Current perspectives on narrative persuasion using TV fiction

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Narrative impact

- **Narrative**:
  - "A representation of connected events and characters that has an identifiable structure, is bounded in space and time, and contains implicit or explicit messages about the topic being addressed" (Kreuter et al., 2007, p. 221).

- **Meta-analysis:**
  - Narratives have significant effects on attitudes, beliefs, behavioral intention and behavior (Braddock & Dillard, 2016).

La serie 'El tiempo entre costuras' dispara un 135% las ventas de máquinas de coser en Amazon

Actualizado 18/11/2013 16:51:42 CET

- Pirámides, murallas y templos, protagonistas de la nueva temporada de 'Desmontando la Historia'

  Sábado, 16 de Septiembre
- Las series, el mejor remedio contra el síndrome postvacacional
- Asesinan a un miembro del equipo de Narcos en México cuando buscaba localizaciones para la serie

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Lo más leído

TV series may provide more than entertainment. Audiovisual narratives are powerful tools for changing people's attitudes, beliefs and behaviours

Braddock, K., & Dillard, J. P. (2016). Meta-analytic evidence for the persuasive effect of narratives on beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors. *Communication Monographs*, *83*(4), 446–467.

Audiences learn from TV fiction

- **Cultivation theory** (Appel, 2008; Shanahan & Morgan, 1999; Shrum et al., 2011).

- **Narrative persuasion** and TV series (e.g., Müller, 2009; Hust et al., 2015; Slater et al., 2006).
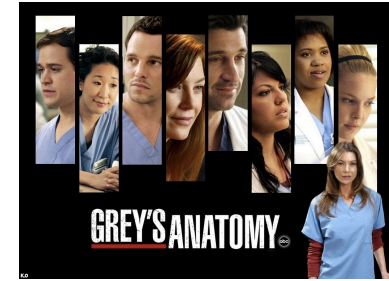
"According to one survey, **26%** of the public cited entertainment television as being one of their top sources of **health information**, and over half (52%) said they consider the health information contained in these programs to be accurate" (Murphy et al., 2011, p. 407)

Murphy, S. T., Frank, L. B., Moran, M. B., & Patnoe-Woodley, P. (2011). Involved, transported, or emotional? Exploring the determinants of change in knowledge, attitudes, and behavior in entertainment-education. *Journal of Communication*, *61*(3), 407-431.

Entertainment-education
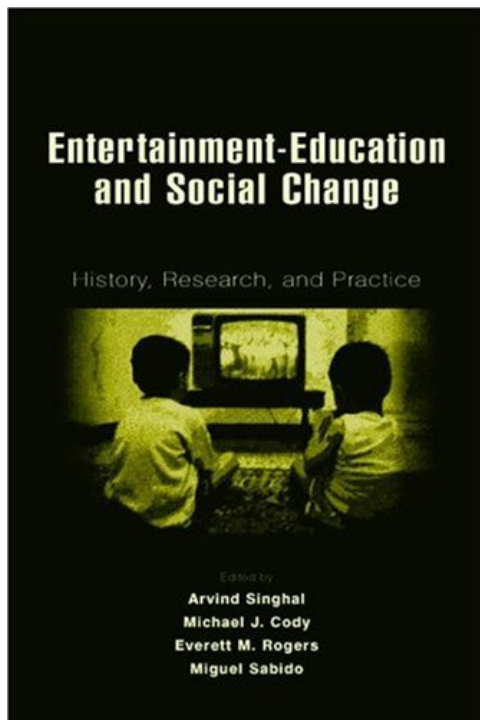
Integrate health-related content directly into popular television storylines

"Entertainment-education (E-E) is the process of purposely designing and implementing a media message to both entertain and educate, in order to increase audience members' knowledge about an educational issue, create favorable attitudes, shift social norms, and change overt behavior" (Singhal & Rogers, 2004, p. 5).

Singhal, A., Cody, M. J., Rogers, E. M., & Sabido, M. (2003). *Entertainment-education and social change. History, research, and practice*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Entertainment-education and audiovisual communication

- Soap opera "*Hum Log*" (*We People*), in **India**, to promote the social status of women.

- Radio soap opera in **Tanzania** "*Twende na Wakati*" (*Let's go with the Times*), to prevent AIDS.

- In the **US**, telenovelas (*Ladrón de Corazones*) or **TV series** (*ER*, *CSI*, *Dr. House*, *The OC*, *Desperate Housewives*, *Sex and the City*, and *Grey's Anatomy*) to prevent cancer, to prevent teen pregnancy or to promote organ donation.

- *Soul City* TV series (http://www.soulcity.org.za) in **South Africa**.

More than 125 entertainment-education productions worldwide designed to improve public health

Example of entertainment-education

Prevention of cervical cancer in the United States

"The Tamale Lesson"

Empirical evidence shows that **(audiovisual) narrative formats are more effective than non-narratives** (like traditional didactic approaches featuring doctors and health experts and showing evidence provided through charts and figures) to deliver information and change attitudes in health issues (e.g., Murphy, Frank, Chatterjee & Baezconde-Garbanati, 2013).

Murphy, S. T., Frank, L. B., Chatterjee, J. S., & Baezconde-Garbanati, L. (2013). Narrative versus nonnarrative: The role of identification, transportation, and emotion in reducing health disparities. *Journal of Communication*, *63*(1), 116-137.

Narrative Persuasion vs. Rhetorical Persuasion

- Narratives (such as television series or movies) are **processed differently** than traditional rhetorical persuasive messages (such as commercial advertising).
- **Different mental process may be involved when a person encounters a narrative versus an argument**.

> **Narrative persuasion** investigates how exposure to the information located within narratives produces story-consistent change in beliefs, attitudes, intentions and behaviors (Green, Strange & Brock, 2002).

Green, M. C., Strange, J. J., & Brock, T. C. (2002). *Narrative impact. Social and cognitive foundations*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
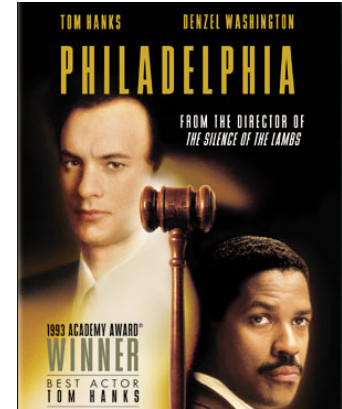
Traditional persuasive messages versus narratives

Persuasive messages

- Contain list of arguments (reasoning, claims, evidence) in an explicit way.

- Show a clear educational or attitudinal goal.

- Processing goal: to develop a correct attitude.

Narratives

- Illustrate through the presentation of events. Action is focused on the main characters.

- Designed for enjoyment.

- Processing goal: to become involved in the story and with the characters.

Theoretical models in narrative persuasion

- Transportation-Imagery Model (TIM, Green & Brock, 2000).

- Extended-Elaboration Likelihood Model (E-ELM; Slater & Rouner, 2002).

- Entertainment Overcoming Resistance Model (EORM, Moyer-Gusé, 2008).
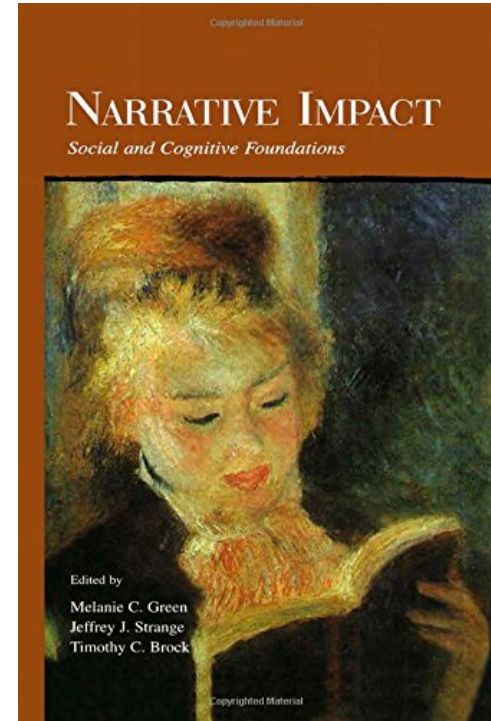
Explanatory processes (mediating mechanisms) of narrative persuasion
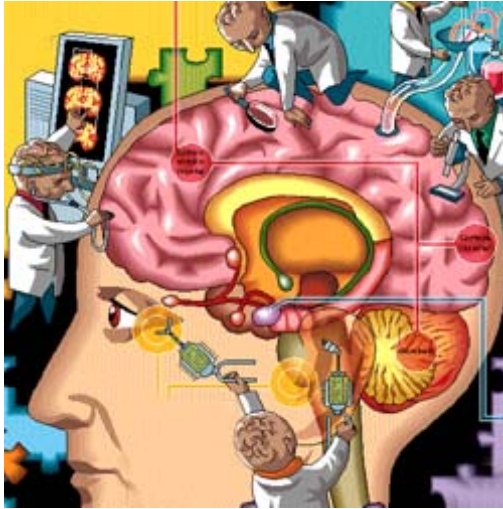
(Moyer-Gusé, 2008)

Narrative involvement: absorption, transportation, engagement, immersion.

Involvement with characters: Identification with characters, wishful identification, perceived similarity (homophily), liking e parasocial interaction (Cohen, 2001; Igartua, 2010; Slater & Rouner, 2002).

Moyer-Gusé, E. (2008). Toward a theory of entertainment persuasion: explaining the persuasive effects of entertainment-education messages. *Communication Theory*, *18*(3), 407-425.

(Narrative) Transportation

Attentional focus ("I was mentally involved in the narrative while reading it")

Visual imagery ("While reading the narrative I had a vivid image of the protagonist")

Emotional-affective process ("The narrative affected me emotionally")

Green, M. C., & Brock, T. C. (2000). The role of transportation in the persuasiveness of public narratives. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79 (5), 701-721.

Transportation Scale Items (Green & Brock, 2000)

Circle the number under each question that best represents your opinion about the narrative you just read.

	Not at all						Very much
1. While I was reading the narrative, I could easily picture the events in it taking place.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. While I was reading the narrative, activity going on in the room around me was on my mind.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. I could picture myself in the scene of the events described in the narrative.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. I was mentally involved in the narrative while reading it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. After the narrative ended, I found it easy to put it out of my mind.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. I wanted to learn how the narrative ended.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. The narrative affected me emotionally.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. I found myself thinking of ways the narrative could have turned out differently.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. I found my mind wandering while reading the narrative.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. The events in the narrative are relevant to my everyday life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11. The events in the narrative have changed my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. I had a vivid mental image of [character name].	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Green, M.C., & Brock, T.C. (2000). The role of transportation in the persuasiveness of public narratives. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 79(5),* 701-721.

Video Transportation Scale (Williams et al., 2011)

Circle the number under each question that best represents your opinion about the narrative you just watch.

	Not at all					Very much		
1. While I was watching the story, activity going on in the room around me was on my mind.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Attentional focus
2. I was mentally involved in the story while watching it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Engagement
3. The story affected me emotionally.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Engagement
4. I found my mind wandering while watching the story.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Attentional focus
5. The events in the story are relevant to my everyday life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Engagement

[Items 1, and 4 are reverse-scored]

Williams, J. H., Green, M. C., Kohler, C., Allison, J. J., & Houston, T. K. (2011). Stories to communicate risks about tobacco: Development of a brief scale to measure transportation into a video story–The ACCE Project. *Health Education Journal, 70*(2), 184-191.

Identification with the characters

X = Protagonist's name

Emotional empathy or sharing the feelings of the character ("I felt emotionally involved with **X**'s feelings")

Cognitive empathy or sharing the perspective of the character ("I tried to see things from **X**'s point of view")

Merging or the the experience of becoming the character ("I felt as if I were **X**")

Identifying with characters is an **imaginative process** that involves the temporal replacement of own identity with that of a character from an affective and cognitive point of view (Cohen, 2001).

Igartua, J. J., & Barrios, I. M. (2012). Changing real-world beliefs with controversial movies. Processes and mechanisms of narrative persuasion. *Journal of Communication*, *62*(3), 514-531.

Identification with the character scale (Igartua & Barrios, 2012)

In the movie [TV series, narrative] you have just seen [read] different characters are involved. On this occasion we would like you to answer the following questions in relation to the main character, X [replaced by the character name], indicating to what extent have you experienced the following. Answer by circling the number that best reflects your answer.

	Not at all	A little	Moderately	Quite a bit	Very much
1. I felt emotionally involved with X's feelings	1	2	3	4	5
2. I felt "as if I were X"	1	2	3	4	5
3. I imagined how I would act if I were X	1	2	3	4	5
4. I was concerned for what was happening to X	1	2	3	4	5
5. I understood how X acts, thinks and feels	1	2	3	4	5
6. I myself experienced X's emotional reactions	1	2	3	4	5
7. I tried to imagine X's feelings, thoughts and reactions	1	2	3	4	5
8. I had the impression of living X's story myself	1	2	3	4	5
9. I understood X's feelings or emotions	1	2	3	4	5
10. I tried to see things from X's point of view	1	2	3	4	5
11. I identified with X	1	2	3	4	5

Igartua, J. J., & Barrios, I. M. (2012). Changing real-world beliefs with controversial movies. Processes and mechanisms of narrative persuasion. *Journal of Communication*, 62(3), 514-531.

Identification, narrative transportation and cognitive processes (<u>predictions</u>)

Two possible relationships between identification and transportation with cognitive processes: **cognitive elaboration** (*reflection on the contents of a persuasive message*) and **counterarguing** (*the generation of thoughts that explicitly refute a message's intended persuasive theme*).

①Identification (**empathy dimension**) and transportation (**emotional–affective dimension**) can **stimulate the cognitive elaboration** of messages which, in turn, increase their potential persuasive effects.

②Identification (which also involves a temporary loss of self-awareness, **merging dimension**) and transportation (**attentional focus dimension**) most likely would lead to a **less critical** *reading* of the message which, in turn, increase their potential persuasive effects.

Narrative persuasion models in Entertainment-Education (predictions)
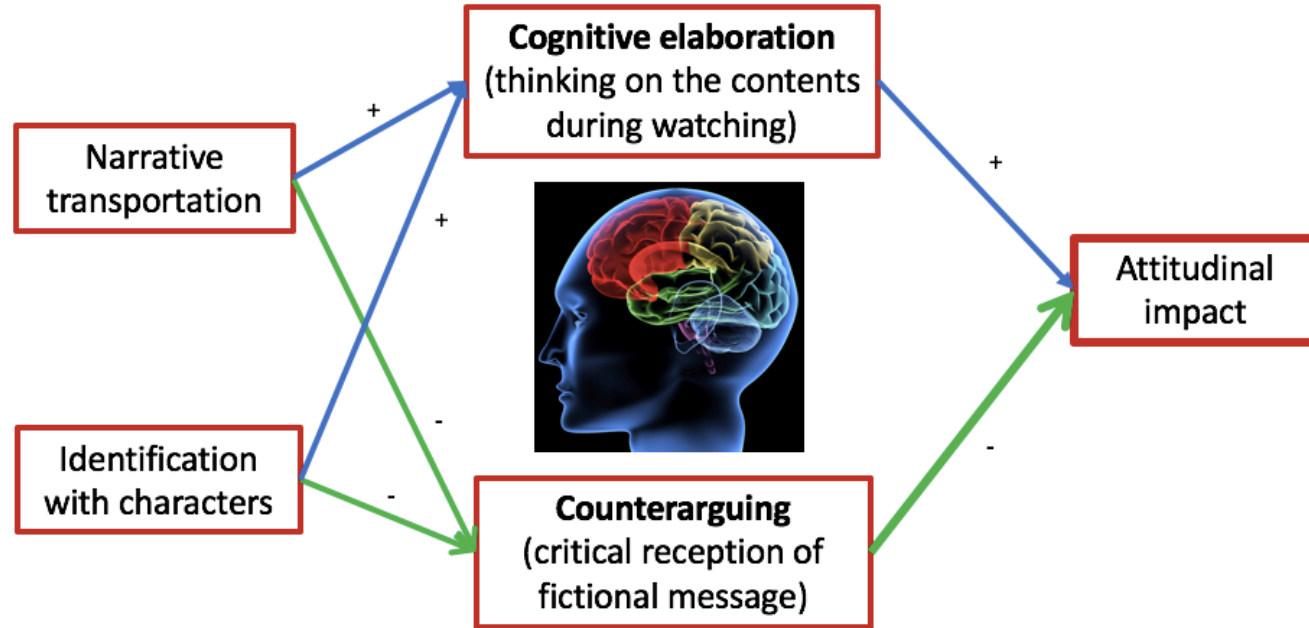
BUT, empirical research into this topic is **in its early stages** (e.g., Moyer-Gusé et al., 2011; Moyer-Gusé & Nabi, 2010).

A case study

https://www.youtube.com/user/REVELADOSDTP

"Revelados, desde todas las posiciones"

- RDTP is a **television series** addressed to young people between the ages of 12 and 19, produced by the **Fundación Imaginario** in Colombia.

- The making of this fictional melodramatic series was based on research into entertainment-education carried out by Soul City (South Africa).

- **Educational contents: sexual relations, gender violence and sexual diversity**.

- First season: **20 episodes** lasting about **15 minutes** each and presents a story with continuity from one episode to another.

The **main characters**:
Camila, Juan Carlos, Vanessa and Sebastián.

RDTP: Episodes and topics

Episode 8: Adolescent sexuality: this episode attempts to reinforce positive beliefs about sexual decision-making.
Camila is the main character of the episode transmitting the educational message.

Episode 10: Gender violence: to reinforce negative attitudes towards gender violence.
Vanessa is the main character of the episode transmitting the educational message.

Episode 17: Expressing homosexual feelings: to reinforce a positive attitude toward gay men who decide to openly express their sexual orientation.
Juan Carlos is the main character of the episode transmitting the educational message.

RDTP: E-E and arguments

Fictional narrative formats (entertainment-education productions) designed to bring about positive social change show a **clear educational component**.

Even though narrative formats (e.g., TV series) do not explicitly present **arguments** from an external source, these can appear in **dialogues** **taking place among characters** during certain moments of the story (Hoeken & Fikkers, 2014; Igartua & Vega, 2016; Igartua, Cheng & Lopes, 2003).

Method

- N = 208 participants (age 14-20, mean = 15.85; 51.9% women).
- Quantitative reception study (in Colombia, 2013).
- TV series "**Revelados, desde todas las posiciones**" (RDTP):
- Participants were randomly divided in three groups (each group a different RDTP episode).
- The impact of viewing the episodes was assessed though a questionnaire containing scales to measure reception processes and attitudinal impact.

Instruments and variables (examples of items)

- **Identification with characters**:
  - "I myself experienced the emotional reactions of Camila".

- **Narrative transportation:**
  - "I felt very involved with the narration while watching the series".

- **Cognitive elaboration**:
  - "I have thought about the situation and the motivations of the characters".

- **Counterarguing**:
  - "I found myself looking for flaws in the way information was presented in the program".

- **Attitudinal measures**:
  - "Teenagers have the right to decide when they want to have sex".
  - "A man must not tell his partner what to do".
  - "Gay men who have 'come out of the closet' should be admired for their courage".

Data analysis strategy

- The focus is on the **mechanisms** by which narrative messages exert persuasive effects.

- Macro **PROCESS** for SPSS (Hayes, 2013).

- A mediation model with two mediating variables (model 4).

- The indirect effect was calculated using 10,000 bootstrap samples for bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals.

- An **indirect effect** is considered statistically significant if the confidence interval established (CI at 95%) does not include the value 0.

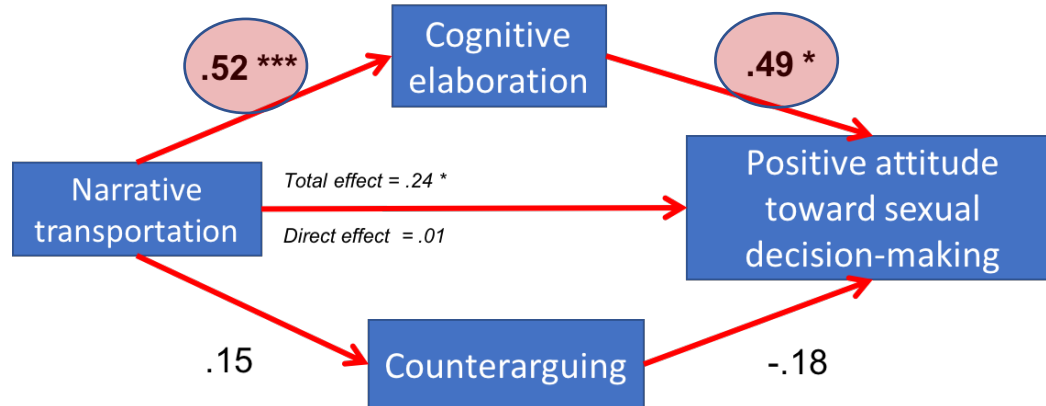# Mediation models: Episode on adolescent sexuality
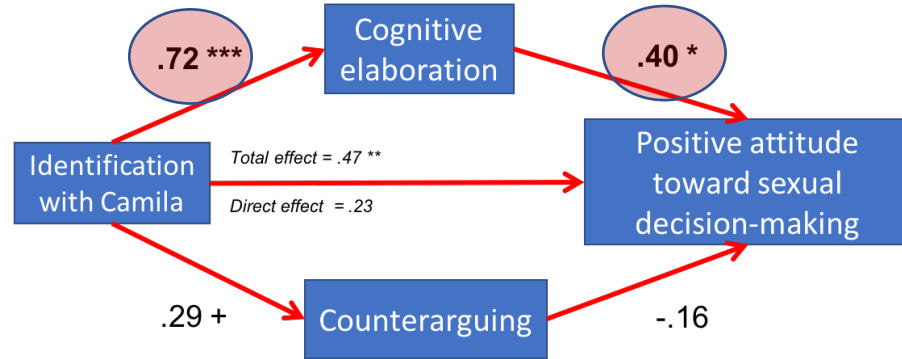
Indirect effects

Identification -> Cognitive elaboration -> Attitudes
$B = .28$, $SE = .16$, 95% CI [.008, .64]
Identification -> Counterarguing-> Attitudes
$B = -.04$, $SE = .05$, 95% CI [-.19, .03]

Indirect effects

Transportation -> Cognitive elaboration -> Attitudes
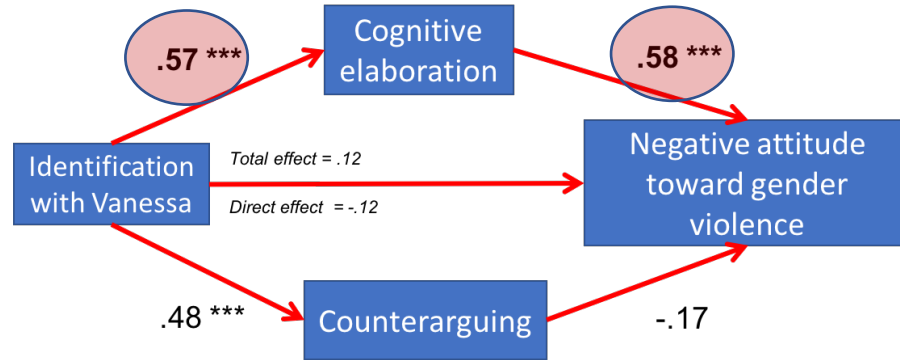**$B = .25$, $SE = .13$, 95% CI [.03, .55]**
Transportation -> Counterarguing-> Attitudes
$B = -.02$, $SE = .03$, 95% CI [-.15, .01]

+ p < .10, * p < .05, *** p < .001
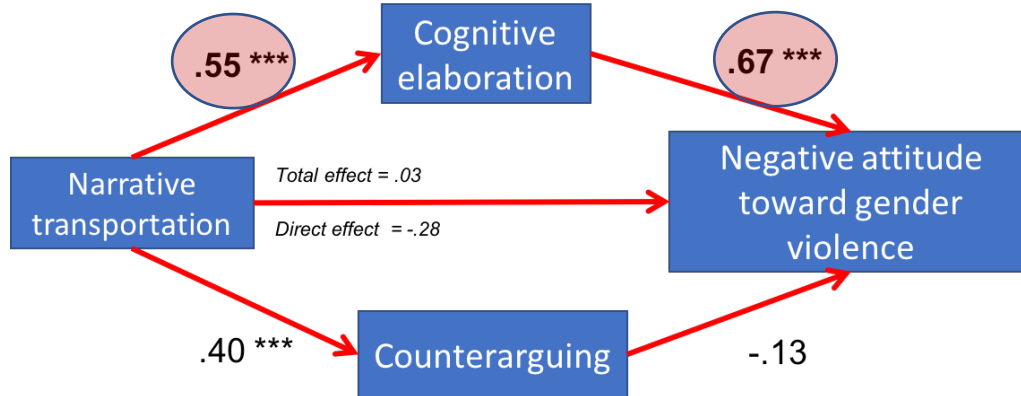
Mediation models: Episode on gender violence

Indirect effects
Identification -> Cognitive elaboration -> Attitudes
$B = .33$, $SE = .13$, 95% CI [.10, .66]
Identification -> Counterarguing-> Attitudes
$B = -.08$, $SE = .11$, 95% CI [-.37, .09]

Indirect effects
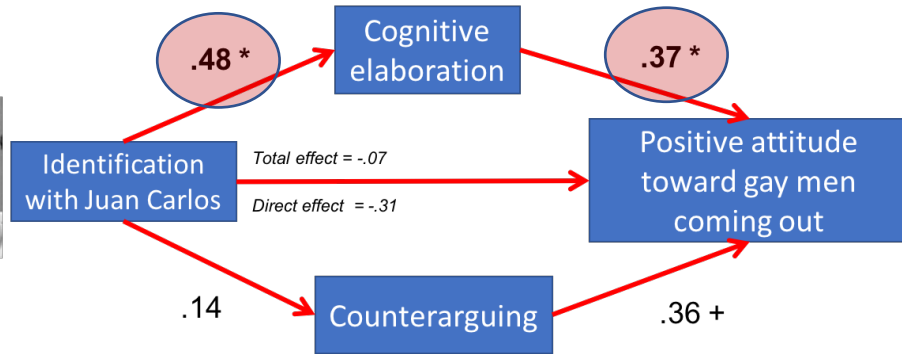**Transportation -> Cognitive elaboration -> Attitudes**
$B = .37$, $SE = .12$, 95% CI [.14, .64]
Transportation -> Counterarguing-> Attitudes
$B = -.05$, $SE = .08$, 95% CI [-.24, .09]

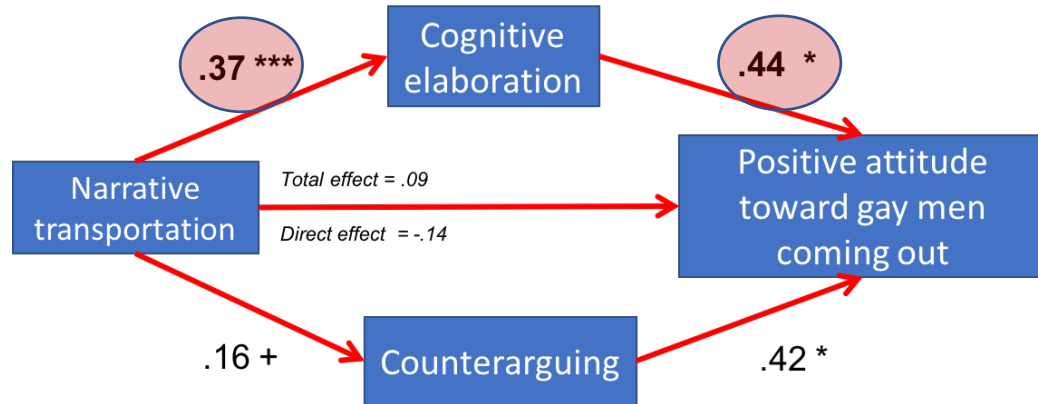*** $p < .001$

Mediation models: Episode on sexual diversity

Indirect effects
Identification –> Cognitive elaboration –> Attitudes
B = .18, SE = .12, 95% CI [.02, .52]
Identification -> Counterarguing-> Attitudes
B = .05, SE = .10, 95% CI [-.05, .40]

Indirect effects
Transportation -> Cognitive elaboration -> Attitudes
B = .16, SE = .09, 95% CI [.01, .39]
Transportation -> Counterarguing-> Attitudes
B = .07, SE = .08, 95% CI [-.02, .31]
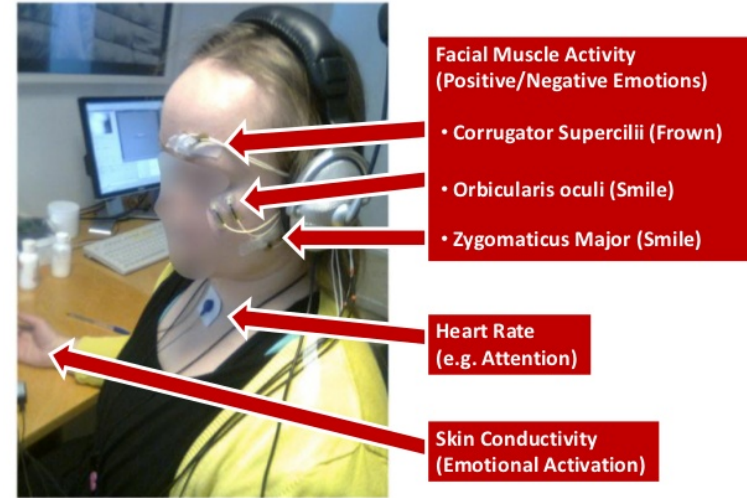
+ p < .10, * p < .05, *** p < .001

Conclusions

- This study confirm the important role of **identification with characters** and **narrative transportation** as mechanisms of narrative persuasion.

- **Counterarguing** did **not** play a significant **mediating role**.

- Identification with the main character and transportation were associated with a greater **cognitive elaboration** which, in turn, lead to prosocial attitudes.

Entertainment-Education TV fictions: **characters make explicit the arguments** supporting the prosocial or preventive message through their **dialogues**.

Next...

- We need to analyse the **media exposure conditions** (e.g., motivation to media consumption, beyond *hedonism*) and the **characteristics of the E-E narratives** (e.g., perspective, narrative voice) **and characters** (e.g., similarity between characters and message recipients) that **increase** identification and transportation (Tukachinsky, 2014).

- We need a **psychophysiological approach** to study identification and transportation as processes that change **during** watching TV series (Sukalla, Bilandzic, Bolls & Busselle, 2016; van Krieken, Hoeken & Sanders, 2017).

Facial Muscle Activity
(Positive/Negative Emotions)

- Corrugator Supercilii (Frown)

- Orbicularis oculi (Smile)

- Zygomaticus Major (Smile)

Heart Rate
(e.g. Attention)

Skin Conductivity
(Emotional Activation)

Thank you for your attention!

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