

THE INDIRECT EFFECTS OF POWER ON MORAL JUDGMENTS DURING
PARASOCIAL PROCESSING

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The present research examined the role of attribution as a mediator of the parasocial processes of moral judgment and empathic engagement within the context of a textual fictitious narrative. To address this research, the current study investigated the interactions between aspects of the parasocial phenomenon, user experience, and narrative context, and connected these relationships to the area of information processing in media psychology. Focusing on the information processing aspect of the parasocial experience the dissertation reports on an experimental study that empirically tests the degree to which power, by way of attribution, influences moral judgment of and empathic engagement with a narrative protagonist. Specifically, a protagonist perceived to be in a high-power position will bring about deontological moral judgments based on abstract notions of what is right and wrong, in addition to a low expression of empathy and high expression of counter empathy. Alternatively, a protagonist perceived to be in a low-power position will lead to consequential moral judgments based on the relative goodness of an action's consequences and will be accompanied by a high expression of empathy and low expression of counter empathy. In both directions, attribution was hypothesized as the mechanism of the effect. This central hypothesis was supported in that power

distinctions were found to be related to moral judgments and affective engagement, with attribution mediating the effect.

Ultimately, the study bridges research on attribution and power with the theoretical concept of parasocial processing, while also providing practical guidance for the characterization of protagonists in narrative content.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Jill Axline was born in Glencoe, Illinois. She completed an undergraduate degree in history (2002) at Cornell University in Ithaca. Following her undergraduate studies, Jill held positions at *Interior Design* magazine and Vera Wang, focusing on editorial and marketing communications. Telling stories for a living led Jill to seek further education to learn how individuals process these stories and assimilate them into their own personal narratives. After fulfilling requirements for a Masters Degree in Psychology at Pepperdine University in Irvine, California, Jill sought to continue to investigate her interests by returning to Cornell University to study principles of media psychology under the guidance and mentorship of Professor Poppy McLeod.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When my husband and I arrived to Ithaca in August of 2009, I sought a job at Cornell University in marketing while he pursued a Masters of Business Administration at the Johnson Graduate School of Management. Although the notion of engaging in research and doctoral studies was of interest to me, it was not until I volunteered to assist a professor at the Department of Communication on research I had read about online that I felt committed to developing my own research program. Within just a few weeks, I submitted an application and began my studies prior to the rest of my cohort (spring 2010) so that I could hit the ground running! Over the past five years, I have cultivated friendships with future colleagues, forged collaborations with professors, and advanced the foundation of an interesting and fulfilling research program.

Of primary importance, I would like to express my gratitude to my dissertation committee for their unwavering support, mentorship, and feedback. Dawn Schrader, from my perspective, has always been the ‘chief morale officer’ for completing this incredible task. Her belief in my research abilities, coupled with her commitment to providing critical feedback was essential as I strove to make my work better. I am also thankful to Michael Shapiro for his participation on this project. As a pillar of the academic community in the discipline of media psychology, Professor Shapiro provided much needed advice and guidance to develop a dissertation that would enhance our knowledge of the psychology of narrative. As the external member on my committee, Harry Segal contributed important perspectives that helped me to integrate broader perspectives from the field of psychology. Finally, it has been a true honor and privilege to have Poppy McLeod serve as the chair of my dissertation committee. From inviting

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Research at the nexus of mass and interpersonal communication has revealed significant convergence among the ways in which media users process characters as social entities. Social psychology and communication scholars have posited that exposure to mass mediated messages elicits social cognitions similar to those experienced in real world encounters. Explanations for these effects range from theories concentrated on exposure levels, such as cultivation theory (Gerbner, 1998), to theories that implicate cognitive and affective needs as conduits for effects, such as uses and gratifications theory (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). Other scholars have focused specifically on the procedural dynamics implicit to viewer processing of mediated narratives and characters, as is the case for affective disposition theory (Zillmann & Cantor, 1977). Regardless of the view taken by scholars, the ubiquitous nature of mediated messages and stories in the developed world underscores the necessity of continued research into how audience members process media content and in what way these activities mirror engagement in real life social encounters.

Several theoretical concepts and constructs have emerged as channels through which researchers have attempted to explicate how audience members process and understand mediated characters. Theoretical and empirical research on empathy, perspective taking, moral judgment of, and identification with story characters have revealed various parallels between exposure to media persona and social cognition in real life encounters. In particular, the phenomenon of parasocial interaction provides a framework for understanding how imagined relations with mediated characters elicit

cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses that are akin to interpersonal relationships in the physical world (Horton & Wohl, 1956). Myriad variables (audience demographics, personality, and viewing situation, as well as character attributes, etc.) have been taken into account to explain how, why and to what extent the parasocial processes transpire.

The proposed research investigates the role that context, particularly the perception of power held by a character in his or her immediate environment, plays in the nature of parasocial processing. This study is situated at the theoretical intersection of parasocial interaction and processing (Horton & Wohl, 1956; Schramm & Hartmann, 2008), moral judgment (Kagan, 1997; Smart & Williams, 1973), and attribution theory (Gilbert & Malone, 1995; Kelley & Michela, 1980; Ross, 1977). To date, examinations of parasocial interaction and processing have explored the impact of user attributes, user context, and character attributes on aspects of parasocial processing, but have neglected to explore the impact of contextual variables related to the character on these same processes. The current study tests theoretical extensions that have broader implications for how media users process characters and the narratives within which these characters live. As will be further outlined below, research in this underexplored area will improve our understanding of narrative processing and advance our ability to tease apart the subtle nuances of situated social cognition and the processing of social information relative to the perceived environment.

One function of narratives is to model and abstract specifically social information so that this information might be generalized and applied to audience members' future two-way interactions, allowing prediction of and explanation for various types of social relations (Mar & Oatley, 2008). This idea that narratives invoke a social-processing

mode of cognition in consumers similar to that of interpersonal relations outside of the narrative world has stimulated investigation of parasocial interactions (PSI) – one-way interactions wherein the viewer perceives and reacts to characters as if they were social objects in the physical world (Giles, 2002; Horton & Wohl, 1956). Prior research has investigated how factors influencing the parasocial experience lead to variations in audience members’ experience of empathy, perspective taking, identification, transportation, and moral judgment of character behaviors (Eyal & Dailey, 2012; Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2010; Schramm & Wirth, 2010; Tsao, 1996). Such factors have included individual difference variables among audience members (e.g. personality, demographic factors, trait empathy, predilection for immersion, etc.), audience context (e.g. consuming media in a group or individually, level of attention, etc.), and features of the focal character (e.g. attractiveness, likability, perceived realism, etc.).

As described briefly above, one factor underexplored in work on the parasocial phenomenon is character context. More broadly, contextual cues, such as social and cultural circumstances as well as temporal and spatial orientation are thought to influence information processing (Kelley, Holmes, Kerr, Reis, Rusbult, & van Lange, 2003). Given that PSI is treated as an inherently social phenomenon, socially relevant contextual cues must be considered. Although audience context has been examined, prior work has yet to consider how the ways in which characters are situated within a social context regulates or influences how audience members interpret communicated content. For instance, how might a character’s social position relative to other actors in a narrative affect our perception of that character’s behaviors? Are varying perceptions a function of a character’s social context or their intentions to perform the behavior? What cognitive

mechanisms might account for any discrepancy in perception? To help answer these questions, this study integrates psychology theories from information processing (e.g. attribution) with theories of power (Lovaglia, 1995) and moral judgment (Kagan, 1997; Smart & Williams, 1973) to embark upon an empirical investigation of these ideas. More specifically, a character occupying a specific power position is confronted with a moral dilemma. The impact of that character's power position (as a factor of character context) on participants' moral reasoning (as a factor of audience perception during a parasocial encounter) is examined in the service of addressing these questions.

Rationale for Dissertation

In this research, I establish a program of research to investigate the interactions between aspects of the parasocial phenomenon, user experience, and narrative context, and to connect these relationships to the area of information processing in media psychology. In the current study, I specifically wish to cast light on the effects of power, as this contextual element may be considered the most important form of social influence (Russell, 1938). Further, the work builds on previous research delineating different attributions common to power distinctions, by testing the relationship between moral judgments of character behaviors, as a specific parasocial process, and a character's power position.

This work extends prior research in four primary ways: 1) testing theoretical relationships between parasocial processes and character context; 2) developing and validating stimulus materials that effectively manipulate power positions in the context of a fictional narrative; 3) translating into English and validating previously validated

German PSI-Process Scales; and 4) expanding upon previous work on audio-visual based PSI by introducing tests of the phenomenon on a text-based medium.

There are significant theoretical rationales for conducting this study. First, the theories drawn upon in this research highlight the role of mediated social context in a variety of perceptual effects. For instance, construal level theory suggests that objects, events, and behaviors may be mentally represented in different ways depending upon contextual elements that prompt an individual to interpret a situation as psychologically close or distant (Liberman, Trope, & Stephan, 2007; Liberman & Trope, 2008). Under this theory, context is an important mechanism that accounts for the manner in which individuals process information in their environment. In a similar way, the correspondence bias wherein individuals attribute their own behavior to situational causes and others' behaviors to dispositional causes (Gilbert & Malone, 1995; Jones & Nisbett, 1977) can be disrupted by contextual elements (Overbeck, Tiedens, & Brion, 2006). Contextual elements that then skew how information is processed such that attributions of causation for behavior that are impacted could presumably impact individual's judgments, attitudes, and subsequent behaviors. Finally, constructionist theory suggests that explanations for character behavior in narrative text comprehension are brought forth from situational cues (i.e. contextual details) relevant to a character's goals, surrounding events as well as physical and psychological environments (Graesser, Singer, & Trabasso, 1994). Together, the aforementioned theories can be helpful in explicating contextual antecedents of the parasocial phenomenon.

The present study tests previously underexplored relationships between the parasocial phenomenon, audience experience, and narrative context. Ultimately, this

work enhances our understanding of how situational factors, specific to a character rather than a viewer, affect the viewer's processing of social information. Specifically, this work develops and validates an adapted PSI measurement and conducts an experiment, utilizing a random sample of paid participants on Amazon's Mechanical Turk platform. The details of the study are outlined below following an extensive review of all relevant literature.

Outline of Chapters

Chapter 2 provides an extensive review of the theories and theoretical concepts used in the dissertation. This analysis grounds the theoretical rationale for the central hypothesis as well as the proposed experiment. First, the chapter defines the various concepts that fall under the umbrella of the parasocial phenomenon, focusing on definitions, related antecedents, outcomes, and processes, as well as, thematic development of the parasocial investigation. Secondly, the factors influencing parasocial processing, particularly with respect to attributes and contexts, are also reviewed. Context is then defined and power is identified and justified as the central contextual variable of interest. The focus on power then leads to a review of relevant theories that relate power to moral judgment by way of attribution. Attribution is identified as a potential mechanism of parasocial effects and is therefore the primary focus of this section. An examination of the correspondence bias and construal level theory is highlighted to help establish attribution as the cognitive mechanism of parasocial effects, while also improving their own explanatory power by situating these ideas within new contexts. Finally, the potential for exploration of parasocial phenomena in text-based

media is presented, taking note of key historical markers that have dictated the present state of parasocial research which has exclusively focused on audio-visual media types.

Chapter 3 describes findings from the central experimental study whose findings address the theoretical gaps described in Chapter 2. Another study, validating the scale used in the dissertation study, was run to exclusively enhance the methods used to measure relevant variables in the central dissertation study. The validation study IRB exemption, measurement items, methods, and stimulus materials can be found in Appendix A. Chapter 3 also justifies the use of Amazon Mechanical Turk as a valid study setting for social science inquiry, outlines the central variables of interest, provides an overview of the dissertation study data analysis and proposed model, and reports findings and final models from the main empirical study. Chapter 4 discusses the study findings in more detail and provides implications of these results for future communication research and practical application.

CHAPTER 2

THE INDIRECT EFFECTS OF POWER: AN INTEGRATION OF THEORIES OF POWER, PARASOCIAL RELATIONS, AND MORAL JUDGMENT

The following literature review outlines the parasocial concept, articulates the key underexplored area of context (in general, and as it pertains to characters in a narrative), and highlights power positions as referential structures upon which situations are construed, attributions are formed, and judgments are made. This analysis grounds the theoretical rationale for the central hypothesis as well as the proposed experiment. Finally, the use of text-based media as a context within which to explore parasocial phenomena is outlined and justified.

Parasocial Interaction & Parasocial Relationships

Horton and Wohl (1956) coined the term *parasocial interaction* to describe television viewers' perceived experience of social activity with representations of individuals appearing in the media. The authors suggested that this quasi-interaction served the essential function of providing a sense of companionship and a lens through which viewers could examine and begin to understand relationships in their own lives. From this seminal research emerged myriad studies examining both the predictor and outcome variables as well as the processes of PSI, featuring investigations into the characteristics of mediated figures (e.g. character attractiveness and predictability), predictors of interactive effect (e.g. frequency and duration of consumption, individual personality factors, and attachment style), features of media content (e.g. perceived realism), and media effects (e.g. intimacy and homophily) (Armstrong & Rubin, 1989; Cole & Leets, 1999; Nordlund, 1978; Rosengren & Windahl, 1972; Rubin, Perse, &

Powell, 1985). In contemplating the actual sociality of these one-way interactions, Wang, Fink and Cai (2008) examined PSI for signs of pathological necessity to determine if these experiences could be viewed as a functional alternative to interpersonal interaction for lonely or socially isolated individuals; however, this study and others like it (Armstrong & Rubin, 1989; Rubin et al., 1985) have failed to support the assumption that PSI are maladaptive coping mechanisms and have subsequently brought about a conceptual framing of PSI as an extension of normal interpersonal interaction (Giles, 2002). Despite the decreased likelihood of two-way social interaction with characters relative to social interaction with another individual, several studies provide evidence to suggest that audience members engaging in PSI use the same fundamental cognitive processes as they do when engaged in interpersonal communication (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Perse & Rubin, 1989; Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Turner, 1993), resulting in *parasocial relationships* (PSR), or relationships with characters perceived as ongoing and similar to that of a ‘good neighbor’ or social acquaintance (Gleich, 1996).

The aforementioned studies, as well as numerous others, have provided much needed insight into the antecedents and effects of PSI to explicate how these pseudo-interactions can be classified under the umbrella of interpersonal communication (Rubin & Step, 2000). In keeping with Horton and Wohl’s (1956) original assertion that audience members engaged in PSI think of mediated characters as credible relational partners and Giles’ (2002) framework that assumes PSI exists on the same continuum as social interactions, in the present research, I take the view that PSI and PSRs are inherently social despite the nonmutual, nondialectical nature of this form of communication.

Additional evidence of this view is explicit in more recent studies that provide evidence for the applicability of the interpersonal investment model of friendships (relational maintenance), parasocial breakup (relational termination), and PSI/PSR with disliked characters (relational diversity). Eyal and Dailey (2012) make a direct comparison between PSRs and friendships by examining the extent to which perceived openness, self-disclosure, social support, and avoidance of conflict (components of satisfaction) affect relational maintenance with mediated characters. The authors extend previous research on the interpersonal investment model, which predicts that relational commitment – a strong indicator of maintenance – occurs when individuals report higher satisfaction and investments and lower quality of relational alternatives. Their findings indicate that comparable to real friendships, PSRs are more likely maintained when audience members felt satisfied with their mediated relationship and put more time and effort into getting to know a character; however, the quality of relational alternatives was not significant in predicting commitment to PSRs, indicating that relational exclusivity is less of a factor in mediated relationships (Eyal & Dailey, 2012). Similar to real relationships, PSRs are also subject to relational termination and its associated effects. In his examination of parasocial breakup, Cohen (2004) found that the stronger the perceived relational tie to a mediated character, the greater the emotional reaction experienced when relationships are unilaterally severed (e.g. show cancellation, actor leaves television show, etc.). Lastly, relationships experienced in the real world are not always characterized by liking and affinity. Dibble & Rosaen (2011) extend the scope of parasocial research by pointing out that viewers' PSI/PSR occur irrespective of positive or negative judgments of the character. The authors argue that PSI is most likely to occur

when perceived interaction is high and perceived identification, or first-person experiencing, is low. In the case of friendships, similarity and identification with potential friends are thought of as essential precursors to friendship, so if identification is low, it is possible that PSI occurs without the formation of a friendship. In line with this argument, the authors' findings indicate that friendship need not be present for PSI/PSR to be instantiated.

Parasocial Processing

Having delineated the intrinsic sociality of PSI/PSR, this section attempts to outline the psychological processes implicated in audience interactions with story characters. PSI is conceptualized as an illusionary experience of social engagement. Hartmann & Goldhoorn (2010) suggest that during social encounters, individuals automatically infer mental states of others in their environment. Alternative to the reflective cognitive process of perspective taking, these inferences are thought of as reflexive and result in intuitive emotional responses rather than elaborate beliefs or judgments. Inferences are rapidly perceived so that attributions provide heuristic-based knowledge of the social other with limited cognitive effort (Klimmt, Hartmann, & Schramm, 2006). Given the previous arguments that audience members view mediated characters as social others, it is reasonable to assume that the same automatic processes involved in social interaction are also at work during PSI (termed parasocial processing or PSP; see Schramm & Hartmann, 2008). The cognitive, affective, and behavioral PSP responses that then occur during exposure can be conceived based on intuitive impression formation and recognition processes. The amount of parasocial processing engaged in by an audience member will vary from the rudimentary perception and evaluation of

character to the more complex illusion of mutual attention, awareness, and adjustment (Dibble & Rosaen, 2011; Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2010). Audience members' perception of mutual attention, awareness, and adjustment build on automatic social inferences so that in addition to acquiring an impression of the character in the environment, the viewer acquires a feeling of reciprocity by perceiving that the character is aware of and attending to their presence (through eye contact, personalization of speech, explicit emoting, etc.). Consequently, as in social situations, viewers will adjust their behavior (posture, gesture, expressions, heart rate) throughout the parasocial encounter; thus strengthening PSP responses in accordance with more advanced psychological processing (e.g. cognitive and affective perspective-taking, deliberative moral judgments, meta-cognitive evaluation of the viewing experience, etc.). Advancement of psychological processing is positively related to individuals' perspective taking ability because perspective taking facilitates the impression of mutual awareness (Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2010).

Klimmt et al (2006) model PSP as a suite of cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses that follow impression formation and recognition of a mediated character as a social other. The cognitive responses include attention allocation, perspective taking, schema activation, anticipatory observation, moral evaluations, and persona-self relations; emotional responses include empathy, sympathy, and mood contagion; and behavioral responses include motor, physical, and verbal activity. Klimmt and co-authors suggest that any constellation of these component processes may constitute viewers' psychological responses to characters. Additionally, various PSP responses may occur synchronously, but the procedural dynamics that dictate discrete patterns of responses is

largely determined by viewer and character attributes (Klimmt et al, 2006). Very little research has been conducted to explore how PSP responses vary in scope or intensity as a result of viewer and character situations.

Moral Evaluation as a Key Parasocial Process. The general concept of morality (in thought and behavior) has been defined as a socially-constructed and culturally-shaped virtue; however, human beings' moral development is simultaneously believed to be an adaptive function of the species' inherent sociality (Sadler-Smith, 2012). Darwin's (1881) seminal work, *The Descent of Man*, suggests that human beings possess a universal adaptive function of moral sense that provides the fundamental ingredients necessary for humans to act with goodness; thereby increasing potential for survival in the context of a communal life. Cataloguing judgments of others' behaviors was a matter of fundamental importance to human evolution as it increased successful predictions of whether others would cooperate or defect in joint endeavors. Therefore, evaluating others behaviors when making social decisions directly affected survival and reproduction (Gintis, Henrich, Boyd, & Fehr, 2008) and continues to be an essential component of social interaction as a product of natural selection.

When engaging in parasocial processing, audience members also participate in moral evaluation of the characters with whom they interact. The characters and their actions are subject to moral evaluation by audience members as a product of human social cognition (Klimmt et al., 2006). The mere presence of moral evaluation in a one-way communication is one component of this cognitive process. However, the act of evaluation does not encompass the totality of moral sense. If an act observed by onlookers is uncontroversially perceived as morally wrong, further deliberation is often

necessary to determine if the person who engaged in the act should be judged as morally responsible. In other words, individuals are not always assigned moral responsibility for committing immoral behavior. This suggests that in addition to engaging in moral evaluation of characters and their behavior, audience members will also make additional moral judgment to determine the moral responsibility of a character for his or her behavior.

This second component of the social cognitive process of moral evaluation has been the subject of some of the most influential theories of moral psychology. Among them, Piaget and Kohlberg put forth developmental theories of moral psychology that were heavily influenced by Kant's (1796/2002) conception of deontological ethics. The deontological perspective suggests that the moral judgment of an action is evaluated in relation to duties, obligations, or universal rules that serve as a constraint on human action (Kagan, 1997). When actions violate these constraints, an act is deemed morally impermissible. Furthermore, to be held responsible for an act, an individual must have had the ability or control to do otherwise. The deontological perspective has often been juxtaposed against the equally influential consequentialist ethics (Smart & Williams, 1973). The consequentialist approach operates outside of rules, obligations, and duties, and instead suggests that the central criterion for determining moral right from wrong is the favorability of the outcome. By this view, moral acts may be defined as acts that maximize good consequences and minimize negative consequences. Broadly speaking, these opposing views on the process of moral reasoning suggest that during evaluation individuals either attend to the nature of an act (its moral correctness) or to anticipated outcomes to determine moral responsibility (praise or blame).

What determines which ethical principle is at play when individuals derive judgments? Hume and Beauchamp (1751/1998) posited that moral judgment depends on empathy. Specifically, Hume suggested that moral judgment is derived from a feeling of satisfaction, uneasiness, pain, or disgust that results from the perceiver's empathy with the feelings of the individual engaging in the action that is being appraised and with the feelings of the individuals who are affected by that action. We applaud acts that are prosocial, condemn acts that cause harm, and feel indignant when individuals willfully impose suffering on others. As a result, Hume would suggest that empathy serves as the conduit for the type of evaluation a person will make; activating deontological or consequentialist moral principles and bringing them to bear in the moral reasoning process (Hoffman, 2000). Consequently, affective processing is also implicated in the process of moral evaluation and should be considered as another parasocial process of note in this investigation.

As a universal adaptive function of human sociality, it seems justified that moral judgment would be implicated as a response component of any human relational process, mediated or otherwise. To date, moral judgment has been categorized and measured exclusively as a cognitive sub-process of PSP, with measurements of empathy (a positively-valenced feeling *with* a social target so that feelings between the target and perceived are aligned) and counter-empathy (a negatively-valenced feeling *with* a social target so that feelings between the target and perceived are in direct opposition) existing as separate affective sub-processes (Schramm & Hartmann, 2008). This distinction may be helpful in isolating the cognitive and affective processes that are related to moral evaluation, and determining if variation in these separate mechanisms corresponds with

other variables of interest (e.g. power, attribution, etc.). As such, PSP subscales measuring the cognitive evaluation and affective appraisals of characters' actions were included as the parasocial variables of interest in the study outlined in the methods section of this dissertation. An additional scale measuring the moral principles at work during parasocial processing (deontological vs. consequentialist) was developed and tested alongside these preexisting concepts.

Factors Influencing PSI, PSR, and PSP

Research to date has explored numerous antecedents of the parasocial experience that are specifically relevant to the processing of interpersonal stimuli. Although the dependent variables have ranged from parasocial interaction, to parasocial relationships, parasocial breakup, and parasocial processing, the emphasis of each empirical investigation has been to explore the manner in which dispositional and viewer-specific contextual variables affect the overall experience of a mediated, one-way interaction. However, after reviewing studies covering a span of over forty years, a very clear gap in these investigations has emerged. Investigations of the parasocial experience have emphasized the dispositional attributes of both the media consumer and the character, as well as, contextual features of the viewer's environment; however, the effects of contextual features specific to the target character on the parasocial experience are mysteriously unaccounted for in this body of work (Table 1). Additionally, work focusing on dispositional attributes is more extensive than that which focuses on context. This preference for dispositional variables seems to mimic the broader scope of academic language available to describe personality compared to the dearth of language available to characterize situations (Snyder & Cantor, 1998). Nonetheless, the following

paragraphs review the empirically supported antecedents of the parasocial experience, grouped according to lens (dispositional vs. contextual) and locus (media consumer vs. character).

Table 1. Empirical and Theoretical Research on the Antecedents of Parasocial Interaction, Parasocial Relationships, and Parasocial Processing.

	Viewer	Character
Dispositional Attributes	<p>Affinity/dependence/commitment (Auter & Palmgreen, 1997; Grant, Gurthrie, & Ball-Rokeach, 1991; Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985; Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Lather & Moyer-Guse, 2011)</p> <p>Importance of television to viewer (Miller 1983)</p> <p>Amount of viewing (exposure) (Miller, 1983; Perse & Rubin, 1989; Cohen, 2004)</p> <p>Personal Isolation (Gregg, 1971)</p> <p>Neurosis, Introversion, Loneliness (Nordlund, 1978; Rosengren & Windahl, 1972; Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985)</p> <p>Attitude homophily/perceived similarity to character (Turner, 1993; Cole & Leets, 1999)</p> <p>Gender (Cohen, 2004; J. Cohen, 1997; Lather & Moyer-Guse, 2011; Eyal & Dailey, 2012)</p> <p>Identification (Eyal & Dailey, 2012)</p> <p>Relational commitment (Eyal & Dailey, 2012)</p> <p>Perspective-taking ability & Empathy readiness</p>	<p>Character task attractiveness (Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Schramm & Hartmann, 2008)</p> <p>Character physical attractiveness (Rubin & McHugh, 1987; A. M. Rubin & Perse, 1987; Hoffner & Cantor, 1991; Schramm & Hartmann, 2008)</p> <p>Character social attractiveness (Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Schramm & Hartmann, 2008; Turner, 1993; Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2011; Klimmt, Hartmann, & Schramm, 2006)</p> <p>Address behavior (verbal & bodily) (Auter, 1992; Auter & Moore, 2003; Hartmann & Klimmt, 2005; Schramm & Wirth, 2010; Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2011; Mancini, 1988)</p> <p>Dominance (Nordlund, 1978)</p> <p>Openness (high levels of self-disclosure) (Perse & Rubin, 1989)</p> <p>Character realism (A.M. Rubin & Perse, 1987; Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985; Schramm & Wirth, 2010)</p> <p>Character friendliness/likability/popularity (Skumanich & Kintsfather, 1998; Dibble & Rosaen, 2011; Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Eyal & Dailey, 2012)</p> <p>Physique/manner of dress/speech characteristics/behavior patterns</p>

	<p>(Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2011; Tsao, 1996; Schramm & Wirth, 2010)</p> <p>Viewing motives (Lather & Moyer-Guse, 2011)</p> <p>Viewers' genre preferences (Schramm & Wirth, 2010)</p> <p>Viewers' self-rated attractiveness (Schramm & Wirth, 2010)</p> <p>Extraversion (Schramm & Wirth, 2010)</p> <p>Sociability, self-confidence, self-concept, self-esteem (Schramm & Wirth, 2010; Newton & Buck, 1985; Turner, 1993)</p>	<p>Hoffner & Cantor (1991)</p> <p>Emotional states and nonverbal behaviors Hoffner & Cantor (1991)</p> <p>Perceived obtrusiveness Schramm & Hartmann (2008); Schramm & Wirth, (2010)</p> <p>Character persistence (Nordlund, 1978; Schramm & Hartmann, 2008)</p>
Contextual Features	<p>Viewer attention and distraction (A.M. Rubin & Perse, 1987; Schramm & Hartmann, 2008)</p> <p>Relationship duration (Eyal & Dailey, 2012)</p> <p>Validation from viewers' social relations (Eyal & Dailey, 2012)</p> <p>Single vs. group reception (Schramm & Hartmann, 2008)</p>	None to date

The most extensive identification of antecedents to the parasocial experience has occurred through the dispositional lens of the media consumer. Some of the earliest investigations of PSI were based on assumptions following a dispositional deficiency model (Tsao, 1996). These studies sought to uncover a connection between PSI and borderline pathological, negatively-valenced, and socially-undesirable states of neurosis (Nordlund, 1978), personal isolation (Gregg, 1971), Introversion (Rosengren & Windahl, 1972), and loneliness (Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Rubin et al, 1985). With the exception of Gregg's finding that personal isolation predicts PSI, the rest of these demonstrated null findings, suggesting that PSI may not be a predilection of the socially inept, but rather an

extension of normal social cognition and behavior. As inquiry started to move away from dispositional deficits, there grew a trend towards looking at individual behaviors and habits as the causal mechanism behind the parasocial experience. For example, studies exploring the effects of individual dependency on television, affinity for media consumption, and commitment to habitual consumption of the given medium, show, or character increased in number and scope (Auter & Palmgreen, 2000; Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Grant, Guthrie, & Ball-Rokeach, 1991; Lather & Moyer-Guse, 2011; Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Rubin et al, 1985). At the same time, the amount of television viewed became a topic of interest as researchers sought to uncover correlations between exposure and the parasocial experience (Cohen, 2004; Miller, 1983; Perse & Rubin, 1989).

As the number of parasocially-oriented studies increased, so too did the invocation of interpersonal theories (e.g. uncertainty reduction theory, interpersonal investment model, etc.) as explanatory vehicles for PSI and PSR outcomes. Consequently, the variables of interest were often related to the referenced interpersonal theory. These variables included attitude homophily (Turner, 1993; Tian & Hoffner, 2010), attachment style (Cohen, 2004; Cole & Leets, 1999), relational commitment (Eyal & Dailey, 2012), and attributional confidence (Perse & Rubin, 1989). While the interpersonal processes implicated in the parasocial experience were considered paramount, there was simultaneously a movement towards understanding how elements of a person's self-concept may also play a role in PSI and parasocial relationship formation. These investigations included studies on identification (Eyal & Dailey, 2012), media consumer motives and genre preferences (Schramm & Wirth, 2010), self-esteem, sociability, Extraversion, self-rated attractiveness, and general strength of self-concept

(Newton & Buck, 1985; Schramm & Wirth, 2010; Turner, 1993). Finally, as PSI and PSR research became further delineated at the turn of the century, researchers sought to understand the underlying cognitive and affective processes that comprise the meta-concept of the parasocial experience. As a result, a number of studies focused on media consumers' perspective-taking ability (Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2011), capacity for cognitive empathy (Tsao, 1996), and empathy readiness (Schramm & Wirth, 2010). Finally, demographic variables such as age (Auter & Palmgreen 2000) and gender (Cohen, 1997; Cohen, 2004; Eyal & Dailey, 2012; Lather & Moyer-Guse, 2011) have also been taken into account as antecedents of the parasocial experience with statistically significant, yet variable results.

Characters' dispositions have also received a lot of attention as having influence over the parasocial experience. Specifically, physical attractiveness (Rubin & McHugh, 1987; A.M. Rubin & Perse, 1987; Hoffner & Cantor, 1991; Schramm & Hartmann, 2008) and social attractiveness (Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2011; Klimmt et al, 2006; Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Schramm & Hartmann, 2008; Turner, 1993; see also likability, friendliness, and popularity studies: Dibble & Rosaen, 2011; Eyal & Cohen, 2006; Eyal & Dailey, 2012; Skumanich & Kintsfather, 1998) have been established as significant predictors of both PSI and PSR. Hoffner & Cantor (1991) delved more deeply into character attractiveness, suggesting that elements such as character body type, physical traits such as hair color or ethnicity, manner of dress, speech characteristics, behavioral patterns, and exhibited emotional states and nonverbal behaviors also have an effect on PSI. Taking into account the importance of such detail, other researchers found effects of overall character realism on both PSI and PSR (A.M. Rubin & Perse, 1987; Rubin et al,

1985; Schramm & Wirth, 2010). Finally, personal attributes such as dominance (Nordlund, 1978) and openness exhibited as high levels of self-disclosure (Perse & Rubin, 1989) were also significant predictors.

Following the same path as researchers interested in media consumer attributes, those focused on characters were similarly concerned with relationally-relevant attributes. A big emphasis for character disposition research has focused on the concept of address behavior. Characters are thought to ‘break the fourth wall’ when they address media consumers directly. Mode of address can occur verbally or through body language (Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2011) and is thought to be an attribute of the character that invites relational intimacy (Auter, 1992). Consequently, a number of studies have shown that address behavior, particularly direct address, is a strong predictor of both PSI and PSR (Auter, 1992; Auter & Moore, 2003; Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2011; Mancini, 1988; Schramm & Wirth, 2010). Other variables of interest have included character obtrusiveness, defined as the extent to which a character takes up the screen or the scene (Schramm & Hartmann, 2008; Schramm & Wirth, 2010) and character persistence, defined as the character’s regularity of appearance (Nordlund, 1978; Schramm & Hartmann, 2008); both of which affect PSP intensity on the cognitive, behavioral, and affective dimensions.

The last area covered among studies of the parasocial experience adopts the contextual perspective of the media consumer. Although these studies are limited in number, each examination established significant predictors of PSI or PSR. A.M. Rubin & Perse (1987) were the first to consider the effect of context on PSI, exploring viewer attention as a sub-construct of emotional involvement. Schramm & Hartmann (2008)

later reconstructed this contextual variable as a viewer's level of distraction during reception. In both cases, variation in attention during reception was a strong predictor of PSI and PSP, respectively. Schramm & Hartmann (2008) also considered the impact of reception that takes place at the individual and group levels, suggesting that the processes activated during PSP would differ in constellation and intensity depending on the manner in which a program is viewed. Similarly, Eyal & Dailey (2012) took into account the effects of media consumers' social context, finding that a viewer's friends' evaluations of and comments about the mediated relationship exert influence on the strength of that viewer's PSR. Although limited relative to studies from the dispositional vantage point, these studies investigating viewer context as being impactful to the parasocial experience are notable and suggest that relational context may have more to offer the parasocial topic area than has currently been considered. Additionally, the complete lack of inquiry targeting character context is surprising, especially as we take into account the importance of situation in the formation of associations, inferences, judgments, and relations.

The Situation as Context

In social psychology research, the seminal works of Gordon Allport, Solomon Asch, and Kurt Lewin have defined 'what is social' in terms of situations (Reis, 2008). Delineating the concrete physical environment from the construed, psychological environment, Lewin (1946) suggested that "the person and his environment have to be considered as one constellation of interdependent factors" (p. 239-240). Building on this notion, social psychology researchers have explored the ways in which aspects of the

perceived psychological environment mediate cognitive associations and inferences activated by external events (Bem and Allen, 1974; L. Ross & Nisbett, 1991).

Within the realm of narrative, media, and discourse psychology, psychologists have sought to understand how consumers of narratives construct *situation models* as constantly evolving mental models that help individuals conceptualize what a story is about. Situation models are constructed of perceptions of characters that perform specific actions to fulfill goals, relational arrangements and conflicts, emotional reactions of characters, procedural order of action, defined objects, character traits and mental states, and stylistic details. Applying background world knowledge, consumers of narratives are thought to construct situation models to assist inference generation (Graesser, Olde, & Klettke, 2002).

Graesser, Singer, and Trabasso's (1994) constructionist theory offers an account of how situation models are built during narrative text comprehension. The theory holds that knowledge-based inferences are routinely activated and encoded based on generic and episodic knowledge structures such as mental scripts, stereotypes, prior exposure to texts, and world experience. For instance, when detecting information about a social classification in a story, a generic stereotype would inform reader inferences about a character based on previously held notions of a specific class of people. According to the theory, such inferences are often generated automatically and with little cognitive effort for the purpose of building coherent meaning representations or constructing explanations for behavior (Graesser, et al, 1994). The latter function of constructing explanations is of greatest interest to the current dissertation. It assumes that narrative consumers attempt to explain why certain events, states, and actions occur in the story and suggests that

these explanations are brought forth from explicit information about characters' superordinate goals for performing the actions, the events that precipitate these actions, and the physical and psychological environments within which the actions occur (i.e. situational cues).

According to Kelley et al (2003), situational cues provide the necessary context for individuals to detect and express motives, goals, values, and preferences. These cues may be comprised of information from the physical space, the temporal continuum, and the social space. Since the focus of the current discussion pertains to the cognitive and affective mechanisms governing reader-character interaction and relationships, the following paragraphs give specific attention to the interpersonal dimensions of situations (Wish, Deutsch, & Kaplan, 1976). Human cognitive, affective, and conative tendencies have been informed evolutionarily as adaptive functions of the species' inherent sociality. To capitalize on the necessity of living and interacting with members of the community, human associations with other persons – the interpersonal context – plays a central role in shaping how a situation is experienced. Based on the tenets of Thibaut and Kelley's Interdependence Theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), Kelley et al (2003) offer a top-down theoretical approach to understanding which features of an interpersonal situation or context may activate specific cognitive and affective processes that help individuals interpret and respond to those features. Interdependence theory characterizes six dimensions of social situations: 1) outcome interdependence between actors; 2) mutuality of outcome interdependence as defined by power relations; 3) outcome correspondence and conflict; 4) outcome coordination and independence; 5) temporal structure of outcomes; and 6) information certainty for decisions about

outcomes (Reis, 2008). Based on this perspective, the nature of a situation, perceived through one or more of these dimensions, fundamentally influences enacted behaviors, as mediated by cognitive and affective processes. In other words, individuals respond differently to a given set of circumstances across different interpersonal contexts (e.g. Axline, 2012).

Power as a contextual cue

Given that parasocial phenomena are inherently social, the contextual variable selected for investigation in the main dissertation study was chosen from the social context. The mutuality of outcome interdependence – the second dimension of social situations according to interdependence theory – focuses on the psychological effects and behavioral affordances of perceived asymmetric power relations. The concept of power exists at multiple levels of analysis. At the individual level, power is equated with trait dominance. At the interpersonal level, power is negotiated through social roles, and at the intergroup level, power can be associated with the numerical or stereotypical majority. Although a character's perceived power may be associated with dispositional traits such as intelligence, dominance, attractiveness, etc., the current study focuses on the structural aspects of power. Based on the exchange theoretical tradition, power is thought to reside in relations between actors rather than as dispositional traits of actors themselves (Emerson, 1962). As such, scholars have defined power as a “social structural capacity to acquire contested rewards” (Lovaglia, 1995, p. 402), and as a “structurally determined potential for obtaining favorable resource levels,” (Markovsky, Willer, & Patton, 1988, p. 224). Whether referencing control over rewards or resources, each definition suggests that power is a dimension of the relational structure or environment, and is therefore

considered here as a situational cue, and the main contextual variable of interest impacting perceptual processes for the current discussion.

Empirical work on power asymmetry in dyads has revealed numerous effects on actors' cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses. In asymmetric situations, the subordinate individual has been shown to more closely attend to the superior individual's behaviors (Berschied, Graziano, Monson, & Dermer, 1976) and non-verbal cues (Hall, 1998). The subordinate individual is also more likely to engage in cognitive perspective-taking (Tjosvold & Sagaria, 1978), generate more accurate, complex, and nonstereotypic memories of the superior individual (Dépret & Fiske, 1993), and engage in more controlled cognition to increase perceived control over a situation (Fiske & Dépret, 1996). Further, individuals in a high-power position use more flexible information-processing strategies (Overbeck & Park, 2006) and are thought to have increased availability of cognitive resources, and therefore, a greater ability relative to individuals in a low-power position to focus on the task at hand while inhibiting task-irrelevant information (Guinote, 2007). Affectively, the subordinate individual is more likely to experience embarrassment after receiving assistance (Gross, Wallston, Piliavin, 1979), experience anxiety, mistrust, and insecurity during interaction (Drigotas, Rusbult, & Verette, 1999), and feel an overall sense of lost control and learned helplessness (Peterson, Maier, & Seligman, 1993). Behaviorally, the subordinate individual is less likely to play a significant role in decision-making (Safilios-Rothschild, 1976), places a greater degree of emphasis on demonstrating a favorable self-presentation (Jones, Gergen, & Jones, 1963), and performs expertise in a manner that follows codified guidelines and seeks consensus (Axline, 2012).

Ultimately, scholars have demonstrated that power affects process-oriented aspects of information processing (Guinote, 2008). From a third-person perspective, perceivers interpret actions of high-power and low-power individuals differently by generating inferences of causal attribution in line with preconceived notions of constraint that are intrinsically tied to the social categorization of power (Overbeck, Tiedens, & Brion, 2006). In other words, according to Overbeck and colleagues, perceivers assume powerful targets are more able to act dispositionally because of a presumed lack of constraint from external elements. However, powerless targets are thought to be highly constrained by their environments, and therefore, situational attributions are a more likely outcome of third-party inference.

From a first-person perspective, the experience of high or low power has been shown to impact moral thinking styles to the extent that high-powered individuals rely on rule-based, deontological moral thinking (rightness or wrongness of behaviors based on whether universal rules and principles are violated) whereas low-powered individuals rely on outcome-based, consequentialist thinking (judgment of behaviors based on the consequences of those behaviors) (Lammers & Stapel, 2009). In partial opposition to these findings, high-power position has been positively associated with forgiveness of a relational partner's transgressions (Karremans & Smith, 2010), indicating a less severe standard of judgment for negative behaviors. To date, there has been no focused resolution of this discrepancy in findings surrounding the relationship between power and the process of moral judgment. However, recent research has tied construal level theory – specifically, temporal distance – to the varied activation of moral thinking styles (Agerström & Björklund, 2009); a line of reasoning that may be brought to bear on the

relationship between power position, attributions, and moral judgment. The current dissertation will further explore this puzzle to determine whether and how perception of power position impacts moral thinking styles.

Based on the above reviewed literature, we can assume that power impacts information processing in two distinct ways: 1) power affects person perception by biasing associations of high- and low-power positions with the degree of constraints experienced by an individual; and, 2) power affects situation construal (whether the situation is perceived abstractly or concretely) to the extent that high- and low-power positions affect first-person and third-person experiencing of abstract and concrete construals. Although these impacts are not necessarily in contrast to one another, the former (perceived constraint) may be described as having a more explicit association with power, while the latter (situation construal) is more implicit. It is uncertain which of these mechanisms best accounts for the impact of power on attributions despite both having been shown to have an impact. The current dissertation seeks to clarify this uncertainty and highlight whether explicit or implicit processes better account for the impact of power on attributions. The following sections will explore both well-established logics to provide support for the proposed mediation model predicting the indirect effect of power on moral judgments.

Power, perceived constraint, and attribution. As described above, power has been defined as a contextually-situated role that affords its possessors control over rewards and resources (Fiske, 1993; Lovaglia, 1995; Markovsky, Willer, & Patton, 1988). Power has also been referred to as the ‘production of intended effects’ (Weber, 1946), and the ability to affect others by demonstrating asymmetric relational influence (Willer,

Lovaglia, & Markovsky, 1997). Implicit to these conceptualizations of power is the idea that whether one refers to control over assets, production of intended effects, or influence over others, a high-power position is one that is relatively unconstrained by other people or situations; thus, affording the possessor of power control over his or her situation. Alternatively, the possessor of a low-power position is subject to the constraints implicit to their relational circumstances. As constraint increases, so too does an individual's contextual position of powerlessness (Overbeck et al., 2006). The degree of constraint associated with one's power position has differential effects on perceivers' attributions to the powerful and powerless. Overbeck and colleagues posit that "a truly powerless person is seen as having no discretion in the selection of actions" (p. 480). In other words, an individual in a low power position is thought to be incapable of acting her dispositions to the extent that her actions must be dictated by her situation. Conversely, the high power individual has the capacity to carry out behaviors in line with her internal values and desires rather than having to conform to outside circumstances. Ultimately, this logic suggests that 'the correspondence bias' (also referred to as 'the fundamental attribution error') (Gilbert & Malone, 1995; Jones & Nisbett, 1971; Ross, 1977) – a phenomenon wherein individuals attribute their own behavior to situational causes and others' behaviors to dispositional causes – is disrupted by the power position of the person whose actions are being perceived. In other words, under circumstances where someone is in a low power position and subject to high situational constraints, the natural tendency to make dispositional attributions is suspended; therefore, situational attributions would be made. Further, this change in attribution bias may be accounted for by the relationships between power position and perceived situational constraint.

Scholars have also explored the effect of perceived constraint on attributions irrespective of power orientation (also studied in the inverse as perceived freedom). Miller (1976) found support for the effect of perceived freedom of a target individual on attributions of attitudes, showcasing how attribution error may be corrected. Specifically, Miller found that the attitudes of a target person perceived to have strong situational pressure and low perceived freedom were attributed to the situation rather than the target person's disposition. Snyder & Jones (1974) found that the effect of environmental constraints on targets (correcting the attribution bias so that targets behaviors are attributed to the situation rather than the target's disposition) were only significant when 'extreme variants of constraint' were perceived by participants. Miller and Lawson (1989) demonstrated that perceived constraint affected the fundamental attribution error in the predicted direction, such that situational attributions replaced dispositional attributions in explaining behavior, specifically when information substantiating maximal constraint was provided. In the latter two cases of more generalized studies exploring the effects of constraint on attribution, a signifier of 'extreme' or 'maximal' constraint was fundamental to the correction of the correspondence bias. Ultimately, when environmental constraints are seen to be strong, perceivers make situational attributions rather than dispositional ones; thereby, deactivating the correspondence bias. The following paragraph outlines evidence linking power to constraint.

Power, by its very nature, is a structural condition that manifests as discrete roles or positions that are constrained by their exclusive opportunity sets (Lovaglia, 1995; Markovsky, Willer, & Patton, 1988; Skvoretz, Willer, & Fararo, 1993). High-power positions are unconstrained and, therefore, enable more elaborate opportunities for action

orientation than low-power positions. Consequently, perceivers may infer a target's level of power based on his or her exhibited orientation towards action (Magee, 2009).

Magee's empirically validated pattern of inference is thought to solidify an association between power distinction and the ability to act; and implicit to one's ability to act, is the associated degree of constraint that either affords or inhibits that action. This association is further substantiated by the widespread belief that power-holders, relative to the powerless, take more action in the service of their goals because they experience fewer constraints from their environment (Galinsky, Magee, Gruenfeld, Whitson, & Liljenquist, 2008). As a result, power-holders often seem impervious to conformity pressures (Galinsky et al, 2008) and free to use internal goals as a guiding force for their actions (Slabu & Guinote, 2010). This association may be further exemplified by perceivers' first-hand knowledge of powerful or powerless positions. For instance, Whitson, Liljenquist, Galinsky, Magee, Gruenfeld, and Caldena (2013) have recently demonstrated that while power increases awareness of goal-relevant information, it also decreases cognitive processing of perceived goal constraints. As a result, power-holders' proclivity for action is based in-part on their decreased awareness of situational constraints. In this way, the association between power and constraint is both a perceived third-party inference and an experienced first-person phenomenon. Given the common mental association between perceived constraint (or the capacity to act) and the possession of power, and the evidence that perceived constraint affects the degree to which perceivers attribute the volitional nature of a target's behavior to his or her disposition or situational circumstances, it may be assumed that perceived power impacts the attribution mechanism. Specifically, the perception of high power position maintains the

correspondence bias so that behavior is attributed to a person's disposition. However, the perception of a low power position corrects the correspondence bias resulting in situational attributions of causation for a person's behavior.

Power, psychological distance, and attribution. Eyal and Liberman (2010) suggest that core, idealized moral principles (i.e. deontological moral thinking) are more salient when individuals make judgments and inferences about psychologically distant events or individuals, relative to psychologically close events or individuals (see also Eyal, Liberman, & Trope, 2008). This notion is grounded in the tenets of construal level theory (CLT), which assume that the same object, event, or behavior may be mentally represented in different ways. CLT distinguishes between high-level and low-level construals; the former are comprised of abstract, schematic, and decontextualized representations and the latter consist of concrete, contextualized, and incidental representations. The central proposition of CLT is that the construal of psychologically distant situations brings to mind more abstract, high-level mental representations of any given target object, while psychologically close situations elicit more low-level concrete representations (Liberman, Trope, & Stephan, 2007; Liberman & Trope, 2008). Objects may be considered psychologically distant on a number of dimensions and are considered remote from direct experience in terms of: (1) temporal distance (occurring in past or future); (2) spatial distance (proximity to self); (3) social distance (experience of others rather than self and relational familiarity of target other); and (4) probability (likelihood of occurrence). CLT posits that objects conceptualized as distant on any dimension will be represented abstractly because high-level construals maintain invariant cognitive consistency and facilitate inferences despite increasing distances (Eyal & Liberman,

2010). Empirical evidence linking the effect of psychological distance on level of construal has been demonstrated for social distance (Liviatan, Trope, & Liberman, 2008; Aron, Aron, Tudor, & Nelson, 1991), spatial distance (Fujita, Henderson, Eng, Trope, & Liberman, 2006; Henderson, Fujita, Trope, & Liberman, 2006); and temporal distance (Liberman, Sagristano, & Trope, 2002; Liberman & Trope, 1998).

Further, CLT suggests that attributions, evaluations and judgments are also subject to variable mental construal such that increased psychological distance makes salient abstract principles of evaluation and reduces the impact of contextual aspects of a situation. The distinction between high and low levels of construal is central to person perception and attribution theories (Gilbert & Malone, 1995; Jones & Davis, 1965; Trope, 1989). Consequently, CLT researchers posit that psychological distance yields dispositional judgments of events or individuals at their highest, most idealized level. Contrastingly, the perceived lack of psychological distance makes situational attributions and judgments more salient (Liberman & Trope, 1998). The actor-observer effect – an effect often cited in the literature on attribution – is an example of the manner in which individuals explain others' behavior (socially distant from self) in abstract, dispositional terms, and their own behavior (zero social distance from self) in concrete, situational terms (e.g. Fiedler, Semin, Finkenauer, & Berkel, 1995). The effect of mental construal on attributions has been demonstrated in research on temporal distance (Agerström & Björklund, 2009; Nussbaum, Trope, & Liberman, 2003), but has not been investigated in the context of spatial, social, or probability distance.

Of greatest interest to the current discussion is the relationship between power, construal level, psychological distance, and attributions. In recent years, scholars have

explored how power exhibits transformative effects on person perception (Gruenfeld, Inesi, Magee, & Galinsky, 2008), social relationships (Lammers, Stapel, & Galinsky, 2010), and social distance (Lee & Tiedens, 2001; Smith & Trope, 2006). Referring to the first-person experience of power, Smith and Trope (2006) posit that “power increases the psychological distance one feels from others (p. 578); however, the first empirical evidence of this claim was not demonstrated for six more years. Lammers, Galinsky, Gordijn, and Otten (2012) were the first to demonstrate that power may be conceptualized as social distance. More specifically, their study supported the proposition that the experience of elevated power by an actor increases the degree of social distance perceived by that actor between him/herself and his or her subordinate, especially when that power is considered legitimate (i.e. power earned by the actor based on previous performance).

Combined with evidence that psychological distance and construal level are positively related (Trope & Liberman, 2010), these results serve as the basis for the social distance theory of power (Magee & Smith, 2013), which provides the “theoretical logic connecting power to social distance and social distance to construal level” (p. 158). This theory is grounded in two assumptions. The first supposes that asymmetric experiences of relational dependence (characterized by an asymmetrical feeling of need for affiliation and corresponding investment into the relationship; see Smith & Trope, 2006) that is inherent to power discrepancies between two people beget asymmetric experiences of social distance. This occurs because the individual in a low power, dependent position is singularly motivated toward affiliation and continues to make significant investments in the relationship with expectations of increasing social closeness; however, the individual

in a high power position feels less dependence on their relational partner thus decreasing his or her expectations of affiliation with the other party. Consequently, the individual in the high power position feels low motivation to affiliate with their relational partner and the individual in the low power position experiences high motivation to affiliate with their relational partner. The theory argues that the lack of symmetric dependence between the two actors brings about asymmetric experiences social distance between the two with the individual in high power feeling more subjective distance than the individual in low power. The second assumption follows the tenets of CLT suggesting that because individuals in high power positions experience a greater sense of social distance than individuals in low power positions (Lammers et al, 2012), they more likely engage in abstract mental representations of situations than their low power counterparts. The individuals in low power positions are then more likely to engage in concrete, situational mental representations of situations (Magee & Smith, 2013).

Ultimately, the authors of the theory suggest that power position impacts perception of social distance which then impacts construal level to the extent that a high power position will engender abstract thinking and facilitate behavior congruent with one's values; low power positions will bring about concrete thinking and behavior that is relevant to the given situation. Although the social distance theory of power is relatively new, there are a number of studies that if interpreted with these assumptions in mind may be considered demonstrative of how a person in a high power position exhibits intentions and behaviors that are more consistent with his or her abstract, core values than with situational forces. For example, when men with a predilection towards sexual harassment were primed with the concept of high power, they reported increased sexual attraction to

women; a response behavior that study authors argued is consistent with their core values (Bargh, Raymond, Pryor, & Strack, 1995). Additionally, high power priming prompted communal individuals to act generously and exchange-oriented individuals to act more selfishly (Chen, Lee-Chai, & Bargh, 2001). Finally, Galinsky, et al (2008) demonstrated that when primed with high-power, pro-social individuals formed greater intentions to create a trusting relationship with another party in a negotiation than pro-self individuals, irrespective of the other party's cooperative or competitive nature. In the baseline condition, where no power prime existed, intentions were determined by the other party's nature. Although these studies do not specifically speak to social distance, they showcase the ability of power to activate behaviors and intentions that are consistent with an actor's abstract, core values and demonstrate the effect of power on construal level (Magee & Smith, 2013). Ultimately, the social distance theory of power offers the cognitive mechanism of changing construal levels as the primary feature underlying the correspondence between abstract, core values and behaviors, intentions, and attributions.

Despite the strength of this logic, the aforementioned theory suggests that social distance is the consequence of power dynamics experienced within an asymmetrical relationship rather than between a person of power and an independent perceiver. However, Magee and Smith (2013) suggest that the same effects would extend “to social targets external to the power relationship, provided that a new relation of asymmetric dependence does not exist with the external target” (p. 173). They support this idea by describing social distance as an enduring feature of power that is automatically activated whenever a power schema is primed. In this way, power is thought to have a procedural priming effect, shifting how third-person perceivers process information related to

psychological distance implicit to power relations. Magee and Smith use the language ‘social targets external to the power relationship’ and although a perceiver/media consumer is not a traditional social target in that the potential for two-way interaction with the high-or-low-power individual is not possible, the existence of a parasocial relationship and/or interaction with the high-or-low-power individual would suggest that many of the cognitive and affective processes involved in traditional interaction would also be engaged in this context (Giles, 2002). Assuming the perceiver detects the high-or-low-power individual’s power position, power should prime distance. At this time, there is no empirical evidence to support this claim; however, the theoretical claim offered by the authors of the theory lays the groundwork for the current investigation. The current study will seek to uncover whether the identification of a high- or low-power character by a media consumer during a parasocial experience will give rise to the same effect as that demonstrated in the asymmetrical relationship.

Having reviewed two explanations for the impact of power on attributions (i.e. power’s impact on perceived constraint and situation construal) in the related literature, it is unclear which one has greater control over attributions. It is based on this uncertainty that I offer the following research question:

RQ1: Which effect of power (perception of constraint or psychological distance) has more control over whether dispositional or situational attributions are made for individuals’ behavior?

Attribution and moral judgment. Why would moral judgments patterns be related to perceived power positions? The study reviewed above that investigated how temporal distance affects moral thinking by way of attributions (Agerström & Björklund,

2009), provides a compelling example to consider. In this case, causal attributions of behavior made to a target's disposition highlighted core values and principles, whereas attributions to a target's situation underscored the concrete nature and relative effects of situational conditions on judgments. These attributional shifts differentially activated two types of moral principles – deontological and consequentialist thinking styles – which the authors refer to as various levels of moral concern. The distinction between abstract and concrete moral thinking represents one of the main divisions in moral philosophy. Recall that the abstract notion that what is right is always a function of what is fundamentally defined as dutiful (a deontological stance) exemplifies a universal principle that transcends circumstances and lends itself to more precise prediction of events and behaviors than situation-specific action plans. On the other hand, the concrete notion that the morality of an act is determined by the circumstantial goodness of its consequences increases variation and unpredictability of behaviors. Dispositional and situational attributions follow a similar pattern. Dispositional attributions provide predictability to the uncertain mind of a social target (Gilbert & Malone, 1995); situational attributions provide flexibility around the relatively knowable mind of a social target or the self. According to the fundamental attribution error, the traditional bias defaults to dispositional attributions of behavior for individuals other than the self. As described above, power as a context variable is hypothesized as a disrupter of this bias, to the extent that perceiving powerlessness elicits situational attributions. It then follows that the concrete heuristic, based on CLT, is engaged to generate a consequentialist judgment after situational attributions are made to individuals in a low power position because consequentialist judgments are tied to more concrete construals of a situation.

Consequently, Agerström and Björklund's (2009) study provides the first empirical evidence that causal attributions account for whether moral judgments adhere to the prescriptions of deontological or consequentialist stances. Specifically, dispositional attributions lead to deontological moral thinking and situational attributions lead to consequentialist moral thinking. In this way, it would be interesting to further explore how different attributions –dispositional or situational – might be conceptualized as the specific cognitive mechanism responsible for the effect of perceived power on moral judgment. Based on this line of inquiry, I propose the following hypothesis:

H1: The effect of perceived power on moral judgment is mediated by the extent to which behaviors are attributed to either dispositional or situational causes.

The importance of the manner in which power is conferred. Research on power in the fields of sociology and small group research has delineated the concept of power position or strength (high or low) from power type (coercive v. referent, high ability v. low ability) (Berger, Fisek, Norman, & Wagner, 1985; Kemper & Collins, 1990; Lovaglia, 1995; Overbeck et al, 2006). Perceived power types are used by perceivers as referential structures to relate strength of power with specific causes and expected outcomes. Recall that power has been conceptualized as a structural capacity to acquire rewards (Lovaglia, 1995) and the potential to obtain favorable resource levels (Markovsky et al, 1988). An ability-related referential structure assumes that an individual's level of rewards or resources, as a proxy for power, is related to his or her ability so that high resources denotes high ability to both obtain and yield those resources. For example, one might assume that a uniquely able individual should be paid more to carry out a task than one who is relatively unable. Assuming that one believes in or is

operating under this particular structure, it then follows that an expectation will be formed that highly paid individuals are also more able than others, except for when evidence to the contrary is made apparent. Contrary evidence can be drawn from information about whether rewards or resources were conferred to an individual based on dispositional merit or situational causes. If evidence suggests that rewards have been earned through dispositional merit, the expectation is reaffirmed. If, however, evidence suggests that rewards or resources were assumed due to circumstance, the inference that highly paid individuals are more able than others will be disrupted (Gilbert, Jones, & Pelham, 1987). For example, if an individual in one's immediate social network is revealed to have a very high net worth, expectations of ability will rise if the cause of this wealth is clearly related to the individual's dispositional actions; however, if the wealth had come about as a consequence of luck or inheritance, expectations of ability will not rise (Lovaglia, 1995).

These two types of power (earned v. inherited) convey different information about how power strength or position is obtained, which may have an effect on causal attributions. For example, the actions of an actor demonstrated to have earned his or her high power position will likely be attributed to his or her disposition. Similarly, the actions of an actor seen to have inherited a low power position will be attributed to the situation. The effects of an inherited high power position and earned low power position, however, are unclear. It may be that power type moderates the strength or likelihood of attribution such that an earned low power position has a weaker situational attribution than an inherited low power position and an inherited high power position has a weaker dispositional attribution than an earned high power position. Consequently, the strength

of the indirect effect of power on different facets of moral judgment may be moderated by the interaction between power strength and power type (Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007). Without any previous empirical evidence to ground this claim, I offer the following research question:

RQ2: Does the interaction of power strength and power type moderate the previously hypothesized indirect effect of power on moral judgment by way of causal attribution?

Exploring Parasocial Phenomena in Text-based Media

Horton and Wohl's (1956) pioneering parasocial research began as a way to understand the nature of audience engagement with televised entertainment and news content. More broadly, PSI was one of the earliest theoretical approaches to make the connection between 'mass media' and interpersonal communication. The relevance of PSI was initially applied to the areas of media effects and social cognition to unpack the notion of an 'active audience' and in some ways even suggest that viewers looked to media personae for guidance on how to socially construct reality (Tsay-Vogel & Schwartz, 2014). This perspective was couched in the proliferation of the symbolic interactionism perspective that was largely prevalent at the time of the 'Chicago School's' body of social thought in post-World War II America (Katz, Peters, Liebes, & Orloff, 2003). The Chicago School viewed communication as the prime motivator of social order, positing that it was the "primary mode by which human ties are made; [and] as such, [the] primal element of social life" (Katz et al, 2003, p. 104). Consequently, interaction was a central focus for both research method and theoretical development during this era; and television, specifically, was viewed as *the* 'mass communication'

mechanism to extend interaction over collapsed dimensions of time and space while enhancing publics' ability to participate in the democratic process. As such, standing on the shoulders of formative Chicago School accounts of communication from Cooley and Mead, parasocial interaction with televised media personae underscored the potential of non-co-present interaction.

This aforementioned potential was not necessarily considered good or healthy. In fact, the use of the prefix *para* in social science is often employed to reference the mimetic, derivative, or irregular aspects of a phenomenon (Handelman, 2003). The selection of this word therefore connotes Horton & Wohl's nervousness about television as the dominant communication medium of the time; bringing up questions surrounding whether virtual encounters with characters should be considered inter- or intrapersonal. From a traditional perspective, the interaction occurs between the viewer and the screen to the extent that any imagined interaction with the character occurs only within the viewer's head. If this was the case, how might the occurrence of parasocial interaction relate to some sort of dispositional and/or social deficiency that is tied to one's use of or dependence on television? This line of thought can be explicitly traced through the early literature on PSI that repeatedly investigates the relationship between PSI with televised personae and viewers' neurosis, Introversion, loneliness, personal isolation, and dependence on television (Auter & Palmgreen, 1997; Grant, Gurthrie, & Ball-Rokeach, 1991; Nordlund, 1978; Rosengren & Windahl, 1972; Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Rubin et al, 1985).

Prior to the television era, psychoanalytic theorists equated social relations with literary heroes as a necessary part of the imaginative process. Freud, specifically,

suggested that engagement with characters in works of fiction served the dual purpose of growing ego strength and strengthening future social interactions. From this view, engagement with fictional characters allows readers to suspend deliberative oversight and reasoned judgment, and enable the spontaneous generation of ideas free from the sanctions of social authority and responsibility (Freud & Gay, 1989). What differs between Freud's psychoanalytic conception of relationships with literary characters and those employed to conjure parasocial phenomena in the audio-visual realm, is the relational locus rather than the mediated context. In Freud's discussion of narrative heroes, he likens the hero to the self, essentially describing a process of character-audience member identification (a projected, first-person experiencing of the hero). He further posits that it is this cognitive act of identification that allows individuals to exorcise the ego's underlying conflicts and/or deprivations by experiencing the hero's actions within the narrative (Freud, Jensen, & Rieff, 1956). Although this scholarship hints at the relevance of applying the parasocial concept to a textual context, it lacks the clearly defined delineation between character and self that distinguishes the parasocial experience from identification.

Following the initial proliferation of the PSI concept, the emphasis on PSI occurring in the context of audio-visual mediated channels (e.g. television, radio) only slowly gave way to an exploration of this experience in the context of online streaming video (Hurst, 2000), online communities (Ballantine & Martin, 2005; Thorson & Rodgers, 2006); immersive virtual environments (Chung, Daniel deBuys, & Nam, 2007; Jin & Park, 2009), and social media (Frederick, Lim, Clavio, & Walsh, 2012; Marwick, 2011) as the technological affordances of these new media types reemphasized the increasing

salience of non-co-present interactivity. Additionally, psychological knowledge about the social perception of mediated characters also grew in great analytical depth, priming investigators to seek a greater variety of mediated interpersonal communication contexts for the application of parasocial theory (Hartmann, 2008). Written text, however, has not been considered one among these many ubiquitous interactive technologies. Beyond Horton and Wohl's (1956) initial conceptualization of the PSI concept, theorists have sought to integrate both verbal and nonverbal interaction cues into the parasocial experience, suggesting that characters would need to be seen and heard for the relationship to be instantiated (Labrecque, 2014). This may account for why textual narrative has not found its way into the parasocial literature. For example, character obtrusiveness, defined as the extent to which a character takes up the screen (Schramm & Hartmann, 2008; Schramm & Wirth, 2010) and character persistence, defined as the character's regularity of appearance in a scene (Nordlund, 1978; Schramm & Hartmann, 2008) have both been related to a more pronounced experience of PSI. However, these variables only speak to the intensity of PSI experienced and do not suggest that the experience of PSI is contingent upon their existence.

Reeves & Nass' (1996) 'media equation' posits that individuals naturally and automatically respond to media as they would to other individuals in their environment. Essentially, the theory suggests that affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses to media are fundamentally similar to responses elicited by people and places in the physical world. This proposition, although situated in the context of computers, television, and new media, does not stipulate the exclusion of written text from books and periodicals. In fact, prior studies exploring the social affordances of written narrative

content demonstrate that processes linked to the parasocial experience such as empathic deployment (Oatley & Gholamain, 1997) and perspective-taking (Carruthers & Smith, 1996; Caughey, 1984) are implicit to the experience of consuming textual narratives. Consequently, I would like to suggest that parasocial processing occurs while readers consume written narratives; thereby expanding the contextual scope of investigations into parasocial phenomena.

What stands to be gained, theoretically, is the ability to compare the parasocial experience of consumers across media types. This could speak to the question of whether parasocial interactions and relationships are more closely related to the content or the form of the media message. Additionally, given the trend toward media convergence (e.g. digital articles that feature video components), it may be helpful to situate the parasocial experience in response to different media along an abstract continuum such that the strength and quality of the parasocial experience might be considered as contingent upon the presence or absence of specific sensory cues. From another perspective, the comparison of parasocial effects among different media types might reveal something about the media consumer, showcasing how specific individual difference variables might predispose one person to strong relationships with characters embedded in text, and another to relationships with characters illuminated on a screen. Predilection towards one or another could lay the groundwork for the development of entertainment and/or education-based narratives that cater to individual preferences. Finally, from a methodological perspective, the ability to manipulate narrative text to examine antecedents, processes, and effects of parasocial phenomena is a far easier task for academicians than generating specifically visual content or attempting to manipulate

preexisting visual content. This would enable investigations of greater breadth and depth to explore the phenomena. With these potential affordances in mind, this dissertation seeks to expand the context for the study of parasocial phenomena into textual narratives. The proposed study, as well as the validation study for the PSP instrument, will utilize written text as the sole stimulus to elicit parasocial responses. Short of finding no response, I believe these studies will establish the written form as a new context for the investigation of parasocial processing.

Dissertation Empirical Study

The literature review comprising this chapter defines three parasocial phenomena – parasocial interaction, parasocial relationships, and parasocial processing – traces the theoretical and empirical lineage of these concepts, calls attention to the social cognitive processes that are implicated in the instantiation of the parasocial experience, and reveals a theoretical gap in the exclusion of character context as an antecedent of parasocial processes and effects. The notion of context is then explored and the identification of power as a social contextual variable is substantiated as a first variable of interest for an investigation into the impact of character context on specific factors of parasocial processing. Attribution is positioned as the explanatory mechanism behind the effect of power on factors of parasocial processing (i.e. moral judgment, empathy, counter empathy). The literature review then showcases two distinct variables related to power – perceived constraint and social distance – as possible drivers of change in attribution. Finally, the manner in which power is conferred is explored as a possible moderator of the effect of power on attribution. The review concludes with a discussion of expanding the application of parasocial concepts to textual narratives.

Drawing upon the theories and theoretical concepts outlined above, the following chapter highlights a study that integrates elements of parasocial processing with ideas about moral reasoning, empathic engagement, and attribution. In particular, the following chapter presents a study that empirically tests the degree to which power and attributions of causation for characters' behavior influences moral judgments and (counter-)empathic engagement with said characters.

In all, the study integrates theories of parasocial phenomena with attribution theory as a means of better understanding the contextual antecedents of and subsequent cognitive mechanism behind parasocial processing. By using experimental methods, the study can shed new light on causality that is not adequately addressed through anecdotal data. Lastly, this study is important as it may help inform on literary methods to improve characterization processes in narrative writing and increase audience member enjoyment of characters that fulfill their expectations.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND RESULTS

Methods

Overview

The experiment consisted of a 2 story type (historic or modern storyline) by 2 (power strength) by 2 (power type) factorial design. Participants were randomly assigned by the Qualtrics® randomization algorithm to read one of four versions of a short story about a character presented with a moral dilemma. The conditions are described in further detail below.

Measures of the perceived constraint, social distance, attribution, and four components of moral judgment variables were presented in random order on the survey after participants read the assigned short story. The study received IRB approval, #1405004691 (see Appendix B for survey instruments, IRB approval, and study stimuli).

A validation study was conducted prior to the main dissertation study to ensure the validity of the empathy, counter empathy, and evaluation of character actions variables that were derived from the original Parasocial Process Scales instrument (Hartmann & Schramm, 2008). A translation of the German scale into English was conducted by Verena Krause, a native German-speaker, and an IRB approved study, #1312004377 was conducted to obtain validation. The details of this study may be found in Appendix A.

A series of pilot studies was conducted to validate the main study stimulus materials. These pilots determined that there were no systematic differences with respect to character attractiveness, character realism, reader immersion, reader enjoyment, or

story readability. Pilot test instruments, stimuli, results, and analyses may be found in Appendix C.

Participants

The online experimental study participants, aged 18 and over, were selected from a general population panel ($n = 420$; 53% female). The sample size was selected *a priori* to achieve 0.85 power, given a medium effect size for appropriate statistical analysis of a between-subject 2x2x2 factorial design. Participants were recruited to participate from the Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) website. All participants were screened as “Master Workers,” a sub-group of MTurk users with demonstrated accuracy on specific types of tasks. Master Workers are required to pass MTurk’s internal statistical monitoring for accuracy to receive and maintain this distinction. Each Master Worker was compensated \$2.00 for their participation.

Procedures

After selecting the study on the MTurk interface, participants were redirected to the Cornell Qualtrics® platform to complete the experiment in the allotted time of one hour. After participants completed an informed consent form, they were further instructed to read the provided story and answer questions surrounding their attitudes towards the story’s protagonist. Participants completed the study in an average of 15 minutes.

Study Context

As described above, the study sample was obtained using a general sampling pool of MTurk Master Workers using the Internet as the sole medium for experimental data collection. As far as using the Internet as a medium for collecting data, Gosling, Vazire,

Srviastava, & John (2004) posit that the Internet as a collection medium can reduce biases found in traditional samples. Further, according to analyses of the demographic characteristics of MTurk workers and the quality of data collected for psychometric purposes, MTurk participants were shown to be at least as diverse and significantly more representative of non-college, general populations than traditional samples (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). Although the sample may not be entirely representative of the US population in terms of demographics, MTurk samples generally provide a broad range of respondent types (e.g. ethnicity, gender, age, socioeconomic status) that is not typical of a university-based sample. The use of MTurk also afforded the opportunity to collect data in a short period of time to reach an adequate sample size of 420 participants. Finally, although there is debate as to whether Internet-based experiments can furnish motivated participants and generalizable presentation across formats, evidence suggests that MTurk Workers are internally motivated (Buhrmester et al, 2011) and that the data they yield is largely generalizable (Gosling et al, 2004). Based on this evidence, the author believes an Internet-based experiment, administered through the MTurk platform, was the appropriate venue for the outlined research.

Independent Variable

Participants were randomly assigned to read one of four versions of a short story that feature a protagonist presented with a moral dilemma. Two manipulations were designed to introduce varying levels of power strength and power type, which were intended to prompt different degrees of attribution bias, and indirectly, varying moral judgments.

Stimulus Materials. The central storyline for the stories features a protagonist who accidentally steals a valuable item and is confronted with the decision as to whether he should return the item or keep it and allow another individual to suffer the consequences of the theft. Power strength, the variable name for power position, was manipulated by describing the protagonist as either a high status or low status person. Specifically, in the historic storyline, the high- and low-power positions are described as noble and servant; in the modern storyline, CEO and mail clerk. These positions were selected because all four social roles may be commonly identified as generally either ‘having’ or ‘lacking’ in access to rewards and/or resources, in keeping with their geographical and temporal contexts. Furthermore, two story versions, one set in historic England and the other in modern-day U.S., were penned in order to control for contextual familiarity. Finally, power type was manipulated by indicating that the protagonist either earned or inherited his position.

The narrative storyline was designed by the study author, but was written in conjunction with a professional author, Kevin Hall. The professional author penned each of the eight story iterations after having been exposed to the academic literature and conceptual premises that informed story development. Specifically, Mr. Hall was asked to read the dissertation literature review and engage in a discussion with the study author to demonstrate his understanding of the theoretical concepts at work. With the exception of specifically manipulated text to showcase power strength and type the story iterations between the two versions are identical and have been designed to avoid eliciting variation in affective and cognitive responses (i.e., neutral content). All eight iterations were subjected to pilot testing to determine any variation in reader immersion and enjoyment,

the stories' perceived realism, readability, and memorability, and the protagonists' perceived task, physical, and social attractiveness (see Appendix G for these items). A complete outline of the pilot test results is presented in Appendix H. All eight story versions are available for review in Appendix I.

Study Conditions. Approximately 210 participants per storyline were assigned to one of eight conditions in which a high- or low-power protagonist faces the moral dilemma, and in which that protagonist's power is conferred by inheritance or by his own merit (Table 2).

Table 2. Overview of experimental conditions

	High Power Strength	Low Power Strength
Earned Power Type	(1) High Power/Earned (HPE)	(3) Low Power/Earned (LPE)
Inherited Power Type	(2) High Power/Inherited (HPI)	(4) Low Power/Inherited (LPI)

Power Variables. As explained earlier, power has been found in the social psychology literature to be comprised of two dimensions: perceived constraint and social distance. Although these variables are not formally considered independent variables for the present study, they may be considered as two discretely observed variables of power (Magee & Smith, 2013; Overbeck et al., 2006). Consequently, constraint (e.g., 'To what extent was Edward free to make his own decision?') and distance (e.g., 'I feel very removed from Edward.') were measured to determine whether and how participants perceive each concept. Measurement scales for constraint and distance were developed for the purpose of this study and pre-tested to determine validity (Appendix B). Scale scores were computed for constraint ($\alpha = .802$) and distance ($\alpha = .869$) by averaging participant scores from 6-item scales for each variable. Both variables were measured

using a 6-point Likert scale. Analytically, constraint and distance were examined to determine which variable, if either, more strongly accounts for the effect of power on attribution.

Mediator

After reading the short story, participants were asked to respond to scaled items designed to assess the extent to which attributions of causation for the protagonist's behavior were dispositional (e.g. To what extent do you believe Edward behaved the way he did because of the type of person his is?) or situational (e.g. To what extent did external pressures influence Edward's decision to keep the ring?). Participants answered a 6-item attribution scale, developed for the purpose of this study and rated on a 6-point scale (1 = 'Not at all' to 6 = 'A great deal'). Scores were then dummy-coded into a dichotomous variable such that 1 = situational attributions and 6 = disposition attributions. To create a single mediator variable from the 6-item scale, scores for the scale were averaged for each participant and achieved good reliability ($\alpha = .810$).

Dependent Variables

There are four dependent variables in total; three from a previous scale and one developed for the purposes of the present study. The first three dependent variables described below – empathy, counter empathy, and evaluation of the character's actions – were measured using a Likert-type scale translated from the original German and validated in English form Schramm & Hartmann's (2008) PSI-Process Scales (see Appendix A for the full, validated English translation of the scale).

Empathy. Participants were asked to respond to eight items measuring the positive relationship between the reader's and the protagonist's emotional responses (e.g.

‘When Edward was doing badly, I was also doing badly; when Edward was doing well, I was also doing well’). This scale required participants to answer on a five-point scale, ranging in response types (1 = ‘Strongly disagree’ to 5 = ‘Strongly agree’). The average scores for each participant yielded good reliability ($\alpha = .831$).

Counter empathy. Participants were asked to respond to eight items measuring the negative relationship between the reader’s and protagonist’s emotional responses (e.g. ‘When Edward was doing well, I was doing badly; when Edward was doing badly, I was doing well’). This scale required the participants to answer on a five-point scale, ranging in response types (1 = ‘Strongly disagree’ to 5 = ‘Strongly agree’). Scores for the scale were averaged for each participant and achieved good reliability ($\alpha = .710$).

Moral Evaluation. Participants were asked to respond to eight items measuring their evaluative judgment response to the protagonist and his behavior (e.g. ‘I noticed characteristics about Edward’s behavior which I like or dislike’). In other words, this scale measured the degree to which the participant evaluated the protagonist and his actions. This scale required the participant to answer on a five-point scale, ranging in response types (1 = ‘Strongly disagree’ to 5 = ‘Strongly agree’). Scale averages for each participant achieved good reliability ($\alpha = .865$).

Moral Responsibility. Participants were asked to respond to scaled items designed to assess where on the spectrum between deontological (e.g. ‘To what extent do you think Edward’s decision to keep the ring violated moral standards of right and wrong?’) and consequentialist (e.g. ‘To what extent do you consider Edward’s decision to keep the ring justified by the given the circumstances?’) moral reasoning they judged a character and his behaviors. Participants answered a 6-item moral responsibility scale,

developed for the purpose of this study and rated on a 6-point, bipolar scale (1 = ‘Not at all’ to 6 = ‘A great deal’). Scores for the scale were averaged for each participant and achieved good reliability ($\alpha = .879$).

Control Variables

Affective resonance and intentionality were added as continuous covariates to the four models. Gender, autobiographical similarity, and storyline were added to the models as dichotomous covariates.

Affective Resonance. Mood state has been found to impact the fundamental attribution error to the extent that negative mood decreases the effect and positive mood increases the effect (Forgas, 1998). Given that this type of information-processing is impacted by affective states, the affective resonance of the protagonist on participants was measured. Using a Likert-type scale translated from the original German and validated in English from Schramm & Hartmann’s (2008) PSI-Process Scales, participants were asked to respond to a 4-item scale measuring the positive and negative feelings evoked by the protagonist (e.g. ‘Edward’s behavior had a strong influence on my own mood’). This scale required participants to answer on a five-point scale, ranging in response types (1 = ‘Strongly disagree’ to 5 = ‘Strongly agree’). The average scores for this scale reached moderate reliability ($\alpha = .691$).

Autobiographical Similarity. Findings from several broad-ranging studies suggest that viewers that share similar experiences with characters tend to form consistent attitudes, interpretations, and behaviors with those characters (Andsager, Bemker, Choi, & Torwel, 2006; Cohen, 2001; de Graaf, 2014; Pinkleton, Austin, & Van de Vord, 2010), suggesting self-other convergence or low perceived social distance. Kim and Shapiro

(2013) demonstrated that autobiographic similarity, and by extension, self-referencing, between a character and a reader can influence information-processing and perceptions of personal risk (i.e. beliefs). Additionally, Goethals and Nelson (1973) proposed that autobiographical similarity and dissimilarity have the potential to impact attributional biases and confidence in one's judgments. Although this line of thinking primarily addresses evaluative consensus between two similar or dissimilar parties, the effect of similarity on this type of information-processing warrants the inclusion of autobiographical similarity into the proposed models as a covariate measure. Participants were asked two items to measure the extent to which they had experienced a scenario similar to the story protagonist (e.g. 'Have you ever stolen or shoplifted anything?' and 'Have you ever *accidentally* stolen anything?'). These two items featured three response options: 'Yes', 'No', and 'I would rather not say.' At the time of analysis, this variable was added as two separate dichotomous covariates to separate accidental and intentional theft behaviors, thereby accounting for different types of autobiographical similarity. This was done because the study's storyline features an accidental theft; however, the study author felt that the reader's experience with theft behavior more broadly should also be taken into account, albeit through a separate question.

There is the possibility that other aspects of autobiographical similarity could have been measured. For example, being in a position of power, having wealth, or having had an experience as a servant; however, for the purpose of this study, familiarity with the immoral action was selected as the primary variable of concern that would require a test for covariation. A more detailed discussion of this choice appears in the discussion section of this document.

Intentionality. Intentionality was included as a covariate to account for the empirical evidence suggesting that perceived intention mediates the relationship between attribution of causality and judgments of responsibility, blame, and punishment (Shaver, 1985; Shultz & Wright, 1985). Participants were asked to respond to a single scaled item to assess the degree of intentionality attributed to the protagonist for his behavior in the context of the presented moral dilemma (e.g. ‘Did Edward choose to keep the ring intentionally?’). This item required the participant to answer on a six-point scale (1 = ‘Definitely Not’ to 6 = ‘Definitely Yes’).

Gender. Participants were asked to identify their gender (e.g. What is your gender?) and were provided with three response types: ‘Male’, ‘Female’, and ‘I would rather not say.’ This variable was added as a control to adjust model conclusions for any gender effects that would occur due to the storyline featuring only a male protagonist.

Storyline. As described in an earlier section, two stimulus stories were developed for the purpose of assessing whether the proposed effects would occur across narratives with different contextual details. Consequently, responses from each story were grouped, dummy-coded, and added as a covariate to the tested models.

RESULTS

Overview of Data Analysis Strategy

The data were analyzed with the statistical tool, SPSS (version 21), utilizing both inferential and descriptive statistical approaches. In all cases of dichotomous variables, the scale median served as the basis for dichotomization thereby defining high and low groups for the variable (MacCallum, Zhang, Preacher, & Rucker, 2002). In the case of gender, participant responses were coded 0 = male and 1 = female; the third response

type ('I would rather not say') and missing responses were eliminated from the analysis. Two responses were eliminated on this basis.

For research question 1, I first established that constraint and distance were associated with power using a series of one-way ANOVAs. Then, a multivariate linear regression analysis was run using constraint and distance as predictors of attribution. This test looked for general significance of the predictors as well as for which predictor explains a larger proportion of the variance in attribution scores. For hypothesis 1 and research question 2, I first generated a linear regression analysis that tested whether power type moderates the relationship between power strength) and attribution. Given that the interaction effect of the moderator (power type) was found to be non-significant, a new model was run to assess the mediation only. I used Hayes (2012) PROCESS macro, which enabled the use of a dichotomous independent variable (e.g. high-power or low-power). The selected PROCESS macro models estimate indirect, conditional, and direct effects among the mediator, moderator (if applicable), independent variable, and dependent variable and yield a point estimate and bias corrected 95% confidence interval for the indirect effects using the bootstrapping method. The use of bootstrapping is beneficial as it assumes that the sampling distribution for the indirect effect is not normally distributed (Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007). The model was run on four components related to the moral reasoning process: 1) moral evaluation; moral responsibility; empathy; and, counter empathy. The factor structure of the proposed four-component conceptualization of moral judgment was examined through confirmatory factor analysis. Finally, the dichotomous covariates – gender, autobiographical similarity, and storyline – were added to the models following the Hayes (2013) guidelines on using

three or more categorical independent variables in PROCESS. See Figure 1 for a conceptualization of the originally proposed moderated mediation model.

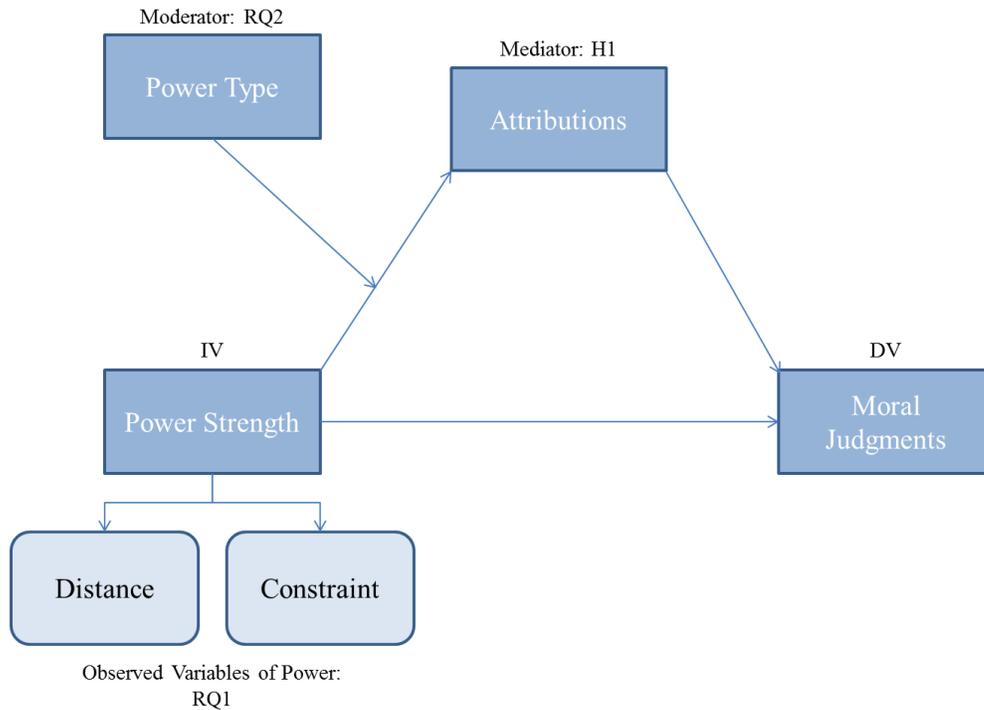


Figure 1: Proposed Moderated Mediation Model

Response Validation

A total of 420 participants combined from both the historic and modern participant pools were asked to answer the following catch trial question at some random point when taking the questionnaire: “To demonstrate that you are reading this question, mark the furthest circle to the left indicating that you disagree in the extreme.” Six cases (2 male; 4 female) where participants did not mark the correct response were eliminated from the dataset; an additional 16 participants who failed to complete items on the

questionnaire pertaining to the control variables were excluded from *only* the mediation analysis.

Bivariate correlations were conducted between gender and the dependent variables and revealed a significant positive correlation between gender and moral responsibility ($r = .18, p < .05$), signifying that gender is related to at least one variable of interest in the present study. To determine if the difference between the means for male and female participants is significant with respect to moral responsibility, an independent samples t-test was conducted and assumptions of homogeneity of variances and normal distribution verified. On average, female participants were more likely to produce deontological judgments of the protagonist actions ($M = 5.02, SE = .07$), than were male participants ($M = 4.78, SE = .07$). This difference, 0.24, CI [-0.44, -0.04], was significant $t(410) = -2.38, p = .018, d = 0.24$.

Factor Structure of Four Moral Judgment Variables

Several criteria were used to assess the validity of the factor structure. First, all 30 items correlated at least $r = 0.3$ with a minimum of one other item, suggesting reasonable factorization. Second, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy (i.e. adequate sample size) was $KMO = 0.89$, surpassing the recommended value of $KMO = 0.6$ and verifying the sampling adequacy for analysis (Hutcheson & Sofroniou, 1999). Additionally, the Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2(435) = 5641.16, p < .001$), verifying that the samples are from populations with equal variances and that, overall, the correlation between variables are significantly different from zero. Based on these indicators, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted with all 30 items.

A principle components analysis was undertaken to verify composite moral judgment scores for the four proposed factors. Initial eigenvalues confirmed that four factors met Kaiser’s criterion of greater than one. Combined, these four factors explained 54.67% of the variance. Table 3 shows factor loadings after varimax rotation. All items clustered into the proposed factors with the exception of two counter empathy items that loaded on the empathy scale (“I was unable to develop any benevolent feelings towards Edward [Rob]” and “I more or less would not care if Edward [Rob] was doing badly”). Because the empathy and counter empathy variables are the inverse of one another, this loading pattern may have made sense if the two counter empathy items were reverse coded items; however, only one was a reverse coded item. After checking the reliability of the counter empathy scale with ($\alpha = .710$) and without ($\alpha = .763$) these two items, and the correlation between the remaining counter empathy items with (-.336) and without (-.338), I eliminated the two items because of the improvement to reliability, nominal impact on correlation, and sufficient number of primary loadings in the absence of these items. As a result, the items that cluster on the same factor suggest that factor 1 represents empathy, factor 2 represents counter empathy, factor 3 represents moral evaluation, and factor 4 represents moral responsibility.

Table 3. Summary of confirmatory factor analysis with varimax rotation (n = 414)

Items	Rotated Factor Loadings			
	Empathy	Counter empathy	Moral Responsibility	Moral Evaluation
I always felt compassion for Edward (Rob).	.722	-.003	-.188	-.197
When Edward (Rob) was doing badly, I was also doing badly; when Edward (Rob) was doing well, I was also doing well.	.675	-.019	-.416	-.184
I could easily have determined how Edward (Rob) felt in various situations.	.674	.137	.007	-.236
In some situations it seemed to me as if I felt the same emotions as Edward (Rob).	.640	.045	-.126	-.221

I could only rarely empathize with Edward's (Rob's) mood.	.630	.102	-.325	-.069
I could not comprehend feelings Edward (Rob) showed.	.617	.154	.055	.054
I was unable to develop any benevolent feelings towards Edward (Rob).	-.614	-.094	.052	.120
I demonstrated little empathy towards Edward (Rob).	.598	.071	-.343	.101
I more or less would not care if Edward (Rob) was doing badly.	.506	.272	-.032	.386
I would have been unable to say whether Edward (Rob) felt well or badly.	.465	.215	.276	-.094
I repeatedly evaluated whether I like or dislike Edward's (Rob's) comments and behavior.	.062	.813	.028	.152
I formed an opinion about Edward (Rob).	.097	.749	.027	-.021
I noticed characteristics about Edward (Rob), which I like or dislike.	.162	.746	.264	.072
I did not consider how one should evaluate Edward's (Rob's) behavior.	.078	.725	.166	.111
It was not important to me to judge Edward's (Rob's) behavior.	.188	.699	.327	.175
I did not form an opinion about the things that Edward (Rob) said or did throughout the story.	-.004	.687	.075	.093
I pondered if I ought to like or dislike Edward (Rob).	.167	.643	.250	.260
It did not seem necessary to me to form an opinion about Edward (Rob).	.109	.556	-.124	.049
To what extent do you think Edward's (Rob's) decision to keep the ring (necklace) violated moral standards of right and wrong?	.012	.181	.809	.162
To what extent do you consider Edward's (Rob's) decision to keep the ring (necklace) justified by the given circumstances?	-.337	.063	.786	.087
Edward's (Rob's) act of keeping the ring (necklace) is a violation of what is morally right, irrespective of the circumstances.	-.302	.049	.761	.058
Despite being a moral gray area, I think Edward's (Rob's) act of keeping the ring (necklace) was appropriate given the circumstances.	-.001	.209	.760	.050
Edward's (Rob's) failure to help the accused man by admitting his own fault violated moral standards of right and wrong.	-.221	.107	.712	-.052
Edward's (Rob's) failure to help the accused man by admitting his own fault is justified by the given circumstances.	.032	.080	.701	.254
I was hoping that Edward (Rob) would get the "proper punishment" for what he did.	-.284	.111	.124	.734
I was waiting for something bad to happen to Edward (Rob).	-.151	-.020	-.016	.716
When Edward (Rob) was doing badly, I was doing well; when Edward (Rob) was doing well, I was doing badly.	.222	.248	.095	.613
It wasn't important to me whether something bad happened to Edward (Rob).	-.287	.260	.402	.577
I would have felt no joy if something bad happened to Edward (Rob).	-.250	.058	.041	.574
I would not feel the need to gloat if Edward (Rob) was in misery.	-.084	.280	.152	.475
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.				
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.				
Note: Factor loadings over .40 appear in bold				

Manipulation Check for Power Strength and Power Type

To demonstrate that the manipulation for power strength elicited varying perceptions of high- and low-power distinctions, participants in the study's pre-tests answered three items to determine how the protagonist's power was construed (e.g. 'To what extent does Edward hold a high-power position?'; 'To what extent does Edward hold a low-power position?'; 'To what extent does Edward have the ability to influence others?').

Demonstrating that strong measurement validity existed, the manipulated material produced significant differences in how power strength was perceived. After grouping the two high-power (high-power earned and high-power inherited) and two low-power conditions (low-power earned and low-power inherited) into one high- and one low-power group, I measured mean between-group differences of power strength scores using an independent samples t-test. Among all three pilot tests that tested the manipulation check, means for participants assigned either to high-power or low-power protagonists significantly differed. For the historic storyline pre-test, the difference between participants assigned a high power protagonist ($M = 1.4, SE = 0.48$) and low-power protagonist ($M = 3.5, SE = 0.51$) was significant $t(38) = -13.08, p = .00$. For the first modern storyline pre-test, the difference between participants assigned a high power protagonist ($M = 1.5, SE = 0.51$) and low-power protagonist ($M = 3.5, SE = 0.51$) was significant $t(38) = -12.34, p = .00$. And finally, for the second modern storyline pre-test, the difference between participants assigned a high power protagonist ($M = 1.7, SE = 0.48$) and low-power protagonist ($M = 3.5, SE = 0.51$) was significant $t(38) = -11.72, p = .00$. After determining that between-group differences were significant, the groups of

participants that read stories with high-power and low-power protagonists were correlated with the explicit questions measuring participants' perception of protagonist power.

Correlations for power strength questions (power strength factor) and power strength story assignment (Power Group) were run during for three pilots tests (Table 4). The power strength factor was comprised of three items with high reliability in the historic ($\alpha = .935$), modern1 ($\alpha = .938$), and modern2 ($\alpha = .890$) pre-tests. The calculations yielded strong correlations in the expected directions for all historic and modern pre-tests, suggesting that the manipulations of power in both storylines were effective. As reviewed above, the manipulation was demonstrated to be acceptable, and therefore, power strength factor was eliminated from the main dissertation study questionnaire.

Table 4. Pearson's product moment correlations for power strength

		Power Strength Factor
Historic Storyline	Power Group	-.856**
Modern Storyline	Power Group	-.923**
Modern Pilot 1	Power Group	-.827**
Modern Pilot 2	Power Group	-.827**

*Pearson's r; **p < .01*

Research Question 1

For research question 1, I first tested the assumption of normal distribution for attribution. I used the Kolmogorov-Smirnov as a first screen for normal distribution and found that $D(414) = 0.055$, $p = .097$. I then verified these numerical findings against visual representations of normal distribution (e.g. histogram and Q-Q Plots). Finally, I checked the Skewness statistic for attribution (-.018) and divided it by the standard error

(.120) of the statistic to determine that it was, in fact, less than +/-1.96. Based on these results, I concluded that the assumption of normal distribution of attribution had been verified.

I then established that constraint and distance were associated with power using a series of one-way ANOVAs. Then, a multivariate linear regression analysis was run using constraint and distance as predictors of attribution. This test looked for general significance of the predictors as well as for which predictor explained a larger proportion of the variance in attribution scores. Overall, research question 1 asks which aspect of power – perception of constraint or psychological distance – is more strongly related to attributions. Consequently, this question asks whether there is a difference between distance and constraint in the degree of influence over the attribution of causation for behavior.

To that end, I conducted a linear regression to examine the effect of constraint and social distance on attribution. The model explained a significant amount of the variance in attribution ($F(2, 411) = 196.19, p < .01; R^2 = .488$) (Table 5). Attribution scores were dummy-coded into a dichotomous variable such that 1 = situational attributions and 6 = disposition attributions. As predicted, high constraint was associated with situational attribution and low constraint was associated with dispositional attributions ($\beta = -.612, p = .00$), and high social distance was associated with dispositional attributions and low social distance was associated with situational attributions ($\beta = .190, p = .00$). Further, examination of the standardized coefficients for these scales reveals that the constraint variable ($\beta = -.584$) compared to the distance variable ($\beta = .203$) is a stronger predictor of the effect (see Table 5).

Table 5. Linear regression coefficients for distance and constraint variables

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p
	B	SE	B		
(Constant)	4.456	.244		18.232	.000
Distance	.190	.037	.203	5.145	.000
Constraint	-.612	.041	-.584	-14.791	.000

Dependent Variable: Attribution

Research Question 2

Research question 2 explores whether the interaction of power type and power strength produces a moderated mediation of power on moral judgment, through attribution. Prior to including the moderating variable (power type) into a moderated mediation model, the moderation effect was tested independently using PROCESS model 1 (Hayes, 2012): a linear regression model that centers predictors around the grand mean, computes interaction automatically, and conducts a simple slopes analysis. The effect of the interaction between power type and power strength on the relationship between power strength and attribution was not significant ($b = .092$, 95% CI [-0.3128, 0.4976], $t = .4484$, $p = .654$), suggesting that the manner in which power is conferred, whether earned or inherited, does not moderate the relationship between power strength and attribution. Consequently, power type was eliminated from the subsequent mediation analysis conducted for hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 predicted that the effect of perceived power on moral judgment would be mediated by the extent to which morally questionable behavior is attributed to dispositional relative to situational causes. Testing this hypothesis required an examination of mediation in four separate analyses; one for each of separate moral

judgment mechanisms analyzed for this study (i.e. moral responsibility, counter empathy, empathy, and moral evaluation). Using PROCESS model 4 (Hayes, 2012) as an analytical tool, each model had power type as the independent variable, several covariates (affective resonance, autobiographical similarity, intentionality, gender, storyline: outlined above as control variables), and attribution as the mediator. For all models, attribution was dummy-coded such that 1 = situational attributions and 6 = dispositional attributions.

Overall, partial mediation was observed for three of the four mechanisms of moral judgment. Specifically, for moral responsibility (1 = consequentialist moral judgments and 5 = deontological moral judgments), observation of a high power individual engaging in amoral behavior increased the likelihood of attributing that individual's actions to his disposition ($b = .38, p < .001$), which in turn significantly increased the likelihood of judging the individual's actions deontologically ($b = .44, p < .001$); alternatively, the observation of a low power individual engaging in amoral behavior increased the likelihood of attributing that individual's actions to his situation, which increased the likelihood of judging the individual's actions consequentially. In other words, the higher the power strength, the more likely the behavior was judged deontologically and the lower the power strength, the more likely the behavior was judged consequentially. A direct effect of power strength on moral responsibility remained even when the mediator was taken into account ($b = .26, p < .002$), suggesting partial mediation. Ultimately, this means that the effect of power on moral judgment persists even after taking the effect of attribution into account. Bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals did not include 0,

indicating a statistically meaningful indirect effect ($b = .18$, BCa 95% CI [.087, .269]) (see Figure 2).

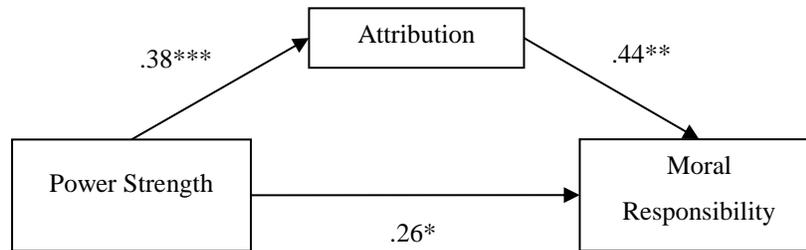


Figure 2. Regression coefficients for the relationship between power strength and moral responsibility as mediated by attribution. The regression coefficient between power strength and moral responsibility is given, controlling for intentionality and affective resonance. Power strength was coded such that 0 = low power and 1 = high power. Attribution was coded such that 1 = situational attributions and 6 = dispositional attributions.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$; *** $p < .0001$

For the affective factors of moral judgment – empathy and counter empathy – partial mediation was also present. For empathy (1 = low empathy and 5 = high empathy), again the observation of a high power individual engaging in amoral behavior increased the likelihood of attributing that individual’s actions to his disposition ($b = .38$, $p < .001$), but a negative relationship between attribution and empathy was then observed. More specifically, dispositional attributions from the observation of a high power individual behaving amorally significantly decreased the likelihood of judging that individual’s actions empathically ($b = -.33$, $p < .001$), whereas situational attributions increased the likelihood of judging actions empathically. In other words, the higher the power strength, the less likely the behavior elicited empathy and the lower the power

strength, the more likely the behavior elicited empathy. A direct effect of power strength on empathy remained when attribution was taken into account ($b = -.38, p < .001$), suggesting partial mediation. Bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals did not include 0, indicating a statistically meaningful indirect effect ($b = 1.12, \text{BCa } 95\% \text{ CI } [-.197, -.068]$) (see Figure 3). Consistent with these findings, in the case of counter empathy (1 = low counter empathy and 5 = high counter empathy), the observation of a high power individual engaging in amoral behavior increased the likelihood of attributing that individual's actions to his disposition ($b = .38, p < .001$) and a positive relationship between attribution and counter empathy was observed. If attributions were dispositional, the likelihood of feeling counter empathy about the individual's actions was more likely ($b = .19, p < .001$). In other words, the higher the power strength, the more likely the behavior elicited counter empathy and the lower the power strength, the less likely the behavior elicited counter empathy. Again, a direct effect of power strength on counter empathy remained when attribution was taken into account ($b = .22, p < .004$), suggesting partial mediation. Bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals did not include 0, indicating a statistically meaningful indirect effect ($b = .07, \text{BCa } 95\% \text{ CI } [.029, .131]$) (see Figure 4).

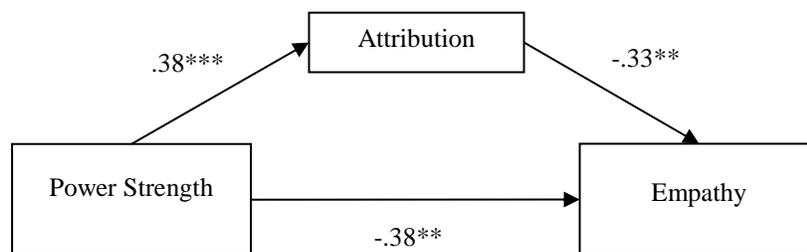


Figure 3. Regression coefficients for the relationship between power strength empathy as mediated by attribution. The regression coefficient between power strength and empathy is given, controlling for intentionality and affective resonance. Power strength was coded

such that 0 = low power and 1 = high power. Attribution was coded such that 1 = situational attributions and 6 = dispositional attributions.

$**p < .001$; $***p < .0001$

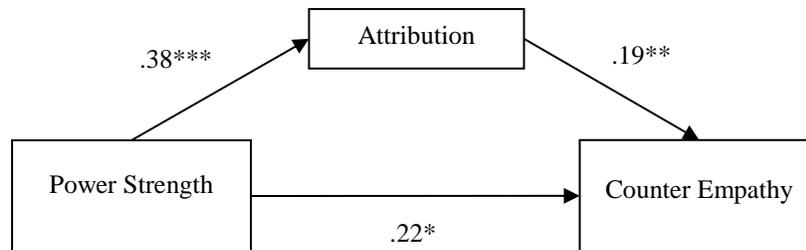


Figure 4. Regression coefficients for the relationship between power strength and counter empathy as mediated by attribution. The regression coefficient between power strength and counter empathy is given, controlling for intentionality and affective resonance. Power strength was coded such that 0 = low power and 1 = high power. Attribution was coded such that 1 = situational attributions and 6 = dispositional attributions.

$*p < .05$; $**p < .001$; $***p < .0001$

The model testing the effect of power strength on moral evaluation (1 = low degree of moral evaluation and 5 = high degree of moral evaluation) by way of attribution was non-significant; neither mediation nor a direct effect were observed (see Figure 5).

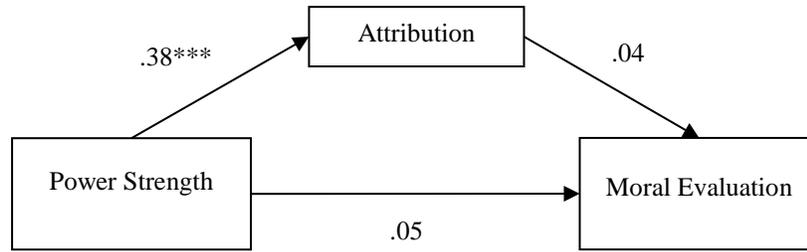


Figure 5. Regression coefficients for the relationship between power strength and moral evaluation as mediated by attribution. The regression coefficient between power strength and moral evaluation is given controlling for intentionality and affective resonance. Power strength was coded such that 0 = low power and 1 = high power. Attribution was coded such that 1 = situational attributions and 6 = dispositional attributions.

*** $p < .0001$

Covariate Results

Affective resonance (to what extent the protagonist affected participants' mood), perceived intentionality of the protagonist, participant gender, historic and modern story stimulus types, and autobiographical similarity between protagonist and participant (history of theft and/or accidental theft) were controlled for as covariates in all four models. In the three models where partial mediation was observed, affective resonance and intentionality were consistently statistically significant covariates but did not affect the significance of the overall model. Gender, storyline, and autobiographical similarity were not significant covariates and, and therefore, omitted from the final models. For each model, when the protagonist was thought to have stolen the item intentionally (1 = not intentional behavior to 6 = definitely intentional behavior), he was judged deontologically ($b = .22, p < .001$) and received low empathic response ($b = -.10, p < .001$), and high counter empathic response ($b = .10, p < .001$). When the protagonist's behavior

had a strong effect on participants' mood (1 = no emotional response and 5 = high emotional response), he was judged deontologically ($b = .12, p < .006$) and received high empathic response ($b = .13, p < .001$), as well as, high counter empathic response ($b = .23, p < .001$). Collectively, these results suggest strong support on three of the four models tested for hypothesis 1, even after taking the aforementioned control variables into account.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Discussion

Summary

The current empirical study investigated the indirect effects of power on four mechanisms of moral judgment via attribution of causation for behavior. Specifically, the study examined the moral judgment aspect of parasocial processing in two ways. Primarily, this research explored an antecedent of parasocial processing that has never been measured – specifically a contextual variable specific to a parasocially-experienced character (i.e., power). Additionally, the current study incorporated theories from research strands pertaining to moral psychology and attribution in an effort to understand the mechanisms behind the effects. In the case of parasocial processing, much of the research has been directed towards the traits inherent to character and audience member as well as the context of the audience member only. The novelty of focusing on a variable specific to character context is three-fold. First, social science scholars tend to concentrate on trait and contextual variables specific to the human actor (the person experiencing the one-way interaction) to unpack the predictors, processes, and effects of parasocial interaction. With a focus on the media consumer, character traits are also deemed important in part due to their similarity with or difference from the person of interest. By measuring the effects of one element of character context, this dissertation begins to highlight the effects of additional aspects of the social context that are normatively evaluated by the media consumer and imbued with meaning. Second, integrating attribution processes into our understanding of parasocial effects can improve

the explanatory power of parasocial theory by demonstrating yet another social cognitive process that occurs even in the absence of two-way interaction. In the case of moral judgment, using power position discrepancies among story protagonists provided a pathway to address character context effects on cognitive and affective parasocial processes such as moral decision-making, empathy, and counter empathy, and highlighted attribution as an important mediator. Connecting power, as a contextual variable, to the parasocial experience and attribution also extended our knowledge of third-person experiencing of asymmetrical relational structures and their impact on important cognitive and affective responses. By exploring the implicit and explicit effects of power via perceived constraint and social distance, the current study demonstrated the more substantial role of constraint as an explicit indicator of power in eliciting automatic attributional processing.

In addition to exploring new dependent variables, namely, the four mechanisms of moral judgment, and a new independent variable, power as a character context variable, the study also investigated attribution as a mechanism of parasocial effects. Attribution, while having previously been posited as a potential mechanism for construal effects, has not been extensively tested with statistical mediation (Agerström & Björklund, 2009). To address this gap, the current study tested the degree to which attribution elicited by effects of power mediates the effects of power strength on four mechanisms of moral judgment. By underlining attribution as explanatory of parasocial effects, the study also incorporated psychological theories on correspondence bias and construal levels into parasocial processing. To that end, the current examination not only provides evidence

of attribution as a significant mediator in the parasocial process, but also situates its findings within well-established psychological theories.

Overall, the study reported that the presence (or absence) of power in the context of a character's social orientation can have a significant effect on a reader's moral decision-making process. In chapter 3, it was outlined that a protagonist perceived to be in a high-power position will bring about judgments based on more abstract notions of what is right and wrong, in addition to a low expression of empathy and high expression of counter empathy. Alternatively, a protagonist perceived to be in a low-power position will lead to judgments based on the impact of their consequences and will be accompanied by a high expression of empathy and low expression of counter empathy. In both directions, attribution was hypothesized as the mechanism of the effect. The central hypothesis received partial support in that power distinctions were associated with moral responsibility and affective engagement, with attribution mediating the effect. However, power strength did not significantly predict moral evaluation. Further, the inclusion of affective resonance and intentionality helped to rule out these variables as confounds in the prediction of the four components of moral judgment by power such that their inclusion did not substantially alter the relationship between moral judgment and power. Gender, storyline, and two types of autobiographical similarity proved to be non-significant covariates when accounted for in each of the tested models.

Making sense of the mediation.

The findings suggest that how a character in a narrative is contextually situated with respect to power can have an effect on the manner in which his behavior is judged by a reader. In particular, participants who read a narrative with a high power protagonist

were likely to judge that individual based on moral standards of right and wrong (i.e. deontological moral reasoning). Alternatively, participants who were exposed to a narrative led by a low power protagonist were likely to judge the behaviors of that individual based on the surrounding circumstances (i.e., consequentialist moral reasoning). This effect occurred the same way irrespective of whether participants received the historic or modern stimulus type. Furthermore, high power individuals elicited strong feelings of counter empathy and weak feelings of empathy, and low power individuals elicited strong feelings of empathy and weak feelings of counter empathy. Attribution, moreover, partially mediated these effects, suggesting that attribution of causation for behaviors was the cognitive mechanism behind the observed effects. Unlike its influence on moral responsibility, empathy, and counter empathy, attribution did not influence moral evaluation. In fact, the null findings of power strength on moral evaluation might suggest that moral evaluation occurs irrespective of any attributional appraisal (attribution of causation for behavior or attribution of responsibility, blame, or praise). The presence of another social being may simply elicit opinion formation prior to any decision about causation or expectation for consequence. Given this finding, it is likely that moral evaluations operate independently of causal attribution processes and the resulting moral reasoning that occurs to assign responsibility.

The present study found significant results for both cognitive moral responsibility and affective models of empathy and counter empathy demonstrating how the process of behavioral attribution independently impacts discrete mechanisms of moral judgment. Further, the study provided support for the proposed relationship between empathy and the activation of different ethical principles put forth by Hume and Beauchamp

(1751/1998). Recall that Hume outlined how moral judgment is derived from feelings of satisfaction, uneasiness, pain, or disgust that emerge from a perceiver's feelings of empathy for the object of his or her appraisal. The author posited that if a target object is appraised and elicits strong feelings of empathy (or counter empathy), the feelings that result will differentially activate deontological or consequentialist moral principles such that low empathy leads to higher likelihood of judgment for violations to rules of moral correctness, and high empathy leads to judgment based on the anticipated outcomes of behavior. Although a causal relationship was not investigated here, the results of the current study demonstrated that deontological judgment, low empathy, and high counter empathy were predicted by the same character type (object of appraisal) and consequentialist judgment, high empathy, and low counter empathy were predicted by the same character type. Investigating whether empathy and related emotions predict the activation of different moral principles is outside of the scope of the current study; however, the relationship among these outcome variables in the constellation suggested by Hume, justifies the measurement of both affective and cognitive processes implicated in moral judgment and lays the groundwork for future studies of affective primacy.

Most important, the findings provide evidence for why a contextual variable specific to a mediated character (e.g. power strength) can influence aspects of parasocial processing by highlighting the role of social cognitive processes, such as causal attribution. Participants' attribution of causation for a character's behavior, driven by that character's power position, had a clear influence on the activation of specific moral principles (deontological vs. consequentialist), but did not affect the mere presence of moral evaluation. This result illustrates that participants rely on the cognitive process of

attribution when appraising context-based variables for moral responsibility and suggests that moral evaluation occurs irrespective of circumstantial appraisal of causation or permissibility. This finding provides empirical support that individuals evaluate third-person contextual details in two discrete ways: assessment as a high-level, detached act of information gathering and assessment as a decisive act of determining responsibility and categorizing social actors. It may be argued that the former occurs benignly just as we evaluate a setting for its many colors and shapes. The latter, however, is more closely linked to Darwin's moral sense in that it facilitates our social predictions of others' future behaviors. This finding is important as it underscores what aspect of the cognitive parasocial process pertaining to morality – assessment of moral responsibility – is impacted by character context.

The two effects of power. With regard to the power strength variable, specifically, findings suggest that although the two latent indicators of power – perceived constraint and social distance – exert a significant effect on attribution, constraint has a stronger effect on causal attribution than social distance. Despite being a latent variable of power in this instance, perceived constraint could be thought of as a more explicitly experienced delineation between the powerful and the powerless that can be observed and described in the context of one's environment. Social distance, on the other hand, is more implicit as it embodies an automatic mental construal that occurs unconsciously when social others are perceived (Gilbert & Malone, 1995; Jones & Davis, 1965; Trope, 1986). This finding suggests that the identification or perception of differences in a third-person context is driven more strongly by explicit indicators of asymmetry than implicit mental construals. Consequently, it could be that when the actor-observer effect (Fiedler,

Semin, Finkenauer, & Berkel, 1995) – an effect often cited in the literature on attribution – is applied to third-person evaluations, the power of the effect on attributions is diminished.

The failed moderator.

The manner in which power is conferred was not found to affect the process of attributing cause for behavior, or the moral judgment component of the parasocial experience. This finding is somewhat curious as power type has been theorized to have the impact of imbuing power strength with legitimacy by relating the high/low distinction to specific causes and expected outcomes (Lovaglia, 1995). Empirical findings suggest that high power roles are related to perceived interpersonal levels of influence (Shanteau, 1988), high social status attributions made by others within the person's environment (Littlepage & Muller, 1997), social capital and network connectivity (Suddaby & Viale, 2011), and professional credentialing (Abbott, 1988). However, the current study's findings indicate that the referential structures that inform how attributions differ based on power positions may not be related to individual ability, as suggested by Lovaglia (1995). Instead, one's position in a social hierarchy may exert enough of an effect on third person perceptions of behavior to render that individual's ability irrelevant when ascribing expectations, cause or judgment to said behavior. This, of course, assumes that the power conferral manipulation used in the present study is a reasonable operationalization of ability. Lovaglia argues that expectations for ability depend on whether performances of ability are attributed to an individual or a situation. Furthermore, he suggests that expectations of ability will coalesce if rewards or resources (i.e. power) are attributed to the individual (i.e. earned) and only limited expectations for

ability will form if rewards or resources are attributed to the situation (i.e. inheritance or luck). Jones and Nisbett (1971) provide evidence that attributions of ability are formed promptly and may persevere despite evidence to the contrary. However, Gilbert et al. (1987) found that information about situational factors that influence reward and resource levels can disrupt these attributions of ability. So, if we form expectations about ability based on our perceived knowledge of an individual's power – for example, wealth – and then we come to find that their wealth was inherited, Gilbert et al. (1987) posit that our expectations of the individual's ability will decrease because we now understand that the wealth resulted from position in the social structure rather than through a demonstration of competence or ability. This still poses a potential issue to the extent that an individual who inherits *may* have ability, albeit not clearly demonstrated in the context of this study. Consequently, conclusions to be made about the effect of power strength are limited and will require further investigation. Other operationalizations of power indicators, such as specific performance outcomes, may provide a more straightforward test of how referential structures impact attributions.

Significant Covariates.

Of all the covariates tested in the four models, only intentionality of the protagonist and emotional resonance were found to be significant, albeit without impacting the significance of the overall models. Gender, storyline, and autobiographical similarity were not significant covariates and were eliminated from the final models. These findings underscore two independent effects of protagonist and audience characteristics on parasocial processing: the effect of the protagonist's intentions and the effect of audience members' mood.

With respect to intentionality, the more audience members perceived the protagonist's amoral behaviors to be intentional, the more likely they were to judge the protagonist's behaviors deontologically and feel counter empathy; and, the less likely they were to feel empathy. These findings indicate that intentionality judgments – which occur when an actor performs an action intentionally - account for some of the variance in audience members' perceptions and judgments of the protagonist. Similar to power, intentionality can also be conceptualized as a contextual variable that is specific to the character. Malle and Bennett (2002) suggest that intentions, as mental states, are ascribed to actors as they themselves are intending to achieve specified ends. However, the authors argue that intentionality is ascribed to an actor's actions and include the actor's intention to achieve a certain end as well as his/her ability to achieve that end and awareness that certain actions would fulfill his/her intention. Additionally, the authors posit that individuals ascribe intentionality to determine the meaning and social function of a completed action. This line of reasoning combined with the dissertation study results reaffirms the effect of character context, in this case intentionality, on cognitive and affective information processing. Furthermore, Malle and Bennett (2002) found that when third parties perceived intentional performance of behavior, praise and blame evaluations intensified for corresponding actions. This intensified evaluation held more strongly for blame than praise. These findings dovetail with the current study in that as perceived intentionality increased for an amoral behavior, empathy decreased and counter empathy increased. Collectively, these findings stimulate further interest about the effects of character context on social perception and call for further inquiry into intentionality as a contextual antecedent of varying parasocial experience.

The results surrounding the affective resonance covariate showcases the effect of audience members' mood on their subsequent judgment of the character. In the case of the affective resonance covariate, as the character's impact on mood increased, moral judgments became more deontological and both counter empathic and empathic responses rose. Wirth and Schramm (2005) suggest that appraisals of the environment may emerge within the self or develop in conjunction with a character, which differentially results in ego-emotions and socio-emotions. Ego-emotions occur when the mediated object does not necessarily articulate an emotion, but instead evokes an emotional response from the viewer based on the viewer's personal goals, expectations and evaluations surrounding the communicated message. This process is called emotional induction. Earlier research suggests that mood states can impact information processing to the extent that different global affective states can signal abstract or concrete processing of information. For instance, the *feelings-as-information model* posits that mood states within the perceiver's own environment inform an individual about challenges in the immediate environment to the extent that good mood signals a benign environment and bad mood signals a problematic one. The benign environment defaults to low effort processing that relies on pre-existing schema or abstract heuristics – such as deontological moral judgment – to extract meaning from perceived information. Alternatively, the problematic environment requires high effort processing that relies on detail-oriented and analytic thinking to concretize a situated action plan (Schwartz, 1990). Ultimately, the integration of affect into cognitive models of information processing highlights the motivational functions of affective states and the manner in which these states may affect cognitive processing, as illustrated by the current study results.

However, this model serves to account for how affect that is present *prior* to media exposure and *within the perceiver's environment* determines information-processing style, and therefore, only serves as guidepost for how we might start to interpret the present findings. Additionally, the affective resonance covariate only measures the intensity of emotional induction rather than determining affective valence as benign or problematic. Consequently, it may be beneficial to explore these results further by specifically measuring how emotional valence, not just general intensity, impacts moral judgment, empathy, and counter empathy. Additionally, an examination of how this model applies within the context of the character's environment would also be essential for this line of inquiry.

Furthermore, if we analyze the results of the affective resonance covariate as more closely akin to socio-emotions rather than ego-emotions, these findings may be interpreted against the backdrop of studies that analyze emotions/moods that emerge exclusively as a result of relations between viewers and mediated personae (Vorderer, 2001). This sub-category of socio-emotions has elsewhere been described as affective involvement (Wirth & Schramm, 2005). According to Hall and Bracken (2011), the degree of affective involvement experienced during media reception of narratives is moderated by audience member relationships with characters. Similarly, Klimmt et al (2006) suggest that the more audience members infer mental states of characters, the more likely they are to experience affective involvement, and subsequently, empathic engagement with limited cognitive effort. When considered in light of the current findings, these studies beg the question as to whether a high- or low-power position differentially enables audience members to more readily infer characters' mental states.

It may be that psychological closeness or distance that is derived from the perception of a character's power position could make characters' mental states seem more or less accessible to a perceiver. Although these previous studies touch on the effects of affective involvement on empathy and perceived parasocial relationships, they lack a focused examination of moral judgment as an outcome variable. Findings from this dissertation call for further investigation into the potential impact of affective resonance as a mediator of the proposed effect.

Power and Parasocial Processing.

To that end, results from this study can potentially invite discussion on how power or social position in a community can impact perception and judgments of characters. It was demonstrated here that power, as a representation of a character's orientation in a social context, could impact the manner in which the consumer of narrative content judges and emotionally reacts to that character. Moral judgment, empathy, and counter empathy have previously been identified as key features of parasocial processing and measured in response to character attributes, audience member attributes, and audience member context (Schramm & Hartmann, 2008). However, the present idea differs from previous tests of variation in features of parasocial processing because it identifies power as one contextual detail specific to the character that impacts the parasocial experience. Power, as stated earlier, has been theorized to impact psychological effects and generate behavioral affordances and is considered to be a dimension of the relational environment (Kelley et al, 2003). Specifically, Overbeck et al (2006) demonstrated how perception of individuals with or without power generates different inferences for attribution of causation for behavior. According to Overbeck and

colleagues, perceivers assume powerful targets are more able to act dispositionally because of a presumed lack of constraint from external elements. However, powerless targets are thought to be highly constrained by their environments, and therefore, situational attributions are a more likely outcome of third-party inference. This study provided a strong foundation upon which power was selected as a contextual variable to assess the impact of character context on parasocial processing. The present findings not only lend further validity to Overbeck and colleagues' results, but also build on these premises by identifying attribution as a mediating cognitive mechanism between power and relational judgments in a narrative context. Ultimately, this verifies the impact of power on information processing and tells us by what means the perception of power impacts the process of moral judgment.

Parasocial Processing

In addition to having translated and validated the PSI-Process Scales as a means to test features of parasocial processing in English, these findings contribute to research on parasocial phenomena in several ways (see Appendix A for a full discussion of the Scale translation and validation). Scholars examining parasocial interaction, relationships, and processing have called for additional experimental research on the factors underlying these phenomena (Cohen, 2009; Schramm & Hartmann, 2008; Tsao, 2004). The current research answers this call by experimentally investigating the effects of power as character context on parasocial processing. This approach complements several experimental studies that have been conducted in the past to address this methodological gap in the parasocial literature (Auter, 1992; Auter & Davis, 1991; Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2010, Schramm & Wirth, 2010).

The current findings also suggest that parasocial phenomena are processed as inherently social despite the non-mutual nature of this form of communication. Results from this study roughly correspond to those suggested in previous tests of the theoretical concept that explore how aspects of mediated characters can impact social processing (judgment, like/dislike, etc.). In the present study, participants reported a different quality of parasocial experience (judgment based on character situation vs. judgment based on character disposition; and experience of counter empathy and/or empathy) depending upon the character's power position. This finding resonates with previous research that identifies aspects of the character as a central determinant of social processing. Eyal and Dailey (2012) examined how a character's perceived openness, self-disclosure, social support, and avoidance of conflict affected parasocial relationships. The authors found that participants judged characters more favorably when these indicators of relational investment were more closely aligned with their own. Dibble & Rosaen (2011) explored how varying levels of perceived interaction with characters and identification with their explicit traits impact the extent to which parasocial interaction is experienced. Their findings underscored the notion that social processing in the context of parasocial relations is largely influenced by perceived interaction with the character; a perception that corresponds to character traits and types of address. The current study builds on examples showcasing how character traits contribute to the parasocial experience by offering evidence that one type of character context seems to determine how empathy and counter empathy are experienced and in what way characters are judged.

Finally, the combined statistically significant findings from the PSP validation study, outlined in Appendix A, and the main dissertation study suggest that text-based narratives do, in fact, elicit parasocial processing responses. Not only does this open the door to further exploration of the parasocial phenomenon in written narrative, but it also demonstrates that audio-visual content need not be present for the social cognitive processes of parasocial interaction and relations to occur. Similar to Honeycutt's (2003a) notion of imagined interactions – cognitive processes that take place when individuals imagine themselves in dialogue with social others – one-way communicative exchange does not require audio-visual stimulation to yield communicative efficiency or relational development. In fact, employing imaginative cognitions in this way has also been found to facilitate the activation of procedural records (i.e. schemas), interaction goals, and decision-making (Greene, 1984; Honeycutt & Bryan, 2011), promote cognitive and affective coping activities (Berkos, Allen, Kearney, & Plax, 2001; Taylor & Schneider, 1989), perpetuate conflict (Honeycutt, 2003b), and increase teamwork and athletic performance (Martin, Mortiz, & Hall, 1999). Consequently, the potential products of parasocial interaction and relations with characters in text-based narratives are many and warrant further investigation.

Limitations and Future Directions

Participant Response Validity. Given that this study was administered online, addressing validity and reliability of participant responses is essential. Several recent studies suggest that research conducted in social science laboratories and online demonstrate little difference in participant response (Paolacci, Chandler, & Ipeirotis, 2010; Mason & Suri, 2012). Paolacci et al (2010) replicated standard judgment and

decision-making studies on MTurk, online discussion boards, and in a university lab setting. Quantitatively, the results from the three recruitment strategies yielded nominal differences; qualitatively, the results were identical across the three populations. Additionally, the authors suggested that unsupervised, online participants, when compared to participants in a lab, can be monitored to achieve the same level of attentiveness if a “catch trial” (i.e. a question that checks to see if the participants are reading) is provided. As stated earlier, the current study included a catch trial to eliminate non-attentive participants. Of the 420 participants in this study, approximately 1.4% were eliminated by the catch trial question, indicating that participants largely exhibited strong attentiveness when performing the survey task. Another issue that emerges with respect to online studies is the participation of habitual survey-takers and communication about the study across this population. Chandler, Mueller, & Paolacci (2014) demonstrate that communication between survey-takers is rare and participation is driven by payment rather than by the topic of the survey. Additionally, Kaufmann, Schulze, & Veit (2011) found that intrinsic motivation for survey participation is related to task autonomy and skill variety rather than survey topic or type. Finally, Berinsky, Huber and Lenz (2012) found that 88% of MTurk participants take two or fewer surveys in one month and as little as 2.4% of responses were received from the same IP address. These findings suggest that habitual and multiple survey-taking behaviors is actually uncommon to this population. Although the anonymity afforded by recruiting from MTurk is beneficial for the Workers and IRB protocols, it precludes me from examining their records to determine whether and how these aforementioned issues apply to those who completed the current study. However, I chose to employ Workers with the Masters

qualification for their proven track record of accuracy, high approval rating by other Requesters, and longer average time spent on tasks.

Another issue of note when conducting an experiment online is selective attrition. If one condition places a greater burden on the participant than another, the online environment may be more conducive to participant withdrawal than the lab setting (Horton, Rand, & Zeckhauser, 2011). The experimental conditions contrived for the present study are identical with the exception of the manipulation of character context (i.e. power position and the manner in which power was conferred); a set of textual details that were unlikely to cause increase or decrease of perceived burden to bring about selective attrition. Moreover, participant drop-outs only occurred during piloting when compensation level was deemed too low by the participants.¹ Consequently, the evidence supports the online venue as a valid and reliable means of collecting data for social science experiments.

Gender. Controlling for gender in the overall analysis demonstrated that even when gender was taken into account, all three significant mediation models were still significant. However, to determine whether the models differ among men and women participants, bivariate correlations between gender and the dependent variables revealed a significant relationship between gender and the determination of moral responsibility, signifying that gender is related to at least one variable of interest in the present study. Upon further investigation, an independent t-test revealed that the female population is more likely to judge the actions of the protagonist deontologically than male participants. Having controlled for gender in the overall mediation models suggests that the slightly larger population of female participants does not pose a serious threat to the study's

¹ The researcher received feedback over email to account for drop-outs during pilot testing.

validity, but the gender difference in moral responsibility responses requires further consideration. A meta-analysis reviewing work on gender differences in moral judgment styles revealed that gender is not a strong predictor of predilection for deontological or consequentialist judgments (Jaffee & Hyde, 2000). However, a more recent meta-analysis that takes moral judgment *and* emotion into account reveals that, relative to men, women are less consequentialist in their moral thinking and have stronger moral concerns related to care and purity. Furthermore, this difference is mediated by gender differences in empathic concern, such that women were shown to have higher capacity for empathic concern (Koleva, Selterman, Kang, & Graham, 2014). This latter review explains the higher degree of deontological judgments against the protagonist who made an amoral decision at the expense of others (i.e. in the historic storyline, the man who received the blame was exposed to public ridicule and potential hanging; in the modern storyline, the man who received the blame lost his job, suffered public humiliation, and was arrested). However, this does not explain why the discrepancy in results was not also present in the empathy and counter empathy models. This could be attributed to varying definitions and measurements across different studies for the empathy and counter empathy variables and would require further investigation.

Finally, it may be worthwhile to consider the fact that the study's stimulus materials exclusively feature a male protagonist. According to Bandura (1994), gender similarity is an important factor to the relationship between a media consumer and a televised character in that it increases the likelihood of attention and influence. This may be related to Rogers and Bhowmik's (1970) notion that perceived homophily increases the frequency of interaction and increased interaction begets stronger potential for

influence. Greater degrees of homophily are also tied to increased perceived identification with a character (Hoffner, 1996). Several researchers have provided evidence that identification, especially identification based on gender, mediates television's effects on viewers (Huesmann, Lagerspetz, & Eron, 1984; MacCoby & Wilson, 1957; Reeves & Miller, 1978). So, perhaps, the lack of female protagonist affected the capacity of female participants to relate to the central character in the present study. Consequently, the increased social distance bolstered the likelihood of more abstract, deontological moral judgments among female participants more so than male participants. Future research might investigate how readers react when confronted with both female and male protagonists engaging in amoral behavior, while also accounting for perceived homophily, identification, and social distance as mediators of any gender effects.

Referential Structures. As outlined above, the failure of the power conferral (power type) variable to affect the relationship between power strength and attribution is interesting considering it should impact how participants generate expectations for the power holder's behavior (Gilbert et al, 1987). Power depicts position or standing in a social hierarchy based upon the ability to obtain rewards and/or resources. Expectations of a person in any given position are produced by relationships between individuals and referential structures (e.g. how position was obtained). Referential structures essentially outline competency or ability and carry with them implicit attributional biases (Lovaglia, 1995). Also pointed out previously, the current study may not have utilized the optimal operationalization of ability level necessary to serve as a referential structure for readers because an individual who inherits can still be attributed with ability. A clearer

operationalization might depict the protagonist as having achieved specific performance outcomes or as having explicit skills, competencies, or institutional credibility (e.g. degree, license, etc.). Knowledge about a person's reputation also impacts attributions of ability (e.g. Rand, Dreber, Ellingsen, Fudenberg, & Nowak, 2009) and could serve as a clearer manipulation of the intended effect. Additionally, individual difference variables not measured in this study might play a significant role in accounting for when power type could elicit attributional bias. For example, participants in this study may self-report a high or low power position due to personal effort or inheritance, and this element of autobiographical similarity may have affected their attribution of ability and resulting expectations of the protagonist. In a parallel effort, Hende, Dahl, Schoormans, and Snelders (2012) recently demonstrated that protagonist-reader similarity impacts narrative transportation (a cognitive and affective experiential process) and product evaluation, seemingly making the narrative more effective in conveying its intended message. In a similar way, individuals who see themselves as akin to the high-power protagonist may not attribute behaviors to that character's disposition given that attributions of causation for personal behavior are often qualified by one's circumstances (Gilbert & Malone, 1995; Jones & Nisbett, 1971; Ross, 1977). Although this type of autobiographical similarity was not measured in this dissertation, future research could include measures of self-reported power orientation to determine whether reader-protagonist autobiographic similarity interacts with attribution of causation for behavior in general, and judgments about amoral behaviors specifically.

The Relevance of Parasocial Theory. The current study was designed and carried out with the purpose of addressing a theoretical gap in previous investigations of

parasocial phenomena. In my reading of the parasocial literature, I failed to identify any exploration into the impact of character context on audience members' social processing of mediated characters. This observation represents a very broad gap in the parasocial literature that required a substantial delimitation of scope in order to be investigated empirically. Consequently, the current study design and its specific variables emerged inductively from this broader observation and were tested deductively in the outlined experiment. The cognitive and affective processes of moral judgment were selected as specific variables of interest and represent only a subset of the larger suite of parasocial processes. Similarly, context is an extremely broad concept that not only encompasses myriad variables, but is also defined and interpreted differently by a wide array of academic disciplines. Power was singled out as a specific variable of the social context to delimit the scope of this concept. In both instances, the independent and dependent variables selected for this study may be interpreted as concepts in and of themselves rather than as constructs representing broader concepts.

In the case of moral judgment and parasocial theory, there is a case to be made that the cognitive and affective processes of moral judgment may be examined without reference to parasocial processing. Despite the fact that moral judgment was measured in a mediated relationship (i.e. between audience member and character), moral judgment is a social process that occurs systematically when the presence of a social other is perceived in our awareness (Sadler-Smith, 2012). The perception of a social other does not necessarily call for two-way interaction, co-presence, or even full embodiment to impact social cognitive processes and resulting behavior. For instance, Bateson, Nettle, & Roberts (2006) demonstrated that the perceived physical presence of social others,

elicited by displaying images of human eyes, impacts cooperation and honesty behaviors. So assuming that mediated characters are perceived as social others, they may elicit moral judgments that can be compared to moral judgment processes levied toward a non-mediated social other. Consequently, it could be argued that the ‘parasocial’ distinction between mediated moral judgment and non-mediated moral judgment may not be necessary. To examine the current findings outside of the realm of parasocial theory such that we only consider the effect of power on moral judgment and not the effect of one aspect of character context on one aspect of parasocial processing, would not impact the interpretation of the results, but rather would only delimit the contributions of the study to those discussed in the sections on the mediation, power, the moderators and the covariates. Ultimately, the results of this study could be considered both granularly and under the larger conceptual umbrella of parasocial theory.

Future Research: The Big Picture. Recall in an earlier chapter of this dissertation, a discussion of Thibaut and Kelley’s (1959) interdependence theory, which posits that aspects of interpersonal context activate specific cognitive and affective processes to help individuals interpret and respond to their immediate environment. Of the six dimensions that comprise the interpersonal context stated in the theory, mutuality of outcome interdependence as defined by power was selected for the current investigation. Although this dissertation provides clear evidence of the mechanisms behind power as a contextual variable specific to a mediated character in a textual narrative, there are still research gaps worth investigating in the future. First, the findings from this dissertation can only be generalized to two types of contextual details – power as a function of constraint and power as a function of social distance – as well as three

types of PSP responses – cognitive moral judgment, empathy and counter empathy. Other interpersonal contextual variables specific to character could elicit different reactions among participants and in different combinations of parasocial processes (cognitive, affective, and behavioral). For instance, Worchel (1986) found that social isolation/private behavior, when compared to social connection/public behavior, influences perceived interpersonal distance and intimacy. In the same way that power relates to social distance, this contextual variable of a character's social density might also instigate varying degrees of social distance, and subsequently, attribution, to impact resulting moral judgments. This roughly relates to previous examinations of viewer context that explored how watching television in a group versus watching television alone impacted the parasocial experience (Eyal & Dailey, 2012; Schramm & Hartmann, 2008). It would essentially explore how a character's social density (i.e. a character conveyed as taking action within a group compared to a character taking action alone) has the potential to impact the parasocial experience. Investigating a second social contextual variable related to a mediated character seems like a logical next step to explore the generalizability of the current study.

Temporal structure of outcomes represents another important dimension of the interpersonal context (Reis, 2008). Also tested in this dissertation, albeit as a control, was the impact of temporal context on the proposed model. Recall that the stimulus materials featured a historic and modern-day context in order to test the reliability of the proposed effects across storylines. The findings demonstrated that temporal context, as defined here by past and present settings, did not impact the effect of power on moral judgment; however, it might be interesting to investigate how various temporal features,

such as the how the protagonist is situated in time (visiting the future from the past or the past from the future) may affect cognitive and emotional responses to characters. We might also consider how a protagonist's *actions* are situated in time (occurring in a flashback or flash forward, reflected upon versus forecasted to occur) as a temporal context variable of interest for its impact on parasocial processing. Loof (2014) found that narrative flashbacks decreased relational uncertainty and increased perceived social closeness with mediated characters, suggesting that flashbacks can illuminate information about a character that provide context and explanation for a character's behavior. These findings may also have the potential to impact judgments and feelings of empathy and counter empathy. Additionally, Roh & Schuldt (2014) reported that criticized, youth-targeted, narrative marketing campaigns that are framed prospectively elicit stronger negative emotions and stimulate more pro-social attitudes than campaigns framed retrospectively. This indicates that, in the mind of audience members, behaviors that have yet to occur are more evocative than those that have already occurred. There is then reason to believe that the resultant parasocial processes that accompany anticipation and retrospection may differ as a consequence of temporal context. Future research should investigate how various derivations of temporal context might impact parasocial processing in order to build our knowledge of the contextual antecedents of these processes. With that in mind, I argue that examinations of power are simply a first step in a far greater exploration of how character contexts impact the audience experience.

Given that the current study pertains to the cognitive and affective mechanisms governing reader-character interaction and relationships, varying the interpersonal context variable is only the first among many ways to build on the current findings.

Another line of inquiry may be to investigate how different types of parasocial targets impact the effects of power, attribution, and the resultant judgments. In his extensive review of the literature on parasocial interaction and parasocial relationships, Giles (2002) distinguished three orders of parasocial encounters along two dimensions according to: 1) physical and psychological closeness of the media figure (indicated by proximate/face-to-face or distant/mediated interaction); and, 2) authentic realism of the media figure (determined by whether the figure is representing his/her true identity, portraying a fictional role, or is a fantasy figure with no real-life counterpart). The current study used a second-order, fictionalized, human character who was fully mediated, but could have had a real-life counterpart. How might the order of the parasocial encounter impact the present findings? For instance, would a non-fictionalized actor with power who was depicted engaging in amoral behavior garner the same parasocial processing response as one without power? Boorstin (1961) suggests that celebrities (a subset of mediated, real individuals imbued with social capital/power) are subject to a lower standard of moral integrity. Brown, Basil, and Bocarnea (2003) demonstrated that despite his abuse of steroids to enhance his athletic performance, baseball player Mark McGwire still garnered positive judgments of character from study participants. It would be interesting to tease apart whether this effect is power-specific, by contrasting moral indiscretions of a high power real-life individual with a low power one. This also begs the question as to how the current findings apply to a third order parasocial actor such as a cartoon character. Condry (1989) suggests that individuals use cues, such as animation, to distinguish reality from fantasy. Further, when scenes are interpreted as real, relative to unrealistic, they have a greater likelihood to impact subsequent attitudes and behaviors

(Berkowitz, 1984; Huesmann, Lagerspetz, & Eron, 1984). Would the fantastical nature of the parasocial actor impact the present findings? Future research could bear out these questions to determine if power affects moral judgments by way of attribution for the three different orders of parasocial situations.

Finally, the current investigation is limited to findings based on reactions of participants to unintentionally amoral behaviors only. Future research would optimally compare the effects of power and attribution on moral judgment based on exposure to unintentional and intentional moral behaviors, as well as, intentional amoral behaviors. This, most importantly, speaks to current findings on intentionality, which was shown to be a significant covariate in the present models. As mentioned previously, Malle and Bennett (2002) found that when third parties perceived intentional performance of behavior, praise and blame evaluations intensified for corresponding actions. Furthermore, these intensified evaluations held more strongly for blame than praise. These findings suggest that the effect observed in the present dissertation may be stronger in an instance where the protagonist's behavior was overtly intentional. Additionally, the practice of an amoral behavior compared to a moral behavior is more likely to elicit stronger judgments. However, the extent of these differences and how they relate to attribution of causation is a line of inquiry worthy of future investigation.

Practical Implications

Bruner (1986) delineates between two modes of thought: propositional thinking and narrative thinking. According to the author, characters, along with conflict, setting, plot, and theme, are the central literary elements that give rise to effective narratives. Further, Bruner suggests that propositional thinking (which includes logical

argumentation and scientific deduction) is specifically context-independent and narrative thinking is context-rich, demanding an understanding of human intention and an appreciation of time and place. As the core relational component of narratives, characters give rise to readers' natural engagement with a social object which is subject to context sensitivity. In keeping with the findings from this study, Bruner would argue that characters bring about specific emotional and judgment responses as a function of their contextual surroundings.

In addition to extending theory on parasocial processing by highlighting the relationship between power and moral judgment, the findings from this dissertation may be further applied to the practice of creating influential characters in a wide range of narrative texts and visual representations. Orson Scott Card, as a writer and mentor to other writers, has had a profound effect on the author of this dissertation. In his mentoring work, he has suggested that, "Vivid and memorable characters aren't *born*: they have to be *made*," (Card, 2010, p. 4). In his book on how to develop characters, Card suggests that characters become what we see them do. However, he expresses that this is the shallowest form of characterization to the extent that actions do not necessarily give readers enough information to truly know, judge, and feel for a character. Instead, he argues that a character is what he *means* to do and that this intention is put forth by readers' knowledge of his past, his reputation, and his position relative to others in his immediate social network (Card, 2010). This instructional text for new fiction writers underscores the importance of character context to shape how we perceive a character's intentions and motives for engaging in certain behaviors (i.e. attribution of causation). According to the author, an artfully-crafted character is one that elicits specific judgments

based on author-provided contextual details. The current study sheds light on a specific contextual detail that may be utilized to manipulate readers' relationship with a character by influencing the emotional and cognitive processing of that character's actions.

Emphasizing or minimizing a character's power could have the effect of increasing or attenuating more stringent, abstract judgments of the character as well as impacting readers' experience of empathy and counter empathy. For example, video game characters/heroes, adopted by the user, are often in a position of low power seeking to topple the enemy who is often situated in a high power position (e.g. Pokemon vs. the Elite Thieves; Mario vs. King Koopa; Riou of Suikoden vs. the Mad Prince, Luca Blight). Despite the protagonist's morally questionable actions, his or her subordinate position may be intentional to manipulate or possibly disengage (Raney, 2011; Shafer & Raney, 2012) any moral sentiments that would disrupt the defeat of the high power antagonist. Affective disposition theory situates emotional empathy as a chief mechanism guiding the formation of affective dispositions (after moral judgments have been made), and therefore, viewers' responses to and expectations of media characters (Raney, 2006). Zillmann (1991) argues that audience members experience empathic or counter empathic engagement with characters, which then dictates their expectations for narrative outcomes. Outcomes that are consistent with these expectations then impact audience members' experience of enjoyment. In this sense, empathic emotional processing can be seen as a conduit for emotional induction of pleasure. So by understanding how specific contextual details (i.e. power position) can impact most individuals' experience of empathy, moral judgment, and subsequent expectations, authors can align ultimate plot outcomes to instantiate the intended experience of pleasure in their readers. Further, an

author might also insert explicit indicators of whether actions can be attributed to a character's disposition or situation to bring about the same type of effect. This sort of thoughtful, evidence-based writing can engender more pleasurable experiences of narrative consumption in fictional books, film, televised content, and narrative-based video games and virtual reality experiences.

Conclusion

Overall, this dissertation furnishes meaningful evidence underscoring the complex nature of the one-way parasocial experience. Findings from the dissertation study demonstrate how a character's perceived power can influence audience responses within the context of a written narrative. Attribution, moreover, emerges as an important mediator to explain this relationship, thus confirming previous research on social distance, constraint, attribution, and moral judgment. Together, findings from the dissertation serve to identify context-specific sources of discrepancy in moral judgment, while also pointing toward future research that can facilitate the creation of fictional content and enhance the pleasurable experience of media consumers.

APPENDICES

Appendix A. Validation Study Instruments, Stimuli, IRB, and Analysis



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Institutional Review Board for Human Participants

Concurrence of Exemption

To: Jill Axline
From: Amita Verma, Director, ORIA
Approval Date: December 20, 2013
Protocol ID#: 1312004377
Protocol Title: PSI Process Scale English Translation Validation

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Amita Verma'.

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Cc: Poppy McLeod

PSI-PROCESS Scale Validation English Measurement Items

For all items, participants answered on a five-point scale, ranging from ‘Strongly disagree’ to ‘Strongly Agree’.

Cognitive Parasocial Processing Items

1. I have wondered every once in a while whether I have been in similar situations as (protagonist).
2. I reacted rather matter-of-factly and emotionally unfazed towards (protagonist).
3. I intensely thought about (protagonist)’s behavior.
4. (Protagonist)’s feelings were sometimes contagious.
5. I didn’t really notice (protagonist).
6. What (protagonist) has said or done did not trigger any emotions in me.
7. I have actually never thought about what (protagonist) might do or say next.
8. When (protagonist) showed up, I forgot my own feelings and adopted his/her mood.
9. I was neither excited about nor agitated by what (protagonist) has said or done.
10. I rarely made assumptions about what could happen to (protagonist).
11. I often had ideas about how things would develop for (protagonist).
12. I did not think about (protagonist)’s situation one bit.
13. I have noticed characteristics about (protagonist), which I like or dislike.
14. I formed only a fleeting impression of (protagonist).
15. Every once in a while, I have pondered previous incidences in which (protagonist) has behaved similarly.
16. I did not compare myself to (protagonist).
17. I can still remember exactly what I thought (protagonist) would look like.
18. I tried to understand (protagonist)’s acts.
19. I made an effort to comprehend (protagonist)’s reactions.
20. I barely noticed how (protagonist) behaved.

21. While reading about (protagonist)'s actions, I repeatedly considered whether I would have done a better or worse job than him/her.
22. It was not important to me to judge (protagonist)'s behavior.
23. I had the impression that (protagonist)'s mood was rarely transferred to me.
24. I repeatedly pondered if I ought to like or dislike (protagonist).
25. I have actually never wondered whether (protagonist) has something to do with me.
26. It did not seem necessary to me to form an opinion about (protagonist).
27. I watched closely how (protagonist) behaved.
28. I have rarely thought about whether I personally would have acted in the same way as (protagonist).
29. Everyone once in a while, I thought about whether (protagonist) is similar or dissimilar to me.
30. I have rarely thought about whether (protagonist)'s behavior is typical of him/her.
31. (Protagonist) repeatedly attracted my entire attention.
32. The feelings, which I observed (protagonist) go through, were not contagious.
33. I have frequently had thoughts such as, "I would like to do this like (protagonist)" or "I definitely don't want to do this like (protagonist)."
34. I hardly thought about why (protagonist) did certain things.
35. The behavior of (protagonist) had a strong influence on my own mood.
36. I rarely had any expectations about how (protagonist) would behave next.
37. I rarely pondered whether I have ever been in similar circumstances as (protagonist).
38. The picture of (protagonist) that I thought about when reading the story is still vivid in my mind.
39. I have often thought about what the future holds for (protagonist).
40. I occasionally reacted very emotionally towards (protagonist).
41. I repeatedly pictured (protagonist)'s situation in my mind.

42. I have occasionally recalled things I know about (protagonist).
43. I repeatedly evaluated whether I like or dislike (protagonist)'s comments and behavior.
44. I often put effort into anticipating how (protagonist) will behave.
45. I did not consider how one should evaluate (protagonist)'s behavior.
46. I did not form an opinion about the things that (protagonist) said or did throughout the story.
47. I have considered what united me with, and what distinguishes me from (protagonist).
48. I have rarely thought about what (protagonist) looked like in my memory.
49. (Protagonist) did not trigger any memories in me.
50. I rarely wondered about the consistency of (protagonist)'s behavior.
51. I repeatedly tried to guess what (protagonist) would do or say next.
52. I hardly thought about the meaning of (protagonist)'s actions.
53. I did not concern myself with what could happen to (protagonist) during the course of the story.
54. I repeatedly pondered whether I know people who resemble (protagonist).
55. I have formed an opinion about (protagonist).
56. I didn't pay attention to (protagonist).

AFFECTIVE VALENCE ITEM: How likable did you find (protagonist)? (Answer choices: 'Very unlikable' to 'Very likable')

Negative valence affective items:

1. There were moments in which I despised (protagonist) very much.
2. Occasionally, I hated (protagonist) for what he/she said or did.
3. I found (protagonist) to be particularly dislikable.
4. I felt rather negative towards (protagonist).
5. I did not find what (protagonist) said or did particularly objectionable.
6. I did not link any particularly negative feelings to (protagonist).

7. I did not feel any particular aversion towards (protagonist).
8. I couldn't say whether I hated (protagonist).
9. I was hoping that (protagonist) would get the "proper punishment" for what he/she said or did.
10. I was continuously waiting for something bad to happen to (protagonist).
11. When (protagonist) was doing badly, I was doing well; when (protagonist) was doing well, I was doing badly.
12. I was unable to develop any benevolent feelings towards (protagonist).
13. It wasn't important to me whether something bad happened to (protagonist).
14. I would have felt not joy if something bad had happened to (protagonist).
15. I would not feel the need to gloat if (protagonist) was in misery.
16. I more or less would not care if (protagonist) was doing badly.

Positive valence affective items:

1. There were moments in which I admired (protagonist) very much.
2. Occasionally, I downright loved (protagonist) for what he/she said or did.
3. (Protagonist) was likable.
4. One simply has to like (protagonist).
5. I couldn't say whether I had any positive feelings towards (protagonist).
6. (Protagonist) did not particularly call forth affection in me.
7. I did not feel particularly sympathetic towards (protagonist).
8. I neither liked nor admired (protagonist) for what he/she said or did.
9. I always felt compassion for (protagonist).
10. When (protagonist) was doing badly, I was also doing badly; when (protagonist) was doing well, I was also doing well.
11. I could easily have determined how (protagonist) felt in various situations.
12. In some situations it seemed to me as if I felt the same emotions as (protagonist).

13. I could only rarely empathize with (protagonist)'s mood.
14. I could not comprehend the feelings that (protagonist) showed.
15. I demonstrate little empathy towards (protagonist).
16. I would have been unable to say whether (protagonist) felt well or badly.

Validation Study Stimulus Materials

LIKABLE PROTAGONIST

Darren was in a long zig-zagging line of people in crisp business attire. He admired how meticulously done some people were. As he looked them over, trying not to show it, he imagined himself to be standing in a row of awake, cheery superhuman cyborgs. Each person either talked to someone next to them, or talked to their phone. They smiled a lot. In particular, Darren noticed that none of them were sweating, despite the bright, hot day outside the windows of the coffee shop. The sight made Darren involuntarily tug at his shirt; he was grateful for the air conditioned oasis he stood in.

Darren closed his eyes, breathed in, out. Darren filled his lungs with sighing waves. He simulated their sound in his mind as he pictured the sand darkening at sunset with water as clear as clean glass. Just when he had successfully muted the noise around him, he caught the sound of the woman behind him talking. Her deep, clear voice sounded calm and positive. "That's good news," Darren heard, and he found himself listening for more. "Yes, I think it'll do well. I like it, and so do some people I showed it to. Either way, you've already created something wonderful, darling."

Darren did his best not to eavesdrop further. From what he couldn't help but hear the conversation continued along similar lines. The woman was speaking to someone who he imagined to be an artist of some kind. Darren envied the call; overhearing it, his dream felt suddenly impossible. That was becoming a familiar enough feeling, however, and one he was learning how to shake away.

He moved forward around a turn in the snaking line and stole a glance at her. He had to look up a little to see her dark green eyes, and she had long, straight hair framing her relaxed face; her hair was pale red on top of brown. Then her eyes looked into his for a moment and he took another step and she was behind him. His mind was filled with the face he had seen. The next time the line started to curve, he found her standing much closer to him, and he was keenly aware of how the line of her jaw ran equal to his eyes. The two sociable young cyborgs in front of Darren stopped moving forward and he was stuck in the bend, turned slightly toward her.

She wore a suit, but it was only business in spirit. There was something different to the way it was cut, something artful but Darren was ignorant about fashion. While her jacket fit her like one,

it played with her outline, giving her wider, sharper shoulders and a profile that was more a sweeping arc than a figure. It enhanced her size, and her long, straight pants and flats showed off her natural height.

After a moment, he looked at her. She kept her lips closed as she smiled. He smiled back, then looked away. He felt compelled to say something.

"I'm Alexandra. What's your name?"

"Darren," he said. He suddenly felt tight above the shoulders. He cleared his throat and worked his face, trying his best to force it to relax.

Alexandra had a big smile that showed all of her straight white teeth. She made a face, her mouth becoming a line; Darren read her expression as thoughtful and amused. "What's your last name?"

"Rachel," Darren said using the French pronunciation. "Why," he asked her. She raised one eyebrow. "I was curious. Are you going to get hot or iced coffee, Darren?"

Darren shook his head a little at her question. "Going cold today. What's your preference?"

"I get one of the cans. Just want a shot. You from out of town?"

Darren laughed a little. "Do I look like I'm from out of town?"

"I don't know where you're from." It sounded firm, almost like a snap.

Darren blinked. He felt less sure of his laugh. Her expression didn't change and, even though her words were a little rough on his ear, she didn't look offended. "I live in Brooklyn. Why do you ask?"

"Because if I can find out enough about you before you can stop me, I bet I can talk you into sitting with me."

"Ah."

"You're a blusher. Cute."

Darren chuckled and shook his head.

"Look. I'm taking a fifteen minute break. I like company. We already know too much not to be curious."

Alexandra shrugged her sharp shoulders. "Sit with me or don't." She shook her smartphone in her hand. "I can find something else to look at."

"Hey, come on," Darren said. "All right, already."

They were nearer to the front of the line now, and she was standing more next to him than behind him. "Let me buy your coffee."

"You don't have to."

"It'll taste like a treat," she said, and when he walked up to the register she came, too.

Alexandra looked at him; he ordered. She got a can from the refrigerated section and then paid for both. They found two seats opposite a small table that was crowded up against other small tables with people sitting at them.

Darren found himself ticking between different emotions every few moments as he sat down with her. He went from wondering if the people on either side of him could tell that he didn't belong there, or with her. If they looked at the fine way she was dressed and then back at what he threw on; if they looked too different. Then all at once he wanted specifically to sit there with her, because something about it did feel different.

She smiled with half of her mouth. "Don't be mad," she said. "I'm teasing you on purpose." She popped open her can. "If you can take my teasing, we can be friends."

"I don't mind it," Darren said. He wanted to add, "I like it," but he didn't.

Her green eyes were dark even with a harsh light shining directly down onto her, but he could see the depth to their color, like emeralds. "Am I making you uncomfortable," she asked.

"No."

"Your turn to say something."

"What do you do?"

She was looking down her nose at him as she took a sip. Her eyebrows raised. "That boring old question."

"You're not all about work, are you?"

"No," he said again. He looked her face over, suddenly worried that he wouldn't be able to hold another person's interest for all of a fifteen-minute break. Sentences swirled around in Darren's mind and he struggled to get them out of his mouth. "I heard you talking earlier," he said. His cheeks felt tight so he took a deep breath and forced it out. "Are you an artist?"

Her face froze for just a moment, then Alexandra blinked and looked him over as she spoke. "I do fancy myself one. That's the most flattering way to put it, anyway. You heard my whole conversation?"

"I wasn't trying to."

Alexandra tittered through her nostrils. She took a long pull from her coffee can and saw Darren took the moment to drink, too. "I make art of my own and I publish the art of others. I am a friend to artists. Well, I only publish the art of my friends. I only publish art that I truly love."

"I see." Darren's mind felt hot, to hear someone else speaking so freely of a reality he fantasized about. He chewed on the corner of his thumb, and then forced both hands down into his lap. His legs fidgeted under the table. "What kind of art do you make?"

"The art I feel like making," she said.

Darren blew out through his lips. "Is that an answer?"

"You're cynical."

Darren laughed. "I work upstairs."

"What do you do?"

"I thought that was the wrong thing to ask."

"Not the wrong thing. It's an awful first thing to ask me after the way I started us."

"Well, I'm actually back here at an old job of mine. I quit not too long ago. Actually, I quit so I could work on personal projects, but, ah, those projects didn't pay the rent."

"What personal projects," she asked, sipping her coffee.

Darren started to feel a little ragged just thinking about it all. He felt his shaking leg shaking the rest of him now, too. "You really want to know?"

"Sure," she said.

Darren sighed and looked around the room. He leaned forward on the table and looked at Alexandra. She waited, looking back. Her eyes never stopped staring into his, or at his face; yet her eyes were dark and soft, and he felt them waiting for him.

"Well I'm -- I mean, I was -- dipping into a few different forms of self-expression. Music, painting writing. Even, um, computer programming."

"You don't think of that last one as art," she asked.

He thought about it. He liked the word art, and thinking about himself as an artist, yet he didn't ever use it. "Do you think it is," he asked her.

"Sure," and she gave a little shrug. "Why not?"

"I don't know," Darren said.

"You said you were dabbling in self-expression. Does writing code allow you to express yourself?"

"Yes," Darren said. Then he looked down at the top of his coffee. "Sorry, this is already becoming a pep talk."

"Don't apologize," she said, simply. Then, when he didn't say anything, "Do you need a lot of pep talks?"

Darren looked at her, lips tight and sighing out from his nose. He shook his head.

She only smiled and blinked. "There's that blush again." Then she shook her empty coffee can.

"Well, Darren

Rachel, it was good to meet you. Good luck upstairs." She leaned forward as she got up, and her long, cool fingers settled overtop his hand.

"And keep at the art."

"Thank you," Darren said, leaning back a little. "I appreciate it. It was good to meet you."

Her eyes studied his face for a moment more and then she said, "Okay, see ya."

She rose, looking down at him as she passed. Her hand found his shoulder and squeezed, and then she was walking away, her back to him, her spill of red brown hair draped between sharp black shoulders.

He stood, and called "Alexandra."

She turned, smiling at him.

He held his hands out. "Can I see you again?"

Her smile remained on her face as she walked over and stood over him. She held up her phone, screen facing him. He saw empty rectangles. "Put yourself in my pocket," she said. "I'll take you to lunch."

UNLIKABLE PROTAGONIST

The blazing crown of the sun glared over the curve of the horizon just as Eunomia Candace Rogers finished the Morning Prayer and opened her eyes. Twelve voices said amen together in the sudden warmth. Then the autumn breeze returned and so did its chill.

They sat on smoothed stone benches on a small circular brick mezzanine near the top of the hill. All the way up was the Hall of Women; it was two stories, long, and narrow -- built like the women's residence halls that were scattered about the foot of the hill. From her perch Eunomia could see where prayer leaders from other residences huddled in circles on the greens and in shaded parks. She could see the familiar dark blue, almost gray walls and peaked roof of Barb Grayson Hall, the dormitory she was master of. On the far side of the orderly, manicured campus of Stacker Christian College, a similar hill was topped by the Hall of Men and rimmed with the men's residences.

All of the women dressed as if they were headed to a job interview. Eunomia wore a loose, thick black sweater with a bunched collar. Her sweater was tucked into a gray dress, bound with a thin brown leather belt. The dress went down to the bottom of her knees; her legs, covered with opaque black hose, ended with short-heeled, laced brown shoes. All of them had backpacks full of books at their feet.

Eunomia produced a Bible, her Stacker handbook, a pencil, and a piece of small, bright yellow paper. The veterans -- the women who served Grayson for a semester already or more -- sat an inch or two forward in their seats when they saw this last item.

Eunomia gazed down into the invisible center of the circle of women. "Typically we tally sins at these meetings. With the semester coming to an end, we judge them. A sin is an abomination if there is no atonement."

Eunomia held the bright leaflet out in front of her. "On this list are thirty names. These wayward young women are in considerable danger of becoming reprobates." Eunomia gazed into the eyes watching her. Each of her captains sat in rapt attention. Dina and Bea, who flanked Eunomia, nodded back at her. "This is not a task to be taken lightly, but the rules are clear. Search within yourself. Recall what it says in the Bible; recall what your handbook says. If you believe a woman listed here is truly invested in saving herself, then cross her name off."

Eunomia started writing on the list with the pencil. "Finally, if there are women who are not on this list who you know should be, write their names at the bottom." Eunomia finished writing Mary Isobel Carter's name and handed the list and pencil to Bea, who sat beside her. Each woman looked the list over and added or relieved someone. Eunomia studied the state of the page when it returned to her.

"Who crossed off Leslie Sturgeon?" A thin, burgundy-sweatered captain with pale orange hair lifted her hand. "Leslie and I went on numerous missions together." The woman had to swallow at the end of her sentence. She cleared her throat. "I believe she's a good person."

"No," Eunomia said, circling Leslie's name on the list. She looked out at the horizon and admired how the campus, now bathed in the sun, looked freshly painted. "I sleep below Leslie. Last week I woke up to hear her talking to Gabrielle in whispers. I told them to go to bed, but before I could Leslie confessed to immoral exploration with a friend in high school.

"Gabrielle will receive one hundred demerits and start next semester campused," Eunomia said. She folded the list in half. "Leslie Sturgeon will be expelled for her unrepentant sinning. You will all receive these names; keep an eye on these women. If they continue to drift from a path of righteousness then it is our duty to make their errors plain to them. Only then is there hope. For any of us."

"Doors open, ladies," Eunomia called out as she walked the first-floor hallway of Grayson. Young women stood in their rooms in jeans or pajama pants, their feet in slippers or socks or

flip-flops. Demerits for covering one's legs were only given on Grayson's first floor, where visitors may otherwise see something they should not.

Each floor of Grayson had eight rooms and each room housed four women. A communal bathroom and a cooking space separated floors into two clusters of four rooms. A prayer captain watched over each cluster and her own room; she relied on assistant prayer captains to oversee the other three rooms. Eunomia was responsible for her own cluster on the fifth floor, and she had her own trio of assistants. It was seen as a privilege since both Dina and Bea were two of Eunomia's earliest assistant prayer captains.

Grayson was her home going on five years: she was assigned to the residence for her first year at Stacker and became an assistant prayer captain before the end of her first semester. Eunomia was a hall monitor by the start of her senior year and became Grayson's supervisor when she returned to Stacker as a graduate student. Like many of her fellows, she spent two years after her undergrad studies traveling the world with a missionary team from the university.

Eunomia spotted Dina in the restroom; as a hall monitor, Dina replaced a captain on the first floor. She stood brushing her teeth at a sink and looked at Eunomia through a mirror.

"Katy and Bridget were called up to the How. Bea says she has a way to get Leslie, too."

"Good," Eunomia said. She leaned against the narrow edge of the thin wall that shielded the hall from the bathroom; it was plaster on one side and tile on the other. "Bea's staunch servitude is a blessing to our hall."

"She talks about being a supe sometimes."

Eunomia's lips wilted, curling up at each end. "I have no doubt she'll be a supervisor over a hall one day.

Maybe even as a senior. Definitely not next semester, though: juniors aren't picked to be supes."

"I don't know, cap," Dina said, and then spat. Only Dina ever called her that. "Bea's pretty important in the real world. Daddy's loaded."

Eunomia laughed through her nose. "Godly favor isn't won with an Earthly currency."

Eunomia was cooking noodles in her hot pot when she first heard Mary's shrill, screaming voice. It entered the room through her open window; a second, muffled version of Mary's anger bubbled under her floor.

Eunomia stood up to see Bea peek into the room wearing a loose gray shirt and jeans that showed none of the shape of her legs. She had her hair up in a bun. "Mary just got back from the How," she said, and then her lips stretched into a sly smile she had trouble restraining. "Someone tipped her APC that she was using her work pass to sneak out on dates. We got a picture of them kissing."

Eunomia smiled and followed Bea to the stairwell. A freshman in a shirt and shorts and her barefeet was jogging up the other direction.

"Stop," Eunomia ordered. "Who is this?"

"Judith Smith," Bea said.

"Socks," Eunomia hissed, and then pressed her hand to her chest, her index finger rested along her collarbone; the freshman did the same, the neck of her shirt dipping below her pinky. "That shirt doesn't check, and those shorts certainly do no."

Judith's young face quivered. "I was going to tell Becca about Mary."

"Thirty demerits," Eunomia replied. "An extra five for carrying gossip in your heart. Back to your room."

Change this instant. Leave Becca to worry about her own woes, and think on yours."

The supe and her monitor arrived on the floor below to find a gaggle of young women in shirts and jeans and shorts and socks and slippers crowded outside Mary's room. They scattered before Eunomia and Bea, who found Mary alone inside, curled up between her bed and the

white-painted radiator. Her face was a mask of despair. What was left of the thin eyeliner she put on that morning rimmed her eyes with dark smudges. She still wore her campus attire, missing her dress shoes.

"You've been suspended," Eunomia said. She stood over Mary and crossed her arms. Bea stood behind her hands on her hips, filling the doorway.

"What will I tell my parents," Mary wailed.

Eunomia leaned forward, hands on her knees. "What will you tell them happened here?"

"Patricia got me sent to the How." Mary pointed a shaking finger at Bea, fresh tears streaming down her cheeks. "You did, too." Her pointing finger curled inward as her hand balled into a slow fist. "You tattled on me like children."

"You're the child, Mary," Eunomia said in an even voice, as if she read from an invisible page. "You blame Patricia and Bea for your own shortcomings. You won't be able to lie in the end, Mary. You will be judged. Get used to it. God will judge you. Your prayer captains will judge you. Bea will, and I will, too.

"I do judge you. There is good in this world and there is evil. God made it that way so that we could tell the two apart, and reproach those who do evil."

1ST PERSON – DIRECT ADDRESS

I, Moira Carpenter, knew I only had a week left, maybe less. Stig Ringquist would never admit it to me, or Linda Jaffrey: he wanted me out, and a new art director would render my position irrelevant. Stig would surely abuse his influence. It would be easy for him to sabotage my hunt for a new job. Not for forever, but I hated the thought that he could lord over me at all. It was Stig that halted my climb, like a rocket soaring one moment and in the next disintegrating into thousands of pieces. Do you know what that feels like?

Anyway, I just realized how hard I was nibbling on the side of my index finger once I drew blood. I examined the wound in surprise. It was a long-conquered tick, one that plagued my younger,

nervous self; I used to chew my fingertips raw with worry. I bet you don't have habits like that, but I'm riddled with them. I pinched my eyes tight and focused on the stinging flesh. When I really thought about it, if I had Linda's blessing, I could be the new art director. Linda was not Stig's boss, but she had equal responsibility and arguably more clout. It would be a promotion for me, up from serving as Stig's overtaxed project manager. I wondered if that hurt my chances with the woman: making me art director meant the three of them crowded the same rung.

I watched tiny people mill around below. My eyes twitched from shape to shape as I searched for the red-and-white stripes of Linda's scarf. I sat alone in her sixth-floor office in a familiar position: my chair was rolled up to the wall with my knees pressed against it. My forehead almost touched the glass of the window. I had one arm draped along the wooden sill that was so thick with envelope-white paint; my other arm was propped up on my elbow and my chin rested on the heel of my palm. The windowpane would only lift a few inches, but I kept it open anyway. The air was cold and fresh in my nostrils and helped my office seem a larger box than it was.

The shapes below waddled along dappled sidewalks. Their booted feet sought patches of speckled white mush around darker splotches of ice. It was like watching ants crawl around inside a glass farm. No, I thought, it was like you were staring into a crystal ball and learning some private detail you weren't supposed to know. I recognized Leonard, my building's security guard, in his blue suit and a jacket the same color as his bald dark brown head. Snow fell and melted on the salted street as he waited for a car to hiss by in the slush. "Go get coffee," I whispered against the window, and smiled as Leonard crossed over to an Egyptian deli. He made the same journey every day in any form of weather.

It took time for me to notice there was anything special about the view. The decrepit graffitied redbrick building across the street was as crude to look at as mine was to work in. My floor sorely needed a renovation, and could have used it a decade ago.

Gazing out my window one day I noticed Stig emerging from the same deli that Leonard frequented. Stig carried his usual salad full of onions and feta and grape leaves and artichoke hearts. He always smelled like that salad in meetings after noon. Day after day, seeing Stig buy the same lunch, I dawned on his punctuality: he marched to the deli at quarter to one. I paid more attention to what happened outside my window after that, picking up on people's patterns.

The jumble of shops and eateries lining the street were collectively referred to around the office as "the mall."

The mall had everything you could want; that was the joke. It proved a well-deserved reputation. I was able to satisfy my day-to-day needs in its ethnic restaurants, boutiques, salons and bodegas. I'm sure you'd have an absolute ball there. I mean, the mall granted special wishes, too: before a holiday, the pharmacy stocked cards and decorations. Any of the delis were overflowing with fresh flowers, bought for first dates or a "sorry I was late."

Observing my colleagues from my perch allowed me to appear for what turned into lunch meetings, or surprise them with gifts from stores they frequented. I had the mall to thank for my rapid ascent into management, but it failed to reveal anything more about Stig. Other than buying a salad, the man did next to nothing in the mall -- not before or after work.

I noticed the bright striped scarf before I realized who it was. Linda walked out of a Korean restaurant, bag in hand, and entered a door next to an art gallery with an all-glass facade to reach the nail salon on the second floor.

I glanced over my fingernails: light magenta, almost purple. I carved ruts in the polish with my thumbnail.

Flaking paint bunched up under my nail. I unzipped and tugged off my ankle boot, slipped off my short sock and inspected my toes: lavender nails on skin the color of coffee ice cream. No scuffs; I could ask for something different if I needed to. I put my sock and boot back on and checked the damage to my fingernails. Then I put my mass of long black hair with its tight curls into a loosely fanned ponytail. One last check of my ghostly reflection in the glass pane -- I pulled the flaps of my navy blazer taut over my white oxford shirt and donned a black puffy jacket -- and I was on my way.

The elevator down to the first floor was a clanging, metal box. I walked through the familiar, narrow, white-walled, cement-floored hallway that looked like it was painted with primer and then never again. "Hello, Leonard,"

I said, and the older man smiled behind a bushy gray mustache and raised his coffee cup and said, "Hello, Moira." I had to force the door open against the wind and zipped my jacket up the rest of the way as I crossed the blustery, slush-covered street. I just hate winter. You must live in one of the warm climates without tundra-like temperatures. I envy you as the cold bites at my ankles and cheeks and hands one last time as I pull open the door and climb up a flight of stairs to the salon.

I felt like everyone was looking at me when I walked in. A quick scan found Linda sitting toward the end of a line of half a dozen elevated, high-backed massage chairs all cramped together, her face turned away. I was relieved to see a space on the other side of Linda, whose phone had her undivided attention. A woman went over to prepare the chair, and the closest manicurist asked, "What would you like today?"

I balled her fists, and was careful not to look Linda's way. "Oh, just a pedicure," I said, reaching out to grab something red from the lurid array of bottles in the plastic rack on the wall. I spared a glance to make sure it was a sensible shade and not something full of glitter.

As I crossed before Linda, I saw the woman had flip-flops on. Worse, the manicurist at her feet threaded a length of rough paper between her toes. Linda wasn't staying long.

The padding of the massage chair was orange like a traffic cone, with a white stripe down the middle of it. Its round armrests were topped with a curve of cherry wood laminate. At the foot of the chair was a plastic basin colored gold, and I had to climb around it so that I could twist into my seat. The young manicurist scooped in translucent blue crystals that fizzed in the water as the bowl filled.

"Hey, Linda," I called over when I settled.

The other woman looked back over the topless lenses of her glasses, which she wore low on her nose. Her body gyrated to the rhythm of the chair's massaging pegs. "Moira." Linda's black hair was cut in a remarkably simple way: chopped at her shoulders and an inch above her eyebrows. It did nothing to hide Linda's steady gaze, and that she never seemed to blink.

Linda's eyes sank back toward her smartphone screen and I smiled down at the young woman who sat on a padded stool below her. My bare feet rested on the lip of the basin and its bubbling

turquoise pool. The woman tapped the top of my right foot and I lowered it into the hot mixture. Water jets tickled my heel. I then extended my other leg and propped my foot up on the far side of the basin. The woman pumped some liquid onto a cotton square and ran the soft, cold puff over the toes of my raised foot.

My eyes flickered at Linda's gleaming nails; the manicurist painted over the clear polish with purple using precise strokes as steady as a ticking clock hand.

I willed my voice to be casual and relaxed. "Going anywhere for the holidays?"

Linda didn't look up, not immediately. She slid her thumb slowly up the screen, and then tapped. Then her thumb stroked upward again.

Linda turned her head toward me and blinked at me. "Seeing my parents. In Vermont." Then her eyes were back on the screen in her hand. "What about you?"

"Still making plans," I replied.

"Huh."

The manicurist slathered gel on my toenails and tapped the edge of the basin; I swapped which foot was in the roiling bath. A false start already: I again found myself searching for what to say as the jets teased my heel.

To my surprise, Linda beat me to it. She looked up from her phone with a sly smile. "You didn't see Stig on your way over, did you?"

I blinked. "No," and then I did my best to crack a smile and sound conspiratorial; I channeled sleepovers with friends in high school. "Are you hiding from him?"

"I can't get any less of him right now even if I wanted to. I see him all day long. The man needs to manage his side of things. I feel like he's treading water."

I thought about exactly how I wanted to sound. I went for hopeful. "Maybe that's the kind of problem a new art director can help you with."

Linda hmm'd. "Interesting that you'd bring that up."

I waited to see if Linda said anything else. When she didn't, I swallowed and felt like I was forcing myself over the top of a tall wall. "I have to say, I'm interested in it. I think I would be a good fit."

"Have you talked to Stig about this?"

"He wasn't very open to the idea."

"I see him after this."

Linda went back to thumbing her smartphone. After a while she leaned forward and inspected her neat purple toenails. "I'll skip the dry," she told her manicurist, who walked off. Linda swung her legs from the chair and sat facing me.

"Listen, you're an ambitious woman and all. I like that. What good is that if you don't have any bite?"

Linda stood and put on her black overcoat. Her manicurist returned with change but Linda waved it away.

"Thanks for the touch up, Do Yea." Do Yea smiled and the women shook hands. Then Linda frowned down at me.

"If you don't make art director, what are your options going to look like then?"

Linda walked off. I swallowed, but my saliva stuck in my throat like a clog. The young manicurist at my feet looked up at me, then went back to carefully trimming my cuticles with a pair of tiny scissors.

I stared through the wall before me. It was stripped down to the brick, which crumbled and left pools of rust-colored sand on the floorboards. I felt frozen in time as I processed the interaction I just had with Linda. They were words you would never want to think but I couldn't stop them from forming: maybe Stig had already won.

What do you think?

3RD PERSON – INDIRECT ADDRESS

Moira Carpenter knew she had a week left, maybe less. Stig Ringquist would never admit it to her, or Linda

Jaffrey: he wanted Moira out, and a new art director would render her position irrelevant. Stig would surely abuse his influence. It would be easy for him to sabotage Moira's hunt for a new job. Not for forever, but she hated the thought that he could lord over her at all. It was Stig that halted Moira's climb, like a rocket soaring one moment and in the next disintegrating into thousands of pieces.

Moira realized how hard she nibbled on the side of her index finger once she drew blood. She examined the wound in surprise. It was a long-conquered tick, one that plagued her younger, nervous self; she used to chew her fingertips raw with worry. Moira pinched her eyes tight; she focused on her stinging flesh. With Linda's blessing, Moira could be the new art director. Linda was not Stig's boss, but she had equal responsibility and arguably more clout. It would be a promotion for Moira, up from serving as Stig's overtaxed project manager. She wondered if that hurt her chances with the woman: making Moira art director meant the three of them crowded the same rung.

Moira watched tiny people mill around below. Her eyes twitched from shape to shape as she searched for the red-and-white stripes of Linda's scarf. Moira sat alone in her sixth-floor office in a familiar position: her chair was rolled up to the wall with her knees pressed against it. Her forehead almost touched the glass of the window. She had one arm draped along the wooden sill that was so thick with envelope-white paint; her other arm was propped up on her elbow and her chin rested on the heel of her palm. The window pane would only lift a few inches, but Moira kept it open anyway. The air was cold and fresh in her nostrils and helped her office seem a larger box than it was.

The shapes below waddled along dappled sidewalks. Their booted feet sought patches of speckled white mush around darker splotches of ice. It was like watching ants crawl around inside a glass farm. No, Moira thought, it was like staring into a crystal ball and glimpsing some private detail about a person. She recognized Leonard, her building's security guard, in his blue suit and a jacket the same color as his bald dark brown head.

Snow fell and melted on the salted street as he waited for a car to hiss by in the slush. "Go get coffee," she whispered against the window, and smiled as Leonard crossed over to an Egyptian deli. He made the same journey every day in any form of weather.

It took time for Moira to notice there was anything special about the view. The decrepit graffitied red-brick building across the street was as crude to look at as hers was to work in. Her floor sorely needed a renovation, and could have used it a decade ago.

Gazing out her window one day she noticed Stig emerging from the same deli that Leonard frequented. Stig carried his usual salad full of onions and feta and grape leaves and artichoke hearts. He always smelled like that salad in meetings after noon. Day after day, seeing Stig buy the same lunch, Moira dawned on his punctuality: he marched to the deli at quarter to one. She paid more attention to what happened outside her window after that, picking up on people's patterns.

The jumble of shops and eateries lining the street were collectively referred to around the office as "the mall."

The mall had everything anyone could want; that was the joke. It proved a well-deserved reputation. Moira was able to satisfy her day-to-day needs in its ethnic restaurants, boutiques, salons and bodegas. The mall granted special wishes, too: before a holiday, the pharmacy stocked cards and decorations. Any of the delis were overflowing with fresh flowers, bought for first dates or a "sorry I was late." Observing her colleagues from her perch allowed Moira to appear for what turned into lunch meetings, or surprise them with gifts from stores they frequented. Moira had the mall to thank for her rapid ascent into management, but it failed to reveal anything more about Stig. Other than buying a salad, the man did next to nothing in the mall -- not before or after work.

She noticed the bright striped scarf before she realized who it was. Linda walked out of a Korean restaurant, bag in hand, and entered a door next to an art gallery with an all-glass facade to reach the nail salon on the second floor. Moira glanced over her fingernails: light magenta, almost purple. She carved ruts in the polish with her thumbnail. Flaking paint bunched up under her nail. She unzipped and tugged off her ankle boot, slipped off her short sock and inspected her toes: lavender nails on skin the color of coffee ice cream. No scuffs; she could ask for something different if she needed to. Moira put her sock and boot back on and checked the damage to her fingernails. Then she put her mass of long black hair with its tight curls into a loosely fanned ponytail. One last check of her ghostly reflection in the glass pane -- she pulled the flaps of her navy blazer taut over her white oxford shirt and donned a black puffy jacket -- and she was on her way.

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Moira didn't want to think the words but they came anyway: maybe Stig had already won.

Validation Study Results

The four scales translated into English from German from Schramm & Hartmann's (2008) PSI Process Scales measure various cognitive and affective parasocial responses to media content (i.e. PSP). In endeavoring to use these scales, I obtained IRB approval #1312004377 (see Appendix A) to run a validation study for all eleven cognitive and affective parasocial process scales. In keeping with the purpose of the present study, the three behavioral PSP scales were eliminated from the validation analysis. The validation study was conducted on MTurk, with 152 participants completing the entire exercise. Participants were randomly assigned to read one of four stories, each written by the same author (see Appendix C). Following the method used in Schramm & Hartmann (2008) to validate the German version of the PSI-Process Scales, one story featured a protagonist who directly addressed the audience, while the other three featured no direct address. This manipulation has also been used in other empirical studies of the parasocial phenomenon (Auter, 1992; Auter & Moore, 2003; Hartmann & Klimmt, 2005; Schramm & Wirth, 2010; Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2011; Mancini, 1988).

The central purpose of this study was to validate the English translation of these scales for use in my primary dissertation study. Similar to the original validation analysis, I analyzed the resulting data by reverse coding the necessary items and creating indices for each parasocial process, testing the reliability of each scale (Table 6), determining if significant correlations exist between external criteria (e.g. attractiveness, immersion, address) and overall cognitive and affective parasocial responses (Table 7), and running a series of one-way ANOVAs to measure the manipulation of address among the story versions (Tables 8.1 and 8.2). Please note that only four of the eleven scales tested will be used in the proposed study as indicated by the bolded portions of Table 6.

Table 6. Reliability Statistics for Cognitive and Affective PSP Scales

Response	Process	α	# items per scale
----------	---------	----------	-------------------

<i>Cognitive</i>	<i>.93</i>	<i>42</i>
Depth of info processing and vividness of recall	.68	2
Attention allocation	.65	2
Logical comprehension	.79	4
Reflection about character	.16	4
Tie between one's own experiences and character	.54	4
Comparison to person-specific knowledge	.39	2
Evaluation of character and his/her actions	.86	8
Anticipation of character's actions	.75	4
Anticipation of character's fate	.83	4
Establishment of relationship between character and self	.83	8
<i>Affective</i>	<i>.69</i>	<i>40</i>
Emotional contagion	.54	4
Emotional induction	.77	4
Antipathy	.94	8
Counter-empathy	.70	8
Sympathy	.89	8
Empathy	.82	8

Table 7. Correlations between external criteria and participants' cognitive and affective parasocial responses

External Criteria	Cognitive responses	Affective responses
Address	.314**	.524**
Attractiveness	.314**	.601**
Immersion	.559**	.478**

*Pearson's r; **: p < .01*

Table 8.1. Univariate Analysis of Variance to Test Manipulation of Address

Manipulation	Value Label	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.00	Indirect - Likable	39	2.5238	1.00975
2.00	Direct – Neutral	38	1.6042	.87202
3.00	Indirect - Unlikable	37	2.8971	1.14666
4.00	Indirect - Neutral	38	2.4194	.93182

Manipulation F-value = 7.995, p < 0.001

Table 8.2. Bonferroni Post Hoc Test of Univariate Analysis

Manipulation (I)	Manipulation (J)	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Conf. Int. Lower Bound	95% Conf. Int. Upper Bound
2.00 Direct - Neutral	1.00 Indirect - Likable	-.9196*	.24160	.001	-1.5657	-.2735
	3.00 Indirect – Unlikable	-1.2929*	.26853	.000	-2.0110	-.5748
	4.00 Indirect - Neutral	-.8152*	.27385	.020	-1.5475	-.0829

Dependent Variable: Address

**The mean difference is significant at the .05 level*

Note: All other group contrasts were non-significant

Results from this validation study demonstrate that the *selected* PSP scales are operating in the way that they should according to Schramm & Hartmann (2008), which suggests that they are appropriate for use in the proposed study.

Appendix B. Main Study Instruments, Stimuli, and IRB

Factor	Question	RC	Response type
Reflective Moral Judgment (DV)	I evaluated whether I liked or disliked Edward's comments and behavior.		Strongly disagree to Strongly agree
	I formed an opinion about Edward.		“
	I repeatedly pondered if I ought to like or dislike Edward.		“
	I noticed characteristics about Edward, which I like or dislike.		“
	I did not consider how one should evaluate Edward's behavior.	x	“
	It was not important to me to judge Edward's behavior.	x	“
	I did not form an opinion about the things that Edward said or did throughout the story.	x	“
	It did not seem necessary to me to form an opinion about Edward.	x	“
	Affective resonance (Control variable)	Edward's behavior had a strong influence on my own mood.	
I reacted very emotionally towards Edward.			“
What Edward did or said did not trigger any emotions in me.		x	“
Counter-empathy (DV)	I reacted rather matter-of-factly and emotionally unaffected by Edward.	x	“
	I was hoping that Edward would get the "proper punishment" for what he/she said or did.		“
	I was continuously waiting for something bad to happen to Edward.		“
	When Edward was doing badly, I was doing well; when Edward was doing well, I was doing badly.		“
	I was unable to develop any benevolent feelings towards Edward.		“
	It wasn't important to me whether something bad happened to Edward.	x	“

	I would have felt no joy if something bad happened to Edward.	x	Strongly disagree to Strongly agree
	I would not feel the need to gloat if Edward was in misery.	x	“
	I more or less would not care if Edward was doing badly.	x	“
Empathy (DV)	I felt compassion for Edward.		“
	When Edward was doing badly, I was also doing badly; when Edward was doing well, I was also doing well.		“
	I could easily have determined how Edward felt in various situations.		“
	In some situations it seemed to me as if I felt the same emotions as Edward.		“
	I could only rarely empathize with Edward's mood.	x	“
	I could not comprehend the feelings Edward showed.	x	“
	I demonstrated little empathy towards Edward.	x	“
	I would have been unable to say whether Edward felt well or badly.	x	“
Intentionality (Control)	Did Edward choose to keep the ring intentionally?		Definitely not to definitely yes
Moral Responsibility (DV)	Edward's (Rob's) act of keeping the ring (necklace) is a violation of what is morally right, irrespective of the circumstances		Not at all to A great deal
	Despite being a moral gray area, I think Edward's (Rob's) act of keeping the ring (necklace) was appropriate given the circumstances.	x	“
	Edward's (Rob's) failure to help the accused man by admitting his own fault violated moral standards of right and wrong.		“
	Edward's (Rob's) failure to help the accused man by admitting his	x	Not at all to A great

	own fault is justified by the given circumstances.		deal
	To what extent do you think Edward's decision to keep the ring violated moral standards of right and wrong?		“
	To what extent do you consider Edward's decision to keep the ring justified by the given circumstances?	x	“
Manipulation	To what extent does Edward have the ability to influence others?		“
Check - Power	To what extent does Edward hold a high-power position?		“
Strength (Pilot)	To what extent does Edward hold a low-power position?	x	“
Manipulation	To what extent did Edward obtain his position in society on his own merit?		Not at all on his own merit to Completely on his own merit
Check - Power type (Pilot)	To what extent did Edward obtain his position in society by inheriting it from a relative?	x	Not at all inherited to Completely inherited
	To what extent did Edward earn his position in society?		Not at all earned to Completely earned
	To what extent did Edward inherit his position in society?	x	Not at all inherited to Completely inherited
Biographical Similarity (Control)	Have you ever stolen or shoplifted anything?		Yes; No; I would rather not say
Gender (Control)	Have you ever accidentally stolen anything?		“
Gender (Control)	What is your gender?		Male; Female; I would rather not say
Reading Check	To demonstrate that you are reading this question, mark the furthest circle to the left indicating that you disagree in the extreme.		Completely disagree to completely agree
Attribution	To what extent do you believe Edward behaved the way he did	x	Not at all to A great

(Mediator)	because of the circumstances?		deal
	To what extent did external pressures influence Edward's decision to keep the ring?	x	“
	To what extent did the situation make it necessary for Edward to keep the ring?	x	“
	How much did Edward's position in society influence his decision to keep the ring?	x	“
	To what extent do you believe Edward behaved the way he did because of the type of person he is?		“
	To what extent did Edward keep the ring because it was in keeping with his personality?		“
	To what extent did Edward keep the ring because of his own preferences or desires?		“
Distance	I feel very close to Edward (Rob).		“
(sub-concept of	I relate to Edward's (Rob's) position.		“
IV)	I feel removed from Edward (Rob).	x	“
	Edward's (Rob's) position in society seems very close to my own.		“
	Edward's (Rob's) position in society is not relatable to me.	x	“
	I identify very closely with Edward (Rob).		“
Constraint	To what extent did the situation constrain Edward's (Rob's) choice to keep the ring (necklace)?	x	“
(sub-concept of			
IV)	To what extent was Edward (Rob) free to make his own decisions?		Not at all free to Completely free
	How much freedom did Edward (Rob) have in choosing to keep the ring (necklace)?		No freedom to Complete freedom

To what extent was Edward's (Rob's) choice to keep the ring (necklace) unconstrained by the situation?		Not at all to A great deal
Edward (Rob) is a person constrained by circumstance, and is therefore, not free to act as he would like.	x	Strongly disagree to strongly agree
Edward (Rob) is a person unconstrained by circumstance, and is therefore, free to act as he would like.		“

Main Study IRB 1405004691 Exemption Letter



Cornell University
Office of
Research Integrity and Assurance

East Hill Office Building, Suite 320
395 Pine Tree Road
Ithaca, NY 14850
p. 607-254-5162
f. 607-255-0758
www.irb.cornell.edu

Institutional Review Board for Human Participants

Concurrence of Exemption

To: Jill Axline
From: Amita Verma, Director, ORIA
Approval Date: May 09, 2014
Protocol ID#: 1405004691
Protocol Title: Indirect Effect of Power on Moral Judgments

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Amita Verma'.

Your above referenced request for **Exemption from IRB Review** has been approved according to Cornell IRB Policy #2 and under paragraph 2 of the Department of Health and Human Services Code of Federal Regulations 45CFR 46.101(b).

Please note the following:

- Investigators are responsible for ensuring that the welfare of research subjects is protected and that methods used and information provided to gain participant consent are appropriate to the activity. Please familiarize yourself with and conduct the research in accordance with the ethical standards of the Belmont Report (<http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/policy/belmont.html>).
- Investigators are responsible for notifying the IRB office of change or amendments to the protocol and acquiring approval or concurrence **BEFORE** their implementation.
- Progress reports or requests for continuation of approval are not required for this study.

For questions related to this application or for IRB review procedures, please contact the IRB office at irbexemptions@cornell.edu or 254-5162. Visit the IRB website at www.irb.cornell.edu for policies, procedures, FAQs, forms, and other helpful information about Cornell's Human Participant Research Program.

Please download the latest forms from the IRB website www.irb.cornell.edu/forms/ for each submission.

Cc: Poppy McLeod

Main Study Stimulus Materials

Note: Bolded text indicates manipulated text

STIMULUS MATERIAL A (HISTORIC)

Noble/Inherited (High Power Strength – Inherited Power Type)

The town's hanging tree was a modern gallows: a triangle of wood lying on its side atop three legs, built on a slab-like stone foundation that had stairs carved into a side of it; over a dozen bodies could dangle from its three beams at once. The hangings always drew a crowd, but to inspire the carnival that packed its grounds that warm, clear day, the tree had offered up something special.

A local lord was to be executed for treason. The accusing family made public its loaning of a specialist from France; he was to decapitate the lord using a sword. News of the promised spectacle brought visitors from the surrounding countryside, including, Edward hoped, merchants with the kind of wares that would impress Meredith, the object of his affection. Edward looked from afar at the merchants' stalls; they crowded in the shadow of the large step-like wooden bleacher that sat in witness of the hanging tree.

It was no place for a noble, Edward knew. He stuck out in the linen-garbed crowd in his hat, jacket, doublet, hose, and shoes of fine horse leather. Edward was the eldest son of Philip Howard, a titleholder and landowner who, while not the king of England, was close enough in terms of the power he exerted over his lands.

Edward strolled through the crowd, rewarding the peasants and merchants who bowed their heads to him with a slight nod as he passed, and he ignored everyone else. The young man was pleased to see that, despite the rowdy atmosphere of the carnival, the respect his station demanded survived.

As he approached the collection of stalls beneath the bleacher, Edward saw many of them were stuffed with food and common housewares. Then Edward found a cart displaying an array of glittering necklaces with large gems and intricate designs. Atop a tall stool nearby he saw a

tray of gold and silver rings. **And draped along a nearby peg were soft-looking scarves that he judged as fine enough for a noble to wear.**

Edward looked through the assortment of jewelry with pursed lips and a raised eyebrow. One ring in particular kept bringing his eyes back to it: it was a gold loop that looked like a snake eating its own tail and a brilliant yellow-and-blue lapis crowned its head.

A small, thin old man bumped up against Edward as he stooped to admire the rings himself. The younger man felt the ring leave his palm and reflexively closed his hand around the looped serpent; he glared down. Edward decided to walk away before his anger got the better of him, putting a few stalls between himself and the bothersome old man.

Edward was looking over another assortment of necklaces when he realized he was still clenching his fist. His fingertips pressed the shape of the ring into his palm. The loop felt warm and slick with his sweat.

"Thief!" a voice suddenly roared, and all the color drained from Edward's cheeks. Edward expected to be bowled over at any moment. He couldn't force himself to face the direction that the challenge came from.

And yet, no assailant rushed him. Edward turned to see a muscular man who wore the fine clothes of a well-off merchant; he was throttling with his ham-sized fists the old man who had bumped into Edward, and he was shaking him to and fro as if he weighed nothing.

"Bring it out of those rags or I'll shake it out," the large man demanded.

"I wasn't the one," the wiry elder pleaded over and over, but he was drowned out as the merchant shook him around again, roaring, "The ring! The ring!"

Edward swallowed. His mouth felt so dry that it hurt his throat to swallow. He kept his fist clenched and the ring hidden as he tried to decide what to do.

The ring was worth less than a trifle to him, but the young lord had wandered too far away from the merchant's stall. He could not think of an explanation for why he still had the ring. The truth -- that he had innocently carried it off with him -- seemed a flimsy defense

against the rage of the merchant. Edward knew he did not want to trade places with the old man and be the one at the end of those large, violent arms.

A crowd had gathered around the commotion, and support for the merchant quickly grew. **Like his father and his father's father before him, Edward had only ever known the life of a nobleman. Consequently, Edward felt threatened by the rabble, uncomfortable by the fact that he was now surrounded by serfs, farmers, and common folk.**

Edward stood there, fist clenched, ring now pressing painfully into his palm, as the crowd jeered at the old man and the huge merchant shook him and slapped him. As Edward looked between the excited, agitated faces in the crowd and the merchant's malicious glee, the lord could think of no way to present the simple reality of what he had done. **Because life at the upper reaches of society was all he knew, Edward was not used to directly dealing with a confrontation like the one he was watching unfold.**

The merchant choked his captive with one hand, walking forward and pushing him into the eager crowd. "You picked the wrong day, thief. Go tell the headsman to tie another rope!"

The crowd cheered and took the old man from the merchant, holding his squirming, thin body overhead as they hauled him around the bleacher to the hanging tree.

The merchant looked at Edward, still standing there awkwardly holding his fist in front of his chest. **He frowned and gave a nod between equals,** then walked off after the mob.

Edward slowly walked away from the carnival, the sun hot on his head, shoulders, and back. The ring was still in his fist. It was his, but he wondered if it would still do as a present for Meredith. The idea of her ever learning that it was stolen, even unwittingly, was too great a risk. He almost threw the ring into the grass there and then.

Edward unfurled his fingers and looked at the ring sitting on his palm. Its hungry gold snake and streaked yellow-and-blue stone winked up at him, sunlit.

Edward closed his fist again. "Poor wretch," he said.

Noble/Earned (High Power Strength – Earned Power Type)

The town's hanging tree was a modern gallows: a triangle of wood lying on its side atop three legs, built on a slab-like stone foundation that had stairs carved into a side of it; over a dozen bodies could dangle from its three beams at once. The hangings always drew a crowd, but to inspire the carnival that packed its grounds that warm, clear day, the tree had offered up something special.

A local lord was to be executed for treason. The accusing family made public its loaning of a specialist from France; he was to decapitate the lord using a sword. News of the promised spectacle brought visitors from the surrounding countryside, including, Edward hoped, merchants with the kind of wares that would impress Meredith, the object of his affection. Edward looked from afar at the merchants' stalls; they crowded in the shadow of the large step-like wooden bleacher that sat in witness of the hanging tree.

It was no place for a noble, Edward knew. He stuck out in the linen-garbed crowd in his hat, jacket, doublet, hose, and shoes of fine horse leather. Yet Edward was not made uncomfortable by the common rabble like nobles he knew. He began life an orphan and was raised to be shrewd in matters of coin by the merchant who adopted him. Edward earned his high station by buying land and titles.

Edward strolled through the crowd, rewarding the peasants and merchants who bowed their heads to him with a slight nod as he passed, and he ignored everyone else. The young man was pleased to see that, despite the rowdy atmosphere of the carnival, the respect his station demanded survived.

As he approached the collection of stalls beneath the bleacher, Edward saw many of them were stuffed with food and common housewares. Then Edward found a cart displaying an array of glittering necklaces with large gems and intricate designs. Atop a tall stool nearby he saw a tray of gold and silver rings. **And draped along a nearby peg were soft-looking scarves that he judged as fine enough for a noble to wear.**

Edward looked through the assortment of jewelry with pursed lips and a raised eyebrow. One ring in particular kept bringing his eyes back to it: it was a gold loop that looked like a snake eating its own tail and a brilliant yellow-and-blue lapis crowned its head.

A small, thin old man bumped up against Edward as he stooped to admire the rings himself. The younger man felt the ring leave his palm and reflexively closed his hand around the looped serpent; he glared down. Edward decided to walk away before his anger got the better of him, putting a few stalls between himself and the bothersome old man.

Edward was looking over another assortment of necklaces when he realized he was still clenching his fist. His fingertips pressed the shape of the ring into his palm. The loop felt warm and slick with his sweat.

"Thief!" a voice suddenly roared, and all the color drained from Edward's cheeks. Edward expected to be bowled over at any moment. He couldn't force himself to face the direction that the challenge came from.

And yet, no assailant rushed him. Edward turned to see a muscular man who wore the fine clothes of a well-off merchant; he was throttling with his ham-sized fists the old man who had bumped into Edward, and he was shaking him to and fro as if he weighed nothing.

"Bring it out of those rags or I'll shake it out," the large man demanded.

"I wasn't the one," the wiry elder pleaded over and over, but he was drowned out as the merchant shook him around again, roaring, "The ring! The ring!"

Edward swallowed. His mouth felt so dry that it hurt his throat to swallow. He kept his fist clenched and the ring hidden as he tried to decide what to do.

The ring was worth less than a trifle to him, but the young lord had wandered too far away from the merchant's stall. He could not think of an explanation for why he still had the ring. The truth -- that he had innocently carried it off with him -- seemed a flimsy defense against the rage of the merchant. Edward knew he did not want to trade places with the old man and be the one at the end of those large, violent arms.

A crowd had gathered around the commotion, and support for the merchant quickly grew. **Edward did not recall his younger years in society's lower classes with joy; it felt so alien a world to him now that he found himself threatened by the rabble, uncomfortable that he was surrounded by serfs, farmers, and common folk, and none of his peers in the gentry.**

Edward stood there, fist clenched, ring now pressing painfully into his palm, as the crowd jeered at the old man and the huge merchant shook him and slapped him. As Edward looked between the excited, agitated faces in the crowd and the merchant's malicious glee, the lord could think of no way to present the simple reality of what he had done. **Because of the high place in society he now found himself, Edward was not used to dealing directly with a confrontation like the one he was watching unfold.**

The merchant choked his captive with one hand, walking forward and pushing him into the eager crowd. "You picked the wrong day, thief. Go tell the headsman to tie another rope!"

The crowd cheered and took the old man from the merchant, holding his squirming, thin body overhead as they hauled him around the bleacher to the hanging tree.

The merchant looked at Edward, still standing there awkwardly holding his fist in front of his chest. **He frowned and gave a nod between equals,** and walked off after the mob.

Edward slowly walked away from the carnival, the sun hot on his head, shoulders, and back. The ring was still in his fist. It was his, but he wondered if it would still do as a present for Meredith. The idea of her ever learning that it was stolen, even unwittingly, was too great a risk. He almost threw the ring into the grass there and then.

Edward unfurled his fingers and looked at the ring sitting on his palm. Its hungry gold snake and streaked yellow-and-blue stone winked up at him, sunlit.

Edward closed his fist again. "Poor wretch," he said.

Servant/Inherited (Low Power Strength – Inherited Power Type)

The town's hanging tree was a modern gallows: a triangle of wood lying on its side atop

three legs, built on a slab-like stone foundation that had stairs carved into a side of it; over a dozen bodies could dangle from its three beams at once. The hangings always drew a crowd, but to inspire the carnival that packed its grounds that warm, clear day, the tree had offered up something special.

A local lord was to be executed for treason. The accusing family made public its loaning of a specialist from France; he was to decapitate the lord using a sword. News of the promised spectacle brought visitors from the surrounding countryside, including, Edward hoped, merchants with the kind of wares that would impress Meredith, the object of his affection. Edward looked from afar at the merchants' stalls; they crowded in the shadow of the large step-like wooden bleacher that sat in witness of the hanging tree.

Most of the women and men wandering around the grounds were dressed like Edward in his scratchy linen shirt and pants, and his shoes that had been made and remade with old, tired leather. Edward was the son of a servant mother and never knew his father; she was sent away as soon as the majority of Edward's early rearing was done. Alone, Edward was left to choose between servitude or the street.

Edward moved through the crowd, ducking gazes if he could and nodding or bowing his head if any eyes caught his -- especially if the person dressed like someone important. It was as exhausting as it was automatic, and Edward made his way to the edge of the crowd as quickly and invisibly as he could possibly manage.

As he approached the collection of stalls beneath the bleacher, Edward saw many of them were stuffed with food and common housewares. **He spent much of his time, even when he was a young boy, fetching such goods with his master's coin; it was something he watched his mother do, and did with her for a time -- before she left.** Then Edward found a cart displaying an array of glittering necklaces with large gems and intricate designs. Atop a tall stool nearby he saw a tray of gold and silver rings.

Edward looked through the assortment of jewelry with pursed lips and a raised eyebrow.

One ring in particular kept bringing his eyes back to it: it was a gold loop that looked like a snake eating its own tail and a brilliant yellow-and-blue lapis crowned its head.

A small, thin old man bumped up against Edward as he stooped to admire the rings himself. The younger man felt the ring leave his palm and reflexively closed his hand around the looped serpent; he glared down. Edward decided to walk away before his anger got the better of him, putting a few stalls between himself and the bothersome old man.

Edward was looking over another assortment of necklaces when he realized he was still clenching his fist. His fingertips pressed the shape of the ring into his palm. The loop felt warm and slick with his sweat.

"Thief!" a voice suddenly roared, and all the color drained from Edward's cheeks. Edward expected to be bowled over at any moment. He couldn't force himself to face the direction that the challenge came from.

And yet, no assailant rushed him. Edward turned to see a muscular man who wore the fine clothes of a well-off merchant; he was throttling with his ham-sized fists the old man who had bumped into Edward, and he was shaking him to and fro as if he weighed nothing.

"Bring it out of those rags or I'll shake it out," the large man demanded.

"I wasn't the one," the wiry elder pleaded over and over, but he was drowned out as the merchant shook him around again, roaring, "The ring! The ring!"

Edward swallowed. His mouth felt so dry that it hurt his throat to swallow. He kept his fist clenched and the ring hidden as he tried to decide what to do.

The ring was worth more than he would ever have, but the young servant had wandered too far away from the merchant's stall. He could not think of an explanation for why he still had the ring. The truth -- that he had innocently carried it off with him -- seemed a flimsy defense against the rage of the merchant. Edward knew he did not want to trade places with the old man and be the one at the end of those large, violent arms.

A crowd had gathered around the commotion, and support for the merchant quickly grew.

There was a comfort for Edward, even with the ring in his grasp, in finding himself surrounded by common folk like himself; people who only knew life on his end of society. He was anonymous in a sea of his people; still, he knew if the mob sensed his wrongdoing they would turn him in just to keep the excitement going.

Edward stood there, fist clenched, ring now pressing painfully into his palm, as the crowd jeered at the old man and the huge merchant shook him and slapped him. As Edward looked between the excited, agitated faces in the crowd and the merchant's malicious glee, the **servant** could think of no way to present the simple reality of what he had done. **Life at the lower end of society was all he knew, and Edward was used to being on the wrong end of a confrontation like the one he was watching unfold.**

The merchant choked his captive with one hand, walking forward and pushing him into the eager crowd. "You picked the wrong day, thief. Go tell the headsman to tie another rope!"

The crowd cheered and took the old man from the merchant, holding his squirming, thin body overhead as they hauled him around the bleacher to the hanging tree.

The merchant looked at Edward, still standing there awkwardly holding his fist in front of his chest. **Then the merchant glanced away and spat,** and walked off after the mob.

Edward slowly walked away from the carnival, the sun hot on his head, shoulders, and back. The ring was still in his fist. It was his, but he wondered if it would still do as a present for Meredith. The idea of her ever learning that it was stolen, even unwittingly, was too great a risk. He almost threw the ring into the grass there and then.

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Servant/Earned (Low Power Strength – Earned Power Type)

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three legs, built on a slab-like stone foundation that had stairs carved into a side of it; over a dozen bodies could dangle from its three beams at once. The hangings always drew a crowd, but to inspire the carnival that packed its grounds that warm, clear day, the tree had offered up something special.

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Most of the women and men wandering around the grounds were dressed like Edward in his scratchy linen shirt and pants, and his shoes that had been made and remade with old, tired leather. There was a time when Edward dressed in finery matching any of the merchants manning the carnival stalls, but failing to pay his debts dropped him into a life of indentured servitude, and because Edward was born a bastard he had no family to bail him out: he either had to work his debt off, or go to prison for it.

Edward moved through the crowd, ducking gazes if he could and nodding or bowing his head if any eyes caught his -- especially if the person dressed like someone important. It was as exhausting as it was automatic, and Edward made his way to the edge of the crowd as quickly and invisibly as he could possibly manage.

As he approached the collection of stalls beneath the bleacher, Edward saw many of them were stuffed with food and common housewares. **Where at one time he could have purchased any of it, he had forced himself to get used to fetching such goods with his master's coin; his lord's fondness for possessions allowed him plenty of opportunity to practice.** Then Edward found a cart displaying an array of glittering necklaces with large gems and intricate designs. Atop a tall stool nearby he saw a tray of gold and silver rings.

Edward looked through the assortment of jewelry with pursed lips and a raised eyebrow. One ring in particular kept bringing his eyes back to it: it was a gold loop that looked like a snake eating its own tail and a brilliant yellow-and-blue lapis crowned its head.

A small, thin old man bumped up against Edward as he stooped to admire the rings himself. The younger man felt the ring leave his palm and reflexively closed his hand around the looped serpent; he glared down. Edward decided to walk away before his anger got the better of him, putting a few stalls between himself and the bothersome old man.

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"Bring it out of those rags or I'll shake it out," the large man demanded.

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Edward swallowed. His mouth felt so dry that it hurt his throat to swallow. He kept his fist clenched and the ring hidden as he tried to decide what to do.

The ring was worth more than he would ever have, but the young servant had wandered too far away from the merchant's stall. He could not think of an explanation for why he still had the ring. The truth -- that he had innocently carried it off with him -- seemed a flimsy defense against the rage of the merchant. Edward knew he did not want to trade places with the old man and be the one at the end of those large, violent arms.

A crowd had gathered around the commotion, and support for the merchant quickly grew. **Edward found an unexpected solace in being surrounded by others of his newly appointed low station: he felt anonymous in the sea of people; still, he knew if the mob sensed his wrongdoing they would turn him in just to keep the excitement going.**

Edward stood there, fist clenched, ring now pressing painfully into his palm, as the crowd jeered at the old man and the huge merchant shook him and slapped him. As Edward looked between the excited, agitated faces in the crowd and the merchant's malicious glee, the **servant** could think of no way to present the simple reality of what he had done. **Because he now found himself at the lowest end of society, Edward was used to being on the wrong end of a confrontation like the one he was watching unfold.**

The merchant choked his captive with one hand, walking forward and pushing him into the eager crowd. "You picked the wrong day, thief. Go tell the headsman to tie another rope!"

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STIMULUS MATERIAL B (MODERN)

CEO/Inherited (High Power Strength – Inherited Power Type)

Robert waited in the back seat of the car for the young woman to open his door for him. They shook hands. He guessed that she was an assistant sent by George, the company's marketing director, and he was right. Robert flagged his driver to carry on, and followed the assistant to a private elevator that had one stop: the grandstand's penthouse. Inside, the assistant took his coat, asked Robert his drink preference, and pointed out some notable people who had arrived before him.

It was Robert's first time in the company's luxurious executive sky box, though he was a regular at the stadium. Usually he was down in the stands, **right up front. He was a familiar sight at all the big games; friends would even tell him they saw him on TV.**

Standing above it all in a sky box was **a new but not thrilling experience** for him. **He typically turned down the free tickets as he preferred to be close to the action, but the amenities of the executive suite, much ballyhooed during boardroom chitchat, were as lavish as he had heard. The finger food and open bar helped persuade him, too.**

The assistant returned with Robert's beer and he thanked her, then he went to stand with a group of executives and familiar faces in front of the big windows overlooking the field. The windows were pushed open: he felt the cool air swirl in and carry with it the sounds of the game and the crowd. Robert loved hearing it. He sipped his beer and, and for a moment, felt like he was the only person in the box. He put his drink down on a small wooden table as he lost himself in the movement of the players, and the ball.

"Hello, Robert."

Hearing his name jarred Robert out of his reverie.

It was George Gear, the company's marketing director. Robert complimented George for his assistant's attentiveness, and for the fine job he did with the suite. The two caught up for a little, talking a bit about work and then a bit about their personal lives.

Robert was used to the attention as the son of the company's founder. His father, Ben Brant, had groomed Robert from a young age to succeed him. Ben enjoyed the

company of people like George all day long; executives and managers who knew that Robert was the future head of the company. They treated him with all the respect allotted to his father's lofty station. For Robert, sometimes, it felt a bit like being a modern noble.

"Well, I hope you're enjoying yourself," George said finally.

"I am, thank you," Robert said."

"Are you a fan of the team," George asked; one last nicety.

"Yes. Raised that way."

"Well, it was good to see you."

"You, too, George," Robert replied.

Robert turned his attention back to the game. He watched a few pitches as he drank his beer, lowering the glass back down onto the **wooden surface, where a wet circle had formed.** The inning wrapped up just as he finished his beer, **so he left his glass for someone else to clean up and went for a refill.**

Robert came across a big display case on his way: he leaned in, looked at the trophies and whistled. Some were for games he remembered watching, either **with his dad** or on television. On one shelf was a ball on a little stand, and when Robert looked at the date and the name of the pitcher his eyes widened. He had fond memories of that game. He closed his eyes and imagined the pitch the way he had seen it: just off to the side in the stands, already getting on his feet as the ball sailed over the plate and clinched a perfect game. The memory filled him with joy.

His dad would want to see it, Robert decided. He picked up the ball and admired the pitcher's signature for a moment. Then he held up the ball and his phone, framing a shot.

Commotion at the window drew Robert's attention. He rushed over to see what was happening, trying to spy the field between the heads and shoulders of other people crowded before him. His team was up at bat; he spotted a player trying to steal. The man dove back for second as the pitcher threw to the baseman there; the runner's hand slapped down first and he was safe. Robert guessed he had tried to steal before as the pitcher looked rattled. The bases were

loaded and the field was tense as everyone waited for the next pitch.

The ball flew toward the batter and the bat found it with a crack. Robert watched the ball fly like a rocket, and then he and the rest of the crowd at the window exploded as it cleared the arena's distant wall for a grand slam.

In the reverie, Robert suddenly realized that he was still holding the ball; his eyes quickly glanced around to see if anyone had noticed him holding it. **Getting in any kind of trouble with all the powerful people who filled the executive suite would most certainly tarnish Robert's reputation.**

That's when Robert spotted the marketing director marching back into the room, flanked by large men dressed in matching windbreakers; not police, but a pair of frowning stadium security guards. Robert saw that they were walking up to a young man who, **unlike Robert**, must have gotten his ticket through the company's lottery. He stuck out like a sore thumb in the crowd of executives and their guests from the casual way he dressed and how he looked nervous to be there.

"You there! You just walked away from the team's trophy display." The marketing director held up a hand, finger pointing up. "I'd like you to tell me where Gary Savage's game-winning ball is."

The young man looked confused and uncomfortable, especially with the way the director was talking to him. "Man, what ball?"

George's tight, brittle veneer slipped and Robert found himself flinching at the man's clear anger. He hid the ball in the large pocket of his **dress pants**. The resulting bulge felt big and obvious, and he could feel his palm sweating, but no one was looking at him. They were all watching the confrontation.

Robert realized that no one was going to call him out. It was up to him, then. That would mean facing down with the angry marketing director, however, and Robert found himself hesitating at the idea.

"Don't pretend! I watch this space like a hawk -- like a *hawk!* -- and a moment ago when I walked by the ball was there. Now it is not. I would like it back, young man. This is your last chance."

The young man made a face like he had something sour in his mouth. "Last chance? I don't have any ball!"

"All right," the director said, and he was silent for a moment. Then he took another step toward the young man, his voice full of malice. "Let's go through the motions, then. First, these two are going to search you. Then, you're going to lose your job, because that ball isn't company property, it's stadium property. Have fun with their lawyers. Oh, and don't look now," the marketing director held out his arm while he spoke, pointing, "but you're on the big screen."

Sure enough, a massive display on the other side of the field showed the sky box, and through the windows it was easy to spot the young man and the guards. Robert swallowed, his neck buzzing. **As heir to the company, reputation was more important to Robert than money, and there were people in that room who could make his life awkward: at the stadium, at the office, and even with his father, if they were clever enough.** Still, Robert felt bad that someone else was taking the fall for him over such a small misunderstanding.

With Robert deciding not to act, the young man was dragged out by the two guards, heels skidding against the ground. The director turned to the watching crowd, calling that there was "nothing to see here," and when his eyes met Robert's, Robert felt his blood turn to ice. Then the director's gaze moved on, and a cheer from the stadium brought the attention of the room back to the game.

Robert swallowed. He could not post his photo now, that was for sure. He did not want to risk going back over to the shelves where the ball belonged, either, as the director would surely be watching over it.

Outside, too, the camera feeding the jumbotron followed the guards and the flailing young man as the crowd laughed and jeered and the announcers hurled jokes.

The CEO decided it had gone too far and was out of his hands. Robert put the ball back in its box as he made for the exit, feeling a rush and wondering if he would be discovered. No one came after him, however, and Robert heard another happy roar from the crowd as he walked down the staircase toward the parking lot.

CEO/Earned (High Power Strength – Earned Power Type)

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Standing above it all in a sky box was **a new but not thrilling experience** for him. **He typically turned down the free tickets as he preferred to be close to the action, but the amenities of the executive suite, much ballyhooed during boardroom chitchat, were as lavish as he had heard. The finger food and open bar helped persuade him, too.**

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"Hello, Robert."

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It was George Gear, the company's marketing director. Robert complimented George for his assistant's attentiveness, and for the fine job he did with the sky box. The two caught up for a little, talking a bit about work and then a bit about their personal lives.

Robert was used to the admiration as a person who earned what he had. The man did not come from money; he put himself through college on scholarships and loans, and paid the loans off in a few scant years after the company he founded right out of school took off. Now he was the CEO of one of the most successful corporations in the world. Robert allowed his satisfaction to seep into his features; it was tough not to be proud.

"Well, I hope you're enjoying yourself," George said finally.

"I am, thank you," Robert said.

"Are you a fan of the team," George asked; one last nicety.

"Yes. Always have been."

"Well, it was good to see you."

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He wanted something to remember it by, Robert decided. He picked up the ball and

admired the pitcher's signature for a moment. Then he held up the ball and his phone, framing a shot.

Commotion at the window drew Robert's attention. He rushed over to see what was happening, trying to spy the field between the heads and shoulders of other people crowded before him. His team was up at bat; he spotted a player trying to steal. The man dove back for second as the pitcher threw to the baseman there; the runner's hand slapped down first and he was safe. Robert guessed he had tried to steal before as the pitcher looked rattled. The bases were loaded and the field was tense as everyone waited for the next pitch.

The ball flew toward the batter and the bat found it with a crack. Robert watched the ball fly like a rocket, and then he and the rest of the crowd at the window exploded as it cleared the arena's distant wall for a grand slam.

In the reverie, Robert suddenly realized that he was still holding the ball; his eyes quickly glanced around to see if anyone had noticed him holding it. **Getting in any kind of trouble with all the powerful people who filled the executive suite would most certainly tarnish Robert's reputation.**

That's when Robert spotted the marketing director marching back into the room, flanked by large men dressed in matching windbreakers; not police, but a pair of frowning stadium security guards. Robert saw that they were walking up to a young man who, **unlike Robert**, must have gotten his ticket through the company's lottery. He stuck out like a sore thumb in the crowd of executives and their guests from the casual way he dressed and how he looked nervous to be there.

"You there! You just walked away from the team's trophy display." The marketing director held up a hand, finger pointing up. "I'd like you to tell me where Gary Savage's game-winning ball is."

The young man looked confused and uncomfortable, especially with the way the director was talking to him. "Man, what ball?"

George's tight, brittle veneer slipped and Robert found himself flinching at the man's clear anger. He hid the ball in the large pocket of his **dress pants**. The resulting bulge felt big and obvious, and he could feel his palm sweating, but no one was looking at him. They were all watching the confrontation.

Robert realized that no one was going to call him out. It was up to him, then. That would mean facing down with the angry marketing director, however, and Robert found himself hesitating at the idea.

"Don't pretend! I watch this space like a hawk -- like a *hawk!* -- and a moment ago when I walked by the ball was there. Now it is not. I would like it back, young man. This is your last chance."

The young man made a face like he had something sour in his mouth. "Last chance? I don't have any ball!"

"All right," the director said, and he was silent for a moment. Then he took another step toward the young man, his voice full of malice. "Let's go through the motions, then. First, these two are going to search you. Then, you're going to lose your job, because that ball isn't company property. It's stadium property. Have fun with their lawyers. Oh, and don't look now," marketing director held out his arm while he spoke, pointing, "but you're on the big screen."

Sure enough, a massive display on the other side of the field showed the sky box, and through the windows it was easy to spot the young man and the guards. Robert swallowed, his neck buzzing. **Reputation, which was what helped Robert build his company from the ground up, was more important to him than money, and there were people in that room who could make his life awkward: at the stadium, back at the office, and even in the business community, if they were clever enough.** Still, Robert felt bad that someone else was taking the fall for him over such a small misunderstanding.

With Robert deciding not to act, the young man was dragged out by the two guards, heels skidding against the ground. The director turned to the watching crowd, calling that there was

"nothing to see here," and when his eyes met Robert's, Robert felt his blood turn to ice. Then the director's gaze moved on, and a cheer from the stadium brought the attention of the room back to the game.

Robert swallowed. He could not post his photo now, that was for sure. He did not want to risk going back over to the shelves where the ball belonged, either, as the director would surely be watching over it.

Outside, too, the camera feeding the jumbotron followed the guards and the flailing young man as the crowd laughed and jeered and the announcers hurled jokes.

The CEO decided it had gone too far and was out of his hands. Robert put the ball back in its box as he made for the exit, feeling a rush and wondering if he would be discovered. No one came after him, however, and Robert heard another happy roar from the crowd as he walked down the staircase toward the parking lot.

Clerk/Inherited (Low Power Strength – Inherited Power Type)

Robert circled around in the parking lot, nervous that he wasn't going to find a spot, and nervous that he was a little late. He immediately felt a small relief at finding a space; he took a minute to collect himself in his car. Robert did not feel like himself dressed in a tie, airy slacks and stiff shoes. At home, the jacket had felt ridiculous on him; now he wished he had brought it, instead of his hoodie. Robert shook his head and left his car; he waited in line to have his ticket punched, and then walked up several flights of zigzagging stairs to the top of the grandstand.

It was Robert's first time in the company's luxurious executive sky box, though he was a regular at the stadium. Usually he was down in the stands **somewhere in the middle if he was lucky, or all the way in the back if he bought a ticket on a whim.**

Standing above it all in a sky box was **a grand experience** for him. **He was only there because he had won a lottery at work: enough executives and employees in the marketing**

department had turned down the offer, meaning anyone in the company could toss their name in the hat. Robert had never won the company lottery before, and was determined to make the most out of it now that he had.

Robert asked for a beer from the bartender -- just to have something to hold, really -- before going to stand alone in a corner by the big windows overlooking the field. The windows were pushed open; he felt the cool air swirl in and carry with it the sounds of the game and the crowd. Robert loved hearing it. He sipped his beer and, for a moment, felt like he was the only person in the box. He put his drink down on a small wooden table as he lost himself in the movement of the players, and the ball.

"That better not be a cold glass."

The angry voice jarred Robert out of his reverie.

It was the marketing director. Robert didn't know the director's name, but when he first walked in an assistant at the door pointed the man out and told Robert to follow any orders he gave. Robert had a vague idea of the director's importance from seeing him around the office, though he did not know what exactly he did. Robert watched as the man lifted his glass and put it back down atop a coaster. It embarrassed Robert; he apologized for it.

"Enjoying yourself?" the marketing director asked with a sour expression.

Robert nodded. "I am, thank you."

"And what do you do for us?"

George's tone made him sound less interested in him, Robert ruminated, and more like the man was trying to figure out why he was allowed to be there; the small hairs on Robert's neck tingled as his mind slipped into a defensive state.

"Oh," Robert swallowed, "I work in the mailroom. As a clerk."

"Ah! I know your head manager, Brandon. How is he?"

"He's good," Robert replied, and wondered for a moment whether or not it to tell the director that the manager's name was in fact Ben, and that Robert was his son. It felt too awkward to correct his superior, so Robert let it drop. After all, Robert would not have the job if not for his father. It was, in fact, something his grandfather did for Ben in turn: their family took pride in their legacy in business as managers and administrators. It was important to the family to be able to take care of yourself and your own. Robert was thankful for his place in that tradition, and did not want to risk causing trouble for his father at the office with someone higher up the company food chain.

"Are you a fan of the team?" George asked, changing the subject.

"Yes. Raised that way."

The marketing director's smile was tiny. "Well, it was good to **meet** you."

"You, too, **sir**," Robert replied.

Robert turned his attention back to the game. He watched a few pitches as he drank his beer, lowering the glass back down onto the **supplied coaster**. The inning wrapped up just as he finished his beer, **so he took the glass and the coaster with him to get a refill.**

Robert came across a big display case on his way: he leaned in and looked at the trophies and whistled. Some were for games he remembered watching, either **with his dad** or on television. On one shelf was a ball on a little stand, and when Robert looked at the date and the name of the pitcher his eyes widened. He had fond memories of that game; he closed his eyes and imagined the pitch the way he had seen it: just off to the side in the stands, already getting on his feet as the ball sailed over the plate and clinched a perfect game. The memory filled him with joy.

His dad would want to see it, Robert decided. He picked up the ball and admired the pitcher's signature for a moment. Then he held up the ball and his phone, framing a shot.

Commotion at the window drew Robert's attention. He rushed over to see what was happening, trying to spy the field between the heads and shoulders of other people crowded before him. His team was up at bat; he spotted a player trying to steal. The man dove back for

second as the pitcher threw to the baseman there; the runner's hand slapped down first and he was safe. Robert guessed he had tried to steal before as the pitcher looked rattled. The bases were loaded and the field was tense as everyone waited for the next pitch.

The ball flew toward the batter and the bat found it with a crack. Robert watched the ball fly like a rocket, and then he and the rest of the crowd at the window exploded as it cleared the arena's distant wall for a grand slam.

In the reverie, Robert suddenly realized that he was still holding the ball; his eyes quickly glanced around to see if anyone had noticed him holding it. **Getting in any kind of trouble with all the powerful people that filled the executive suite would certainly cost Robert his job, and, much worse, make him the shame of his father and the family line.**

That's when Robert spotted the marketing director marching back into the room, flanked by large men dressed in matching windbreakers; not police, but a pair of frowning stadium security guards. Robert saw that they were walking up to a young man who, **like Robert**, must have gotten his ticket through the company's lottery. He stuck out like a sore thumb in the crowd of executives and their guests from the casual way he dressed and how he looked nervous to be there.

"You there! You just walked away from the team's trophy display." The marketing director held up a hand, finger pointing up. "I'd like you to tell me where Gary Savage's game-winning ball is."

The young man looked confused and uncomfortable, especially with the way the director was talking to him. "Man, what ball?"

The marketing director's tight, brittle veneer slipped and Robert found himself flinching at the man's clear anger. He hid the ball in the large pocket of his **hoodie**. The resulting bulge felt big and obvious, and he could feel his palm sweating, but no one was looking at him. They were all watching the confrontation.

Robert realized that no one was going to call him out. It was up to him, then. That would

mean facing down with the angry marketing director, however, and Robert found himself hesitating at the idea.

"Don't pretend! I watch this space like a hawk -- like a *hawk!* -- and a moment ago when I walked by the ball was there. Now it is not. I would like it back, young man. This is your last chance."

The young man made a face like he had something sour in his mouth. "Last chance? I don't have any ball!"

"All right," the director said, and he was silent for a moment. Then he took another step toward the young man, his voice full of malice. "Let's go through the motions, then. First, these two are going to search you. Then, you're going to lose your job, because that ball isn't company property. It's stadium property. Have fun with their lawyers. Oh, and don't look now," the marketing director held out his arm while he spoke, pointing, "but you're on the big screen."

Sure enough, a massive display on the other side of the field showed the sky box, and through the windows it was easy to spot the young man and the guards. Robert swallowed, his neck buzzing. **Robert did not want to lose his job, that was for sure. Worse, it sounded like there would be hell from the stadium owners, and that was the kind of trouble that took time and money; two things Robert had in short supply. Even if he survived all that, he would be failing his father, and that would mean losing the future he was raised for and had worked for.** Still, Robert felt bad that someone could lose his job over such a small misunderstanding.

With Robert deciding not to act, the young man was dragged out by the two guards, heels skidding against the ground. The director turned to the watching crowd, calling that there was "nothing to see here," and when his eyes met Robert's, Robert felt his blood turn to ice. Then the director's gaze moved on, and a cheer from the stadium brought the attention of the room back to the game.

Robert swallowed. He could not post his photo now, that was for sure. He did not want to

risk going back over to the shelves where the ball belonged, either, as the director would surely be watching over it.

Outside, too, the camera feeding the jumbotron followed the guards and the flailing young man as the crowd laughed and jeered and the announcers hurled jokes.

The **mail clerk** decided it had gone too far and was out of his hands. Robert put the ball back in its box as he made for the exit, feeling a rush and wondering if he would be discovered. No one came after him, however, and Robert heard another happy roar from the crowd as he walked down the staircase toward the parking lot.

Clerk/Earned (Low Power Strength – Earned Power Type)

Robert circled around in the parking lot, nervous that he wasn't going to find a spot, and nervous that he was a little late. He immediately felt a small relief at finding a space; he took a minute to collect himself in his car. Robert did not feel like himself dressed in a tie, airy slacks and stiff shoes. At home, the jacket had felt ridiculous on him; now he wished he had brought it, instead of his hoodie. Robert shook his head and left his car; he waited in line to have his ticket punched, and then walked up several flights of zigzagging stairs to the top of the grandstand.

It was Robert's first time in the company's luxurious executive sky box, though he was a regular at the stadium. Usually he was down in the stands **somewhere in the middle if he was lucky, or all the way in the back if he bought a ticket on a whim.**

Standing above it all in a sky box was **a grand experience** for him. **He was only there because he had won a lottery at work: enough executives and employees in the marketing department had turned down the offer, meaning anyone in the company could toss their name in the hat. Robert had never won the company lottery before, and was determined to make the most out of it now that he had.**

Robert asked for a beer from the bartender -- just to have something to hold, really -- before going to stand alone in a corner by the big windows overlooking the field. The windows were pushed open: he felt the cool air swirl in and carry with it the sounds of the game and the crowd. Robert loved hearing it. He sipped his beer and, for a moment, felt like he was the only person in the box. He put his drink down on a small wooden table as he lost himself in the movement of the players, and the ball.

"That better not be a cold glass."

The angry voice jarred Robert out of his reverie.

It was the marketing director. Robert didn't know the director's name, but when he first walked in an assistant at the door pointed the man out and told Robert to follow any orders he gave. Robert had a vague idea of the director's importance from seeing him around the office, though he did not know what exactly he did. Robert watched as the man lifted his glass and put it back down atop a coaster. It embarrassed Robert; he apologized for it.

"Enjoying yourself?" the marketing director asked with a sour expression.

Robert nodded. "I am, thank you."

"And what do you do for us?"

George's tone made him sound less interested in him, Robert ruminated, and more like the man was trying to figure out why he was allowed to be there; the small hairs on Robert's neck tingled as his mind slipped into a defensive state.

"Oh," Robert swallowed, "I work in the mailroom. As a clerk."

"Ah! I know your head manager, Brandon. How is he?"

"Doing great," Robert said, but he had to force the smile. Not too long ago, Robert held a more formidable position in middle management at the company. However, due to his lack luster performance on the job, he was relegated down to the mailroom where, according to Brandon, he belonged. Despite his failure to produce fruitful results in management, Robert thought his demotion was wrong and he told Brandon as much --

maybe a little too heatedly -- and the next week Brandon had already poisoned his name at several other companies. Apparently he had earned this lower position and Brandon made sure that neighboring companies knew that to be the truth.

"Are you a fan of the team?" George asked, changing the subject.

"Yes. Always have been."

"Well, it was good to meet you."

"You, too, sir," Robert replied.

Robert turned his attention back to the game. He watched a few pitches as he drank his beer, lowering the glass back down onto the **supplied coaster**. The inning wrapped up just as he finished his beer, **so he took the glass and the coaster with him to get a refill**.

Robert came across a big display case on his way: he leaned in, looked at the trophies and whistled. Some were for games he remembered watching, either **alone in the stands** or on television. On one shelf was a ball on a little stand, and when Robert looked at the date and the name of the pitcher his eyes widened. He had fond memories of that game; he closed his eyes and imagined the pitch the way he had seen it: just off to the side in the stands, already getting on his feet as the ball sailed over the plate and clinched a perfect game. The memory filled him with joy.

He wanted something to remember it by, Robert decided. He picked up the ball and admired the pitcher's signature for a moment. Then he held up the ball and his phone, framing a shot.

Commotion at the window drew Robert's attention. He rushed over to see what was happening, trying to spy the field between the heads and shoulders of other people crowded before him. His team was up at bat; he spotted a player trying to steal. The man dove back for second as the pitcher threw to the baseman there; the runner's hand slapped down first and he was safe. Robert guessed he had tried to steal before as the pitcher looked rattled. The bases were loaded and the field was tense as everyone waited for the next pitch.

The ball flew toward the batter and the bat found it with a crack. Robert watched the ball

fly like a rocket, and then he and the rest of the crowd at the window exploded as it cleared the arena's distant wall for a grand slam.

In the reverie, Robert suddenly realized that he was still holding the ball; his eyes quickly glanced around to see if anyone had noticed him holding it. **Robert found himself with few allies, especially with Brandon blackballing him -- he could not afford more of the wrong kind of attention.**

That's when Robert spotted the marketing director marching back into the room, flanked by large men dressed in matching windbreakers; not police, but a pair of frowning stadium security guards. Robert saw that they were walking up to a young man who, **like Robert**, must have gotten his ticket through the company's lottery. He stuck out like a sore thumb in the crowd of executives and their guests from the casual way he dressed and how he looked nervous to be there.

"You there. You just walked away from the team's trophy display." The marketing director held up a hand, finger pointing up. "I'd like you to tell me where Gary Savage's game-winning ball is."

The young man looked confused and uncomfortable, especially with the way the director was talking to him. "Man, what ball?"

The marketing director's tight, brittle veneer slipped and Robert found himself flinching at the man's clear anger. He hid the ball in the large pocket of his **hoodie**. The resulting bulge felt big and obvious, and he could feel his palm sweating, but no one was looking at him. They were all watching the confrontation.

Robert realized that no one was going to call him out. It was up to him, then. That would mean facing down with the angry marketing director, however, and Robert found himself hesitating at the idea.

"Don't pretend! I watch this space like a hawk -- like a *hawk!* -- and a moment ago when I walked by the ball was there. Now it is not. I would like it back, young man. This is your last

chance."

The young man made a face like he had something sour in his mouth. "Last chance? I don't have any ball!"

"All right," the director said, and he was silent for a moment. Then he took another step toward the young man, his voice full of malice. "Let's go through the motions, then. First, these two are going to search you. Then, you're going to lose your job, because that ball isn't company property. It's stadium property. Have fun with their lawyers. Oh, and don't look now," the marketing director held out his arm while he spoke, pointing, "but you're on the big screen."

Sure enough, a massive display on the other side of the field showed the sky box, and through the windows it was easy to spot the young man and the guards. Robert swallowed, his neck buzzing. **Robert did not want to lose his job, that was for sure. At least, not in a way that would add further disgrace to his name, and make his hard search for a new job even harder, if not impossible. Worse, it sounded like there would be hell from the stadium owners, and that was the kind of trouble that took time and money; two things Robert had in short supply.** Still, Robert felt bad that someone could lose his job over such a small misunderstanding.

With Robert deciding not to act, the young man was dragged out by the two guards, heels skidding against the ground. The director turned to the watching crowd, calling that there was "nothing to see here," and when his eyes met Robert's, Robert felt his blood turn to ice. Then the director's gaze moved on, and a cheer from the stadium brought the attention of the room back to the game.

Robert swallowed. He could not post his photo now, that was for sure. He did not want to risk going back over to the shelves where the ball belonged, either, as the director would surely be watching over it.

Outside, too, the camera feeding the jumbotron followed the guards and the flailing young man as the crowd laughed and jeered and the announcers hurled jokes.

The **mail clerk** decided it had gone too far and was out of his hands. Robert put the ball back in its box as he made for the exit, feeling a rush and wondering if he would be discovered. No one came after him, however, and Robert heard another happy roar from the crowd as he walked down the staircase toward the parking lot.

Appendix C. Pilot Instrument and Analysis

Factor	Question	RC	Response Type
Attractiveness	I think Robert could be a friend of mine.		Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, All of the Time
	I admire Robert's moral fiber.		“
	Robert and I could never establish a personal friendship with each other.	x	“
	I imagine that Robert is very attractive, physically.		“
	I imagine that Robert is somewhat ugly looking.	x	“
	I have confidence in Roberts's ability to get any job done.		“
	If I wanted to get things done, I could probably depend on Robert.		“
	I couldn't get anything accomplished with Robert.	x	“
Immersion	While reading the story, I lost track of time.		“
	The story seemed to drag.	x	Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, All of the Time
	I was mentally involved in the story while reading.		“
	I was never really pulled into the story.	x	“
	While reading I was completely immersed in the story.		“
Enjoyment	Reading this story was a boring activity.	x	Strongly disagree to Strongly agree
	Reading this story was enjoyable.		“
	This story was fun to read.		“
Realism	The dialogue in this story is realistic and believable.		“

	The setting for this story just doesn't seem real.	x	“
	This story shows that people have both good and bad sides.		“
	The story was logical and convincing.		“
	I understood why the events unfolded the way they did.		“
Readability	I found the story easy to read.		“
	I had problems following the story.	x	“
	I could easily follow the actions and events in the story.		“
	I had to work to stay focused on the story.	x	“
Memorability	I can recall key points from the plot of the story		“
	I don't remember much about the story.	x	“

Pilot Test Results

Pilots A and B each had two tiers to account for tests on both the historically-situated and modern-day story types; Pilot C tested only the modern-day story type to account for deficiencies in the earlier pilot data. For each pilot type (e.g. historical1, modern1, historical2, modern2, modern3), 40 participants (total, n = 200) were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions featured in Table 2. After reverse coding the appropriate items, scale reliability scores were calculated for each factor prior to generating scale items for each variable. Scale reliability scores (Cronbach's alpha) for all factors are provided in Table 9. Only one alpha (moral judgment, modern2) calls into question the validity of the items combined to create the factor. Please note, however, that moral judgment was later comprised of six items in the pilot C to increase the reliability of this variable from $\alpha = .508$ to $\alpha = .868$. Additionally, the results from both the historical2 and modern2 pre-tests necessitated that one of three items from the constraint variable be eliminated with resulting reliability scores of $\alpha = .637$ and $\alpha = .680$, respectively. To increase

reliability and comprise a scale featuring more than two items, four additional items were added to the constraint variable for pilot C, resulting in an acceptable reliability score of $\alpha = .758$.

Table 9. Scale Reliabilities for Five Pilot Tests

Variable	# items per scale	Historic1 α	Modern1 α	Historic2 α	Modern2 α	Modern3 α
Attractiveness	8	.847	.757	.754	.769	.806
Immersion	5	.872	.844	.866	.914	.843
Enjoyment	3	.912	.925	.906	.894	.932
Realism	5	.649	.791	.806	.827	.684
Readability	4	.928	.865	.913	.897	.785
Memorability	2	.703	.854	.734	.802	.646
Moral Judgment	2/6	--	--	.724	.508	.868
Power Strength	3	--	--	.935	.938	.890
Power Type	4	--	--	.930	.941	.941
Attribution	7	--	--	.691	.672	.698
Distance	6	--	--	.773	.862	.843
Constraint*	2/6	--	--	.637	.680	.758

**One item was eliminated from Constraint to improve reliability score for all scores but Modern3*

After comprising factor scores, I tested six variables (attractiveness, immersion, enjoyment, realism, readability, and memorability; see Appendix G for a full table of items) for equivalency across all story versions. The intention here was to control for any potential confounding variables that may influence participants' perceptions of the protagonist. Results from a series of one-way ANOVAs reveal three incidents of significance in three different variables across three different pre-tests; however, Modern1 and Modern3 pre-tests produced

equivalency across all story versions. Tables 10.1, 10.2, and 10.3 show the manner in which memorability, immersion, and attractiveness yielded significant differences across manipulations, despite no significance in other tests of these variables. Tables 10.4 and 10.5 demonstrate no significance detected in the Modern pilots 1 and 3, indicating equivalency across the specified variables. Tables 11.1, 11.2, 12.1, 12.2, 13.1, and 13.2 illustrate discrepancies in mean scores and within cell variance for each factor and reveals that in all cases, the low power-earned condition produced the significance. Given the small sample size and inconsistency in these results across five tests, it is difficult to draw conclusions about whether and how to account for issues with the stimulus materials. However, this author is inclined to believe that these incidents of significance represent aberrations in the data as none were replicated across pilots.

Table 10.1. One-way ANOVA for Historic Pilot 1

Variable		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Attractiveness	Between Groups	1.075	3	.358	.633	.598
	Within Groups	20.365	36	.566		
	Total	21.440	39			
Immersion	Between Groups	2.710	3	.903	1.350	.273
	Within Groups	24.087	36	.669		
	Total	26.798	39			
Enjoyment	Between Groups	4.503	3	1.501	1.638	.198
	Within Groups	32.983	36	.916		
	Total	37.486	39			
Realism	Between Groups	1.843	3	.614	1.183	.330
	Within Groups	18.699	36	.519		
	Total	20.543	39			

Readability	Between Groups	2.348	3	.783	.828	.487
	Within Groups	34.050	36	.946		
	Total	36.398	39			
Memorability	Between Groups	5.930	3	1.977	3.837	.018
	Within Groups	18.545	36	.515		
	Total	24.475	39			

Table 10.2. One-way ANOVA for Historic Pilot 2

Variable		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Attractiveness	Between Groups	.214	3	.071	.212	.887
	Within Groups	12.114	36	.336		
	Total	12.328	39			
Immersion	Between Groups	4.929	3	1.643	3.150	.037
	Within Groups	18.774	36	.521		
	Total	23.702	39			
Enjoyment	Between Groups	5.795	3	1.932	1.747	.175
	Within Groups	39.805	36	1.106		
	Total	45.600	39			
Realism	Between Groups	2.040	3	.680	1.325	.281
	Within Groups	18.468	36	.513		
	Total	20.507	39			
Readability	Between Groups	2.344	3	.781	1.063	.377
	Within Groups	26.474	36	.735		
	Total	28.819	39			
Memorability	Between Groups	1.927	3	.642	1.098	.363

Within Groups	21.057	36	.585
Total	22.994	39	

Table 10.3. One-way ANOVA for Modern Pilot 2

Variable		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Attractiveness	Between Groups	3.817	3	1.272	5.507	.003
	Within Groups	8.318	36	.231		
	Total	12.135	39			
Immersion	Between Groups	1.497	3	.499	.496	.688
	Within Groups	36.236	36	1.007		
	Total	37.733	39			
Enjoyment	Between Groups	4.535	3	1.512	2.187	.106
	Within Groups	24.884	36	.691		
	Total	29.419	39			
Realism	Between Groups	.820	3	.273	.513	.676
	Within Groups	19.156	36	.532		
	Total	19.976	39			
Readability	Between Groups	2.977	3	.992	1.450	.244
	Within Groups	24.631	36	.684		
	Total	27.608	39			
Memorability	Between Groups	.867	3	.289	.493	.689
	Within Groups	21.108	36	.586		
	Total	21.975	39			

Table 10.4. One-way ANOVA for Modern Pilot 1

Variable		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Attractiveness	Between Groups	.307	3	.102	.384	.765
	Within Groups	9.594	36	.266		
	Total	9.901	39			
Immersion	Between Groups	.660	3	.220	.328	.805
	Within Groups	24.184	36	.672		
	Total	24.844	39			
Enjoyment	Between Groups	1.238	3	.413	.353	.787
	Within Groups	42.051	36	1.168		
	Total	43.289	39			
Realism	Between Groups	1.696	3	.565	1.952	.139
	Within Groups	10.428	36	.290		
	Total	12.124	39			
Readability	Between Groups	.301	3	.100	.151	.929
	Within Groups	23.924	36	.665		
	Total	24.225	39			
Memorability	Between Groups	1.188	3	.395	.674	.574
	Within Groups	21.156	36	.588		
	Total	22.344	39			

Table 10.5. One-way ANOVA for Modern Pilot 3

Variable		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Attractiveness	Between Groups	3.097	3	1.032	2.431	.081
	Within Groups	15.290	36	.42		

	Total	18.387	39			
Immersion	Between Groups	.906	3	.302	.499	.686
	Within Groups	21.813	36	.606		
	Total	22.719	39			
Enjoyment	Between Groups	2.448	3	.816	.901	.450
	Within Groups	32.618	36	.906		
	Total	35.067	39			
Realism	Between Groups	1.114	3	.371	.899	.451
	Within Groups	14.861	36	.413		
	Total	15.975	39			
Readability	Between Groups	.287	3	.096	.251	.860
	Within Groups	13.712	36	.381		
	Total	13.998	39			
Memorability	Between Groups	.328	3	.109	.530	.664
	Within Groups	7.416	36	.206		
	Total	7.744	39			

Table 11.1. Memorability Descriptive Statistics: Historic Pilot 1

Condition	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Upper	95% Lower
HPI	12	4.4737	.51299	.11769	4.2264	4.7209
HPE	8	4.0625	.62321	.22034	3.5415	4.5835
LPI	11	4.7500	.41833	.17078	4.3110	5.1890
LPE	9	3.5714	1.30475	.49315	2.3647	4.7781
Total	40	4.2750	.79219	.12526	4.0216	4.5284

Table 11.2. Bonferroni Post Hoc Test of One-way ANOVA: Historic Pilot 1

Manipulation (I)	Manipulation (J)	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Conf. Int. Lower Bound	95% Conf. Int. Upper Bound
LPE	HPI	-.890226*	.31734	.044	-1.7883	-.0163
	HPE	-.49107	.37146	1.000	-1.5282	.5460
	LPI	-1.17857	.39931	.033	-2.2934	-.0637

Dependent Variable: Memorability

**The mean difference is significant at the .05 level*

Note: All other group contrasts were non-significant

Table 12.1. Immersion Descriptive Statistics: Historic Pilot 2

Condition	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Upper	95% Lower
HPI	12	3.9333	.70495	.20350	3.4854	4.3812
HPE	8	3.5563	.47013	.16622	3.1632	3.9493
LPI	10	3.3600	1.00576	.31805	2.6405	4.0795
LPE	10	4.2800	.54324	.17179	3.8914	4.6686
Total	40	3.8013	.77959	.12326	3.5519	4.0506

Table 12.2. Bonferroni Post Hoc Test of One-way ANOVA: Historic Pilot 2

Manipulation (I)	Manipulation (J)	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Conf. Int. Lower Bound	95% Conf. Int. Upper Bound
LPE	HPI	.34667	.30920	1.000	-.5166	1.2100

HPE	.72375	.34254	.250	-.2326	1.6801
LPI	.92000*	.32295	.043	.0183	1.8217

Dependent Variable: Immersion

**The mean difference is significant at the .05 level*

Note: All other group contrasts were non-significant

Table 13.1. Attractiveness Descriptive Statistics: Modern Pilot 2

Condition	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Upper	95% Lower
HPI	10	3.4054	.31067	.09824	3.1831	3.6276
HPE	11	3.2159	.50957	.15364	2.8736	3.5582
LPI	9	3.0357	.58323	.19441	2.5874	3.4840
LPE	10	2.5750	.48663	.15388	2.2269	2.9231
Total	40	3.0625	.55782	.08820	2.8841	3.2409

Table 13.2. Bonferroni Post Hoc Test of One-way ANOVA: Modern Pilot 2

Manipulation (I)	Manipulation (J)	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Conf. Int. Lower Bound	95% Conf. Int. Upper Bound
LPE	HPI	-.83036*	.21497	.003	-1.4305	-.2302
	HPE	-.64091*	.21002	.026	-1.2273	-.0545
	LPI	-.46071	.22086	.265	-1.0773	.1559

Dependent Variable: Attractiveness

**The mean difference is significant at the .05 level*

Note: All other group contrasts were non-significant

Finally, tests of correlation were generated to examine the relationships between power and four main variables of interest: attribution, constraint, distance, and moral judgment (Table 14). In both story versions, correlations emerged in the expected direction for all four variables;

however, significance only emerged from relationships in the historic pre-test. The modern pre-test yielded marginal significance in one variable (attribution, $p = .07$), but despite presenting in the correct direction, the three remaining relationships were quite weak. As a result, the modern stimulus material was adjusted to reflect manipulations with more clarity for the reader in a manner similar to the historical stimulus. After deploying a third pilot for the modern stimulus only, significant correlations in the expected directions were found. At this point, the stimulus materials were deemed acceptable for use in the main dissertation study.

Table 14. Correlations Table for Main Variables of Interest

Variable	Historical2	p	Modern2	p	Modern3	p
Attribution	-.312*	.025	-.237	.071	-.344*	.015
Distance	.424**	.003	.088	.294	.302*	.029
Constraint	-.316*	.024	-.101	.268	-.481**	.001
Moral Jud.	-.310*	.026	-.044	.394	-.436**	.002

*One-Tailed Pearson's r; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$*

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