influenced the behavioral intentions of participants. These findings are in contrast with findings of Murphy, et al. (2013), which revealed the narrative lead to shifts in knowledge, attitudes and behavioral intentions.

A possible explanation for the current results is that the traditional articles might have had more authority in the eyes of participants. Newspapers are seen as a reliable source of news and information. The traditional journalistic articles might have been perceived as closer related to reality. Reimer, Mata and Stoecklin (2004) argue that all readers make use of the expertise

heuristic. This might explain why participants of the recent study took better notice of the behavior described in the traditional news article.

The level of action simulation within the traditional news articles was highest for the action 'hide'. This could explain why the behavior of the main character in the traditional article with the action 'hide' was most likely to be copied. This might indicate that action simulation may indeed lead to copying the described behavior in some cases. The level of identification does not seem to be related to this. Identification does not seem to have a positive influence on the behavioral intentions of the reader. Readers of the narrative identified stronger with the main character, but did not copy the behavior. Van Krieken et al. (in press) found the narrative crime news lead to a higher level of identification than the non-narrative article as well.

Van Krieken et al. (in press) also found readers of the crime narrative had a stronger sense of being present at the shooting. Our findings do not add to this, since no significant effects for the level of narrative presence were found in this study. A possible explanation for this is that the news articles used in this study were not seen as realistic enough. Green (2004) found that increased transportation was associated with increased perceptions of realism. In addition, perceived realism has proved to influence identification, emotional involvement and message evaluation (Cho et al., 2014). This might also explain why the current study did not find any significant results for emotional engagement. Oliver et al. (2012) did find narrative-formatted stories produced more compassion toward the individuals in the story.

Readers of the narrative were found to have opposite behavioral intentions when having to choose between the behavioral intentions to run or crawl away. Altmann et al. (2014) found that reading in a factual mode engaged an activation pattern suggesting an action-based reconstruction of the events depicted in a story. In contrast, the brain activation patterns

corresponding to reading fiction seem to reflect a constructive simulation of what might have happened. This might suggest that the traditional articles might have been processed in an action-based reconstruction of the events, whilst readers of the narrative article were reflecting more on what might have happened. This reflection might have led to the conclusion that an opposite reaction was more suitable for the situation described.

### *5.2 Limitations*

The news articles were not originally copied from a real newspaper. This might have had a negative influence on the ecological validity of this research. The experimental materials of Van Krieken et al. (in press) consisted of original newspaper articles. The narrative article was narrated in the present tense and consisted of 1,238 words. The traditional article was written in the past tense and consisted of 402, an added extended version of the traditional article consisted of 1,215 words. These articles might have given a better reflection of reality. In the current study, it can be questioned if all participants were convinced the narrative article could actually appear in a newspaper. A higher ecological validity might positively influence the different mechanics of narrative engagement such as transportation, identification and perceived realism. This might have an influence on the ability of the narrative to influence the behavioral intentions of the reader.

### *5.3 Implications*

It can be investigated whether the authority of a traditional journalistic has more effect on the behavioral intentions of the reader than the use narrative techniques in a journalistic article. In

addition, there might be a difference in processing and simulating the events described in traditional versus narrative news articles.

Furthermore, it might be better to include different measurements for the behavioral intentions of the participants. Participants themselves could write down how they would react when witnessing a similar crime news event. It was now decided which reactions the participants could choose from. Zaller and Feldman (1992) assume that most people are internally conflicted over most issues when filling in a questionnaire. Most respondents do not possess preformed attitudes or opinions at the level of specificity demanded. Maybe different results would have been found when participants had more freedom to formulate their behavioral intentions themselves.

A final implication is to measure attentional focus. Attentional focus refers to an intense concentration on the narrative (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009). It could be included to test whether the narrative crime news article causes readers to become completely focused on the story. A low attentional focus could explain low levels of narrative presence or emotional engagement.

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**Appendix A**

**Statement of Own Work**

**Verklaring geen fraude en plagiaat**

Aan het einde van het traject inleveren bij het secretariaat tegelijk met de digitale versie van de scriptie op CD-rom.

Ondergetekende,

Milou Jansen s4239407

bachelorstudent Communicatie- en Informatiewetenschappen aan de Letterenfaculteit van de Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen,

verklaart dat deze scriptie volledig oorspronkelijk is en uitsluitend door hem/haarzelf geschreven is. Bij alle informatie en ideeën ontleend aan andere bronnen, heeft ondergetekende expliciet en in detail verwezen naar de vindplaatsen. De erin gepresenteerde onderzoeksgegevens zijn door ondergetekende zelf verzameld op de in de scriptie beschreven wijze.

Plaats + datum            01-06-2015

Handtekening            .....

## **Appendix B**

### **Materials**

This appendix displays the four conditions of the journalistic crime news articles used in the current study. The genre (narrative vs traditional) and the action described in the article (run away vs. hide) are manipulated throughout the versions. The different conditions can be found on the following pages.

B1: *Condition 1 (narrative article, running away):*

## **Filmvertoning eindigt in nachtmerrie voor bezoekers**

Van onze correspondent

**UTAH – Pas op het laatste moment besloot de 25-jarige student Adam Jacobs met een vriend naar de film te gaan. Het was vrijdagavond en ze hadden wel wat ontspanning verdiend, vonden ze. Hun keuze viel op *The Hurt Locker*.**

Het was druk in de bioscoop, zoals altijd op vrijdagavond. De geur van popcorn, verwachtingsvol geroezemoes dat af en toe werd onderbroken door een harde lach. Adam zag op de tweede rij nog een aantal lege stoelen. Ze ploften neer. Al gauw verloor Adam zichzelf in de beelden op het grote scherm.

Even na tien uur, de film was halverwege, zag Adam de deur van de nooduitgang open zwaaien. Het silhouet van een man was zichtbaar tegen het zwakke licht van de noodverlichting. Adam richtte zijn aandacht weer op het scherm. Uit zijn ooghoek zag hij dat de man iets langwerpigs van zijn rug haalde. De man nam het met beide handen vast en richtte het op het publiek. Toen schoot er vuur uit wat de loop van een mitrailleur bleek te zijn. Een oorverdovend geknal overstemde het geluid van de film en Adam hoorde de kogels langs zijn oren fluiten en naast en boven hem inslaan.

Er steeg een panisch gegil op. De man vuurde een nieuw salvo op de onderste rijen van de bioscoop af. Adams hart bonkte in zijn keel “Dit overleef ik nooit,” dacht hij. “Wat moet ik doen?”

Toen stopte de schutter om een nieuwe clip in zijn mitrailleur te stoppen. Op dat moment sprong Adam omhoog en begon hij weg te rennen. Zigzaggend rende hij langs de bioscoopstoelen omhoog terwijl hij hoorde dat er opnieuw geschoten werd. Hij onderdrukte de neiging om achterom te kijken en sprintte nog sneller de schuine trap treden op. Hij hoorde het hysterische gegil van de overige bioscoopbezoekers en zag vanuit zijn ooghoeken mensen bewegingloos op de grond liggen. Hij vluchtte de bioscoop hal in en de straat op, op de voet gevolgd door zijn vriend. De eerste politieauto's kwamen net aangescheurd en een tiental zwaar-bewapende agenten ging de bioscoop binnen. Later zagen ze hoe de schutter door drie agenten werd afgevoerd.

“Ik kan het nog maar nauwelijks bevatten,” vertelt Adam een dag later. “Het was surrealistisch, alsof ik in een nachtmerrie was beland. Je verwacht niet dat zo iets gebeurt in een bioscoop.”

De schietpartij vond plaats in Megaplex, de grootste bioscoop in Salt Lake City. Bij de schietpartij kwamen een man van 28 en een vrouw van 41 om het leven. Twaalf anderen zijn zwaargewond naar het ziekenhuis overgebracht. Over het motief van de 35-jarige dader is nog niets bekend.

B2: *Condition 2 (narrative article, hiding):*

## **Filmvertoning eindigt in nachtmerrie voor bezoekers**

Van onze correspondent

**UTAH – Pas op het laatste moment besloot de 25-jarige student Adam Jacobs met een vriend naar de film te gaan. Het was vrijdagavond en ze hadden wel wat ontspanning verdiend, vonden ze. Hun keuze viel op *The Hurt Locker*.**

Het was druk in de bioscoop, zoals altijd op vrijdagavond. De geur van popcorn, verwachtingsvol geroezemoes dat af en toe werd onderbroken door een harde lach. Adam zag op de tweede rij nog een aantal lege stoelen. Ze ploften neer. Al gauw verloor Adam zichzelf in de beelden op het grote scherm.

Even na tien uur, de film was halverwege, zag Adam de deur van de nooduitgang open zwaaien. Het silhouet van een man was zichtbaar tegen het zwakke licht van de noodverlichting. Adam richtte zijn aandacht weer op het scherm. Uit zijn ooghoek zag hij dat de man iets langwerpigs van zijn rug haalde. De man nam het met beide handen vast en richtte het op het publiek. Toen schoot er vuur uit wat de loop van een mitrailleur bleek te zijn. Een oorverdovend geknal overstemde het geluid van de film en Adam hoorde de kogels langs zijn oren fluiten en naast en boven hem inslaan.

Er steeg een panisch gegil op. De man vuurde een nieuw salvo op de onderste rijen van de bioscoop af. Adams hart bonkte in zijn keel “Dit overleef ik nooit,” dacht hij. “Wat moet ik doen?”

Toen stopte de schutter om een nieuwe clip in zijn mitrailleur te stoppen. Op dat moment dook Adam omlaag en begon hij weg te kruipen. Tijgerend kroop hij tussen de bioscoopstoelen door terwijl hij hoorde dat er opnieuw geschoten werd. Hij onderdrukte de neiging om omhoog te kijken en schoof zichzelf vooruit over het tapijt. Hij hoorde het hysterische gegil van de overige bioscoopbezoekers en zag vanuit zijn ooghoeken mensen bewegingloos op de grond liggen. Hij verstopte zich achter een stoel, naast hem deed zijn vriend hetzelfde. Ze hoorden de eerste politieauto’s aankomen en niet veel later kwam een tiental zwaarbewapende politieagenten de bioscoop binnen. Vanuit hun schuilplaats zagen ze hoe de schutter door drie agenten werd afgevoerd.

“Ik kan het nog maar nauwelijks bevatten,” vertelt Adam een dag later. “Het was surrealistisch, alsof ik in een nachtmerrie was beland. Je verwacht niet dat zoiets gebeurt in een bioscoop.”

De schietpartij vond plaats in Megaplex, de grootste bioscoop in Salt Lake City. Bij de schietpartij kwamen een man van 28 en een vrouw van 41 om het leven. Twaalf anderen zijn zwaargewond naar het ziekenhuis overgebracht. Over het motief van de 35-jarige dader is nog niets bekend.

B3: Condition 3 (traditional article, running away):

## **Filmvertoning eindigt in nachtmerrie voor bezoekers**

Van onze correspondent

**UTAH – Bij een schietpartij in een bioscoop in Salt Lake City zijn vrijdagavond twee mensen om het leven gekomen. Daarnaast raakten twaalf mensen zwaargewond. Een man met een mitrailleur opende het vuur terwijl nietsvermoedende bioscoopbezoekers naar de film *The Hurt Locker* keken.**

De schietpartij begon even na tien uur, toen de film halverwege was. In de uitverkochte bioscoopzaal waren op dat moment zo'n 180 mensen aanwezig. De schutter kwam de zaal vermoedelijk binnen via de nooduitgang. Kort na zijn binnenkomst zou hij het vuur hebben geopend. Volgens verschillende ooggetuigen hield hij een mitrailleur vast die hij meerdere malen op het publiek richtte. Hij zou daarbij zeker tientallen kogels hebben gelost.

De schutter kon door de politie worden ingerekend, die snel ter plaatste was. Het zou gaan om een 35-jarige man die niet eerder in aanraking is geweest met de politie. Over zijn motief is nog niets bekend.

De schietpartij vond plaats in Megaplex The Gateway, met twaalf zalen de grootste bioscoop in Salt Lake City. Bij de schietpartij kwamen een man van 28 en een vrouw van 41 om het leven. Twaalf anderen raakten zwaargewond en zijn naar een ziekenhuis in de omgeving overgebracht.

De chaos tijdens de schietpartij was groot, blijkt uit de verklaring van de 25-jarige student Adam Jacobs, die met een vriend in de zaal zat. "De schutter stopte een paar keer om zijn mitrailleur te herladen. Ik sprong omhoog en begon naar de uitgang van de bioscoopzaal te rennen. Terwijl ik de trap op rende brak de paniek in alle hevigheid uit. Er klonk gegil en her en der lagen mensen bewegingloos op de grond. Ik sprintte door en vluchtte de bioscoophal in en de straat op. Het was surrealistisch," aldus Adam.

Het onderzoek naar de exacte toedracht is op dit moment nog in volle gang. "De auto van de verdachte is voor sporenonderzoek in beslag genomen. Zijn woning is inmiddels doorzocht, maar het onderzoek op de plaats delict bevindt zich pas in de beginfase," aldus een woordvoerder van de politie. "We kunnen daar op dit moment dan ook nog geen enkele inhoudelijke uitspraak over doen." Het zal waarschijnlijk nog enkele weken tot maanden duren voordat zich een duidelijk beeld van de schutter en zijn beweegredenen heeft gevormd.

Tijdens een ingelaste persconferentie verklaarde gouverneur John Huntsman vrijdagavond: "Ik kan nog maar nauwelijks bevatten dat dit in onze gemeenschap heeft plaatsgevonden. Je verwacht niet dat zoiets gebeurt in een bioscoop. Het is alsof we in een nachtmerrie zijn beland, maar het is helaas niets dan werkelijkheid. Mijn gedachten gaan uit naar de slachtoffers en hun naasten."



B4: Condition 4 (traditional article, hiding):

## **Filmvertoning eindigt in nachtmerrie voor bezoekers**

Van onze correspondent

**UTAH – Bij een schietpartij in een bioscoop in Salt Lake City zijn vrijdagavond twee mensen om het leven gekomen. Daarnaast raakten twaalf mensen zwaargewond. Een man met een mitrailleur opende het vuur terwijl nietsvermoedende bioscoopbezoekers naar de film *The Hurt Locker* keken.**

De schietpartij begon even na tien uur, toen de film halverwege was. In de uitverkochte bioscoopzaal waren op dat moment zo'n 180 mensen aanwezig. De schutter kwam de zaal vermoedelijk binnen via de nooduitgang. Kort na zijn binnenkomst zou hij het vuur hebben geopend. Volgens verschillende ooggetuigen hield hij een mitrailleur vast die hij meerdere malen op het publiek richtte. Hij zou daarbij zeker tientallen kogels hebben gelost.

De schutter kon door de politie worden ingerekend, die snel ter plaatste was. Het zou gaan om een 35-jarige man die niet eerder in aanraking is geweest met de politie. Over zijn motief is nog niets bekend.

De schietpartij vond plaats in Megaplex The Gateway, met twaalf zalen de grootste bioscoop in Salt Lake City. Bij de schietpartij kwamen een man van 28 en een vrouw van 41 om het leven. Twaalf anderen raakten zwaargewond en zijn naar een ziekenhuis in de omgeving overgebracht.

De chaos tijdens de schietpartij was groot, blijkt uit de verklaring van de 25-jarige student Adam Jacobs, die met een vriend in de zaal zat. "De schutter stopte een paar keer om zijn mitrailleur te herladen. Ik dook omlaag en begon langs de bioscoopstoelen te kruipen. Terwijl ik over de grond kroop brak de paniek in alle hevigheid uit. Er klonk gegil en her en der lagen mensen bewegingloos op de grond. Ik schoof door en verstopte me toen achter een paar stoelen. Daar bleef ik wachten. Het was surrealistisch," aldus Adam.

Het onderzoek naar de exacte toedracht is op dit moment nog in volle gang. "De auto van de verdachte is voor sporenonderzoek in beslag genomen. Zijn woning is inmiddels doorzocht, maar het onderzoek op de plaats delict bevindt zich pas in de beginfase," aldus een woordvoerder van de politie. "We kunnen daar op dit moment dan ook nog geen enkele inhoudelijke uitspraak over doen." Het zal waarschijnlijk nog enkele weken tot maanden duren voordat zich een duidelijk beeld heeft gevormd van wat zich precies heeft afgespeeld.

Tijdens een ingelaste persconferentie verklaarde gouverneur John Huntsman vrijdagavond: "Ik kan nog maar nauwelijks bevatten dat dit in onze gemeenschap heeft plaatsgevonden. Je verwacht niet dat zoiets gebeurt in een bioscoop. Het is alsof we in een nachtmerrie zijn beland, maar het is helaas niets dan werkelijkheid. Mijn gedachten gaan uit naar de slachtoffers en hun naasten."

### Appendix C Instruments

This appendix contains the full questionnaire used in the current study.

**INSTRUCTIE** Blader vanaf nu niet meer terug naar het artikel. Hieronder wordt telkens kort een situatie geschetst. Daarna wordt gevraagd wat je zelf zou doen als je in deze situatie zou belanden, waarbij steeds twee opties worden gegeven. Kies telkens één van de opties door op de schaal het bolletje van je keuze in te kleuren. Het is belangrijk dat je bij elke set van twee opties één bolletje inkleurt.

A) Stel je voor dat je in een ligstoel naast het zwembad ligt. Plotseling zie je een kind kopje onder gaan en niet meer boven komen. Wat zou je in deze situatie doen?

Ik zou...

1. <i>Hulp halen</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<i>Het water in duiken</i>
2. <i>Verstijven</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<i>Handelen</i>
3. <i>Blijven liggen</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<i>Mijn stoel uit springen</i>

B) Stel je voor dat je in een bioscoop naar een film aan het kijken bent. Plotseling komt iemand met een vuurwapen binnen en begint in het rond te schieten. Wat zou je in deze situatie doen?

Ik zou...

1. <i>Omhoog springen</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<i>Omlaag duiken</i>
2. <i>Weg rennen</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<i>Weg kruipen</i>
3. <i>Weg vluchten</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<i>Me verstoppen</i>





18. Ik vond het artikel aangrijpend

*Helemaal mee oneens*                                *Helemaal mee eens*

19. Het artikel riep emoties in me op

*Helemaal mee oneens*                                *Helemaal mee eens*

20. Het artikel liet me koud

*Helemaal mee oneens*                                *Helemaal mee eens*

21. Het artikel raakte me

*Helemaal mee oneens*                                *Helemaal mee eens*

\*\*\*

**INSTRUCTIE Hieronder staat telkens een set van twee eigenschappen. Geef voor elke set aan in hoeverre deze bij jou past door op de schaal het bolletje van je keuze in te kleuren. Het is belangrijk dat je aangeeft in hoeverre de twee eigenschappen samen bij jou passen, ook als één van de twee minder/meer bij je past dan de andere.**

<u>Ik zie mezelf als:</u>	helemaal mee oneens				helemaal mee eens			
1. Extravert, enthousiast	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Kritisch, aanvallend	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Betrouwbaar, gedisciplineerd	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Angstig, snel van streek	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. Open voor nieuwe ervaringen, complex	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Gereserveerd, rustig	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. Sympathiek, warm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Ongeorganiseerd, nonchalant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Kalm, emotioneel stabiel	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Conventioneel, niet creatief	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

\*\*\* EINDE \*\*\*

# EFFECTS OF NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES IN NEWS ARTICLES