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If You Want People to Listen to You, Tell a Story

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We hypothesized that (a) when people share a meaningful story, as opposed to when they share information, they make their partner listen well, and (b) that narrative-induced listening is positively associated with speakers' psychological safety and negatively associated with their social anxiety. In Study 1 ($N = 45$), we showed that a meaningful story is perceived much more as a narrative and higher in narrative quality than two types of *informational-discourses* (telling about daily routine and describing buildings). In Study 2 ($N = 52$), we randomly asked participants to either share a meaningful story or tell about their daily routine. The participants sharing a meaningful story reported that their interlocutor was a better listener, $d = 0.61$, 95% *CI* |0.32, 0.92|. In Study 3 ($N = 42$), we compared the effect of sharing a meaningful story to describing buildings, and replicated the results of Study 2, $d = 1.10$, 95% *CI* |0.61, 1.59|. Moreover, we found that the perceived listening, which was induced by the narrative, mediated the manipulation effects on psychological safety, and social anxiety. Thus, we concluded that when speakers share meaningful stories they make their partner listen well and consequently experience higher psychological safety and lower feelings of social anxiety.

> A story, however, in that it is not a logical argument, breaks down those walls [of solitude]. For it posits the existence of others and allows the listener to come into contact with them—if only in his thoughts.—*The Invention of Solitude,* by Paul Auster, referring to *One Thousand and One Nights of Arabia* (pp. 151–152)

When people listen well, they make speakers share more interesting and coherent stories. Specifically, good listeners increase the quality of speaker's narration (Bavelas, Coates, & Johnson, 2000), elaboration self-narratives (Weeks & Pasupathi, 2011), and development of narrative identity (Pasupathi & Hoyt, 2010). Moreover, a listener's facial expression, such as smiling versus frowning, changes the speaker's narration from abstract to concrete (Beukeboom, 2009). In sum, there is clear experimental evidence that listeners shape speakers' narration. However, the reverse is not clear: Does narration influence listening quality? Bavelas et al. hypothesized that listening and narration are mutually reinforcing: "The presence or absence of appropriate listener responses would affect the quality of narration, but the quality of narration would also affect the quality of listener response" (p. 950). To our knowledge, this hypothesis was not tested. Thus,

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our main goal was to test whether telling a narrative elicits better perceived listening than other forms of discourses.

NARRATIVES AND COMMUNICATION DISCOURSES

Narrative has many definitions: a story that has a beginning, a middle, and an end (Aristotle, 1996); any two events arranged in a chronological or causal sequence (Rimmon-Kenan, 2002); and "any cohesive and coherent story with an identifiable beginning, middle, and end that provides information about scene, characters, and conflict, raises unanswered questions or unresolved conflict; and provides resolution" (Hinyard & Kreuter, 2007). We use Bruner (1990, p. 348) definition: a sequence of events that carries meaning and is justified, at least in part, by the fact that it somehow violates what is normal or expected. Brunner argues that "we do not narrate all the details of any circumstance; what we choose to narrate is generally noteworthy because it stands out by posing a problem or exception" (p. 348). The choice of Bruner's definition is important because it narrows the definition of narrative to meaning and allows contrasting narratives with discourses that provide only factual and descriptive information. According to Bruner, there are two ways of knowing: the paradigmatic and the narrative. The paradigmatic way is characterized by logic verification and tests for empirical truth. A paradigmatic form for transferring information is called *informational discourse.* Informational discourse includes expository and didactic styles of communication, presents propositions in the form of reasons and evidence supporting a claim and describing content (Kreuter et al., 2008). In contrast, *narrative* is a more subjective description of an experience and its meaning.

According to our adopted definition, the unique features of narrative are (a) sequence of events, (b) presentation of a problem, and (c) violation of the expected. Consequently, these three facets contrast narratives from informational discourse. Next, we develop our hypothesis that sharing a narrative, as opposed to informational discourse, elicits better listening.

There are at least three theoretical mechanisms that lead to the prediction that narrative will yield better listening: creating socially shared meaning, a cognitive process that transports the listener to the world of the narrator, and an emotional process. Specifically, sharing narratives in a conversation fills social function such as presenting the self (Hyman & Faries, 1992) and constructs socially shared meaning (Pasupathi, Lucas, & Coombs, 2002). Compared with narratives, informational discourses do not promote the same degree of social connection (Espitalier & Tcherkassof, 2002). Therefore, people are less inclined to listen to descriptive discourses such as claims. Second, narrative about oneself "transports" the listener into the story so he or she is involved emotionally (Green, 2004). Finally, meaningful and emotional narrative elicits emotional responses within the listener. For example, listening to a distressed person increases autonomic arousal (Lazarus, Opton, Nomikos, & Rankin, 1965); listening to other people disclosing intimate information increases listener's anxiety (Archer & Berg, 1978); and exposure to a conversation with depressed persons increases anxiety, depression, and hostility (Strack & Coyne, 1983). It appears that a narrative, as opposed to informational discourse, creates more listening because it creates more social meaning, attracts more cognitive attention, and elicits stronger emotions. Hence, our first hypothesis is:

H1: Narratives create better perceived listening than informational discourses.

If speakers who share narratives indeed elicit a good-listening experience, then we argue that these speakers will accumulate additional benefits. When people experience good listening their wellbeing may be improved. This hypothesis is supported by previous work which has demonstrated that sharing stories can have positive effects on speaker wellbeing and relationship closeness (Greene, Derlega, & Mathews, 2006; Reis et al., 2010). Therefore, we next elaborate on how (narration-induced) listening can affect two aspects of wellbeing: increase in psychological safety and decrease in social anxiety—predictions that are congruent with Carl Rogers's theory (1980).

LISTENING, PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY, AND SOCIAL ANXIETY

Listening that is not judgmental sends a signal of safety to the speaker. This safety signal allows the speaker to assess that he or she can say anything that comes to mind without apprehension (Rogers, 1951). A speaker who experiences such listening should be free from evaluation apprehension because such concerns are associated with a need to obtain approval and avoid disapproval (Friend & Gilbert, 1973; Watson & Friend, 1969). Evaluation apprehension is argued to increase social anxiety, which is defined as "a state of anxiety resulting from the prospect or presence of interpersonal evaluation in real or imagined social settings" (Schlenker & Leary, 1982, p. 665). The level of social anxiety experienced by people depends on the perceived discrepancy between the reactions of others and the standard a person sets for herself or himself. The greater the discrepancy, the greater the anxiety will be, and vice-versa (Leary, 1983). Thus, a listener who pays attention in a nonjudgmental manner is likely to make the speaker feel safe and reduce the speaker's social anxiety—two aspects of wellbeing.

Listening was found to be associated with higher levels of wellbeing in two lines of research. One line of research indicates that psychological safety is both highly correlated with supervisor's listening (Fenniman, 2010; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2012) and is increased by an experimental-scenario manipulation of listening (Castro, 2011). A second line of research suggests that listening is negatively correlated with anxiety in therapy (Scheck, Schaeffer, & Gillette, 1998) and in organizational behavior (Ikemi, Kubota, Noda, Tomita, & Hayashida, 1992). Moreover, this effect was also demonstrated experimentally (Itzchakov & Kluger, 2014). Thus, our second goal is to demonstrate that these effects of listening will generalize to narration-induced listening. That is, we predict that (narration-induced) listening will increase the wellbeing of the narrator. Specifically,

H2: The positive effect of narration on psychological safety and the negative effect of narration on social anxiety are mediated by narrative-induced listening.

Figure 1 summarizes our model and suggests that people who choose to tell narratives, over other types of discourses, not only enjoy better listening but also increase, perhaps unknowingly, their own wellbeing by making their audience listen well. To test our hypotheses, we conducted three experiments. Our goal in Study 1 was to establish that we could successfully manipulate narrative. Equipped with evidence that we can manipulate narration, in Study 2, we compared the effect of sharing a meaningful event (narrative) to describing a daily routine and tested H1. In Study 3 we compared the effect of sharing a meaningful event (narrative) to describing building—a stronger manipulation—to test our entire model (H1, H2a, and H2b).

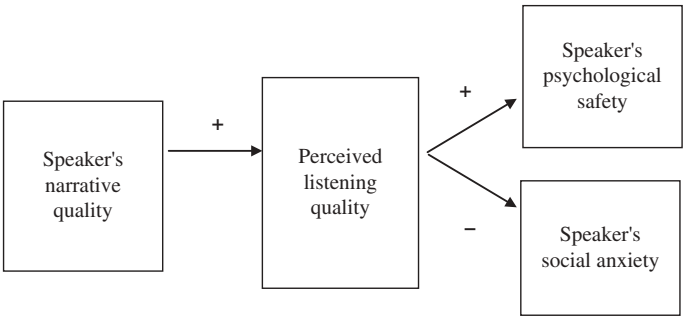

FIGURE 1 A model linking narrative quality, perceived listening quality, psychological safety, and social anxiety.

STUDY 1

In Study 1, we tested whether sharing a meaningful experience is perceived as more of a narrative than telling either about a daily routine or describing university structures.

Method

Participants

Students from colleges and universities around Israel ($N = 45$) participated in the study for approximately US$2.00. We did not collect demographic data. Our sample size was sufficient to observe a strong-effect size (Cohen's $f = .50$) with a power of .80.

Procedure

First, we recruited participants from a panel of survey service (for information about the panel see http://www.midgam.com/info.asp). We screened participants for being students at higher-education institutes to be as similar as possible to samples used in Studies 2 and 3. We randomly assigned participants to write a text on either a meaningful event that occurred to them (n = 16), describe their daily routine or (n = 14), or describe the buildings in their educational institute (n = 15). We instructed them to write a minimum of 250 characters. Next are examples of the texts elicited for each condition. An example for a meaningful story was:

> The day I announced I am leaving my job as a senior manager in a high-tech company. I contemplated a lot about this decision because I earned a high salary on one hand but was under an enormous amount of pressure on the other hand. Today I work as an elementary-school teacher. I earn a much lower salary but am much more satisfied and relaxed.

An example of a daily routine was:

> I wake up at 7:30 A.M, prepare for work, bathroom and shave. Eat breakfast, drink coffee, read the newspaper headlines, get dressed and go to my work place around 8:30 AM (I work as a logistics

> manager at department store). I finish working between 5:00 and 6:00 PM (depending on workload) and drive home. I then take a shower, eat something and rest for about an hour with the TV in the background. Around 8:00 PM, I met my girlfriend and get back home around midnight, take a shower over and go to sleep.

An example for the structures description condition was:

> Adjacent to the entrance of my college is the gym, about 200 meters after is the location of the office equipment store. On the left side, there is the cafeteria and about 50 meters after the administration office. After the office the road splits and if you take a right you get to the student's club, 100 meters after that there is the main building of the college . . .

Two independent judges rated the written texts on six measures. The judges were students who completed a course on narratives and volunteered to participate. We developed four measures reflecting the *degree that the text is a narrative* and used two items (out of the six) of a *narrative quality* measure (Baron & Bulock, 2011) to control for narrative quality. Each judge rated all 45 texts.

Measures

We developed one item for each theoretical facet of narrative and presented it on a Likert scale that ranged from 1 to 10.

Narrative. "To what extent do you consider the text you have just read to be a narrative?" (The agreement between the two judges' rating was satisfactory) $\alpha = .96$.

Sequence of event. "To what extent does the text you have just read constitutes of a beginning, middle and an end?" $\alpha = .87$.

Problem. "To what extent does the text you have just read present a problem?" $\alpha = .94$.

Violation of the expected. "To what extent does the text you have just read is surprising?" $\alpha = .93$.

Memorable. "To what extent is the text you have just read is memorable?" $\alpha = .89$.

Rich in imagery. "To what extent is the text you have just read rich in imagery?" $\alpha = .85$.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents the means, *SD*s, and *ANOVAs* testing differences among the three types of texts. As can be seen in Table 1, the differences among texts yielded large effect sizes, where the meaningful narration was rated significantly higher in being a narrative and in narrative quality. Furthermore, to examine whether the effect of text type on being a narrative is independent of narrative quality we controlled for the "memorable" and "rich in imagery" items from the narrative-quality scale (Baron & Bluck, 2011). Results of ANCOVA indicated that a meaningful event is considered as more narrative-like controlling for these two items, $F\,(2, 42) = 16.67$, 95% *CI* |.20, 59|, $\eta^2 = .46$.

The results of Study 1 demonstrate that it is possible to manipulate narration by instructing people either to tell about a meaningful experience or about other types of information.

TABLE 1
Means and SDs of Study 1 Variables by Condition

	Condition							
	Meaningful experience		*Daily routine*		*University structures*			
Variable	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*F(2, 42)*	η^2
1. Narrative	8.62[a]	1.69	2.40[b]	1.42	1.23[c]	0.37	145.69	.87
2. Sequence of events	7.97[a]	2.15	6.92[b]	0.76	2.33[c]	1.59	51.02	.71
3. Problem	3.84[a]	2.61	1.29[b]	0.61	1.03[b]	0.13	14.59	.41
4. Violation of expected	5.25[a]	1.00	1.11[b]	0.29	1.13[b]	0.52	186.25	.90
5. Memorable	6.96[a]	2.01	2.57[c]	1.04	1.73[c]	1.52	48.18	.70
6. Rich in imagery	5.91[a]	1.61	2.18[b]	0.93	1.17[c]	0.64	72.34	.76

Note. Different superscript letters represents significant mean differences according to *LSD* test. All *p*s were $< .01$.

STUDY 2

Method

Participants

Students from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (N = 52) participated in the study for course credit, $M_{age} = 22.1$, $SD = 9.2$, 45.7% females**.** Our sample size exceeds the sample size required to observe a strong effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.80$) with a power of .80.

Procedure

We invited participants to our laboratory and randomly assigned them to pairs, experimental condition (narrative vs. informational discourse), and order of listening-speaking. In each pair, each participant talked for six minutes and listened for six minutes. We instructed participants to talk about a meaningful event they have experienced in the narrative condition and about their daily routine in the informational discourse condition. Following the two conversations, we asked all participants to fill out a questionnaire containing the Dependent Variables (*DV*s). To ensure our narrative instructions were followed, we ask participants to briefly write a few sentences about what they have heard in the conversation. The answers of *all* participants matched their experimental condition.

Measures

All items were presented with a 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree* Likert scale.

Narrative. The perceived story quality index (Baron & Bluck, 2011) includes five items asking listeners to assess various aspects of the speaker's narrative: "To what extent was this story: (a) memorable, (b) rich in imagery, (c) unemotional [reverse coded], (d) engaging, and (e) unoriginal [reverse coded]," $\alpha = .81$.

Perceived listening. We used three items, which were developed in a preliminary study (Itzchakov & Kluger, 2014). The items were related to the extent the speaker felt his/hers conversation partner listened: "To what extent did you feel your conversation partner listened to you?"; "To what extent did you feel your partner ignored you?" [reversed code]; and "To what extent your conversation partner showed interest in what you had to say?" $\alpha = .86$.

Results

Because we had nested data, we examined the intra-class correlation of listening, $ICC = .08$. When ICC $< .45$ in dyadic data, the level of nonindependence is inconsequential and does not require dyadic-data analysis (Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006). Therefore, we treated our data as independent.

As expected, the narrative condition produced a better narrative quality than the control group (see Table 2), $t\ (50) = 2.91$, $d = 0.83$, 95% *CI* |0.61, 1.05|. Thus, our experimental conditions indeed manipulated narrative quality. Consistent with H1, participants in the meaningful narrative-condition experienced better listening than participants in the informational discourse condition, $t\ (50) = 2.17$, $d = 0.61$, 95% *CI* |0.32, 0.92|. An *ANOVA* indicated no effect for the listening order, $F\ (1, 50) = .29$, $p = .60$, nor an interaction of order with the experimental manipulation, $F\ (1, 50) = .43$, $p = .52$.

The results of Study 2 supported H1. Those who share a narrative experience report that their partner is a better listener than those who share an informational discourse. Therefore, in Study 3 we sought to replicate the results of Study 2 regarding H1, and to test H2a and H2b by adding measures of wellbeing. In addition, in Study 3 we used as a control group instructions to describe buildings. We made this choice to increase the observed effect size of narrative to demonstrate that the choice of discourse could have a significant effect on perceived listening.

Table 2
Means and SDs of the Manipulation Check and Perceived Listening by Experimental Condition in Study 2 and Study 3

		Study 2			*Study 3*		
Variable	*Group*	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*N*	*M*	*SD*
Manipulation Check							
	Experiment	26	4.39	0.60	20	4.82	0.86
	Control	26	3.63	1.13	22	3.03	1.38
Perceived Listening							
	Experiment	26	6.24	0.87	20	6.23	.74
	Control	26	5.57	1.30	22	4.48	2.15

Manipulation check = Narrative measure.

STUDY 3

Method

Participants

Students (N =42) participated in the study for course credit, $M_{age} = 22.5$, $SD = 8.7$, 53.2% females. Our sample size is sufficient to observe a strong effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.80$) with a power of .80.

Procedure

We used the same procedure as in Study 2, except that we instructed participants in the *informational-discourse condition* to describe the buildings throughout the university and our DVs included two additional measures.

Measures

We presented all items with a 1 to 7 Likert scale. We used the same measure as in Study 2 for narrative, $\alpha = .87$, and perceived listening, $\alpha = .96$.

Social anxiety. The state social-anxiety scale (Kashdan & Steger, 2006) includes seven items. This measure assesses feelings of social anxiety during a particular moment. An example item was "I am worried about what the listener thought of me," $\alpha = .92$.

Psychological safety. A short version of the psychological-safety scale (Castro & Kluger, 2014) included eight items, such as "I felt the listener really cares about me," "I felt secure to speak freely," "I felt comfortable to discuss sensitive matters," and "I felt understood" ($\alpha = .88$).

Results

We calculated the intra-class correlation (ICC) for perceived listening, which had an ICC of .35; social anxiety, .24; and psychological safety, .43. Given that all ICCs were lower than .45, the violation of the assumption of nonindependence is inconsequential; hence, we proceeded with simple analyses.

Second, as can be seen in Table 2, the manipulation check yielded stronger effect than in Study 2, $t\,(40) = 4.97$, $d = 1.54$, 95% $CI = |.85, 2.22|$. That is, even the lower bound of the confidence interval suggests a strong effect size. Moreover, the experimental manipulation of narrative versus informational discourse yielded a strong effect size on perceived listening, $t\,(40) = 3.64$, $d = 1.10$, 95% $CI = |0.61, 1.59|$. An *ANOVA* yielded no order effect on perceived listening, $F\,(1, 40) = 1.19$, $p = .28$, nor did it yield an interaction of order with the experimental manipulation, $F\,(1, 40) = 1.47$, $p = .23$. These results replicate Study 2, supporting H1. In addition, participants in the meaningful-narrative condition reported a higher level of psychological safety than participants in the informational-discourse condition, $t\,(40) = 2.10$, $d = .64$, 95% $CI = |0.03, 1.25|$ 2.22|, and lower levels of social anxiety, $t\,(40) = 2.71$, $d = -.83$, 95% $CI = |-0.20, -1.46|$. Moreover, perceived listening was positively correlated with psychological safety, $r = .81$, 95% $CI = |.73, .89|$, and negatively and significantly correlated with social anxiety, $r = -.72$, 95%

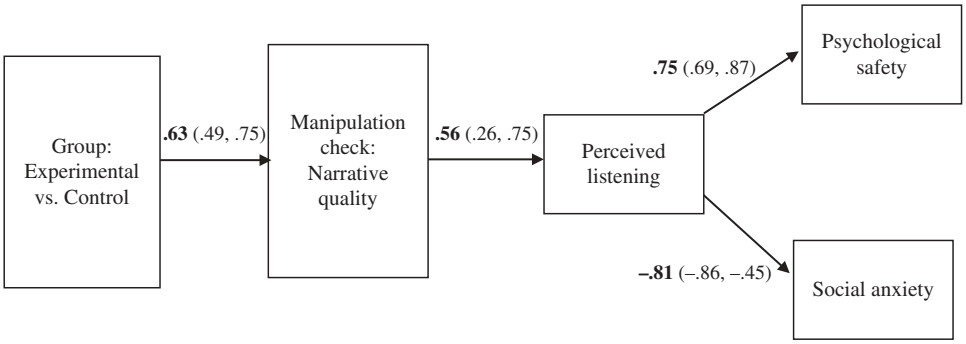

FIGURE 2 Standardized path-analysis estimates of the hypothesized model. Manipulation: 0 = informational discourse condition, 1 = meaningful-narrative condition. Figures in parentheses are confidence intervals of the standardized path coefficients.

$CI = |-.84,-.60|$, supporting both H1 and H2b. To test the entire hypothesized model (Figure 1), we ran a path-analysis with AMOS 22, and used the option of "estimated means" due to two missing values (path coefficients were similar with and without the missing values). Results indicated that the data fit the model, $\chi^2\ (6) = 5.53$, $p = .48$, AIC = 23.53, $CFI = .99$, $RMSEA = .01$; 90% CI [.00, .20], $p_{\text{close}} = .54$. The estimates of this model are shown in Figure 2. Because perceived listening was measured simultaneously with its supposed outcomes, we examined an alternative model with social anxiety and psychological safety as mediators and perceived listening as the outcome variable. Results indicated that the data does not fit the alternative model, $\chi^2\ (5) = 26.56$, $p < .01$, AIC = 56.59, $CFI = .77$, $RMSEA = .38$; 90% CI [.22, .47], $p_{\text{close}} < .01$.

To test whether perceived listening quality mediated the effect of the experimental manipulation on psychological safety and social anxiety, we used the bootstrapping option of Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS). We requested 5,000 bootstrapped samples and bias corrected confidence intervals. The standardized direct effects of the experimental manipulation on psychological safety, $\beta = -.07$, and social anxiety, $\beta = -.08$, were not significant, 95% CI [−.29, .17], [−.34, .18], respectively. The indirect effects were significant for both psychological safety, $\beta = .27$, and social anxiety, $\beta = -.23$, 95% CI [.11, .44], [−.41, −.08], respectively. Thus, perceived listening fully mediated the effect of the experimental manipulation on both psychological safety and social anxiety.

Finally, we examined the fit of out listening measure across Studies 2 and 3. Figure 3 presents a CFA model, with standardized regression weights of the listening items. The data fitted the hypothesized model, $\chi^2\ (1) = 2.82$, $p = .09$, $CFI = .99$, RMSEA = .09, 90% CI |.00, .24|.

Discussion

The result of Study 3 aid in ascertaining the theoretical construct of narrative, manipulated in Study 2. Specifically, these results suggest that the narrative manipulation made participants listen better not only because they were presented with material that was more memorable or richer

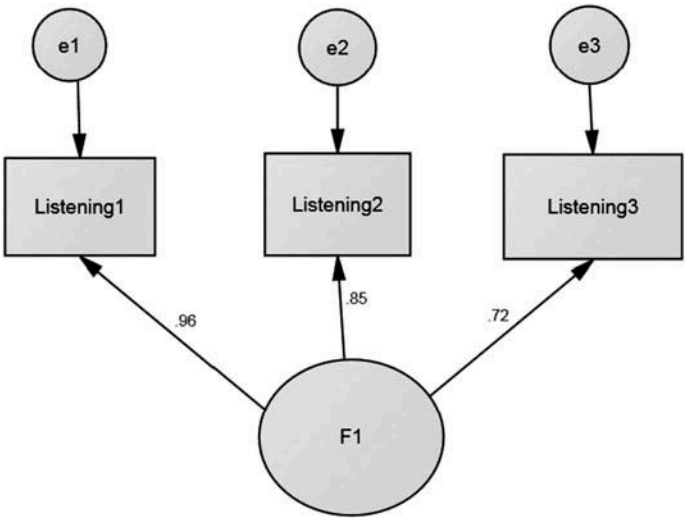

FIGURE 3 Confirmatory factory analysis of listening measure with standardized estimates.

in imagery, but also because they were presented with material perceived to be a narrative containing a beginning, middle, and an end; presented a problem; and violated the expected. That is, Study 3 suggests that our manipulation is consistent with the prevailing theoretical definitions of narrative.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The current study tested the hypotheses that (a) when people share a meaningful story, as oppose to when they share information, they make their partner listen well, and (b) that narrative-induced listening is positively associated with psychological safety and negatively associated with social anxiety. Results of three studies supported the hypotheses, and suggest several observations. First, meaningful narratives elicit better perceived listening than informational discourse (H1). This conclusion is bolstered by the narrative-manipulation check indicating that the meaningful narrative was perceived to have better quality than the informational discourse ($d = 0.83$ in Study 2 and $d = 1.54$ in Study 3). Second, sharing a meaningful narrative increased the psychological safety and reduced the social anxiety of the narrator. These effects were fully mediated by perceived listening, thus supporting both H2a and H2b. We next elaborate on each of these observations and consider their implications.

Our findings shed light on a mechanism of conversation content, which catches the listener attention and results in good perceived listening. Understanding this mechanism is important because good listening is known to be powerful, effective and for most people an unusual experience (Friedman, 2005). Eliciting good-perceived listening is beneficial for the narrator because most people are eager to be listened to and really be understood by the people of with they interact. Not surprisingly, good listening is recommended by practitioners in diverse fields such

as physician-patient interactions (Boudreau, Cassell, & Fuks, 2009), mental-trauma treatment (Shay, 1994), marital therapy (Hendrix, 2007), and parent-child relationships (Faber & Mazlish, 2012). Thus, listeners who explicitly invite speakers to share a meaningful narrative may be perceived as better listeners and contribute to the wellbeing of the speaker. Alternatively, speakers who deliberately share meaningful narratives may enjoy better perceived listening and its benefits.

The mediation analysis in Study 3 indicated that the effect of narrative on psychological safety and social anxiety is fully mediated by perceived-listening quality. This full mediation is important because it addresses one possible critique of Study 3, that is, that telling a meaningful story might make, alone, an increased sense of safety and reductions in anxiety. Yet the full mediation speaks against such an interpretation. Rather, the full mediation suggests that telling a meaningful story might make the narrator experience psychological safety and low anxiety, because the good narration makes the listener listen well. If this effect is replicated in future studies, it may suggest a novel observation that speakers, perhaps unconsciously, determine their own wellbeing (psychological safety and anxiety) by the quality of their own narration.

Our research highlights the importance of message content in interpersonal communication. Specifically, building on our results, listeners should invite speakers to share meaningful narratives to experience better listening. If a listener desires to help the speaker enjoy the benefits of listening, he or she may wish to learn to ask questions inviting speakers to share meaningful narratives. Sharing meaningful narratives also has benefits for the listener. Once the speaker shares a meaningful narrative, the task of being a listener becomes easier. Thus, this observation is consistent with Bavelas et al.'s (2000) hypothesis about the reciprocal influence of narrative and listening.

Our findings that speakers' discourse affects listening are related to empirical findings regarding speaker's tone-of-voice effects on listener's response. For example, listening to a creaky voice compared with a modal-voice quality yielded less favorable personal impression (Imhof, Välikoski, Laukkanen, & Orlob, 2014), and listening to different vocal cues affected personality judgments (Imhof, 2010). The combination of the above studies with our results sheds light on speakers' behavior (content and tone) that affect listening quality.

Finally, to our knowledge, the current research is the first examine the association among (a) social anxiety and psychological safety, $r = -.71$; (b) listening and social anxiety, $r = -.75$; and (c) social anxiety and psychological safety, $r = -.80$. The definitions of psychological safety and social anxiety hint they are two poles of one continuum. However, no study tested this question and it seems possible that one can appear without the other. Our sample size is too small for reliably testing whether these constructs are indeed not isomorphic. Future research should examine whether these constructs are indeed distinguishable.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Our studies had a few limitations. First, people usually interact in a longer conversation than in our studies (two six-minute sessions), which is a threat to ecological validity. Second, we did not have an everyday-narration condition. Third, we did not disentangle the listener from the narrator in our manipulation. Finally, we were interested in the subjective sense of being listened to; thus, to assess listening and its effects, we only asked speakers to rate their experience of being listened to rather than measuring specific behavioral indicators of listening (e.g., questions, head nods, backchannels, recall). However, it is noteworthy that previous work found no association

between *speakers'* perception of listening quality with *listeners'* perception, $r = -.14$, and behavioral measures, $r = -.07$ (Bodie, Jones, Vickery, Hatcher, & Cannava, 2014). Thus, asking for speaker's experience of being listened to should be preferred when measuring listening outcomes on speakers.

Although our findings support the speaker's perception of better listening when he or she tells a story, we do not know if this mechanism works as well in all cases. Does constructing a narrative while describing information elicits better listening or memory (e.g., when giving directions or describing an object)? A future study is needed to examine this question. Moreover, our research did not focus on the question of *which* narrative features and aspects predict better listening. Is it the emotional content of the narrative, level of interest and vividness, or perhaps other priorities? Previous work found that emotional information elicits better listening than descriptive information (Hackenbracht & Gasper, 2013). However, this did test other narrative features and aspects. This question should be tested in future studies.

The results may suggest that people may be better off by learning to elicit stories. For example, when meeting a new person, people are often asked, "What do you do?" This question tends to elicit a list of titles, names of companies, and so forth. Instead, people may learn to ask, "Could you tell me a story about something you enjoy doing at work?" or even "Could you tell me something interesting about your name or last name?" Of course, at times people need factual and detailed information, but we argue that there are many life circumstances where stories cannot only replace informative discourse but also be a welcomed change.

Finally, it would be interesting to compare in future studies our "meaningful story" manipulation to a conversation in a control group that receives no instructions. If the experimental condition produces better listening than this no-instruction control group, we might have a new paradigm to compare good experience of listening versus normal listening.

CONCLUSION

We obtained support for Bavelas et al.'s (2000) hypothesis, according to which the higher the quality of the speaker's narrative the better is the quality of the perceived listening enjoyed by the speaker. Moreover, speakers who produce better narration benefit from the better perceived listening and consequently experience higher psychological safety and lower social anxiety. Thus, it seems warranted to recommend that "if you want people to listen to you, tell a story."

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