

Narrative Hypothesis & Impact Measurement

ANYONE DESIGNING A NARRATIVE PROJECT OR CAMPAIGN makes informed predictions about how and why they will impact an audience. This prediction is called **a hypothesis**. In order to effectively measure your impact, it is essential to define your hypothesis. This also allows you to take a step back and look at the underlying assumptions that form the spine of your narrative strategy.



A hypothesis is your rationale for why your project is the solution to the problem you're trying to solve and a prediction for how your solution will work in the real world.

We have developed the following prompts that, once answered, form your narrative hypothesis:

- * **Our primary audience believes/does:** The problem you're solving for (i.e. problematic attitude, belief, behavior, or narrative)
- * **...because:** Narratives, experiences, values, influences, or mindsets
- * **Therefore, we believe the solution is to:** Broadly, what you believe needs to be done in the world or with your audiences that solves the problem (Note: your narrative goal should grow from this anticipated solution)
- * **We think that if we:** What you're doing to advance toward that solution (aka your project form)
- * **...then our audience will:** Predict the impact that your project will have on your audience: attitude shift, behavior change, etc (aka your project goal)

To find out whether or not your campaign or project has its intended impact, you can test whether your hypothesis was correct. Did your audience respond the way you thought they would? And does their response, whether or not it was as predicted, move you closer to the solution? When working from a hypothesis, even failure can lead to powerful learnings because it builds your understanding of what didn't work and why, and, based on that, what you might try next.

We also recommend you think about what your indicators of success might be. Success indicators can serve as milestones or checkpoints to help you know if you're on the right track. They could include a preferred answer on a content test survey; an observed reaction in an art exhibit, or an idea trending on social media or in the news. If you aren't meeting your success indicators, it may be time to revisit your hypothesis or reassess your approach. You can include success indicators in your hypothesis process by adding this prompt:

- ✱ **We will know our work is having its intended impact when we observe:**
Tangible indicators of success that you can measure; what reactions, responses, behaviors or actions you might observe from your primary audiences that will tell you that you're on the right track

There are many ways to test how your narratives impact audiences. If you want to learn more, we recommend Erin Potts' [*Current Evaluation and Measurement Techniques for Cultural Strategy*](#).

NARRATIVE HYPOTHESIS WORKSHEET: EXAMPLE

This example has been excerpted from Intelligent Mischief's Design Star, completed for the Chrysalis Lab

OUR PRIMARY AUDIENCE IS:	
Young African Americans	
OUR PRIMARY AUDIENCE BELIEVES/DOES:	BECAUSE:
Young African Americans see Black immigrants as competition for resources. Worries over reparations make them anti-immigrant. They feel that people are taking away something that belongs to them.	Their scarcity mindset and belief in a hierarchical system — they don't want to be at the bottom of it. Their fear due to historical erasure of Black Americans. Their awareness of a lack of sovereignty, lack of a homeland. "Home is here, but here's not really home". Feeling of being unmoored, not being able to claim a place of safety or true belonging.
THEREFORE WE BELIEVE THE SOLUTION IS TO:	
Strengthen or re-ignite a Pan-African narrative that builds deep narratives of interdependence, belonging, and abundance, which in turn serve as proxies of other assumptions beyond hierarchy like shared power, etc. Attaching this to positive affect (i.e. Black euphoria/afro-euphoria, Black joy, collectivity, happy feelings) creates the desire for further manifestations of this narrative in behavior and experience-seeking.	
FOR OUR PART, WE THINK THAT IF WE:	THEN OUR AUDIENCE WILL:
Build an immersive space that manifests a Pan-African narrative through multiple installations and experiences, each of which generates affects like Black joy...	...feel connected to a Pan-African identity, learn and create community with others, and develop into a base of Black folks who will be in solidarity with immigrants and other movements.
WE WILL KNOW OUR WORK IS HAVING ITS INTENDED IMPACT WHEN WE OBSERVE:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People go back to immersive space multiple times • People are posting pro-Pan African and pro-immigrant messages on Tik Tok, Instagram • People are pro-immigrant oriented in other parties, festivals (i.e. Wakanda parties, fan fiction, etc) 	

NARRATIVE HYPOTHESIS WORKSHEET

OUR PRIMARY AUDIENCE IS:	
OUR PRIMARY AUDIENCE BELIEVES/DOES:	BECAUSE:
<i>The problem you're solving for (i.e. problematic attitude, belief, behavior, or narrative)</i>	<i>Narratives, experiences, values, influences, or mindsets.</i>
THEREFORE WE BELIEVE THE SOLUTION IS TO:	
<i>Broadly what you believe needs to be done in the world or with your audiences that solves the problem (Note: your narrative goal should grow from this anticipated solution)</i>	
FOR OUR PART, WE THINK THAT IF WE:	THEN OUR AUDIENCE WILL:
<i>What you're doing to advance toward that solution (aka. your project form)</i>	<i>Predict the impact on your audience: attitude shift, behavior change, etc (aka. your project goal)</i>
WE WILL KNOW OUR WORK IS HAVING ITS INTENDED IMPACT WHEN WE OBSERVE:	
<i>Tangible indicators of success that you can measure; what reactions, responses, behaviors or actions you might observe from your primary audiences that will tell you that you're on the right track.</i>	