

Research on the Path to Enhancing the Appeal of Ideological and Political Stories from the Perspective of Narrative Psychology

Le Wang^{1,a,*}, Zhuhua Zhang^{1,b}

¹School of Marxism, Yulin University, Yulin, China

^awangle2025666@163.com, ^b394666103@qq.com

*Corresponding author

Abstract: The appeal of storytelling in ideological and political education is the key to achieving value guidance and emotional identification in ideological and political education. Based on the theory of narrative psychology, this paper explores the generation mechanism and improvement approaches of story appeal in ideological and political education. Starting from the intrinsic relationship between narrative and value recognition, it systematically studies and sorts out the problems existing in current ideological and political narrative practice, such as insufficient narrative depth, poor emotional communication, and formalization of technical application, construct a four-dimensional enhancement model of “narrative content reconstruction-narrative method innovation-technology integration empowerment-effect feedback evaluation.” Research shows that integrating the theoretical achievements of narrative psychology into the practice of ideological and political education can help promote the transformation of ideological and political education from knowledge imparting to value internalization and from one-way indoctrination to emotional connection by enhancing the psychological realism of stories, awakening deep emotional resonance, and creating interactive dialogue narrative fields. It provides theoretical references and practical guidance for enhancing the affinity and effectiveness of ideological and political education in the new era.

Keywords: Narrative Psychology, Ideological and political stories, Infectiousness, Value recognition, Enhancement path

1. Introduction

As a fundamental form encapsulating human experience and wisdom, storytelling serves not merely as a medium for knowledge dissemination, but more significantly as a vivid vehicle for conveying values and an emotional articulation of ideology. It boasts a unique ability to transform abstract theoretical systems into concrete, dynamic life narratives, thereby enabling the genuine integration and profound internalization of theoretical essence into individuals’ spiritual domains. This process facilitates the natural permeation and effective transmission of values. Consequently, the art of storytelling emerges as a crucial pathway for constructing mainstream ideologies and conveying core values.

At present, narrative practice in ideological and political education is still constrained by technological and instrumental thinking patterns—that is, it overemphasizes the superficial renewal of narrative techniques while neglecting the underlying logic of narrative’s intrinsic psychological impact on individuals. This cognitive deviation often lands ideological and political stories in the communication dilemma of “the speaker earnest in speech, yet the listener apathetic,” resulting in insufficient appeal and compromised educational effectiveness. Specifically, several prominent problems persist: story content tends to be homogeneous and stereotyped, lacking spiritual warmth; emotional expressions are empty and didactic, making it hard to evoke profound resonance; the application of narrative techniques sometimes overemphasizes form, verges on mere technical grandstanding, and obscures the original intention of cultivating individuals; and the narrative process remains a one-way indoctrination that fails to respect the audience’s subjective status.

Narrative psychology, as a discipline that explores how humans use stories to construct meaning, is rooted in the core proposition that humans understand themselves, others, and the world through “stories” and construct the meaning of their lives^[1]. It maintains that storytelling is not merely a form of entertainment or communication, but a fundamental organizing principle of the human mind. This aligns

closely with the fundamental objective of ideological and political education—conveying values and fostering sound personalities through narrative. From the perspective of narrative psychology, systematically exploring approaches to boosting the appeal of ideological and political stories can both refine the methods of ideological and political education and effectively innovate its narrative paradigms.

Rooted in the intrinsic needs of ideological and political education and drawing on the disciplinary theoretical perspective of narrative psychology, this paper conducts an in-depth analysis of the psychological formation mechanism behind the appeal of ideological and political stories, and constructs multi-dimensional, systematic paths for improvement. It thereby facilitates a qualitative leap in ideological and political education—from external theoretical indoctrination to internalized value recognition and integration into daily life—providing new ideas and methods for enhancing the appeal and influence of ideological and political education in the new era.

2. Theoretical Foundation: The Intrinsic Fit Between Narrative and Value Guidance

Narrative psychology offers profound theoretical underpinnings for ideological and political education. The intrinsic connection between the two is not merely a matter of methodological reference, but a profound alignment in goals, processes, and mechanisms. Grasping this intrinsic connection in depth serves as the theoretical foundation for developing paths to enhance the appeal of ideological and political stories.

2.1. Narrative as the Fundamental Approach to Value Understanding

Human cognition operates through two fundamental modes: One is logically rigorous paradigmatic thinking, and the other is narrative thinking centered on meaning-making. While ideological and political education relies on the logically rigorous theoretical underpinnings of paradigmatic thinking, the communication, recognition, and internalization of its core values fundamentally depend on the in-depth application of narrative thinking. A truly successful ideological and political story does not impose a specific value as an external label on the narrative; instead, it touches people through the story's positive plotlines, vivid and three-dimensional characters, nuanced emotions, and other inherent elements—much like spring rain moistening all things. This allows the audience to naturally accept and internalize these values in the process of storytelling and reflection, thereby enabling their continuous transformation and integration into personal belief systems.^[2]

This value understanding attained through narrative is essentially a complex psychological process: On the basis of grasping the value narrative, an individual reintegrates their own experiences and sense of meaning. When a student is deeply touched by a true story of perseverance, this response is not merely superficial cognitive recognition of the value of “diligence and struggle”; rather, it involves organically integrating the characters' mental journeys and value choices into their personal life blueprint, engaging in profound dialogue and fusion with these elements. Such understanding is holistic, emotional, and concrete—hence more enduring and profound.

2.2. Psychological Resonance of Narrative Identity and Value Internalization

Narrative psychology reveals the inherent laws by which individuals construct their self-identity in the process of narration. People form a clear self-awareness and identity by organizing life events along the temporal dimension and narrating them into an integrated whole with inherent coherence and value orientation. This process of narrative identity construction shares a deep psychological resonance with the ideological and political education centered on “value internalization.”

Value internalization is not merely the acceptance of knowledge or ideas; it is the creative integration by the educated of the values advocated by society into the unfolding narrative of their lives, making it the core framework of meaning that interprets the past, guides the present, and looks forward to the future. For example, when students gain a deep understanding of Jiao Yulu's touching story, they not only recognize the value of selfless dedication, but also turn Jiao Yulu's image and the spiritual traits it embodies into an important reference for their own life stories, thereby profoundly influencing their choices and value judgments in real life. Therefore, the appeal of ideological and political stories is essentially a psychological power that can facilitate the construction and reconstruction of this narrative identity.

2.3. Intersubjectivity of Narrative Dialogue and Value Generation

Effectively conveyed values are by no means merely the indoctrination of knowledge, but rather the in-depth dialogue and exchange between educators and the educated—who act as equal subjects—on the level of value meaning. Narrative psychology holds that the meaning of any narrative community is not created out of thin air by the narrator, but is constantly narrated, constructed, and co-created within the narrative community formed by the narrator and the listener. Furthermore, in the ongoing interaction between the two, this meaning assumes different manifestations.

Therefore, the intersubjective narrative view, to a certain extent, represents an interrelationship between narrative subjects—a mode of thinking that is other-oriented, adopts the other’s perspective, and constantly corrects one’s own biases through mutual reference. This view thus suggests that ideological and political education should break free entirely from the shackles of monological authoritative indoctrination and strive to create an open, inclusive, and safe dialogue space. Within this space, the educator’s dominant narrative can engage in sincere exchange and constructive collision with the educated’s personal experiences, pre-existing perceptions, and even critical reflections. It is in this intersubjective narrative dialogue that values can be transformed from external, rigid theoretical dogmas into internalized “for-me” truths through individuals’ deep participation and co-creation, thereby facilitating true value formation and meaning construction.

3. Realistic Examination: The Multi-dimensional Dilemma of the Appeal of Ideological and Political Stories

From the perspective of narrative psychology, when examining the current practice of ideological and political education, we can identify deep-seated predicaments at multiple levels—predicaments that intertwine to form systematic issues hindering the appeal of ideological and political stories.

3.1. The lack of narrative depth and the absence of psychological authenticity

At present, a large number of ideological and political stories remain confined to the superficial description of events and simple listing of characters’ deeds. Their narrative structure follows a single pattern of “challenge-struggle-success,” which intentionally or unintentionally obscures the true nature of contradictions, complexity, and uncertainty in real-life practice—especially omitting the psychological struggles of characters when confronting value conflicts. By sidelining psychological elements such as difficult choices amid predicaments, such narratives resemble a form of stereotypical propaganda that elevates characters to ethereal, otherworldly figures. While such portrayals may seem admirable, they create a sense of distance and alienation in daily life.

Such purified, overly romanticized tales lack the texture and authenticity of real life, thus becoming disconnected from the spiritual world of contradictions and dilemmas experienced by the educated. This creates an invisible psychological fence: The audience perceives these stories from a detached, passive “spectator” perspective, thinking them “honorable yet unattainable,” let alone “emulable.” This stands in direct opposition to the cognitive value of narrative psychology, which focuses on integrating all lived experiences—both positive and negative—into a narrative that evolves toward a more integrated sense of selfhood.

3.2. Inappropriate emotional narrative and obstruction of empathy mechanisms

Emotion is the core element of narrative appeal. Currently, there are two extreme misconceptions in the expression of emotion in ideological and political stories. One is emotional deficiency—i.e., a lack of emotional description. In these stories, only events and actions are depicted, but the characters’ inner worlds are not revealed, nor is their true psychology conveyed. Emotion becomes a means to advance the plot rather than an internal driving force. The second is emotional obsessive-compulsive disorder—i.e., relying excessively on lyrical language and exaggerated rhetoric to directly dictate to the audience what emotions they ought to feel. This constitutes a coercive imposition and indoctrination at the emotional level.

Both of these approaches are based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the psychological mechanism of empathy, for empathy is not merely emotional contagion, nor is it the passive assimilation and absorption of emotions—it is a process in which the subject constructs knowledge and emotional connections with the object. If a story lacks specific descriptions of emotional cues or psychological

details, the audience's empathetic system will have no material or emotional basis on which to operate, and thus no empathetic experience can occur.

3.3. Alienation of the application of technology and obscuration of the narrative ontology

At present, with the rapid development of educational informatization, new technologies such as VR/AR, artificial intelligence, and Big Data are being widely applied in ideological and political narratives. Some schools' ideological and political theory courses are overly focused on technology, which leads to the alienation of means from ends—i.e., means overriding purposes. Specifically, one is technical virtuosity: an excessive focus on visual effects and sensory stimulation that separates technology from narrative content, with fancy interfaces instead becoming a barrier to meaning transmission. The second is technological minimalism: an attempt to preset, calculate, and dominate the audience's narrative acceptance process through algorithms, while ignoring the diversity, creativity, and uncertainty of stories.

Both of these forms of expression have led to the alienation of narrative ontology. Stories are no longer open texts that require the audience to draw on all their life experiences to actively understand, interpret, and endow with meaning; instead, they have become closed packages of information or sensory experiences rigidly preconfigured by technology. This stands in complete opposition to what narrative psychology advocates—namely, the individual's active role as a constructive agent in the narrative.^[3]

3.4. The absence of intersubjectivity and the monopoly of narrative power

In most ideological and political narrative scenarios, educators still hold narrative discourse power and act as the sole authoritative narrators, while the educated can only be passive recipients of the narrative and observed subjects. This subject-object binary opposition fundamentally dissolves the intersubjectivity indispensable to narrative. There is no equal, open space for dialogue between educators' narratives and the educated's pre-narratives (i.e., their existing life experiences, values, and emotional structures), resulting in a huge gap between the two.

The educated cannot integrate their own life experiences into the narrative process, nor can they question, supplement, or modify the dominant narrative. Therefore, their subjectivity manifests itself as silence and absence in the narrative process. This makes it difficult for educational narratives to touch the true spiritual world of the educated and deprives them of the creative drive to generate new meaning through dialogue. Narratives, which are supposed to connect hearts and enhance understanding, are alienated into a wall that blocks dialogue and intensifies estrangement.

4. Three-path Exploration: Systematic Enhancement of the Appeal of Ideological and Political Stories

In response to the above issues, this paper, based on narrative psychology, constructs a four-related-dimension path model for enhancing the appeal of ideological and political stories, aiming to systematically boost their appeal and educational value.

4.1. Deep Reconstruction of the narrative Ontology

The key to enhancing the narrative's appeal lies in returning to the narrative itself: Through the reconstruction of meaning and artistic creation, we endow the story with richer inner authenticity and stronger value appeal.

In terms of plot design, we should break away from the simplistic linear narrative structure and boldly depict the complexity, contradictions, and uncertainties in reality. For example, when recounting the classic story of Qian Xuesen's return to China, in addition to highlighting his patriotism and ultimate achievements, we should also delve into the political pressure and personal constraints he endured while in the United States, the practical difficulties of engaging in scientific research under harsh conditions shortly after his return, and the internal conflicts between his personal ideals and family considerations. It is precisely through such in-depth portrayal of real dilemmas and delicate presentation of complex psychology that the character's spiritual qualities and value choices are endowed with a profound ethical impact and psychological authenticity.

In terms of character portrayal, we should avoid depicting characters as grandiose, one-dimensional

abstract figures. Instead, we should emphasize their authenticity and fullness, highlight their multi-faceted and contradictory nature, and truthfully reflect the changes and developments they undergo over time. When portraying heroes and models, we should bring them down from their pedestals, strip away their glorified aura, and restore them to their true selves—allowing the audience to see that beyond their identities as heroes and models, they also share the joys and sorrows of ordinary people, as well as the psychological journey of constantly surpassing themselves through their own efforts: They overcoming difficulties and setbacks in life to grow from ordinary to great. The narrative thread of “from mortal to model” makes it easier for the audience to internalize the logic of the characters’ growth as a source of strength for their own development.

In terms of meaning mining, we should fully leverage the narrative function of root metaphors. These metaphors should be constructed based on the core values of ideological and political education, linking their content to cultural symbols derived from China’s fine traditional culture, revolutionary culture, and advanced socialist culture.^[4] For example, we can equate scientific and technological innovation to a “New-Era Shangganling Campaign” and poverty alleviation efforts to “modern-day Yugong Moving the Mountains.” By anchoring such narratives in the nation’s cultural and psychological roots and deeply ingrained metaphorical structures, the dissemination of ideas can elicit the emotions and meanings embedded in the audience’s collective unconscious. This fosters profound, enduring resonance in meaning and value recognition throughout the process of ideological communication and understanding.

4.2. Strategic innovation in narrative methods

Innovation in narrative methods is a key link in transforming high-quality narrative content into profound educational experiences, and scientific narrative strategies can fully activate the audience’s psychological engagement mechanism.

Creating in-depth contexts is an essential prerequisite for effective storytelling. Educators can leverage diverse elements—such as language, images, objects, and environments—to engage students through multi-dimensional stimulation. By constructing immersive educational scenarios, students are encouraged to participate through multiple senses, adopt diverse perspectives, and gain multi-faceted experiences. This approach enables learners to develop a sense of presence and empathetic connection during their participatory awakening. Rooted in authentic details, a genuine atmosphere, and rich emotional resonance, it facilitates a psychological shift from detachment to immersion. Through narrative connections, students achieve profound resonance and self-enlightenment, allowing the significance of education to take root and exert a lasting influence.

Using conversational narratives is a key approach to stimulating intersubjectivity. To shift from a one-way “single speaker-multiple listeners” model to a multi-level, multi-perspective exchange, a diverse range of methods is required.^[5] Approaches such as narrative workshops, thematic debates, and role-playing can be employed to guide students in integrating their own life experiences, value-related confusions, and emotional encounters into discourse construction, encouraging them to actively engage in dialogue and interaction with the education-led narrative. In this two-way dialogue, positive and constructive interactions are fostered; through such interactions, the corresponding value-based life forms are collectively highlighted and co-constructed, while the spiritual energy inherent in group life is continuously activated.

Mastering narrative rhythm is the artistic key to sustaining and deepening a story’s appeal. A skilled narrator, much like a virtuosic musician, should be adept at regulating the audience’s psychological responses through variations in tension and relaxation, ebb and flow, and density of pacing. They must master the art of crafting suspense to ignite genuine curiosity, build meaningful conflicts that enhance the narrative’s perceived value, employ deliberate pauses to create space for reflection, and leverage nuanced emotional resonance to guide the audience through a transformative journey—from engagement to contemplation, and ultimately to internalization. Through this multi-layered psychological integration, a harmonious alignment of thought, feeling, and conviction is achieved.

4.3. The wisdom empowerment of narrative techniques

Modern educational technology should move beyond superficial sensory stimulation to provide intellectual support for deepening narrative experiences, thereby serving and empowering the fundamental goal of narrative deepening.

Constructing embodied narrative environments constitutes a key direction for technological

empowerment. With the support of emerging technologies such as VR/AR/MR, highly realistic and interactive “embodied cognitive scenarios” can be established. For instance, students can be immersed in a virtual reenactment of the Battle of Luding Bridge to experience the willpower that transcends physical limits; or they can step into the dramatic scene where “Iron Man” Wang Jinxi jumped into the mud pit, personally sensing his unwavering determination to safeguard state property at all costs. This multi-sensory embodied participation can surpass the audio-visual constraints of traditional narratives, foster profound physical and psychological immersion, and significantly enhance emotional memory and situational cognition^[6].

Achieving precise narrative delivery can effectively enhance the accuracy of ideological and political education. By leveraging learning analytics techniques to dynamically detect students’ learning cognitive styles, interest preferences, emotional response patterns, and value cognition levels, intelligent matching and adaptive delivery of ideological and political story content can be realized^[7]. For instance, if some students prefer logical and speculative stories, they can be provided with process-oriented narratives that elaborate on specific scientific principles and technical challenges; if other students favor humanistic stories, specific examples featuring dramatic plots and characters with profound complexity and struggles can be recommended. This personalized narrative approach is more likely to captivate students and elicit emotional resonance.

Exploring generative narrative interaction is at the forefront of technology application. We can look forward to exploring innovative applications of generative AI in ideological and political narratives. For example, design narrative guidance agents based on large language models that can collaboratively generate personalized story branches and development paths that conform to the plot logic and value orientation based on the core values and story framework set by educators. In this way, students can shift from being listened to stories to being active storytellers, deeply understand the intrinsic rationality of value logic in creative narrative participation, and thus achieve a fundamental shift from having to agree to having to agree.

4.4. Evidence-based assessment of the narrative effect

To promote the long-term refinement and development of narrative practice, establishing a scientific and systematic evaluation system is crucial. Only through multi-dimensional, multi-method comprehensive assessment can solid empirical evidence and effective value feedback be provided for the design and delivery of ideological and political narratives—an approach that aligns precisely with the core of the modern educational concept of “learning through assessment.”

The establishment of a multi-dimensional evaluation index system constitutes the foundation for effectiveness assessment. Traditional evaluation approaches often focus solely on knowledge acquisition, which is insufficient. A well-designed evaluation index system should encompass multiple dimensions, including a complete chain of cognitive understanding, emotional resonance, value recognition, and behavioral intention. The cognitive dimension focuses on assessing the depth of students’ understanding of the story’s value logic and their critical thinking abilities; the emotional dimension centers on evaluating the intensity, authenticity, and durability of emotional resonance; the value recognition dimension primarily assesses students’ acceptance and internalization of socially dominant values; and the behavioral intention dimension tracks tendencies toward behavioral change and actual performance in real-life contexts. These four dimensions collectively form a comprehensive transformation pathway from value perception to life practice.

Adopting a mixed-methods research approach is crucial to ensuring the scientific rigor of the assessment. The integration of quantitative and qualitative research methods enables mutual validation, thereby safeguarding the assessment’s scientific basis. Quantitative research methods—such as structured scales, learning behavior data analysis, and control group experiments—can help us capture the comprehensive effects and overall patterns of narratives from a macro perspective. Qualitative research methods, including in-depth interviews, narrative interviews, and focus group discussions, can reveal the specific mechanisms and in-depth processes through which narratives influence changes in an individual’s spiritual world at the micro level. Together, these two research methods constitute a robust and profound empirical foundation for evaluating narrative effectiveness.

Establishing a continuous optimization feedback loop constitutes the fundamental driving force for the sustained improvement of narrative practice. This loop requires educators to provide timely feedback based on assessment data, forming a virtuous spiral cycle of “design-implementation-evaluation-feedback-optimization.” Educators and curriculum designers should continuously collect teaching

process data, student feedback, and social evaluation opinions, promptly identify problems and deficiencies in narrative practice, and then adjust narrative strategies, refine story content, and enhance technology application in a targeted manner. In doing so, they can achieve the continuous enhancement of the appeal of ideological and political stories and the sustained deepening of educational effects.

5. Conclusion: The narrative of ideological and political education moving towards dialogue, generation and embodiment

This paper reflects on the narrative practice of ideological and political education from the “story” narrative perspective of narrative psychology, and conducts an interdisciplinary examination and reconstruction of ideological and political education practice. Research indicates that enhancing the appeal of ideological and political stories is not merely a matter of “storytelling skills,” but rather a profound innovation in narrative paradigms. This requires us to fundamentally develop three new narrative perspectives: “conversational, generative, and embodied.”

The narrative view of dialogue requires us to completely break away from the monopoly of narrative power and understand ideological and political education as a dialogic practice centered on value meaning with the educator and the educated as equal subjects, in which the authority of the educator is no longer based on the monopoly of knowledge, but on narrative wisdom and humanistic care that guide the dialogue and promote understanding.

The generative narrative view requires us to break through traditional values, no longer to pass on values as established things, but to view values as a dynamic meaning that is constantly constructed, understood and generated in the process of concrete, open narrative dialogue and individual reflection. The purpose of education is not to provide people with ready-made standard answers, but to create a meaningful journey of exploration for something meaningful, in the process of igniting the power of people to form value judgment and spiritual creativity.

Embodied narratives emphasize that all human cognition is holistic cognition, and focus on applying technology to create embodied narrative environments for people, in the deep interaction between the body and the environment, so that value experiences not only manifest in human rational thinking, but also act on the entire body and mind, thereby achieving a deeper, more lasting, and more comprehensive integration into the inner self.

Looking ahead, the narrative of ideological and political education needs to strive to construct an independent interdisciplinary narrative theory, proactively integrate cutting-edge technologies to expand the boundary of its appeal, and extend narrative practices from the classroom to society. By guiding diverse value narratives and building a new-type narrative ecosystem, it will ultimately elevate ideological and political stories from a mere educational tool to a spiritual and cultural force that nurtures individual growth, unites community values, and embodies the great power of dream-building.

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