Textual Determinants of a Component of Literary Identification

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RUNNING HEAD: Textual determinants of identification

Abstract

Three experiments were conducted on how properties of the text control one aspect of the process of identifying with the central character in a story. In particular, we were concerned with textual determinants of character transparency, that is, the extent to which the character's actions and attitudes are clear and understandable. In Experiment 1, we hypothesized that the narrator in first-person narratives is transparent because narratorial implicatures (analogous to Grice's (1975) notion of conversational implicatures) lead readers to attribute their own knowledge and experience to the narrator. Consistent with our predictions, the results indicated that stating the inferred information explicitly leads readers to rate the narrator's thoughts and actions as more difficult to understand. In Experiment 2, we assessed whether this effect could be explained by differences in style between the original and modified versions of the text. The results demonstrated that there was no effect of adding text when the material was unrelated to narratorial implicatures. In Experiment 3, we hypothesized that transparency of the central character in a third-person narrative can be produced when the consistent use of free-indirect speech produces a close association between the narrator and the character; in this case, readers may attribute knowledge and experience to the character as well as the narrator. As predicted, the central character's thoughts and actions were rated as more difficult to understand when the markers for free-indirect speech were removed. We argue that transparency may be produced through the use of what are essential conversational processes invoked in service of understanding the narrator as a conversational participant.

Textual Determinants of a Component of Literary Identification

When one reads literary works, it is not uncommon to experience a phenomenon of "identification": It seems as if one knows or understands the central character in some deep, essential way, and one feels similar to that character in important respects. Although there may be some consensus concerning the introspective quality of this phenomenon, there is relatively little objective understanding of when and why it occurs and how it is affected by particular characteristics of the text. The thesis of the present article is that an important aspect of identification is generated by processes commonly used by readers in representing the narrator of the story and that these processes are similar to those used in conversational interactions. Three experiments involving literary texts are reported in support of this view.

The Nature of Identification

It is unlikely that identification can be equated with any single reaction or process. Indeed, some scholars have concluded that the term is "too broad and imprecise to be useful" (Pettersson, 2000). Thus, thinking about identification as a monolithic concept may be misleading. Instead, identification is much more likely to comprise a complex of emotional and cognitive reactions and processes, any one of which may or may not occur in any given instance. It what follows, we attempt a preliminary analysis of at least some of those components. We then provide empirical evidence concerning one such component. Previous research has emphasized several different aspects of what can be intuitively described as identification. As a rough characterization, we distinguish three of these: participation, affinity, and transparency. Participation is a phenomenon in which readers share emotions and attitudes of the character and feel as though they were participating in the events of the story. Thus, the reader cares about what happens to a character and whether his or her plans succeed or fail. Although not always

connected to the issue of character identification, the processes of participatory responses and transportation into the story world (Gerrig, 1993; see also Green, 2004) are relevant to the participation component. Some literary critics have described identification in terms of Freudian defense mechanisms that help cope with desires and fears, such as wish fulfillment, the working out of fantasies, coming to grips with difficult experiences, and so on (Bettleheim, 1976; Appleyard, 1990). Similarly, in a study on media engagement, Busselle and Bilandzic (2009) reduces identification to an emotional reaction leading to "a loss of awareness of self" (p. 325). Cohen (2006) suggests that identification involves a non-dyadic relationship betwen media characters and viewers whereby viewers come to believe they possess characters' positive traits that they do not believe they have in real life. Bley (1945) argues that identification involves becoming a character and sharing his or her experiences. Clearly, these analyses depend on participating in the story world along with the character.

In our terms, affinity describes the reader's attitude towards a character. In many treatments of identification, it is assumed that the reader comes to like the character (e.g., Liebes & Katz, 1990), and some have argued that positive attributes are a necessary precondition to identification (e.g., Cohen, 1999). Zillmann (1994) argues that empathy is a more suitable analysis of these processes than identification; as a consequence, he suggests that the character must be seen in a positive light in order for such empathy to occur (Zillmann, 1991). Similarly, Tan (1994) suggests that in film, positive attributes of a character (such as pursuing a just cause or physical attractiveness) lead to feelings of sympathy for that character. Oatley (1999) distinguishes between adopting a character's perspective (participation in our terms) and reading as a spectator (affinity). Although affinity and participation are closely related, in our usage affinity refers to the reader's attitude *towards* the character while participation refers to the adoption of the attitudes *of* the character. In other words, readers may respond as participants

who in some sense "become" the characters, or as spectators, maintaining a prudential emotional distance. Harding (1962) and, more recently, Oatley (1999) resist equating the term "identification" with either role, arguing that the reader takes both roles, so as to be involved and distanced at different times.

In contrast to participation and affinity, transparency refers to a more cognitive aspect of identification. In particular, in our usage, a character is transparent to the extent to which that character's thoughts and behavior are clear and transparently understandable. Thus, transparency incorporates readers' knowledge and appreciation of the behavior and attitudes of the character. . The transparency component of identification has been referred to by a variety of scholars. For example, Tal-Or and Cohen (2010) maintain that "identification is based on a shared perspective betweem viewers and characters" (p. 407) and hypothesize that identification increases when viewer knows what the character knows. The match of the reader's knowledge and that which can be attributed to the character is thus of central importance. For example, in order to assess identification, Tal-Or and Cohen included questionnaire items such as "I think I understand Jack well" and "I tend to understand why Jack did what he did." Transparency was the focus of the present investigation. To measure transparency, we asked readers to rate how sensible, rational, and understandable a character was using items that were comparable to some of those used by Tal-Or and Cohen. Importantly, though, transparency in our analysis is merely one aspect of what is meant by "identification," which in turn is only a small part of what makes a work enjoyable or valuable to read. Nevertheless, we believe that the present focus on the determinants of transparency provides an important step in the empirical investigation of such phenomena.

Mechanisms of Identification

Two general approaches have been taken in explaining how these different components of identification occur: homophily and strategy. Homophily is based on the similarity, either demographic or attitudinal, between the reader and the character (Gilly, 1998; Johnson, 1989). In literary studies, the idea that a reader may identify with a character in a story to the extent to which the character is perceived to be similar has often been central to discussions of identification. For example, Hogan (1994) suggested that male readers should be more likely to identify with male characters and female readers with female characters. Morever, there is some empirical evidence to support the relationship between the identification and homophily. For example, Eyal and Rubin (2003) asked subjects to rate television character and found a moderate relationship between homophily and identification. However, in our analysis, homophily would seem to be naturally related to the participation component of identification but less obviously related to the affinity component. Thus, we suggest that homophily is at best only one part of the mechanisms that produce identification.

A variant of the identification-through-homophily perspective can be found in the work of Larsen and Seilman (1988). They proposed the term “personal resonance” to refer to a reader’s feeling that a literary work is profoundly relevant and meaningful to him or her. Personal resonance is hypothesized to occur when self-knowledge is activated in memory while reading a story. In support of this analysis, they asked participants to read a text and indicate which parts of the text generated a personal reminding. Later, participants were questioned concerning the role they played in the reminding. They found that narratives were more likely to produce remindings in which the participants played an active role, while expository texts were more likely to produce remindings in which the participants were passive. These results are

consistent with the notion of homophily in that identification depends on the retrieval of active personal memories that are similar to the events described in the text.

A second general approach to the processes involved in identification is the view that it is related to reader strategy. The idea is that identification is promoted or perhaps controlled by the strategy or processing mode adopted by the reader. The research of Vorderer, Cupchik, and Oatley (1997) provides an example of this analysis. In one experiment, readers were asked to adopt either a "sympathetic spectator" perspective (in which they viewed the events as a third person) or a "self-oriented" perspective (in which they imagined themselves participating in the events), and these perspectives were used with either an experience-loaded story or an action-loaded story. While the perspectives did not have clear effects on the action-loaded story, the self-oriented readers rated the experience-loaded stories higher in personal meaningfulness than did the sympathetic-spectator readers. From this, they concluded that readers react most strongly to a story when they are encouraged to focus on their own thoughts and experiences when reading about those of the character. In general, these results suggest that identification may depend on the reader electing to process the text in a particular manner. Similarly, Oatley (1994) argued that readers adopt a character's goals and plans through a process of mental simulation, and then experience emotions as those plans succeed or fail. Oatley's view of mental simulation is similar to our notion of a reading strategy in that mental simulation is active and intentional.

Combinations of homophily and strategy can be found in a variety of sources. For example, Cupchik (1997) argued that "spontaneous identification" occurs when there are strong parallels between the circumstances of the character and those of the reader; this is clearly a process based on homophily. However, "instructed identification" can also occur when readers are told to sympathize with a character or to imagine being the character; this form of identification would seem to involve specific reading strategies. In the realm of cinema, Tan

(1995) suggested that viewers engage in a process of imagining how the characters must feel, and by virtue of this process, experience emotions that are similar to those of the character. He argued that different viewers may have different propensities to identify with the characters. This analysis suggests that identification varies with properties of the viewer and is perhaps under intentional control to some extent, as we would expect for a reading strategy. However, Tan also suggested that the imagination process is greatly aided when the viewer is familiar with the concerns of the character. Thus, strategy and homophily may both be involved in producing identification.

Although these theoretical ideas are helpful in understanding some of the mental processes related to identification, they provide relatively little insight into the role of the text itself in producing identification. Intuitively, it seems that narrative style and the manner in which a character is portrayed are important determinants of identification; indeed, one might argue that the ability to produce identification with a character is a hallmark of a well-written narrative. However, the similarity of the reader to the character and the reading strategies that a reader uses would seem to be unrelated to such textual properties. For example, consider a story such as *Madame Bovary* (Flaubert, 1856) in which there are several important characters described in some detail. With whom does the reader identify? Our impression is that in this case, identification is with the single, central character of Emma. Yet if identification were determined by reader-character homophily, one might expect that different readers would identify with different characters in the narrative, depending on who seemed most similar to the reader. On the other hand, if identification were determined by intentional reader strategies, one might expect that readers could identify equally well with many different characters in a story depending on preference or idiosyncratic inclination. However, we suspect that there is little such ambiguity concerning the object of identification in this and many other cases. In turn, this

implies that there must be important properties of the text that determine how and when identification occurs and that identification must involve other mechanisms besides homophily and strategy. The goal of the present paper is to address one aspect of this general question: What are the textual determinants of identification? In particular, we present evidence on one such textual processing mechanism and argue that the transparency component of identification is often closely related to what are essentially conversational processes. We first describe our analysis of these conversational processes, and then turn to the problem of how these are related to transparency.

Conversational Processes in Narrative Comprehension

Our approach to understanding the role of the text in producing transparency is based on the hypothesis that conversational processes are involved in the comprehension of narratives. In particular, we assume that readers generally construct a representation of the narrator similar to that which would be constructed for a conversational participant (Dixon & Bortolussi, 1996; Bortolussi & Dixon, 2003). As described by Bortolussi and Dixon (2003), this assumption is a central component in a broad framework for addressing issues in the representation of plot, characterization, perception, speech and thought, as well as the narrator. Evidence for this framework has been demonstrated on a range of fronts (e.g., Dixon & Bortolussi, 1995, 1996; Mullins & Dixon, 2007). A critical implication of this approach is that readers are likely to treat their representation of the narrator in much the same way as that of a conversational participant and apply the same kind of logic and inferences concerning that representation as they would in conversation. Such processing is often based on the principle of cooperation as articulated, for example, in the conversational postulates of Grice (1975): Generally, people assume that their conversational partners are rational and honest and are providing necessary and sufficient

information for one to understand their message. We hypothesize that readers typically adopt the same kinds of assumptions with respect to the narrator of a story; that is, readers assume the narrator is rational, reliable, and providing necessary and sufficient information for them to understand the narrative.

This assumption of "narratorial cooperativeness" licenses inferences concerning the knowledge and beliefs of the narrator. For example, when the narrator seems to express unreasonable or unjustified attitudes, the reader is led by the cooperativeness assumption to infer knowledge or experience that would justify those attitudes and attribute those to the narrator; when the text seems to provide more information than necessary, the reader may infer that there is some other message or point in the mind of the narrator that requires that information; and when the text is superficially incoherent, the reader can infer that the narrator believes the reader and the narrator share sufficient knowledge to resolve the apparent inconsistency. Inferences of this sort depend on the assumption of cooperativeness and consequently are distinct from other classes of inferences. In particular, they are analogous to the conversational implicatures of Grice (1975). We adopt the term "narratorial implicature" to refer to their use in narrative comprehension.

The present analysis of narratorial cooperativeness provides a description of only one aspect of the reader's processing of the narrator. For example, although Grice's (1975) formulation of cooperation in conversation has been extremely influential, a wide range of elaborations and extensions of his ideas have been proposed (cf. Clark, 1996), and some of these may apply to the processing of narrative text as well. Similarly, more elaborate accounts of the relationship of the narrator to the reader have been developed (e.g., Bruce, 1981). We argue that although such deeper analyses are possible, processing the narrator as a conversational participant provides a plausible description of what most readers will do on an initial reading of a

text under many circumstances. As a consequence, it provides a foundation for the analysis of more elaborate processing by the reader when it does occur. Bortolussi and Dixon (2003) describe a number of such extensions, including the treatment of unreliable narrators, the mental representation of an implied author, and the role of extratextual information.

Our analysis is related to that of Gerrig (1993), who argues that readers interpret narratives as side participants to a communicative exchange between the author and some intended audience. Gerrig's approach implies that readers can draw inferences concerning the author and his or her intended meaning on the assumption that he or she is cooperative, and this kind of cooperation between the author and the reader provides a useful framework for understanding some kinds of texts and interpretations. However, in the present analysis we are concerned with the more immediate (and perhaps superficial) representation of the narrator (that is, the implied speaker of the words of the narrative), not the historical author per se. Our hypothesis is that readers often interpret the narrator's words as directed to themselves in a conversational fashion, without considering in any detail the larger problem of identifying the intentions of the actual author.

Transparency as Narratorial Implicature

Because narratorial implicatures often involve attributing the reader's knowledge and experience to the narrator, they provide a mechanism that might produce transparency. Consider, for example, the text fragment below (taken from the story we used in Experiment 1, "The Office" (Munro, 1996)):

> But here comes the disclosure which is not easy for me: I am a writer. That does not sound right. Too presumptuous; phony, or at least unconvincing. Try again. I write. Is that better? I try to write. That makes it worse. Hypocritical humility. Well then?

The attitude expressed by the narrator in this excerpt is superficially unreasonable because there

is no reason a priori for one to be embarrassed or insecure about being a writer. However, based on the assumption of narratorial cooperativeness, the reader will generally presume that the narrator's attitude is reasonable and that she is providing sufficient information for one to understand that attitude. As a consequence, the reader would attempt to draw inferences to resolve the apparent inconsistency. In particular, he or she may try to imagine experiences and life circumstances that would justify the narrator's insecurity and attribute those to her. When successful, this process can resolve the apparent inconsistency.

We argue that when drawing inferences concerning the narrator's attitudes and beliefs, a central component is likely to be the reader's own knowledge and experience. The reader intimately understands his or her own attitudes and beliefs and is likely to have readily available explanations and justifications for those attitudes. Consequently, if the reader can find a personal attitude that matches that of the narrator, it would be easy to draw the necessary implicature by attributing an analogous explanation and justification to the narrator. In this particular instance, most readers are unlikely to have had experiences related to being a writer; however, they could easily have experienced a similar form of insecurity concerning skill in some other activity or hobby. Consequently, the superficially unreasonable attitude of the narrator can be resolved by adapting whatever those experiences are to the situation of the narrator and the writing profession and attributing those experiences to the narrator. Our hypothesis is that this process of using one's own knowledge and experience in the service of constructing narratorial implicatures produces transparency: After making these kinds of attributions, the narrator will subsequently be seen to have the same kind of experiences as the reader. In effect, the text invites readers, through the use of narratorial implicatures, to construct a representation of the narrator that shares important elements of readers' background and attitudes. This view is related to that of

Iser (1988), who argued that "the process of absorbing the unfamiliar is labeled as the identification of the reader with what he reads."

This analysis provides an explanation for how transparency might be produced for the narrator and, as a consequence, for the protagonist in first-person narration; evidence supporting this account is provided in Experiments 1 and 2. However, transparency for characters other than the narrator can also occur in, for example, third-person narration. We argue that additional mechanisms are involved in such cases, and we consider one possibility in Experiment 3.

Experiment 1

In Experiment 1, we tested the hypothesis that transparency is produced when readers attribute their own knowledge and experience to the narrator in the service of constructing narratorial implicatures. This hypothesis makes a clear prediction: Transparency should be less pronounced if fewer narratorial implicatures are needed in understanding the narrative. The hypothesis was tested by making information implied by the narrator explicit. We started with a narrative that seemed to produce strong identification, isolated some of the information that might be entailed by narratorial implicatures, and then explicitly added this information to the text. Presumably, the modified version contained approximately the same information that readers would infer anyway, except that now that information was stated explicitly. Consequently, readers would not need to generate the inferences themselves. In other words, because information needed to understand the narrator's attitude and beliefs was provided explicitly in the modified version, readers should be inclined to construct fewer implicatures. By hypothesis, then, transparency of the narrator should be reduced.

The experimental materials were based on the story "The Office" by Alice Munro. The story is a first-person narrative about a woman who wishes to be a writer, but who has little

support from her family and friends. She rents an office in which to do her writing and encounters difficulties with her landlord. The initial portion of story, before any plot events occur, is devoted to a description of the narrator's family, situation, and views on how others react to her desire to be a writer and to the writing profession. For convenience, we refer to this initial segment as the story's "preamble," although it was not demarcated in any way in the text. In order to evaluate our hypothesis concerning the role of implicatures in producing transparency, a second version of this preamble was created in which many of the inferences that were only implicit in the original version were stated explicitly. This explicit preamble was contrasted with the original, implicit preamble under two conditions. In the single-preamble conditions, participants read either a version of the story with the implicit (original) preamble or a version with the explicit (modified) preamble. Our prediction was that transparency should be less with the explicit version. In the dual-preamble conditions, participants read stories containing both preambles but varying in order. According to our hypothesis, transparency should depend on which preamble was read first: When the implicit preamble was read first, implicatures would be necessary to interpret the narrator as cooperative, and narrator transparency should result; the subsequent, explicit preamble should merely confirm more or less what the reader has inferred already. However, when the implicit preamble was encountered second, after reading the explicit version, implicatures should not be necessary since the explicit preamble would have already provided an appropriate background for the narrator's views. The dual-preamble conditions provide a particularly well-controlled test of our hypothesis because precisely the same text and information was read; only the order of the material was changed.

It is not obvious whether transparency is more appropriately assessed online, as the reading processes unfold, or retrospectively, after readers have finished the text and had an opportunity to react to the character over the course of the story. In the present research, we were

primarily concerned with the aggregate response to a character after all of the influences of the story events and language have had an impact. Moreover, it is quite possible that transparency is affected by further reflection and processing after the story has been finished. Such considerations suggest that a retrospective measurement of transparency, after the story has been digested, would be best for our purposes. Certainly, as we have hypothesized above, there are critical inference processes that take place during reading that contribute to the overall sense of transparency, and it is likely that measurements of reading time or eye movements during reading could be used to investigate such processes (cf. Carpenter & Just, 1977). However, we argue that the best place to measure the aggregate effects on transparency is at the conclusion of the story reading.

Method

Materials and Manipulation. Participants read versions of "The Office" by Alice Munro. The original version of this story was 5,442 words. The stimulus manipulations involved an initial introductory segment of the story prior to any actual plot events; this "preamble" was 752 words in length. An excerpt is shown in Table 1. We refer to the original version of this segment as the "implicit" preamble because our view is that its comprehension requires readers to generate a variety of implicatures regarding the mental states, thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes of the narrator. An "explicit" version of the preamble was created in which we attempted to state explicitly much of the information that might be inferred from the original. We endeavored to ensure that the new version did not provide any additional information that was not warranted by our reading of the original and that the new version was as similar as possible to the original. Note, however, that the critical feature of the explicit version is that it reduces the need for

further inferences concerning the attitudes of the narrator, not that it match precisely the interpretation of any given reader. An excerpt of the explicit preamble is shown in Table 1.

In addition to the original (implicit) and modified (explicit) version of the story, three further versions were created. Two of these involved presenting both versions of the preamble, one after the other, either in the explicit-implicit order or in the implicit-explicit order. Finally, the fifth version contained only the balance of the story without any preamble at all. We refer to these latter three story versions as the "explicit/implicit," "implicit/explicit," and the "none" versions. As well as the manipulated preamble itself, the explicit and implicit/explicit versions contained a short transition between the explicit preamble and the rest of the story that was not included in the explicit/implicit version. The lengths of the stories were 5,442 words for the implicit version, 4,950 for the explicit version, 5,751 for the explicit/implicit version, 5,768 for the implicit/explicit version, and 4,633 for the none version. In all cases, there was no explicit delineation of the manipulated material, and the text flowed continuously from what we have referred to here as the preamble to the balance of the text.

Procedure and Measurements. Participants were 115 University of Alberta students from introductory psychology classes. Students received course credit for participation. Participants were randomly assigned to one of five conditions. There were 20 people in the implicit condition, 25 in the explicit condition, 25 in the none condition, 23 in the implicit/ explicit condition, and 22 in the explicit/implicit condition. Data from an additional 22 participants were not used. Of these, 20 failed to complete all of the items on the response form, one indicated that he had read the story before, and one was deemed to be not on task during the session. The experiment was run in group sessions, with 20-25 people participating in each; sessions lasted no longer than 45 minutes.

Participants each read one version of the story and then used a computer scan sheet to respond to 60 Likert items related to their reaction to the narrator, the characters, and the situation depicted in the story. Responses were made on a five-point scale labeled as "Strongly Disagree," "Disagree," "Neutral / Uncertain," "Agree," "Strongly Agree." These items were designed to explore a range of questions pertaining to the process of identification, such as whether participants liked the story and the characters, whether they saw themselves as similar to the character, and so on, as well as a number of questions about participants' background and reading habits. The results to be presented here concern what we regard as the most interesting aspect of those responses and are based on a composite of 10 items that assess the degree to which participants found the narrator's actions and thoughts to be rational, justified, and reasonable. We used this composite as our measure of transparency. The 10 items are shown in Table 2; transparency was calculated as the average score on for these items after reversing the scale of the negative questions.

In order to assess the extent to which these items provided a coherent measure of transparency, a factor analysis was conducted of all of the items, excluding those pertaining to reading habits. Three factors explained 24% of the variance across items, and the increment in explained variance was relatively small for additional factors. The transparency index correlated .73 with the second factor; when the factors were rotated to align with the transparency index, the correlation increased to .81. In order to assess coherence, each transparency item was correlated with balance of the index, excluding that item; the average of these correlations was .52. Thus, although the sample is small, we conclude that the transparency index is a reasonably coherent measure of an important component of the item responses.

Analysis. In order to assess the strength of evidence provided by these results, linear models were fit to the data and their relative adequacy was measured using likelihood ratios. The

likelihood ratio is the likelihood of the data given the best fit of one model divided by the likelihood of the data given the best fit of the other. Thus, very large (or very small) values imply that the fit of one model is substantially better than than that of the other. Following the suggestion of Glover and Dixon (2004), the likelihood ratios were adjusted for the differing degrees of freedom in the models based on the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC; Akaike, 1973); this is tantamount to selecting models based on AIC values, a common approach to model selection (e.g., Burnham & Anderson, 2002). In some prototypical hypothesis testing situations, a statistically significant result would correspond to an adjusted likelihood ratio of about 3. (The symbol λ_{adj} is used to refer to the adjusted likelihood ratio.)

Results

The results for transparency are shown in Figure 1. The figure shows that the explicit versions (in which the explicit preamble was presented alone or first) produced less transparency than the implicit versions (in which the implicit preamble was presented alone or first). On average, the transparency scores for the explicit versions were 0.22 (SE = 0.09) lower than the implicit versions on the five-point response scale. The factor of single versus dual preamble produced little effect. The version without any preamble (indicated by the dashed line in the figure) produced transparency intermediate between that for the implicit and explicit versions.

The relative fits of three models were assessed. In the null model, it was assumed that there were no differences across conditions, while in an "implicatures" model it was assumed that the implicit preamble (either alone or first) would produce greater transparency than no preamble, which in turn would produce greater transparency than the explicit preamble (either alone or first). Specifically, the model included a contrast comparing transparency in the explicit and explicit/implicit conditions to that in the implicit and implicit/explicit conditions. The

implicatures model was superior to the null model, $\lambda_{adj} = 6.51$; this provides clear evidence that transparency was higher in the two implicit conditions. Finally, in the full model, it was assumed that all conditions potentially differed from one another. The adjusted likelihood ratio for comparing the full model to the implicatures model was $\lambda_{adj} = 0.05$, or 19.39 in favor of the simpler model. Thus, the results provide evidence against any difference between the single- and dual-preamble conditions.

Discussion

The results were in accord with the hypothesis that transparency is produced when readers use their own knowledge and experience to construct narratorial implicatures. In particular, transparency was greater when participants read the implicit preamble (either first or alone) rather than the explicit version. Our interpretation is that the implicit preamble leads readers to generate a variety of implicatures that are not needed in the explicit version, and, as a consequence, readers have a greater opportunity to attribute their own experience to the narrator. The result is that the narrator's thoughts and behavior are easier to appreciate and understand. Paradoxically, this result occurs even though the implicit version of the text would seem to provide less information on the surface than the explicit version. Rather, it provides hints and clues without elaborating on any details. In effect, the ability to understand the narrator is contributed not by the information provided in the text (as in the explicit version) but by readers themselves as they attempt to understand the narrative on the basis of the principle of narratorial cooperativeness. This result parallels the findings of Peskin and Astington (2004) on children's representations of mental states. In that study, children were read a story under two conditions: The narrative either explicitly described the mental state of characters using metacognitive verbs or signaled information about mental states only implicitly. Peskin and Astington found that

children who had to infer the mental states of characters for themselves performed better on a subsequent false-belief test than those who were read the explicit version. One interpretation is that the children benefited from practicing an inference process akin to the narratorial implicatures hypothesized here.

In addition to the difference between the implicit and explicit conditions, there was little difference between the transparency found in the single-preamble conditions and that found in the dual-preamble conditions. This result conforms to our predictions. In particular, we argue that the second preamble in the dual-preamble versions should have little effect on the implicatures generated by readers. For example, when the explicit preamble follows the implicit preamble, the additional information should have no impact because the implicatures have already been generated at that point. Similarly, when the implicit preamble follows the explicit preamble, no implicatures should be generated because the initial, explicit information provides an appropriate justification for the narrator's attitudes. It is unlikely that the content of the explicit preamble matches precisely the inferences that any given individual might draw on the basis of the implicit preamble. Indeed, because such inferences will vary with the particular background and experience of the reader, such matching may be impossible in principle. However, the similar transparency in the single- and dual-preamble conditions provides evidence that the explicit preamble was fairly consistent with the inferences that readers drew when reading the original, implicit version. If it did not, there would have been little effect on the implicatures drawn on the basis of the original, implicit version. (Further evidence on this point is provided in Experiment 2, in which an entirely unrelated preamble had no effect on transparency.)

More generally, the equivalent results in the single- and dual-preamble conditions eliminates the possibility that the effect on transparency can be attributed to simple properties of the explicit preamble. For example, precisely the same information was provided in the implicit/

explicit and explicit/implicit conditions, but transparency was reduced only when the explicit preamble came first. Similarly, the effect on transparency cannot be attributed to story length. Although the single-preamble, implicit version of the story was somewhat longer than the single-preamble, explicit version, both of the dual-preamble versions were longer than either of the single-preamble versions by a wide margin. However, there was no difference in transparency between the explicit version and the explicit/implicit version, and no difference between the implicit version and the implicit/explicit version. Thus, passage length cannot be the cause of the effect on transparency.

The contrast between the two dual-preamble conditions (the explicit/implicit version and the implicit/explicit version) controls for a wide range of possible explanations based on the aggregate effects of the text. In particular, one cannot explain the difference between these two conditions based on the information provided in the text, because the sentences included in the two dual-preamble versions were nearly identical. Thus, the difference in transparency cannot be attributed simply to some aspect of the textual information provided in the explicit preamble. Similarly, the effect cannot be attributed readily to the reader's overall impression of the story or writing quality. For example, the relatively pedestrian prose of the explicit preamble may have detracted from one's impression of the story, and it might be conjectured that this poorer impression is related somehow to the transparency measure. However, an aggregate impression of story quality should have been affected regardless of whether the explicit preamble came first or second in the story and would not provide a basis for predicting a difference between the two dual-preamble conditions. Instead, the fact that transparency is affected by the order of presentation implies that the effect has to do with how the implicit preamble is processed.

Conceivably, readers in the dual-preamble conditions may have noticed that there was overlap between the ideas expressed in the explicit and implicit preambles despite being

expressed in entirely different ways. However, this redundancy cannot explain the pattern of results for the transparency measure. In particular, the dual-preamble version showed precisely the same pattern of results as the single-preamble versions. For example, adding the explicit preamble after the implicit preamble had no effect on transparency: The transparency in the implicit/explicit condition is nearly identical to that for the implicit condition. Nor did adding the implicit preamble after the explicit preamble have an effect. Thus, although subjects might have noticed the redundancy, there is no reason to think that it had any effect on the transparency.

Although a clear effect of the manipulation on transparency was observed, the size of the effect was not large. However, a variety of implicatures and similar devices are also found in the balance of the story, after the preamble, and it seems likely that many of these would produce transparency of the narrator even following the explicit preamble. Consequently, in all likelihood, we manipulated only a small proportion of those aspects of the text that control transparency, and it is not surprising that we observed only a modest effect. Such an interpretation is consistent with the intermediate results obtained in the none condition if it is assumed as well that some of the implicatures generated after the preamble are the same as those generated in reading of the preamble itself. Simply eliminating the original, implicit preamble reduced the opportunity to generate narratorial implicatures, leading to less transparency in the none condition than in the implicit condition. However, providing an explicit preamble would also eliminate the need for those implicatures that might be generated either by the implicit preamble or by the balance of the narrative. This would lead to less transparency in the explicit condition than in the none condition, as found.

As we noted at the outset, transparency is but one aspect of identification, and other measurements would be needed to develop a more complete analysis of how identification is promoted by the text. In particular, the transparency measure reflects a perceived understanding

of the character and is, in effect, a form of elaborative inference about the character. Although this aspect of identification has been used in previous work (cf. Tal-Or & Cohen, 2010), the participation and affinity components of identification may hinge on processes that differ from those hypothesized here. However, we argue that understanding how transparency depends on properties of the text provides an important advance, and further research on affinity and participation may build on the current results.

Experiment 2

In Experiment 2, we controlled for a possible confound in the design of the first experiment. The explicit-preamble versions of the story contained additional material that differed significantly in style from the original text. Conceivably, this stylistic variation could have disrupted readers' appreciation of the balance of the story, independent of the information that was conveyed concerning the narrator's state of mind. Although this material had no effect on transparency when it was added second, after the original preamble, it is possible that the impression on the reader created by the initially encountered text is critical. In order to assess this possibility, we assessed the effect of adding purely descriptive material to the story. This descriptive material was written in a pedestrian style, just as the explicit preamble was, but it conveyed little information relevant to interpreting the narratorial implicatures in the original. If the mere stylistic variation was responsible for the results of Experiment 1, the same effect should be found with the unrelated, descriptive material. On the other hand, if the effect found in Experiment 1 was due to the nature of the information conveyed in the manipulated material, adding unrelated descriptive information should have no effect.

There were thus three conditions in the experiment: In the implicit condition, participants read the original story; in the explicit/implicit condition, the story was preceded by a preamble

that explicitly described the inferences that might be drawn on the basis of the implicit preamble in the original; and in the unrelated/implicit condition, the story was preceded by descriptive material unrelated to those inferences. In both the explicit/implicit and the unrelated/implicit conditions, the original, implicit preamble was included following the manipulated text. Thus, these conditions are comparable to the dual-preamble conditions of Experiment 1. The implicit and explicit/implicit conditions provided a replication of the corresponding conditions the first experiment. The critical question was whether transparency in the unrelated/implicit condition would be similar that in the explicit/implicit condition (suggesting an effect of stylistic variation) or that in the implicit condition (suggesting an effect of information relevant to narratorial implicatures).

Method

Materials and Manipulation. As in Experiment 1, participants read versions of "The Office," and the stimulus manipulation involved an initial introductory segment of the story prior to any actual plot events. The original version is referred to as the "implicit" version because this preamble requires readers to generate a variety of implicatures regarding the mental states, thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes of the narrator. A second, "explicit/implicit" version of the story was created in which the story was preceded by text that explicitly described inferences that might be drawn from the original preamble. Finally, an "unrelated/implicit" version of the story was created in which the story was preceded by text describing a walk by the narrator; an excerpt from this passage is shown in Table 3. The explicit/implicit version was similar to the explicit/implicit story version in Experiment 1 except that the added material was edited to be as stylistically close as possible to the unrelated material. In length, the story versions were 5,442 words (implicit version), 5,746 words (explicit/implicit version), and 5,765 words (unrelated/

implicit version). As in Experiment 1, the distinction between preamble (whether it is unrelated, explicit, or implicit) and the balance of the story is made purely for the purpose of experimental manipulation, and participants were presented with all of the material as a single, continuous story.

Procedure and Measurements. Participants were 52 paid volunteers recruited through undergraduate classes at the University of Alberta. There were 17 in the implicit condition, 17 in the explicit/implicit condition, and 18 in the unrelated/implicit condition. Data from an additional eight people was not used. Of these, seven had learned English as a second language, and one indicated that he had read the story before. Participants each read one version of the story and then indicated responses for 27 Likert items related to their reaction to the narrator, the characters, and the situation depicted in the story, as well as their personal reading habits, education, and proficiency with English. Responses pertaining to the story were made on a seven-point scale labeled as "Strongly Disagree," "Disagree," "Disagree Somewhat," "Neutral/ Uncertain," "Agree Somewhat," "Agree," "Strongly Agree." The dependent variable, transparency, was a composite of 10 items (the same as used in Experiment 1) that assess the degree to which participants found the narrator's actions and thoughts to be rational, justified, and reasonable. However, since a seven-point scale was used, the actual numbers are not directly comparable to the five-point scale values measured in Experiment 1.

Results

The transparency results are shown in Figure 2. As can be seen, transparency in the unrelated/implicit condition was close to that observed in the implicit condition, while that in the explicit/implicit condition was substantially less. The difference between the explicit/implicit condition and the mean of the other two conditions was 0.45 (SE=0.18) on the seven-point scale.

The difference between the implicit and explicit/implicit conditions replicated the difference between the corresponding conditions in Experiment 1, and we interpret that difference similarly: Providing the explicit preamble prior to the story eliminated the need to draw many of the narratorial implicatures required in processing the implicit preamble, and the result was less transparency. In contrast, providing the unrelated preamble prior to the story had no effect on transparency.

As in Experiment 1, this interpretation of the results was supported by the fit of nested models. No differences across conditions were assumed in the null model. In the implicatures model, it was assumed that the implicit and unrelated/implicit conditions would yield greater transparency than the explicit/implicit condition. This model was substantially better than the null model, $\lambda_{adj} = 6.68$. Finally, in the full model, it was assumed that all three conditions could vary. This model was no better than the implicatures model, $\lambda_{adj} = 0.37$ or 2.69 in favor of the simpler model. Thus, the results provided clear evidence that the implicit and unrelated/impicit versions produced greater transparency than the explicit/implicit version and that the unrelated/ implicit version and the implicit version produced comparable transparency.

Discussion

The results provide no support for the hypothesis that mere differences in style have an effect on transparency. If the pedestrian style of the explicit preamble were the determinant of the effects in Experiment 1, one would have expected the unrelated/implicit condition to show a comparable effect on transparency. The story in both the unrelated/implicit condition and the explicit/implicit condition begin with text that is stylistically weaker than the balance of the story. However, only the explicit/implicit condition produced an effect on transparency. Consequently, it seems reasonable to conclude that this effect of the explicit preamble must lie

in its content, not merely its writing style. In other words, it is difficult to maintain that merely adding pedestrian material to the beginning of the story can produce an effect on transparency. Of course, it is quite likely that if we measured other attributes of readers' reactions to the story, such as how they liked the story or the manner in which it was told, an effect of adding stylistically discrepant material would be apparent. The present pattern of results only apply to the assessment of participants' reactions to the beliefs and attitudes of the character in the story. We also conjecture that an explicit preamble of the type used in our manipulation would be difficult to write in an engaging, literary style. Arguably, a key component of literary style is to hint, suggest, or describe rather than to state explicitly (e.g., Hall, 2008). Thus, in many cases, the goal of stating the inferred information explicitly may be inconsistent with good fictional writing. The present theoretical analysis in terms of implicatures suggests one reason why this might be the case.

Experiment 3

Although the construction of narratorial implicatures can provide an account of transparency of the narrator (and hence the narrator's character in a first-person narration), by itself it cannot explain character transparency in third-person narratives. We hypothesize that the transparency of a character in a third-person narrative can be enhanced when there is a close association between the narrator and the character. In such cases, the reader may not clearly distinguish between the mental state and disposition of the narrator and those of the character and, as a consequence, attribute knowledge and experience not only to the narrator but to the character as well. In our analysis, this should produce transparency for the central character in third-person narrative, just as occurred for the narrator's character in first-person narrative. There are a variety of narrative techniques that might produce such an association between the narrator

and a character, but we argue that a potent one is the use of free-indirect speech and thought. In particular, we hypothesize that the extended use of free-indirect speech in a narrative makes the character more transparent, just as they might make the narrator in a first-person narrative.

Free-indirect speech can be characterized as a blending of the voice of the narrator with the voice of a character (cf. McHale, 1978). The character's voice can be identified by the use of vocabulary and sentence structure typical of the character's conversational speech; the narrator's voice can be identified by the use of pronouns and verb tense that would be appropriate for indirect speech. Consider, for example, the sentences below:

1. "Please, please can I have some candy?" he asked.
2. He asked whether he could have some candy.
3. Please, please could he have some candy?

In (1), a fragment of speech is related as direct, quoted speech; this conveys precisely the words and their order as they were produced. In (2), the same utterance is conveyed indirectly by merely describing the content of the request. Finally, (3) provides an example of free-indirect speech, in which the vocabulary and sentence structure of the original utterance are preserved, but the verb tense and pronoun use is similar to that used in indirect speech.

Dixon and Bortolussi (1996) explored the role of free-indirect speech in creating an association between the narrator and a character in the story, "Rope" (Porter, 1975). The story consists almost entirely of a conversation between a man and woman, with the speech of both characters presented through free-indirect speech. When the story was modified so that the speech of only one character was related in free-indirect speech, readers rated that character as more rational and justified than the other character, and they were more likely to assume that the narrator shared that character's gender. These results are consistent with the view that free-indirect speech creates an association between a character and the narrator and that in the

presence of such an association, readers do not clearly distinguish the attributes of the character and those of the narrator. In this case, readers consider the character as rational and reasonable (which, on the assumption of narratorial cooperativeness, should be properties of the narrator) and feel that the narrator may share the property of gender with the character. In the present experiment, we examined whether such an association could also produce transparency.

To test this hypothesis, we selected two stories that included a large amount of free-indirect speech, and modified versions were created in which the free-indirect speech markers were removed. Our prediction was that this manipulation should reduce the tendency to attribute properties of the narrator to the character and, as a consequence, should reduce transparency of that character. However, it is possible that our manipulation of speech style affected other aspects of the writing style and that this could contribute to any observed effects on transparency. As a control for this potential confound, we also asked readers for an overall evaluation of the story and used this as a covariate.

Method

Materials and Manipulation. Two stories were used in this experiment: "Miss Bracegirdle Does her Duty" by Stacy Aumonier (Aumonier, 1974), and "Question and Answer" by William Sansom (Sansom, 1960). The first story concerns a woman who travels to France and accidentally locks herself in a strange man's room in the hotel. She hides under the bed, and the majority of the story revolves around her thoughts and ideas as she waits for an opportunity to escape. The second story concerns a man who fears that he may be bored in his relationship with his fiancee, and most of the story describes his thoughts as he wonders whether they should still get married. Both stories are related in the third person, contain a strong emphasis on the

thoughts and feelings of the central character, and include a great deal of free-indirect speech and thought.

Modified versions of the stories were created by removing as many of the markers for free-indirect speech as possible. The changes generally entailed: changing free-indirect either to indirect speech (by adding tags such as “he thought that ...”) or to direct (quoted) speech; removing typographical markers of conversational expression, such as exclamation points, italics, or ellipses; changing the verb tenses, pronouns, and diectic expressions to be consistent with a distinction between character and narrator; and removing vocabulary and colloquial expressions that were clearly a part of the character’s voice. An excerpt from the original and modified “Question and Answer” is shown in Table 4. The length of the original “Bracegirdle”was 6,403 words; modified, it was 6,734 words. The length of the original “Question and Answer” was 4,394 words; modified, it was 4,774 words.

Procedure and Measurements. Participants were 61 introductory psychology students at University of Alberta who received course credit for participating. Data from 6 additional participants were incomplete and were not used. Participants read both stories, one in the original and one in the modified version. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four groups that varied in terms of which story was read first and which story was read in the original. Thirteen participants read “Bracegirdle” (original) followed by “Question and Answer” (modified); 13 participants read “Question and Answer” (modified) followed by “Bracegirdle” (original); 16 participants read “Question and Answer” (original) followed by “Bracegirdle” (modified); and 15 participants read "Bracegirdle" (modified) followed by “Question and Answer” (original). Participants were run in groups of 20-25. Most took 60-90 minutes to complete the task.

After reading each story, participants responded to 75 Likert items pertaining to their reaction to the character, narrator, story, and the situation described in the story. Participants recorded their responses on a computer scanning sheet using the same 5-point scale used in Experiment 1. We report here results from a composite measure based on twelve items that index the extent to which the character's thoughts and actions were transparent, that is, understandable, rational, and appropriate. These items were similar to those used in Experiment 1 and are shown in Table 5. A transparency score was calculated for each story and subject by averaging responses to these items after reversing the scale for negative items. In addition, an overall evaluation score was constructed by averaging the response to two items: "This story is well written" and "This story was worth reading." This score was used as a covariate in the analyses reported below.

Results

The mean transparency scores from Experiment 3 (after correcting for the effect of the evaluation covariate) are shown in Figure 3. The figure indicates that for both stories, transparency was greater for the original version than for the modified version. The mean difference between the original and modified versions was 0.18 (SE=0.07) on the five-point scale. Also, in general, "Bracegirdle" received greater transparency scores than "Question and Answer," but this overall effect did not appear to interact with the free-indirect speech manipulation.

In order to assess these trends, the fits of several models were evaluated as in Experiments 1 and 2. However, because story and version were manipulated within subjects, linear mixed effects analysis (e.g., Pinheiro & Bates, 2000) was used to fit the models using the program lmer (Bates, 2008) in the R language (R Core Development Team, 2008). In mixed-

effects analysis, the nature of the random effects are explicitly described, and in our fits, we found that the best models were obtained by assuming that the effect of story varied across subjects. In the null model, it was assumed that transparency was related to story and overall evaluation. This model was compared to a "speech-style" model in which it was also assumed that story version affected transparency; the second model was substantially better than null model, $\lambda_{adj} = 8.47$. Thus, the results provide clear evidence that the manipulation of speech style affected transparency. Critically, the inclusion of overall evaluation as a covariate in these models implies that this effect of speech style cannot be attributed to global changes in the writing style or appeal of the story. We also considered a full model that included the interaction of story and story version. This model was no better than the speech-style model, $\lambda_{adj} = 0.57$.

Discussion

The results demonstrate that the thoughts and behavior of a character are judged as more transparent when that character is associated with the narrator through the use of free-indirect speech. Our interpretation of this result involves two mechanisms: First, the reader's knowledge and experience are attributed to the narrator in generating narratorial implicatures, and second, an association between the narrator and the character leads the reader to attribute this knowledge and experience to the character as well. As result, the readers rate the character higher in transparency. Crucially, removing the free-indirect speech markers did not change the content of the story or the information that was provided; the manipulation only affected a relatively minor aspect of the narrative technique. However, the two versions of the text are not precisely equivalent, and it is likely that removing the markers for free-indirect speech had other effects on readers' reactions to the stories in addition to the association between the narrator and the protagonist. Indeed, we conjecture that the authors used free-indirect speech precisely with the

intent of evoking particular responses in readers, and transparency of the protagonist may be only one of those. We argue that there is no obvious reason, however, to connect these effects of the text to the measured transparency of the character. For example, our covariate analysis implies that the effect on transparency that we obtained cannot be attributed simply to changes in the overall evaluation of the story.

The size of the obtained effects was similar to that found in Experiment 1. As before, we believe that our manipulation had only a modest effect on the transparency judgments readers made because transparency is likely affected by a wide range of variables. For example, the actual content of the thoughts and behavior of a character undoubtedly contributes a great deal to how easily readers can appreciate that character and how transparent his or her behavior is judged. This provides an explanation for the overall higher transparency scores for "Bracegirdle": The plot and predicament of the character "Miss Bracegirdle" may have been much more easily understood and appreciated than the relatively subtle musings of the character in "Question and Answer." The fact that an effect of speech style was observed, despite this overarching effect of the content of the story, provides critical evidence for a role of narratorial-character associations in producing transparency.

In contrast to the stories studied here, there are also fictional works in which the narrator explicitly distances him- or herself from the protagonist. This can occur, for example, if the narrator is actually a secondary character in the narrative (e.g., Watson in the Sherlock Holmes story) or offers comments on and evaluations of the story world independent of the character (e.g, *Tom Jones*). Our account of character transparency does not extend to narratives of this sort because there would seem to be no strong association between the narrator and the character. One possibility is that in fact transparency does not occur in the same fashion in such narratives.

We do not rule out the possibility, though, that a deeper analysis of the conversational processes involved in understanding such narrators might elucidate other means of producing transparency.

General Discussion

The results of these experiments together suggest that two processes may work in conjunction to create character transparency in many stories. First, logical gaps and inconsistencies in the narration lead readers to generate narratorial implicatures on the assumption that the narrator is being cooperative and rational. Narratorial implicatures often entail attributing the reader's own knowledge and experience to the narrator. Support for this analysis was found in Experiment 1, in which readers found the narrator's thought and actions more difficult to appreciate when narratorial implicatures were reduced by providing the inferred information explicitly. Second, when the narrator is closely associated with a character through devices such as free-indirect speech, the reader may not carefully distinguish the narrator and the character, and the reader's knowledge and experience may be attributed to the character as well. Transparency thus entails that the character is perceived as more like the reader by virtue of having this knowledge and experience in common. Consistent with this mechanism, readers found the central character's thoughts and actions more difficult to appreciate when the markers for free-indirect speech were removed. Together, these results suggest that transparency is produced by what are essentially conversational processes that are engaged in service of understanding the narrator. Unlike some of the earlier arguments made in the literature concerning identification, this account places a critical role on the precise manner in which the narration is presented rather than suggesting that identification is primarily a function the characteristics of the reader and his or her processing strategy.

In our view, transparency can be entirely independent of an objective evaluation of the character and his or her behavior; thus, it can easily occur with characters who are otherwise unappealing or reprehensible. In other words, readers can see their dark side in literary characters. We suspect that this effect on transparency can also carry over to other components of identification, affinity and participation. This differs from the view that affinity requires that a character be portrayed in a positive light (cf. Zillmann, 1994). Indeed, there are many examples in literature of protagonists who engage in socially unacceptable behavior but who are nevertheless likely to be the targets of identification (e.g., Emma of *Madame Bovary*; Raskolnikov of *Crime and Punishment*). We argue that in cases such as these, narratorial implicatures, together with an association between the narrator and the character, lead readers to an understanding of the character and the reasons they behave as they do. Because readers can understand why they themselves might engage in inappropriate or unappealing behavior under some circumstances, they may be able to apply the same understanding to the character's behavior when invited by the narrative technique. In this way, transparency may occur even when the central character has objectively negative attributes and behaviors.

Our use of narratorial implicatures as a communicative process contrasts with other communication analyses in discourse processing. For example, one might process the text as the product of an implied author who has constructed the narrative with its narrator for some aesthetic or communicative intention (e.g., Bruce, 1981). Similarly, Gibbs (1999) suggests that readers are concerned with the communicative intentions of the author. Although implicatures might be constructed in the service of understanding the author or implied author under such circumstances, it is unlikely that they would produce transparency in the manner we have outlined here. In particular, our analysis depends on the supposition that readers see themselves as communicating with the implied speaker of the words of the text, that is, the narrator.

Homophily and Strategy Mechanisms

Despite our general argument that properties of the text are important for transparency, it seems likely that homophily and reading strategy interact with the conversational processes we hypothesize. For example, the process of constructing narratorial implicatures would be aided by similarity between the reader and the character. If the reader shares life circumstances and experiences with the character, it should be easier to find personal experiences that are immediately relevant to justifying the character's beliefs or attitudes. In contrast, if the reader and the character have little in common, it would be more difficult for the reader to find experience or knowledge that would provide a suitable justification for the character's attitudes. In the extreme, the reader may be unable to find any justification for the character's thoughts and actions and thus fail to construct an appropriate implicature. Under such circumstances, the reader may abandon the cooperativeness assumption and conclude instead that the narrator is unreasonable or incoherent. Such a response may be involved in producing the impression of an "unreliable narrator" (see, e.g., Chatman, 1978). Although homophily is likely to be important in the construction of narratorial implicatures, we nonetheless argue that the form of text and the manner in which information is conveyed is critical in signaling when such implicatures should be drawn.

As well, the generation of narratorial implicatures may depend on reading strategy. For example, the assumption that readers treat the narrator as a conversational participant, which entails the principle of narratorial cooperativeness, could be a strategy that readers use to a greater or lesser extent. Alternatively, readers may not adopt the assumption of narratorial cooperativeness if they have reason to think that the narrator may be irrational, incoherent, or lying. This might occur if the narrator is introduced as a madman, as in, for example, Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart." Such a process of discounting the cooperativeness of the narrator is

comparable to what people do in conversation when faced with similar reasons to doubt the veracity or value of conversational contributions. Although we suspect that the tendency to process the narrator as a cooperative conversational participant is common, it need not be universal, and readers' intentional reading strategies are clearly important.

Conclusion

The focus of the present research is the properties of a narrative that enable and contribute to the transparency of a character. Previous theoretical accounts of identification based on homophily between the reader and a character or on the adoption of a reading strategy or mode provide little insight into such properties. Our theoretical claim is that readers process the narrator as a conversational participant and as a consequence, generate narratorial implicatures to make sense of the narrator's thoughts and actions. Transparency can occur when the implicatures involve attributing the reader's own experience and knowledge to the narrator. Transparency of a character in a third-person narration can occur when the narrator is closely associated with a character through, for instance, the extensive use of free-indirect speech. This analysis suggests that the perceived similarity between the reader and the character can be the product of transparency rather than a prerequisite.

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Table 1

Excerpts from the Implicit and Explicit Preambles in Experiment 1

Implicit Preamble

But here comes the disclosure which is not easy for me: I am a writer. That does not sound right. Too presumptuous; phony, or at least unconvincing. Try again. I write. Is that better? I try to write. That makes it worse. Hypocritical humility. Well then? It doesn't matter. However I put it, the words create their space of silence, the delicate moment of exposure. But people are kind, the silence is quickly absorbed by the solicitude of friendly voices, crying variously, how wonderful, and good for you, and well, that is intriguing. And what do you write, they inquire with spirit. Fiction, I reply, bearing my humiliation by this time with ease, even a suggestion of flippancy, which was not always mine, and again, again, the perceptible circles of dismay are smoothed out by such ready and tactful voices – which have however exhausted their stock of consolatory phrases, and can say only, "Ah!"

Explicit Preamble

I feel embarrassed telling people that I am a writer because I have noticed that the typical reaction to such claims is one mixed with sympathy and amusement. It is almost like they want to ask me what I really do for a living. It seems to me that writers do not get any respect until they are commercially successful. I also get the sense that people do not take writers seriously, so this makes my admission of being one all the more uncomfortable to make.

Table 2

Transparency Items for Experiment 1

Positive Items

The narrator's final impression of Mr. Malley was fair.

I think that the thoughts and actions of the narrator are reasonable and justified.

The narrator judges her husband fairly.

I understand the narrator's motivations for her actions and emotions.

I think that the narrator was justified in leaving the office.

Negative Items

I think that asking for the office was an unreasonable request for the narrator to make.

The narrator overreacts to others' reactions to her.

The narrator exaggerates others' attitudes towards writers.

The motivation of the narrator was very ambiguous.

The narrator complains too much.

Table 3

Excerpt from Unrelated Preamble in Experiment 2

Walking along the usual path, I noticed the wind pick up and begin to whip Molly's long, grey hairs all about. She didn't seem to mind, though. She simply continued to leap in and about the dried grass and stubble that covered the park's fields at this time of year, wagging her tail and only stopping to occasionally glance back in my direction. Molly is a bearded collie, although most people on meeting her, including myself when we first brought her home, think she's a sheepdog.

The wind intermittently picked up and died down as we reached the apex of our navigation around the park. When it wasn't howling, it was possible to hear a few scattered birds chirping in the trees. A few were visible through the branches, and it was easy to see how puffed up they were in the cold. I had heard that they do this to better insulate themselves, though I have long since forgotten the source.

Table 4

Excerpts from Original and Modified "Question and Answer" in Experiment 3

Original (with Free-Indirect Speech)

Perhaps they were not in love. Perhaps he was not in love. Perhaps... and his mind went back to the evenings as a boy when he had sat, his eyes fixed on his plate, hearing to either side his parents eating slowly through the long meal, never talking, lost to each other, graveyard meals in the lamplight when the air drummed and he was bored, bored, bored, yet never raised his eyes for fear of meeting an eye, nowhere to go and nothing to see but the enemy, and his boredom had drummed like a bat inside him screaming like night to be out.

Modified (without Free-Indirect Speech)

"Perhaps we are not in love," the man reflected, "perhaps I am not in love. Perhaps ... " His mind went back to the evenings as a boy when he had sat, his eyes fixed on his plate, hearing to either side his parents eating slowly through the long meal; they never talked, and they had been lost to each other; he remembered that those were graveyard meals in the lamplight when the air drummed and he felt bored, yet he never raised his eyes for he had a fear of meeting an eye. He had felt that he had nowhere to go and nothing to see but the enemy, and it had seemed that his boredom drummed like a bat inside him screaming like night to be out.

Table 5

Transparency Items for Experiment 3

Positive Items

The characters were simple to understand and appreciate.

The story does a good job of presenting Miss Bracegirdle's thoughts.

The story does a good job of presenting Miss Bracegirdle's character.

I was able to get inside Miss Bracegirdle's thoughts while reading the story.

Miss Bracegirdle's thoughts are clear and organized.

While reading the story, I felt that the thoughts and ideas came directly from Miss Bracegirdle's mind.

The presentation of Miss Bracegirdle's thoughts was clear, direct, and to the point.

I felt drawn into Miss Bracegirdle's thoughts and feelings.

Negative Items

I found it difficult to follow Miss Bracegirdle's thoughts and ideas.

Miss Bracegirdle's thoughts are muddled and confused.

Miss Bracegirdle overreacts to the situation.

The motivation of Miss Bracegirdle was ambiguous.

Author Notes

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Figure Captions

Figure 1. Transparency as a function of condition in Experiment 1. Error bars indicate the standard error of the mean. The error bar plotted to the left of the points indicates the standard error of the difference between the explicit and implicit conditions, thus providing a visual depiction of the effect size.

Figure 2. Transparency as a function of condition in Experiment 2. Error bars indicate the standard error of the mean. The error bar to the left indicates the standard error of difference between the explicit-preamble condition and the mean of the other two conditions, thus providing a visual depiction of the effect size.

Figure 3. Transparency as a function of story and condition in Experiment 3. Error bars indicate the standard error of mean derived from the linear mixed-effect analysis. The error bar on the left indicates the standard error of the difference between the modified and the original, thus providing a visual depiction of the effect size.

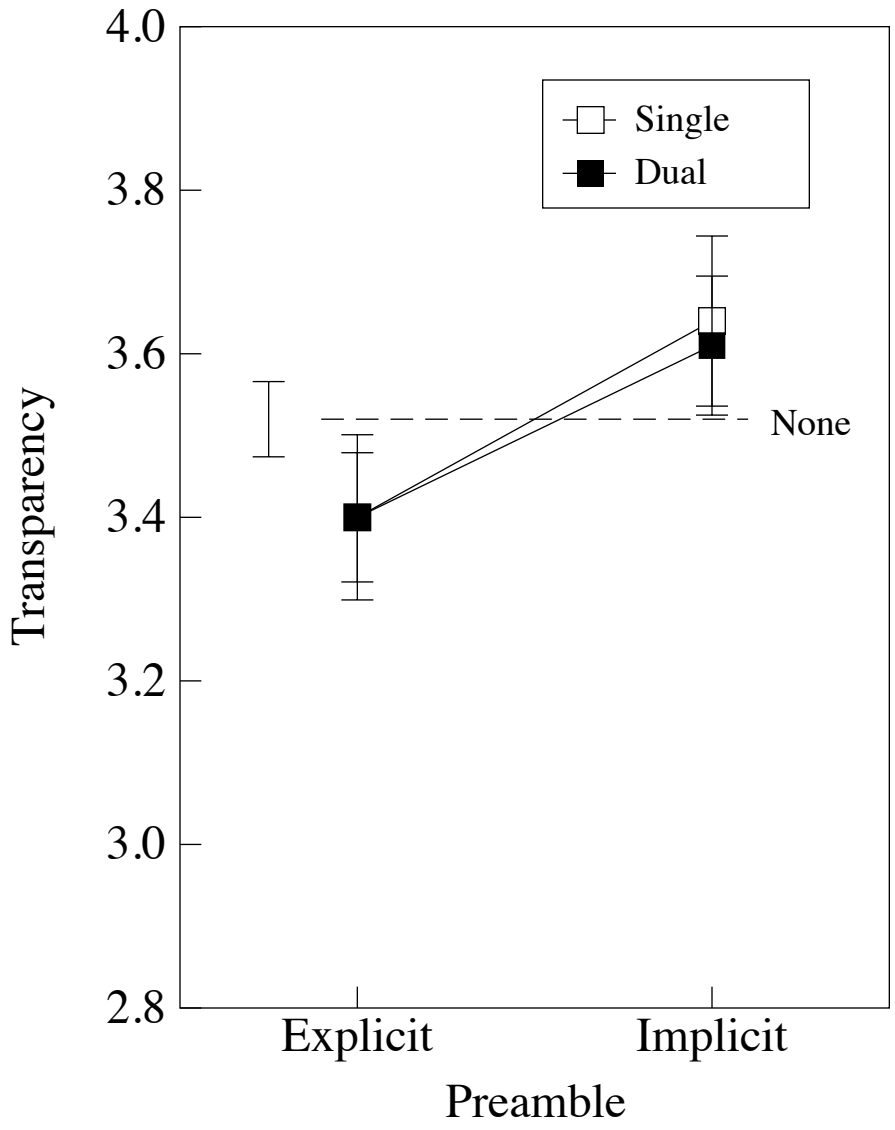


Figure 1. Transparency as a function of condition in Experiment 1. Error bars indicate the standard error of the mean. The error bar plotted to the left of the points indicates the standard error of the difference between the explicit and implicit conditions, thus providing a visual depiction of the effect size.

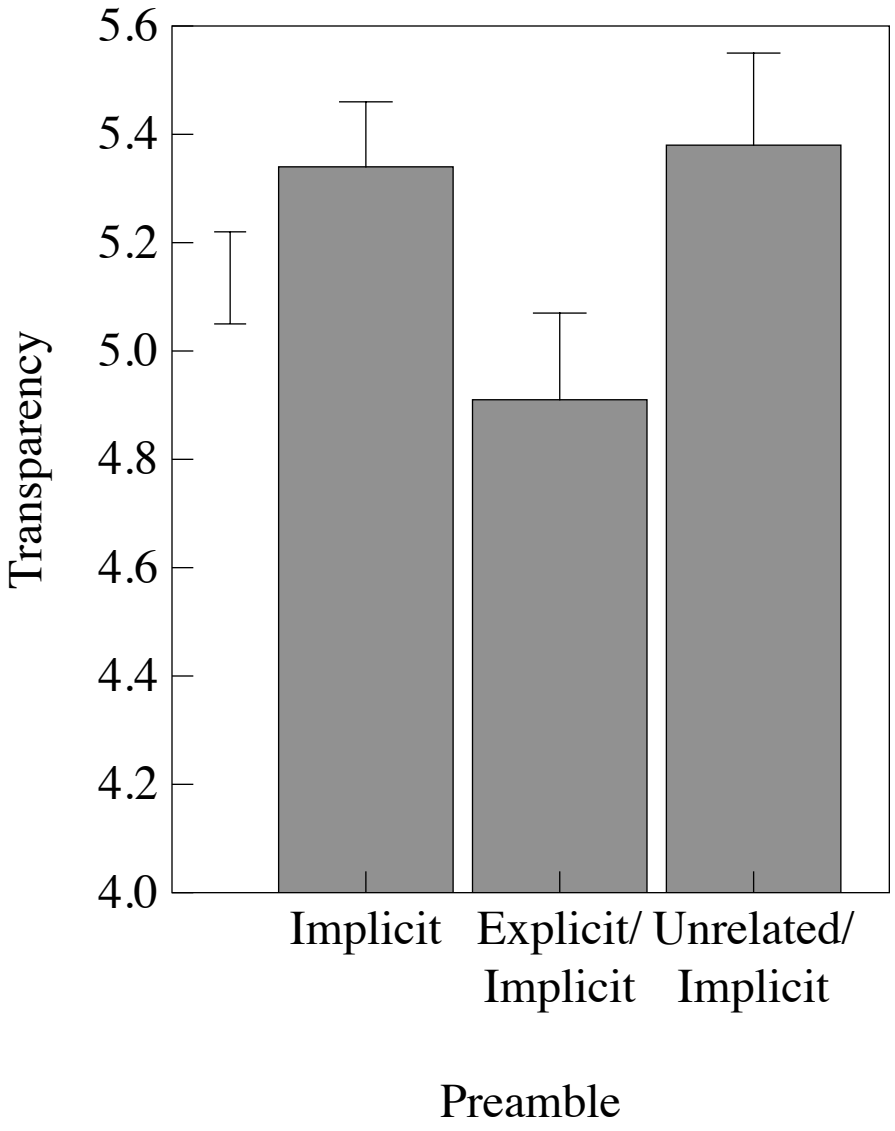
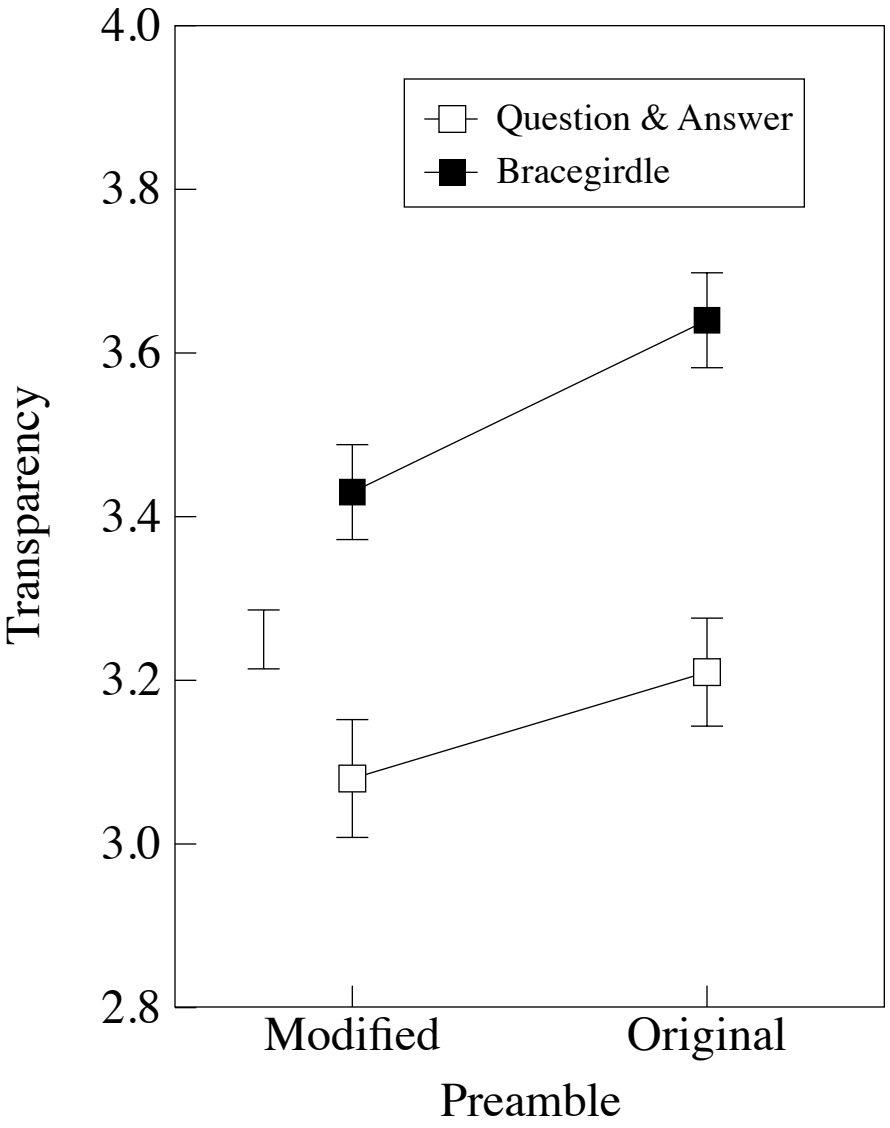


Figure 2. Transparency as a function of condition in Experiment 2. Error bars indicate the standard error of the mean. The error bar to the left indicates the standard error of difference between the explicit-preamble condition and the mean of the other two conditions, thus providing a visual depiction of the effect size.



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