DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE: EXPLORING THE ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF IDENTIFICATION WITH FICTIONAL CHARACTERS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Geoff Francis Kaufman, M.A.
Graduate Program in Psychology

The Ohio State University
2009

Dissertation Committee:
Professor Lisa K. Libby, Advisor
Professor Richard E. Petty
Professor Kentaro Fujita
Copyright by

Geoff Francis Kaufman

2009
ABSTRACT

Identification refers to the imaginative process of assuming the perspective and identity of a character in a work of fiction, which leads individuals to experience, through simulation, the events of a narrative as if they were a particular character and to take on that character’s thoughts, emotions, behaviors, goals, and traits, while in the story world. In this dissertation, I seek to redress the paucity of empirical research on identification by presenting eight studies investigating several of its fundamental antecedents and consequences for readers of literary fiction. In Chapter 1, results from two studies showed that versions of short stories that utilized first-person (versus third-person) narration, included references to a main character’s thoughts and feelings in response to story events, and featured a main character who shared a relevant group membership with readers, compared to versions of stories that lacked one or more of these elements, evoked higher levels of identification and greater adoption of a character’s intentions and behaviors. In Chapter 2, four studies investigated how readers’ level of self-concept accessibility impacts the extent to which they experience identification. Three studies demonstrated that a chronically or temporarily lowered state of self-concept accessibility increased, and a heightened state of self-concept accessibility decreased, readers’ levels of identification and incorporation of a character’s trait into their self-concepts. A fourth
study revealed that if participants were placed in a negative state of self-reflection prior to reading a narrative, however, they reported higher levels of identification with a protagonist, perhaps stemming from the desire to escape the self. In Chapter 4, two studies explored the possibility that encouraging identification with characters who are members of stigmatized groups could be an effective means of reducing stereotypes and prejudice. Specifically, these studies showed that disclosing the stigmatized group membership of a character later, versus earlier, in a story led to comparatively higher levels of identification as well as lower levels of stereotype reliance in readers’ evaluations of the character and lower levels of prejudice toward the character’s group.

In Chapter 5, I discuss the theoretical and practical implications of the findings, differentiate identification from perspective-taking more generally, and propose a model of readers’ potentially dynamic responses to characters in literary fiction.
Dedicated to Mom, Dad, and Darcy.

Thank you for giving me your love, encouragement, and patience --
and for encouraging me to read every book I could get my hands on as a kid.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe the greatest debt of gratitude to Lisa Libby for her support and guidance throughout the entire process of completing the work included in this dissertation, her unyielding enthusiasm about the research, and her willingness to explore new conceptual terrain. Her insight on the topics of perspective and mental imagery were particularly invaluable in formulating and refining my ideas and methods.

I am also grateful to Tim Brock, who sparked my initial interest in narrative research and whose mentorship helped me find my identity as a social psychologist and instilled in me an appreciation for the practical implications of our work. In addition, I wish to acknowledge the other members of my dissertation committee, Rich Petty and Ken Fujita, for their extremely helpful suggestions, as well as the members of the Social Cognition Research Group, the Group for Attitudes and Persuasion, and the Narrative Research Group, for their comments on previous presentations of this work.

I am also thankful for the members of the Libby lab group for their feedback and, equally importantly, their friendship. Finally, I owe a huge thanks to the undergraduate research assistants who helped collect and enter the data for these studies: Yvonne Townshend, Alex Finnarn, Erika Price, Alisha Imholt, and Stephanie Begun.
VITA

March 25, 1978 ........................................... Born – Uniontown, Pennsylvania

2000 ............................................................ B. A. Psychology,
Carnegie Mellon University

2004 ............................................................ M. A. Psychology,
The Ohio State University

2006 – 2009 ..................................................... Graduate Teaching Associate,
The Ohio State University

PUBLICATIONS

Research Publications


FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Psychology
TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Abstract</strong></td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Dedication</strong></td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Acknowledgments</strong></td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Vita</strong></td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>List of Figures</strong></td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Chapters:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The Impact of Narrative Voice, Access to a Character’s Thoughts and</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feelings, and a Character’s Group Membership on Identification.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Impact of Readers’ Level of Self-Concept Accessibility on</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identification.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Special Application: Identification as a Means to Reduce Stereotyping</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and Prejudice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><strong>General Discussion</strong></td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>List of References</strong></td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Appendices:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>First-person, High Thoughts and Feelings Narrative Used in Study 1</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Third-person, High Thoughts and Feelings Narrative Used in Study 1</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>First-person, Low Thoughts and Feelings Narrative Used in Study 1</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Third-person, Low Thoughts and Feelings Narrative Used in Study 1</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Identification Measure</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Flyer Used to Measure Intention to Volunteer in Campus Beautification Projects</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>First-person, Ohio State Character Narrative Used in Study 2</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>First-person, Denison Character Narrative Used in Study 2</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Third-person, Ohio State Character Narrative Used in Study 2</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Third-person, Denison Character Narrative Used in Study 2</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Introversion Narrative</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Introversion/Extroversion Measures</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Extroversion Narrative</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Self-Discrepancy Rating Scales Used in Study 6</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>World-Discrepancy Rating Scales Used in Study 6</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Black/Early Narrative Used in Study 8</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Black/Late Narrative Used in Study 8</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>The effect of narrative voice and level of access to the character’s thoughts and feelings on identification in Study 1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>The effect of narrative voice and level of access to the character’s thoughts and feelings on self-rated interest in community involvement in Study 1</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>The effect of narrative voice and level of access to the character’s thoughts and feelings on intentions to volunteer in Study 1</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>The effect of narrative voice and the character’s university affiliation on identification in Study 2</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>The effect of narrative condition and level of self-concept accessibility on identification in Study 5</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>The effect of narrative condition and level of self-concept accessibility on self-rated extroversion in Study 5</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>The effect of discrepancy condition and level of self-concept accessibility on identification in Study 6</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>The effect of discrepancy condition and level of self-concept accessibility on self-rated introversion in Study 6</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>The effect of narrative condition on identification in Study 7</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>The effect of narrative condition on the favorability of participants’ attitudes toward homosexuals in Study 7</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>The effect of narrative condition on ratings of the character’s level of Femininity in Study 7</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>The effect of narrative condition on ratings of the character’s level of Emotionality in Study 7</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.5 The effect of narrative condition on participants’ self-rated emotionality in Study 7………………………………………………………………65

4.6 The effect of narrative condition on intentions to volunteer in Study 7………67

4.7 The effect of narrative condition on identification in Study8……………….74

4.8 The effect of narrative condition on participants’ ratings of the character’s level of hostility in Study 8……………………………………………………….75

4.9 The effect of narrative condition on modern racism scores in Study 8………76
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“In a very real sense, people who have read good literature have lived more than people who cannot or will not read. It is not true that we have only one life to lead; if we can read, we can live as many more lives and as many kinds of lives as we wish.” – S. I. Hayakawa

The Concept of Identification

We have all undoubtedly had the experience of reading short stories or novels and connecting to particular characters to such an extent that we find ourselves stepping into their proverbial shoes and experiencing the unfolding events of the narrative from their perspective, in essence becoming those characters while we remain in their fictional worlds. In fact, it is likely that assuming the point of view of a fictional character is so natural and ubiquitous a response that we can recall examples from even our earliest encounters with literature. For instance, many of us may remember reading Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland for the first time as children and feeling ourselves transform into Lewis Carroll’s heroine, imagining ourselves seeing through her eyes as she went down the rabbit hole and through the looking glass, being overcome by the same mix of
wonder and terror she felt when she encountered such “curiouser and curiouser” figures as the Mad Hatter, Cheshire Cat, and Queen of Hearts on her fantastic journey, and sharing her ultimate bittersweet relief in the closing chapter as she realized that it had all been just a “curious dream” (Carroll, 1941).

The phenomenon of experiencing the events of a work of fiction as one of its characters is at the heart of identification: when we identify with characters, we simulate their sensations, actions, thoughts, goals, and emotions, as if they were actually occurring to us in real time (e.g., Cohen, 2001; Livingstone, 1998; Oatley, 1994). Identification, in essence, affords us the unique opportunity to leave our world – and ourselves – behind, and to assume new identities, have encounters and interactions, and see new worlds from perspectives we might not otherwise ever have had the chance to experience, simply by virtue of using our imaginations.

Even though identification with fictional characters is a fairly commonplace – and, in my opinion, a fairly consequential – phenomenon, it has largely evaded empirical investigation, particularly within social psychology. This void is likely due in part to the fact that, until fairly recently, there has been a lack of agreement about what identification actually is. For instance, many previous explorations have equated identification with the recognition of similarity between a character’s traits, experiences, or circumstances, and one’s own, suggesting that to identify with a character means simply to relate to and understand a character’s situation or perspective (e.g., Basil, 1996; Maccoby & Wilson, 1957; Reeves & Miller, 1978). In addition, other work has conceptualized identification as the desire to be or act like a character who possesses attributes or enjoys outcomes readers wish to have for themselves (e.g., Hoffner &
Buchanan, 2005). Such responses, which clearly position a character as a target of judgment and scrutiny or as a role model to emulate and imitate, differ greatly from the immersive and simulative experience of psychological merger I believe identification to be. Likewise, identification can be contrasted with the comparatively well-researched phenomenon of parasocial interaction, which refers to the feelings of attraction or attachment that individuals sometimes develop for well-liked characters, which, in essence, amount to a one-sided “friendship” with them (Horton & Wohl, 1956). In general, all of these reactions are more indicative of the orientation between reader and character sometimes referred to as spectatorship; as spectators, readers feel as though they are unobtrusive observers and witnesses of a story’s events and characters (Oatley, 1999). Identification, in contrast, leads readers to imagine being, rather than observing, evaluating, or responding to a particular character. Thus, identification is by no means an inevitable occurrence when reading a story or novel, and efforts to distinguish identification from other potential relationships between reader and character have resulted in growing coherence, clarity, and consensus in recent conceptualizations (see Cohen, 2001, for a review).

A second reason that identification has received little attention as a subject of rigorous investigation may be that researchers and theorists have historically neglected to look beyond the mere entertainment function of literary works and recognize the potential for stories and novels to impact readers’ hearts and minds (Green, Strange, & Brock, 2002; Mar & Oatley, 2008). However, I believe that, because of the unique opportunity that it affords readers to experience alternate realities, identities, and perspectives, identification is a natural target for rigorous theoretical and empirical scrutiny,
fascinating both as a phenomenological experience in its own right as well as a potential
means to transform readers in profound ways.

As a result of the paucity of research on identification, even fundamental
questions about the experience of identification as well as its antecedents and
consequences remain unanswered, and it is this void that I seek to begin to fill with this
dissertation. Thus, the eight studies to be reported represent an initial attempt to
investigate: (1) what factors influence readers’ likelihood of experiencing identification
with characters in literary fiction and (2) what the consequences of identification are for
readers. I believe that addressing these basic questions represents a crucial first step
toward validating the conceptualization of identification that is guiding my work and
demonstrating the important (but largely untested) implications of identification for
changing individuals’ identities, beliefs, and behaviors.

Antecedents of Identification

*Factors Related to the Narrative and Its Characters*

In Chapter 2, I explore how several elementary features of a narrative and its
characters affect the extent to which readers experience identification with a central
protagonist in a short story. The three factors I selected to study were ones I believed
would facilitate identification by making it easier for readers step into a character’s shoes
while immersed in the world of the narrative: the use of first-person voice, the provision
of access to a character’s thoughts and feelings, and the presence of a character who
shares a relevant group membership with readers.
Narrative Voice. The voice of a narrative – that is, the perspective from which the narrative is relayed to readers – is perhaps the most fundamental feature of a short story or novel, with most narratives utilizing either first-person voice, in which a central character narrates the story from his/her point of view, or third-person voice, in which an observer of the characters and events serves as the narrator. I expected that first-person narratives, by virtue of creating a more immediate sense of closeness and familiarity to the main character, would be more conducive to identification than would third-person narratives, which explicitly position protagonists as separate entities (and, in my view, are more likely to position readers as spectators). However, I predicted that first-person narration would be a necessary but not sufficient factor to increase identification, particularly for narratives written in short form (such as the ones utilized in the present research), which do not have the luxury of prolonged character development that full-length novels afford and, consequently, may necessitate a much quicker connection to characters for identification to occur. Thus, I reasoned that in order to increase identification likelihood, short stories written in first-person voice must also include other features likely to act in conjunction with first-person narration to facilitate the adoption of a character’s identity.

Access to a Character’s Thoughts and Feelings. One such factor that I predicted would increase identification when combined with first-person voice was the provision of a high level of access to a character’s thoughts and feelings. Information about a character’s internal responses to story events, I reasoned, represents the grist for the perspective-taking mill, and having such information should increase readers’ ability to understand and adopt the mindset and identity of the character. In Study 1, I manipulated
both the voice of the narrative and the level of access readers had to a main character’s thoughts and feelings to test the prediction that a first-person story providing high access to the character’s stream of consciousness would elicit higher levels of identification than would other versions of the same story lacking one or both of these narrative elements.

**Similarity in Group Membership between Reader and Character.** I also predicted that featuring in a first-person story a character who shares a relevant group membership with readers might help further bridge the psychological gap between reader and character and, consequently, increase the likelihood of identification by making it easier for readers to imagine themselves as the character. Thus, I hypothesized that a story using first-person narration and featuring a main character who is a member of a reader’s ingroup would elicit higher levels of identification than would versions of the same story lacking one or both of these features. I tested this prediction in Study 2 by manipulating both narrative voice and the group membership of the main character.

**Factors Related to the Reader**

Chapter 3 explores how a specific factor related to the psychological states of readers – namely, the level of accessibility of their self-concepts – impacts the likelihood of identification with characters. Central to the conceptualization of identification guiding my research is the experience of identity exchange: the process of “letting go” of one’s own identity and taking on the identity of a character. Indeed, in his theoretical treatment of identification, Cohen (2001) explicitly defined identification as “a process that consists of increasing loss of self-awareness and its temporary replacement with heightened emotional and cognitive connections with a character” (p. 251). Thus, I
initially formulated a pair of complementary hypotheses that followed logically from this definition: being in a state of reduced self-concept accessibility should facilitate identification by making it easier for readers to “forget” themselves and assume the identity of a character and, conversely, being in a state of heightened self-concept accessibility should make it more difficult for readers to relinquish their identities and experience identification. I tested these predictions in Studies 3, 4, and 5.

However, I do not believe the relationship between self-concept accessibility and identification is quite so straightforward. In particular, the expectation that heightened self-concept accessibility will act as a barrier to identification rests on the assumption that higher activation of one’s personal identity does not necessarily carry with it any negative consequences. On the contrary, several decades of research have shown that increasing the activation of the self can sometimes be fairly aversive for individuals, particularly if it leads them to consider less desirable aspects of the self, such as failures to live up to deeply held standards or values (Duval & Wicklund, 1972; Fejfar & Hoyle, 2000; Hass & Eisenstadt, 1990; Philips & Silvia, 2005). Furthermore, when increased accessibility of the self does prompt individuals to acknowledge their deficiencies or shortcomings, it often motivates their desire to engage in activities to “escape” the self (e.g., Heatherton & Baumeister, 1991), particularly if individuals lack confidence in their ability to reduce the gap between their current selves and their goals or ideals (Carver & Scheier, 1981). These findings led me to consider the possibility that identification could very well represent a particularly effective means of escaping self-focus. Because identification offers individuals the chance to relinquish their own identities, at least temporarily, I
expected that readers would be especially likely to identify with a character if they entered a story world in a state of negative self-focus; I tested this prediction in Study 6.

Consequences of Identification

In all of the studies included in Chapters 2 and 3, I also investigated what I believed were several of the most likely (and most important) consequences of identifying with a fictional character. Part and parcel to my conceptualization of identification is the idea that identifying with a character entails experiencing the character’s mindset, goals, and behaviors, as if they were one’s own. Thus, I hypothesized that readers who most identify with a particular character would exhibit the greatest shifts in their own self-views, intentions, and behaviors, after they emerge from the world of the narrative. In Study 1, I tested the prediction that readers who identified most with a character who volunteered in a campus service project would subsequently report the greatest interest in community involvement and a highest level of intention to volunteer. In Study 2, I sought to show that higher identification with a character who voted on Election Day would increase readers’ subsequent voting intentions and behavior. Studies 3 through 6 investigated the extent to which identification with either an introverted or extroverted main character would lead participants to rate themselves higher on the trait exhibited by the protagonist – in other words, to incorporate a trait exhibited by the character into their own self-concepts.

In Chapter 4, I explore the consequences of encountering a specific type of character – one who is a member of a stigmatized outgroup (a male homosexual in Study 7 and an African-American in Study 8) – and test a narrative technique that I expected
would increase identification with such a character. Specifically, I hypothesized that readers would be more likely to identify with a character who belongs to a stereotyped outgroup if the character’s group membership were disclosed *later* versus earlier in a story (especially one that utilizes narrative elements that I propose would increase identification likelihood), and that, as a result of their greater identification, readers would report comparatively lower levels of stereotyping and prejudice. All of these predicted findings, I believe, would show that identification could be effectively – and sometimes strategically – channeled toward promoting changes in readers’ goals, attitudes, and behaviors, in order to achieve socially beneficial ends.

One ancillary goal of this research was to show that individuals’ level of transportation into the world of the narrative (Green & Brock, 2000) would not account for any of the predicted effects. Indeed, I expected that the factors that I have hypothesized would influence the likelihood of identification (e.g., narrative voice, access to the character’s thoughts and feelings, readers’ level of self-concept accessibility) would not necessarily make a narrative itself any more absorbing or engaging to readers. I believe that although a sufficient level of transportation is likely necessary for readers to become deeply involved with a narrative and identify with characters, readers could be equally engrossed in a story or novel (and find the experience equally enjoyable) whether they experience identification or instead position themselves as spectators. In other words, I believe that while transportation increases the likelihood that readers will become immersed in a story world, it does not necessarily predict the orientation readers will take vis-à-vis characters once they have arrived there.
Secondly, to support the claim that identification is distinct from the reflections or evaluations readers might make about a character, I sought to show that even though the different versions of the narratives I utilized might elicit varying levels of identification, they would not differentially impact the level of positivity readers would feel toward the characters depicted in them, especially since a majority of the narratives depicted the character engaging in positive, prosocial acts. Again, I believe readers could emerge from a story world with equally favorable impressions of a character, whether they experienced the story more in the spectatorship mode or the identification mode.

Together, I believe the studies to be described take several important strides toward providing a clearer understanding of identification and its potential to transform readers’ thoughts, actions, attitudes, and identities. It is my hope that this dissertation will convincingly show that identification is not just a phenomenon worthy of extensive theoretical and empirical scrutiny, with the present research potentially representing a stepping-off point, but one with a number of important implications and applications for authors, audiences, and researchers alike. To this end, in Chapter 5 I discuss the theoretical and practical significance of the findings, differentiate identification from perspective-taking more generally, and propose a model of readers’ potentially dynamic responses to characters in literary fiction.
CHAPTER 2

THE IMPACT OF NARRATIVE VOICE, ACCESS TO A CHARACTER’S THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS, AND A CHARACTER’S GROUP MEMBERSHIP ON IDENTIFICATION

“Anyway, I keep picturing all these little kids playing some game in this big field of rye and all. Thousands of little kids, and nobody's around - nobody big, I mean - except me. And I'm standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What I have to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff - I mean if they're running and they don't look where they're going I have to come out from somewhere and catch them. That's all I do all day. I'd just be the catcher in the rye and all. I know it's crazy, but that's the only thing I'd really like to be.” – excerpt from The Catcher in the Rye (Salinger, 1951)

The Catcher in the Rye has become a fixture on many high schools’ required reading lists, and its protagonist and narrator, Holden Caulfield, remains a veritable icon among adolescent readers, who, over a half-century since he came to life, still connect to Holden and his existential angst, his intolerance for “phonies,” and his search for direction and meaning in life. In this chapter, I seek to show that Salinger’s classic novel may be especially likely to invite a high level of identification because it features the very narrative elements I propose should make it easier for readers, especially teenaged ones, to step into the main character’s shoes and be Holden, namely the use of first-person narration courtesy of a character who is similar in age and experience to readers and who reveals his every thought and feeling as the story progresses.
As this example illustrates, the goal of this chapter is to show that even the most elementary choices authors of narratives make about the language they use and the characters they depict can have a dramatic effect on identification likelihood and the persuasive and transformative impact of their works. To provide an initial test of this claim, Study 1 focused on the effect of first-person versus third-person narrative voice and the level of readers’ access to a character’s thoughts and feelings on readers’ identification with a character in a short story and their subsequent likelihood of adopting a protagonist’s characteristics and behavioral intentions. Study 2 investigated the impact of narrative voice and the group membership of a character on readers’ likelihood of identifying with the character and engaging in the same behavior as the character.

Study 1

Study 1 tested the prediction that readers of a short story that is (1) written in first-person and (2) includes information about the main character’s thoughts and feelings would experience a higher level of identification than would readers of a narrative that lacks either of these two essential features, and, consequently, rate themselves higher on a characteristic exhibited by the protagonist (interest in community involvement) and report a higher level of intention to adopt a focal behavior performed by the character (volunteering in a campus clean-up project). In addition, as a secondary aim of the study, I sought to demonstrate that the different versions of the story would not influence the overall favorability of readers’ evaluations of the character’s likability or their levels of transportation.
Method

Participants. One hundred fifty-two undergraduate students (44 males and 108 females, with a mean age of 18.8 years) participated individually or in groups of up to five. They received partial course credit for their participation.

Materials and Procedure. The experimenter directed participants to individual cubicles and distributed booklets containing the experiment’s materials. Instructions on the first page of the booklet explained that participants would be asked to read a brief work of fiction and to answer a number of questions about the story and other topics. Participants were directed to read the story and to answer the questions carefully.

Pages two through five of the booklet contained the narrative itself, which, as with the narratives for all studies included in the dissertation, I wrote specifically for use in the study. Participants were assigned to read one of four versions of a short story that resulted from varying both the voice of the narrative (first-person versus third-person) and the level of access to the character’s inner responses (low versus high). The narrative depicted a college student attending to various aspects of an ostensibly typical Saturday morning routine (e.g., waking up in the dorm room, eating breakfast, showering, getting dressed, taking a quick call from a friend, etc.) before ultimately taking part in a campus clean-up project organized by the resident advisors of the character’s dormitory (see Appendices A through D).

The first- and third-person versions of the narrative differed only in the personal pronouns and possessives used (e.g., “I/my” in the first-person narrative, “He/his” or
“She/her” in the third-person narrative\(^1\). In addition, the narrative either included or omitted most references to the character’s thoughts and feelings. It is important to note that these references largely represented incidental responses that were unrelated to the character’s evaluations of or beliefs about the merits or rewards of participating in the campus project. Consider the following sentence, taken from the first-person version of the narrative, with the bracketed phrase representing one such example: “I turned off my alarm clock, grabbed my towel, flip flops, and shower caddy, and headed down the hall toward the bathroom, *[eager to get the day started]*.”

After reading the narrative, participants completed a scale measuring their level of identification with the character. No validated scale to measure identification existed prior to this study; thus, I constructed a set of seven items, guided by my understanding of the key components of identification and by the specific recommendations of other theorists (e.g., Cohen, 2001). These items, each using a nine-point scale anchored at 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 9 (*strongly agree*), measured the extent to which readers adopted the psychological perspective of the character (e.g., “I felt like I could put myself in the shoes of the character in the story”) and experienced the same emotions (e.g., “I found myself feeling what the character in the story was feeling”) and thoughts (e.g., “I found

---

\(^1\) I created two different versions of the third-person narrative, one with masculine pronouns and referents (he/his) and another with feminine pronouns and referents (she/her). In addition, I created two versions of the first-person narrative by having the character refer to him/herself as either “Paul” or “Paula” in the opening paragraph to identify the gender of the character (this detail was also included in the third-person narratives). I initially included character and participant gender as independent variables for all analyses, but no significant main effects or interactions involving either variable emerged. Thus, I collapsed across both participant and character gender in reporting the results.
myself thinking what the character in the story was thinking”) as the character while reading (see Appendix E).

Participants next completed a seven-item measure assessing the extent to which they believed they possessed various characteristics. Embedded among six filler items representing characteristics not implied by the character’s actions (e.g., “I consider myself to be a studious person”) was one target item measuring participants’ professed level of interest in community involvement: “I enjoy being an active member of the community.” Participants provided their responses to these items using a scale anchored at 1 (strongly disagree) and 9 (strongly agree).

Participants then responded to two items that measured their evaluation of the story’s protagonist; the instructions for these items asked participants to consider their “feelings about the main character in the story.” Both items utilized a 7-point semantic-differential scale, the first item anchored with the endpoints bad and good, the second with the endpoints likable and not likable.

On the last page of the booklet participants completed Green and Brock’s (2000) transportation scale, which assesses readers’ level of immersion in a narrative. This scale consists of eleven items (e.g., “I was mentally involved in the story while reading it,” “While I was reading the story, activity around the room around me was on my mind” (reverse scored), and “The story affected me emotionally”) that participants responded to using a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much). Finally, participants were asked to provide their gender and age with open-ended questions.

After completing the booklet, participants were presented with a flyer from a (fictitious) university organization identified as the Campus Cooperative; the
experimenter informed participants that several researchers had been asked to distribute the flyer at the end of their sessions and that it was not connected to the study they just completed. This flyer presented a list of community service projects said to be sponsored by the organization, key among them campus clean-up projects (see Appendix F). Participants were asked to provide their name and email address only if they were interested in being contacted by the Campus Cooperative to participate in service projects. In addition, participants were instructed to place a check on the space next to the specific projects for which they would like to volunteer. Responses to the flyer were intended to be a measure of participants’ intention to volunteer. All participants returned the flyer (which had been pre-marked with a code number to designate the participant’s identity) to the experimenter, even if they did not provide their contact information or check off any activities. The experimenter then debriefed and thanked the participants individually.

Results

Identification. I submitted participants’ average scores on the identification measure (α = .93) to a 2 (narrative voice: first-person versus third-person) X 2 (access to character’s thoughts and feelings: high versus low) analysis of variance (ANOVA). The results revealed a significant main effect of both narrative voice, $F(1, 148) = 7.58, p < .01$, and level of access to character’s thoughts/feelings, $F(1, 148) = 6.56, p < .02$. These main effects were qualified by a significant narrative voice X thoughts/feelings interaction, $F(1, 148) = 4.82, p < .03$. As predicted, this interaction appeared to be driven by the fact that the first-person version of the narrative that provided a high level of
access to the character’s thoughts and feelings elicited a higher level of identification than all other versions of the narrative (see Figure 2.1). To confirm that this difference was a significant one, I conducted a planned contrast to compare the mean level of identification in the first-person/high thoughts and feelings (HTF) condition with the average level for the other three conditions. The results confirmed my prediction: the level of identification reported by participants in the first-person/HTF narrative condition ($M = 7.07, SD = 1.28$) was significantly higher than the average level reported by participants in the other three conditions ($M = 6.17, SD = 1.30$), $t(150) = 3.72, p < .01$.

![Figure 2.1](image)

_Interest in Community Involvement._ I submitted scores on the single-item measure of participants’ professed level of interest in community involvement to a two-way ANOVA. The results revealed a significant main effect of narrative voice, $F(1, 148)$
= 7.15, p < .01. The main effect for level of access to character’s thoughts/feelings was not significant, $F(1, 148) = 2.45, p < .12$. The main effect of narrative voice was qualified by a significant narrative voice X thoughts/feelings interaction, $F(1, 148) = 5.94, p < .02$. As with the results for identification, the interaction appeared to be influenced by the comparatively high mean level of interest reported by participants in the first-person/HTF condition (see Figure 2.2). Results for the planned contrast confirmed this assumption: the reported level of interest in community involvement for participants in the first-person/HTF condition ($M = 7.48, SD = 1.01$) was significantly higher than the average level for the other three conditions ($M = 6.49, SD = 1.67$), $t(150) = 3.24, p < .01$. No significant main effects or interactions emerged for any of the non-focal characteristics included in the rating scale (all $F$s < 1).

![Figure 2.2](image.png)

*Figure 2.2.* The effect of narrative voice and level of access to the character’s thoughts and feelings on self-rated interest in community involvement in Study 1.
To test the prediction that the significant interaction between narrative voice and access to the character’s thoughts and feelings on participants’ interest in community involvement could be accounted for by participants’ level of identification with the character, I conducted a mediational analysis using the guidelines proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986). Specifically, I utilized a linear regression model with the voice X thoughts/feelings interaction term (along with both main effect terms) as the independent variable, identification scores as the mediator, and reported level of interest in community involvement as the dependent variable.

Three statistical requirements must be met to draw a conclusion regarding mediation. First, the independent variable (the voice X thoughts/feelings interaction) must significantly predict the dependent variable (interest in community involvement). As indicated earlier, this effect was indeed significant, $\beta = .24$, $t(148) = 2.97$, $p < .02$. Second, the independent variable (the voice X thoughts/feelings interaction) must significantly predict the mediator (identification). As reported earlier, this requirement was also satisfied, $\beta = .22$, $t(148) = 2.77$, $p < .03$. Third, the mediator (identification) must significantly predict the dependent variable (interest in community involvement) when the independent variable (the voice X thoughts/feelings interaction) is controlled. When both the interaction term and identification were entered into the model as independent variables, identification significantly predicted participants’ interest in community involvement, $\beta = .20$, $t(147) = 2.41$, $p < .02$, while the interaction term did not, $\beta = .12$, $t(147) = 1.45$, $p < .15$. A Sobel test confirmed that the mediation was significant, $z = 1.87$, $p < .05$. Thus, as expected, participants’ reported levels of identification appeared
to account for the levels of interest in community involvement evoked by the different versions of the narrative.²

**Intentions to Volunteer.** Recall that participants had the option to provide their contact information on the Campus Cooperative flyer as well as to check off specific activities in which they were interested in volunteering, key among them campus clean-up projects. I coded participants’ responses to this measure “0” if they did not provide their contact information, “1” if they provided their contact information but did not select campus clean-up projects from the list of potential volunteering opportunities, and “2” if they provided their contact information and selected campus clean-up projects from the list. In this way, participants who received the highest score on this measure were those most likely to adopt the character-specific intention to engage in campus beautification activities. I submitted these scores to a two-way ANOVA. The results revealed a significant main effect of narrative voice, $F(1, 148) = 4.06, p < .05$. The main effect for level of access to character’s thoughts/feelings was not significant, $F(1, 148) = 2.07, p < .15$. As predicted, a significant narrative voice X thoughts/feelings interaction emerged.

² The reverse meditational model, with interest in community involvement as the mediator and identification as the outcome variable, was also significant. This model, however, assumes that readers first perceived themselves as similar to the character in their level of interest in community activism, which then increased their likelihood of experiencing identification. Although I concede that the relationship between identification and the perception that one shares goals or traits with a character could be a bidirectional one, a point which I will return to in Chapter 5, I propose that identification more often creates changes in readers’ self-perceptions and goals rather than results from them. Thus, for the remainder of the meditational analyses to be reported, I present the model with identification as the mediator.
The planned contrast confirmed that the level of intention to engage in campus clean-up projects reported by participants in the first-person/HTF condition \((M = 1.19, SD = .92)\) was significantly higher than the average level reported by participants in the other three conditions \((M = .71, SD = .82)\), \(t(150) = 3.06, p < .01\) (See Figure 2.3).

![Figure 2.3](image-url)

*Figure 2.3.* The effect of narrative voice and level of access to the character’s thoughts and feelings on intentions to volunteer in Study 1.

To test whether the significant interaction between narrative voice and access to the character’s thoughts and feelings on participants’ volunteering intention could be explained by participants’ levels of identification, I conducted a meditational analysis with the voice X thoughts/feelings interaction term (along with both main effect terms) as the independent variable, identification scores as the mediator, and volunteering intention
as the dependent variable. As reported earlier, the voice X thoughts/feelings interaction was significant for both volunteering intention, $\beta = .26$, $t(148) = 2.98$, $p < .02$, and identification, $\beta = .22$, $t(148) = 2.77$, $p < .03$. The results revealed that when both the interaction term and identification were included as predictors of participants’ intention to volunteer, identification significantly predicted intention levels, $\beta = .17$, $t(147) = 2.58$, $p < .02$, while the interaction term did not, $\beta = .12$, $t(147) = 1.80$, $p < .08$. A Sobel test indicated the mediation was significant, $z = 1.94$, $p < .05$, confirming the prediction that participants’ reported levels of identification could account for the levels of intention to volunteer evoked by the different versions of the narrative.

*Evaluations of the Character/Transportation.* I submitted participants’ character evaluation scores ($\alpha = .95$) and transportation scores ($\alpha = .63$) to a two-factor ANOVA. As predicted, neither the two main effects nor the interaction was significant for either variable (all $F$s < 1), indicating no differences between the four versions of the narrative in readers’ evaluations of the character or their levels of transportation. Thus, the highest levels of identification, self-rated interest in community involvement, and intentions to volunteer, reported by readers of the first-person/HTF narrative cannot be explained by these participants’ judgments of the character or their degree of immersion in the story.

*Discussion*

The results from this first study supported the prediction that the version of the narrative that used first-person narration and provided a high level of access to the character’s thoughts and feelings would elicit the highest level of identification and, consequently, the highest levels of self-professed interest in community involvement and
intention to volunteer. As expected, the experience of reading a story told directly by the protagonist – and learning of the character’s inner responses as the narrative unfolded – increased the likelihood that readers would assume the identity of the character and, as a result, adopt the protagonist’s characteristics and intentions.

In the next study, I turned my attention to another important feature of a narrative: the level of similarity between the group membership of a character and reader. Similar to the hypothesis for Study 1, I predicted that narratives that (1) employ first-person narration and (2) feature a character who shares an important group membership with the character would lead to higher levels of identification than narratives that lack one or both of these elements. In Study 1, I discovered that one particular identity group membership – specifically, the gender of the character – did not influence participants’ levels of identification: both male and participants reported identifying equally with male and female characters. Perhaps a lifetime of encountering characters of both genders in stories and novels (from Harry Potter and Nancy Drew to David Copperfield and Jane Eyre) has made the experience of identifying with characters of either the same or the opposite gender a fairly natural and well-practiced response for most individuals. Thus, in Study 2, I selected a group membership that participants should find meaningful but would be relatively less accustomed to encountering in works of fiction: the university affiliation of the main character.

The narratives used in Study 1 did not specify the character’s university affiliation. In Study 2, however, I explicitly identified the character as a student at the same university as participants or as a student at another university in the same state. In
Study 2, I also changed the narrative to depict the character voting on Election Day, in order to test the hypotheses using a novel focal behavior.

**Study 2**

*Method*

*Participants.* Eighty-two undergraduate students (58 males and 24 females, with a mean age of 19.1 years) participated individually or in groups of up to five. For this study, only participants who reported on a pre-study questionnaire that they were registered and eligible to vote in the county in which the study took place but had not requested or completed an absentee ballot prior to the study were invited to participate. They received partial course credit for their participation.

*Materials and Procedure.* The procedure for this study was similar to that of Study 1, with several important exceptions. First, while I again manipulated the voice of the narrative, I held the level of access to the character’s thoughts and feelings at a high level in the Study 2 narratives. Second, I manipulated the university affiliation of the story’s protagonist by identifying the character as a student at either Ohio State University (the same university that all participants attended) or Denison University (another university in the same state): in the first paragraph of the story, the character picks up a pamphlet that is labeled, “An Ohio State [Denison] Student’s Voting Guide.”

---

3 I conducted a pilot study (*N* = 43) in which I presented participants with a list of ten Ohio universities (including Denison University) and, for each, asked them to judge how similar the average student at that university is to the average student at Ohio State, using a nine-point scale ranging from 1 (*extremely dissimilar*) to 9 (*extremely similar*). Of the ten universities included, the mean similarity rating was lowest.
The narrative depicted the character enduring several obstacles on the morning of Election Day (for instance, car problems, rainy skies, and long lines at the polling location) before ultimately entering the booth to cast a vote (see Appendices G through J).

After reading the version of the story they were assigned, participants completed the measure of identification and the character evaluation items that were used in Study 1. They then responded to a single item measuring their intention to vote the following week (the study was run four days prior to Ohio’s primary election in March 2008). This item, which used a nine-point scale anchored at 1 (not at all likely) and 9 (very likely) read: “How likely is it that you will vote on Election Day next week?” Finally, as in Study 1, participants completed the transportation scale and provided their gender and age on open-ended questions.

A week after this initial session, participants completed an online questionnaire in which they were asked to report whether or not they had voted on Election Day. Specifically, participants were asked to respond either yes or no to the following question: “In talking to people about elections, I often find that a lot of people were not able to vote because they weren’t registered, they were sick, or they just didn’t have time. How about you – did you vote on Election Day, Tuesday, March 4, 2008?” I hoped that framing the item in this fashion would increase the likelihood of participants giving

for Denison ($M = 3.86, SD = 1.57$), which guided my decision to use Denison as the “low similarity” university affiliation in this study.

Although participants were informed they would complete a follow-up questionnaire a week after the laboratory session, they were not specifically told they would be asked about their voting behavior.
honest responses about their actual voting behavior (see Libby, Shaeffer, Eibach, & Slemmer, 2007). After submitting their response, participants were thanked and debriefed on a subsequent screen.

**Results**

*Identification.* I submitted participants’ average scores on the identification measure ($\alpha = .90$) to a 2 (narrative voice: first-person versus third-person) X 2 (character’s university affiliation: Ohio State versus Denison) ANOVA. Results revealed that neither the main effect of narrative voice, $F(1, 78) = 2.29, p < .14$, nor the main effect of character university affiliation, $F(1, 78) = .06, p > .80$, was significant. However, a significant voice X character university affiliation did emerge, $F(1, 78) = 5.84, p < .02$. Because I predicted that the first-person version of the narrative that featured a protagonist from Ohio State would elicit a higher level of identification than all other versions of the narrative, a pattern that indeed emerged (see Figure 2.4), I conducted a planned contrast to compare the level of identification reported by participants in the first-person/OSU condition with the average level reported by participants in the other three conditions. The results confirmed my prediction: the level of identification experienced by readers of the first-person/OSU narrative ($M = 6.86, SD = 1.39$) was significantly higher than the average level experienced by readers of the other three narratives ($M = 6.11, SD = 1.32$), $t(80) = 2.39, p < .02$. 


Figure 2.4. The effect of narrative voice and the character’s university affiliation on identification in Study 2.

**Intentions to Vote.** I submitted participants’ scores on the single-item measure of their intention to vote to a two-factor ANOVA. Results revealed that neither the main effect of narrative voice, $F(1, 78) = .44$, $p > .50$, nor the main effect of character university affiliation, $F(1, 78) = .03$, $p > .80$, was significant. In addition, the voice X character university affiliation was not significant, $F(1, 78) = 2.20$, $p < .14$. Although the pattern of means was similar to the pattern obtained for identification, with readers of the first-person/OSU narrative reporting the highest level of intention to vote ($M = 7.95, SD = 2.48$), results for the planned contrast revealed that this mean was not significantly different from the average level of intention reported by participants in the other three conditions ($M = 7.39, SD = 2.67$), $t(80) = 1.12$, $p > .20$. It is possible that responses to this item were susceptible to a ceiling effect: participants might have been particularly motivated to report an intention, genuine or otherwise, to vote in the election, due to the
fact that the 2008 Ohio primary election was well-publicized and considered by most
pundits to be vital in determining the eventual Democratic presidential nominee (e.g.,
Harwood, 2008).

Voting Behavior. Despite the fact that the measure of voting intention failed to
show differences between the narrative conditions, I still believed that when it came to
voting behavior, the different levels of identification reported by participants in the four
conditions would result in different rates of turnout at the polls on Election Day. The
results for participants’ reported voting behavior suggest that this expectation was borne out. A full 65% of participants in the first-person/OSU narrative condition reported
voting on Election Day, compared to 29% of the participants in the first-person/Denison
condition, 25% of the participants in the third-person/OSU condition, and 43% of the
participants in the third-person/Denison condition, $\chi^2(3, N = 82) = 8.28, p < .04$. This
pattern of voting rates mirrors the pattern observed for the mean levels of identification
reported by participants in each condition.

To determine if participants’ reported levels of identification could account for
this differential rate of voter turnout in the four conditions, I conducted a mediational
analysis, using the technique recommended by MacKinnon & Dwyer (1993) for
dichotomous dependent variables. Specifically, I conducted a logistic regression with the
narrative voice X character university affiliation interaction term (along with both main
effect terms) as the independent variable, identification scores as the mediator, and voting
behavior (coded one and zero for voting and not voting, respectively) as the dependent
variable. The results showed that the voice X university affiliation interaction was a
significant predictor of voting behavior, $\beta = .34, w(78) = 6.31, p < .02$ and, as reported
earlier, of identification, $\beta = .29, t(78) = 2.37, p < .02$. However, when both the interaction term and identification scores were entered into the regression as predictors of voting behavior, identification was a significant predictor, $\beta = .31, w(77) = 5.00, p < .03$, while the interaction term was not, $\beta = .17, w(77) = .72, p > .30$. Results from a Sobel test indicated that the mediation was significant, $z = 2.06, p < .04$, suggesting that participants’ levels of identification accounted for the rates of voter turnout reported by participants in the different narrative conditions.

Evaluations of the Character/Transportation. I submitted participants’ scores on the character evaluation items and the transportation scale ($\alpha = .62$) to a 2-factor ANOVA. As predicted, neither the two main effects nor the interaction was significant for either measure (all $F$s $< 1$), indicating no differences between the four narrative conditions in readers’ evaluations of the character or level of immersion in the narrative. Thus, the highest rates of identification and voting behavior reported by participants in the first-person/OSU narrative condition cannot be attributed to these participants’ level of immersion in the story or their overall evaluation of the character.

Discussion

The results confirmed my prediction that the narrative written in first-person voice featuring a character who shared a common university affiliation with participants would elicit the highest level of identification and, consequently, the highest rates of voting behavior (despite the fact that no differences in reported intentions to vote emerged between conditions). Together, the results of Studies 1 and 2 suggest that combining first-person voice with additional narrative features that further facilitate the
assumption of the character’s perspective invites a higher level of identification than do otherwise identical narratives lacking one or more of these elements. Furthermore, these first two studies revealed that experiencing identification with a character can have a dramatic impact on readers: as a consequence of stepping into the shoes of and temporarily “becoming” the character, readers did indeed appear to emerge from the story haven taken on the characteristics and adopted the goals and behaviors of that character. These findings strikingly demonstrate that writers, through the choices they make in crafting the language and content of their stories, can heighten the likelihood of identification and, consequently, transform their readers’ identities, mindsets, and actions.

In the next chapter, I shift focus from factors related to the narrative and its characters to explore how a factor related to readers—namely, their level of self-concept accessibility—affects the likelihood of identification and, consequently, the extent to which readers incorporate a trait possessed by a character into their self-concepts.
CHAPTER 3

THE IMPACT OF READERS’ LEVEL OF SELF-CONCEPT ACCESSIBILITY ON IDENTIFICATION

“I find myself only by losing myself.” – Paul Ricoeur

In this chapter, I seek to demonstrate that readers’ level of self-concept accessibility plays an important role in determining the likelihood that they will identify with a fictional character and, as a result, come to view themselves as possessing the same personality traits as the character. As discussed in Chapter 1, I first hypothesized that higher levels of self-concept accessibility would reduce the likelihood of readers’ experiencing identification, by making it more difficult for them to relinquish their personal identities and assume the identity of a character, and, conversely, that lower levels of self-concept accessibility would serve to increase identification likelihood by facilitating the adoption of the character’s identity.

As an initial test of these predictions, in Study 3 I measured both participants’ chronic level of private self-consciousness and their level of identification with a character in a short story. To provide what I believed would be an especially strong test, I had participants read a short story in which the central character displayed the central trait of introversion. Because previous research has suggested a moderately positive relationship exists between self-consciousness and introversion (e.g., Franzoi, 1983;
Pilkonis, 1977), demonstrating that readers high in self-consciousness identified less with an introverted character, despite the fact that the character shares a trait typically associated with self-consciousness, would suggest that heightened activation of one’s personal identity may be a particularly powerful barrier to identification.

Study 3

Method

Participants. Thirty-eight undergraduate students (19 males and 19 females, with a mean age of 18.9 years) participated individually or in groups of up to five. They received partial course credit for their participation.

Materials and Procedure. As part of a mass pre-testing questionnaire administered a week prior to the study, participants completed the Private Self-Consciousness Scale (Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975). This scale requires participants to respond to a series of statements regarding their chronic tendency to focus attention on the self, such as: “I reflect about myself a lot” and “I’m generally attentive to my inner feelings.” Participants completed each item using a nine-point scale anchored at 1 (strongly agree) and 9 (strongly agree).

During the laboratory session, an experimenter directed participants to individual cubicles and distributed booklets containing all of the experiment’s materials. Instructions on the first page of the booklet explained that participants would be asked to read a brief work of fiction and to answer a number of questions about the story and other topics. Participants were directed to read the story and to answer the questions carefully.
Pages two through five of the booklet contained the story, which was written in first-person voice and featured as its central character a college freshman (whose gender was unspecified) attending the first party of the academic year. The story provided readers with information about the character’s thoughts, feelings and actions throughout the narrative, many of which implied that he was somewhat socially reserved and introverted. To illustrate, even though the character willingly attends the party and interacts with others, he reveals his trepidation when chosen to perform a karaoke duet, deliberately seeks out a quiet spot to get a momentary reprieve from the crowd and noise of the party, and surreptitiously leaves the party before it ends (see Appendix K).

After reading the narrative, participants were presented with the measure of identification (described for Studies 1 and 2). Participants then completed two measures of their self-ascribed level of introversion (see Appendix L). First, they received a set of ten statements about the self and rated their level of agreement regarding how well each statement represented them, using a nine-point scale anchored at 1 (strongly disagree) and 9 (strongly agree). Included in the set were seven target items measuring participants’ self-reported level of introversion, such as “I am quiet around strangers” and “I am the life of the party” (reverse-scored), and three filler items measuring traits unrelated to introversion/extroversion (e.g., “I am a hard worker”). Second, participants were asked to imagine arriving at their university’s dining hall alone on the first day of school and to rate the likelihood of six different potential responses, using a nine-point scale anchored at 1 (not at all likely) and 9 (extremely likely). Three of the responses were more indicative of extroversion (e.g., “I would find a table where others are sitting and ask to join them”), and three were more indicative of introversion (e.g., “I would find
an empty table and wait for others to join me”). Finally, participants were asked to provide their gender and age with open-ended questions. They were then debriefed and thanked for their participation.

Results and Discussion

I first computed an average score for participants’ level of private self-consciousness ($\alpha = .65$) and identification ($\alpha = .84$). A significant negative correlation between these two variables emerged: $r(36) = -.37, p < .03$. Thus, as predicted, the higher the level of participants’ chronic self-concept accessibility, the lower their level of identification with the story’s main character (or, stated differently, the lower the level of participants’ chronic self-concept accessibility, the higher their level of identification).

I next computed an average rating of participants’ self-ascribed level of introversion by combining their responses on the self-rating and dining hall scenario items ($\alpha = .63$). As predicted, a significant negative correlation between participants’ self-consciousness scores and introversion scores emerged: $r(36) = -.41, p < .05$. At the same time, self-consciousness was not significantly correlated with any of the other non-focal traits included in the rating scale (all $p$s > .20).

I believed that the significant correlation between self-consciousness and trait incorporation would be accounted for by participants’ levels of identification. Indeed,

---

5 I also computed the correlation between identification scores and scores on each of the two subscales of the Private Self-Consciousness Scale, which measure individuals’ internal state awareness and self-reflectiveness (e.g., Anderson, Bohon, & Berrigan, 1996), and showed that scores on both subscales were significantly (negatively) correlated with identification ($rs = -.39$ and -.33, respectively).
when both private self-consciousness and introversion scores were entered into a linear regression model as predictors of participants’ self-rated introversion, identification emerged a significant predictor, $\beta = .33$, $t(35) = 1.37$, $p < .05$, but self-consciousness did not, $\beta = -.23$, $t(35) = 1.37$, $p < .19$. The results from a Sobel test indicated that this mediation was significant: $z = 2.12$, $p < .051$. This finding suggests that the lower (higher) likelihood of incorporating the character’s trait reported by participants’ higher (lower) in self-consciousness can be explained by their lower (higher) levels of identification with the character.

Thus, the results of the study confirmed the expected relationship between readers’ levels of chronic self-concept accessibility and their likelihood of experiencing identification. Next, to provide support for my prediction that this relationship is indeed a causal one, I conducted two experimental studies in which I manipulated participants’ level of self-awareness to be either temporarily low (Study 4) or high (Study 5) and measured their subsequent levels of identification and trait incorporation.

---

6 I also conducted a mediational analysis with participants’ trait ratings as the mediator and their identification scores as the outcome variable and observed that trait incorporation significantly mediated the effect of self-consciousness on identification. However, in subsequent studies, I show that self-concept accessibility also influences individuals’ self-ratings of extroversion when reading a story about an extroverted character. Thus, I believe the more parsimonious explanation for these results is that self-concept accessibility influences the extent to which readers adopt whatever trait the character possesses, and that this effect is mediated by participants’ experienced level of identification.
Study 4

In this study, I tested the effect of reduced self-concept accessibility on identification using an experimental induction that has been previously shown to place individuals in a temporarily deindividuated state. I predicted that participants who received this induction would report higher levels of identification and trait incorporation than would participants whose self-concepts remained at a baseline level of accessibility.

Method

Participants. Fifty-three undergraduate students (19 males and 34 females, with a mean age of 18.3 years) participated in groups of three to five. They received partial course credit for their participation.

Materials and Procedure. The procedure and materials for Study 4 were identical to those used in the laboratory session of Study 3, with one important exception: the half of the participants randomly assigned to the deindividuation condition read the following paragraph, which was included on the first page of the experiment booklet:

For this study we are not interested in you as a member of the college student population. We are running this study in order to assess the attitudes and perceptions of students in general. For the purposes of today’s study you represent an average student no matter what your background or major is. Thus, we will not ask you for any personal identifying information. Instead we have assigned you an arbitrary code number for this session: SLREP51.
I adapted these instructions from ones that have been previously shown to place individuals in a state of deindividuation (Brewer, Manzi, & Shaw, 1993). The other half of the participants (i.e., those assigned to the control condition) did not receive these instructions. All participants then read the narrative and completed the same measures of identification and self-rated introversion from Study 3.

Results and Discussion

Identification. I computed an average score for participants’ level of identification (α = .80) and submitted these scores to a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with participants’ deindividuation condition as the independent variable. Results confirmed my prediction: participants in the deindividuation condition reported a significantly higher level of identification ($M = 5.76, SD = 1.23$) than did participants in the control condition ($M = 5.01, SD = .95$), $F(1, 51) = 6.77, p < .02$.

Self-rated introversion. I next computed an average score for participants’ level of self-rated introversion (α = .73) and submitted these scores to a one-way ANOVA. As

---

These instructions were originally intended to place individuals in an extreme state of deindividuation, which would arouse their need for differentiation (Brewer, 1991), and, thus in their original form were worded more strongly. For this study, I toned down the language in the induction, in the hope that it would place participants in a deindividuated state without increasing their need to assert their unique identities. I conducted a pilot test ($N = 52$) in which I had participants complete the Positive Affect Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS: Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) immediately after the deindividuation induction and showed there was no difference in their reported levels of positive or negative affect compared to levels reported by participants who did not receive the induction ($F < 1$), which supports the assumption that the induction likely did not place participants in a negative state of arousal.
expected, participants in the deindividuation condition rated themselves significantly higher in introversion ($M = 5.87$, $SD = 1.21$) than did participants in the control condition ($M = 4.91$, $SD = 1.33$), $F(1, 51) = 7.51$, $p < .01$. As in Study 3, no differences between conditions emerged for any of the non-focal traits included in the rating scale (all $Fs < 1$).

I expected that the significant effect of deindividuation on participants’ level of self-rated introversion would be mediated by their level of identification. Using the steps recommended by Baron and Kenny (1986), I conducted a linear regression with deindividuation condition as the independent variable, identification scores as the mediator, and introversion ratings as the dependent variable. As reported, deindividuation condition significantly predicted both introversion ratings, $\beta = .33$, $t(51) = 2.60$, $p < .01$, and identification, $\beta = .30$, $t(51) = 2.51$, $p < .02$. However, when both deindividuation condition and identification were entered as predictors of participants’ introversion ratings, identification was a significant predictor, $\beta = .43$, $t(50) = 3.40$, $p < .01$, while deindividuation condition was not, $\beta = .21$, $t(50) = 1.67$, $p < .10$. A Sobel test confirmed that the mediation was significant, $z = 2.08$, $p < .04$. Thus, as predicted the effect of deindividuation on participants’ introversion ratings can be explained by participants’ level of identification with the character.

These results extend the results of Study 3 by suggesting that the relationship between self-concept accessibility and identification is indeed a causal one: reducing participants’ level of self-concept accessibility increased their level of identification and, consequently, their level of internalization of the character’s focal personality trait. In the next study, I tested the complementary hypothesis that heightening the activation of
readers’ self-concepts would reduce the likelihood of identification and trait incorporation.

Study 5

Previous research has established that having participants observe their own reflections in a mirror, not surprisingly, increases the activation of their self-concepts (e.g., Davis & Brock, 1975; Scheier & Carver, 1978). Thus, in the present study, I assigned participants to read a narrative in front of a mirror with either the reflective side or non-reflective side facing up and measured their levels of identification and trait incorporation. To demonstrate that the effects of heightened self-concept accessibility on identification would not depend on the narrative participants read or the specific trait exhibited by the character, in the present study I assigned participants to read one of three short stories: (1) the narrative featuring an introverted main character that I used in the first two studies, (2) a new version of this introversion narrative in which I altered the character’s actions and responses to suggest that he was extroverted (e.g., the character approached the karaoke stage with eagerness and thrived in the noise and throng of the party; see Appendix M), or (3) the campus volunteering narrative from Study 1, which did not contain any explicit references or direct information about the character’s level of introversion/extroversion. All three narratives were written in first-person voice and contained a high level of access to the character’s thoughts and feelings.

In addition, to help rule out the possibility that reading the narrative while facing a mirror simply served as a distraction – and thus would reduce high self-concept accessibility participants’ identification level simply by impairing their ability to engage with or concentrate on the story in the first place – I also included measures of
participants’ levels of transportation and their memory for specific details from the narrative. I expected that participants in all conditions would report being equally transported by their assigned narrative and show no difference in their memory for the story they read.

**Method**

*Participants.* One hundred twenty-two undergraduate students (57 males and 65 females, with a mean age of 18.1 years) participated individually or in groups of up to five. They received partial course credit for their participation.

*Materials and Procedure.* An experimenter directed participants to individual cubicles and distributed booklets containing all of the experiment’s materials. Each cubicle contained a 16” x 52” rectangular mirror propped against the back wall; the mirror had the reflective side or non-reflective side facing up, depending on whether participants had been assigned to the high self-concept accessibility (high-SCA) condition or baseline self-concept accessibility (baseline-SCA) condition. In both conditions, the mirror contained a note reading, “For Experiment SMQ10: Do Not Remove!” to prevent participants from believing it was a part of the procedure of the study in which they were taking part. The experiment booklet participants received was similar to the one used in Study 3, save for the fact that it contained one of three stories, depending on the narrative condition to which participants had been assigned (i.e., the introversion, extroversion, or volunteering narrative condition). Following the narrative, participants again completed the measures of identification and self-ascribed introversion/extroversion.
Immediately after the trait rating measure, participants completed the transportation scale. Then, as a measure of their memory for the story, participants were asked to complete five multiple-choice questions about incidental details from the narrative (e.g., “On what day did the story take place?”), on each of which participants were required to select the correct response from three options. Two of the items were used in all conditions, with the other three items differing between the volunteering narrative condition and the introversion/extroversion narrative conditions, reflecting these stories’ unique content. Participants were asked not to refer back to the story to answer these questions. Finally, participants were thanked and debriefed.

Results

Identification. I computed an average score for participants’ level of identification ($\alpha = .89$) and submitted the scores to a 3 (narrative condition: introversion, extroversion, volunteering) X 2 (self-concept accessibility condition: baseline, high) ANOVA. Results revealed a significant effect of narrative condition, $F(2, 116) = 11.08$, $p < .01$. On average, participants in the extroversion narrative condition reported the highest level of identification ($M = 6.64, SD = 1.24$), participants in the volunteering narrative condition the next highest level ($M = 6.06, SD = 1.62$), and participants in the introversion narrative condition the lowest level ($M = 5.22, SD = 1.51$). This pattern of means could reflect the fact that extroversion and volunteerism are characteristics that are valued more than is introversion, and thus participants identified more on average with a character exhibiting those comparatively more desirable traits (see Figure 3.1).
In addition, a significant main effect of self-concept accessibility condition emerged, $F(1, 116) = 14.95, p < .01$. On average, participants in the high-SCA condition, as predicted, reported a lower level of identification ($M = 5.52, SD = 1.56$) than did participants in the baseline-SCA condition ($M = 6.47, SD = 1.43$). Planned contrasts confirmed that this difference in identification level between the two self-concept accessibility conditions held for the volunteering narrative, $t(120) = 2.30, p < .02$, the introversion narrative, $t(120) = 2.73, p < .01$, and the extroversion narrative condition $t(120) = 2.11, p < .04$. Thus, as predicted, regardless of the narrative participants read (or the trait exhibited by the character therein), heightened self-concept accessibility reduced the extent to which readers experienced identification. The main were not qualified by a narrative condition X self-concept accessibility condition interaction: $F < 1$.

![Figure 3.1](image.png)

*Figure 3.1.* The effect of narrative condition and level of self-concept accessibility on identification in Study 5.
Self-rated extroversion. I computed an average score for participants’ level of self-rated extroversion (using the exact opposite coding scheme from the one utilized in Studies 3 and 4) based on their responses to the rating scale and the dining hall scenario ($\alpha = .76$) and submitted the scores to a two-factor ANOVA (see Figure 3.2). Results revealed a significant effect of narrative condition, $F(2, 116) = 11.08, p < .01$. On average, participants in the volunteering narrative condition reported the highest level of self-rated extroversion ($M = 6.10, SD = 1.14$), participants in the extroversion narrative condition the next highest level ($M = 5.66, SD = 1.13$), and participants in the introversion narrative the lowest level ($M = 4.96, SD = 1.16$). The main effect of self-concept accessibility was not significant: $F < 1$.

The significant main effect of narrative condition was qualified by a significant narrative condition X self-concept accessibility condition interaction: $F(2, 116) = 9.77, p < .01$. Planned contrasts revealed that within the extroversion narrative condition, high-SCA participants reported a lower level of self-rated extroversion ($M = 5.34, SD = 1.19$) than did baseline self-concept accessibility participants ($M = 6.07, SD = .93$), $t(120) = 2.18, p < .03$. Within the introversion narrative condition, the opposite pattern emerged: baseline self-concept accessibility participants rated themselves lower in extroversion ($M = 4.30, SD = .99$) than did high self-concept accessibility participants ($M = 5.56, SD = .98$), $t(120) = 3.82, p < .001$. Thus, in the two narrative conditions in which introversion/extroversion was a relevant trait dimension, heightened self-concept accessibility reduced the extent to which participants rated themselves as possessing the trait exhibited by the character. Within the volunteering narrative condition, in comparison, there was no
difference in the mean extroversion rating reported by high-SCA participants ($M = 6.23$, $SD = 1.22$) and low-SCA participants ($M = 5.97$, $SD = 1.07$), $t(120) = .74$, $p > .40$.

Figure 3.2. The effect of narrative condition and level of self-concept accessibility on self-rated extroversion in Study 5.

I predicted that the lower likelihood of character-specific trait incorporation exhibited by high-SCA participants in the introversion and extroversion narrative conditions would be accounted for by these participants’ lower level of identification with the character. To test the predicted mediation, I first re-coded participants’ responses to the introversion/extroversion measures to reflect greater incorporation of the trait exhibited by the character in each condition (i.e., higher scores corresponding to higher introversion ratings in the introversion narrative condition and to higher extroversion ratings in the extroversion narrative condition) and entered these scores as the dependent variable into a linear regression with self-concept accessibility condition as the independent variable and identification scores as the mediator. Results indicated that
self-concept accessibility condition significantly predicted both trait ratings, $\beta = .35, t(78) = 3.39, p < .01$, and identification, $\beta = .25, t(78) = 2.34, p < .03$. I then entered both self-concept accessibility condition and identification scores as predictors of participants’ trait ratings and showed that while identification emerged a significant predictor of participants’ self-ratings, $\beta = .29, t(77) = 2.46, p < .02$, self-concept accessibility condition did not, $\beta = .15, t(77) = 1.32, p < .20$. Results from a Sobel test indicated that the mediation was significant, $z = 1.98, p < .05$. Thus, one can conclude that the reduced likelihood of high-SCA participants’ incorporation of the protagonist’s trait in the introversion/extroversion narrative conditions can be explained by these participants’ reduced level of identification with the character.

*Transportation and Memory for Story Events.* I calculated an average transportation score for each participant ($\alpha = .57$) and submitted the scores to a two-factor ANOVA. Results confirmed that neither the main effects of narrative condition and self-concept accessibility condition nor the interaction were significant (all $Fs < 1$). In addition, I calculated an average score for participants’ memory for story events ($\alpha = .85$ in the introversion/extroversion narrative conditions; $\alpha = .79$ in the volunteering narrative condition) and submitted these scores to a two-factor ANOVA. Again, neither the main effects nor the interaction was significant (all $Fs < 1$). Thus, it does not appear that high-SCA participants were any less absorbed in their assigned narrative than were baseline-SCA participants, which helps rule out the possibility that their lower levels of identification and trait incorporation (in the introversion and extroversion narrative conditions) resulted from lower levels of immersion in the story or, alternatively, higher levels of distraction, caused by the presence of a mirror.
Discussion

The results from the first three studies in this chapter offer strong support for the hypothesized effect of self-concept accessibility on identification. Heightening the accessibility of participants’ self-concepts while reading reduced – and lowering the accessibility of participants’ self-concepts increased – the likelihood of identification and internalization of the character’s traits. Thus, it does indeed appear that “losing oneself” is conducive to assuming the identity and characteristics of a fictional protagonist, whereas approaching a fictional world with one’s own personal identity more salient makes it more difficult to abandon the self and become the character. As discussed in Chapter 1, however, I do not believe the relationship between self-concept accessibility and identification is quite so straightforward. Specifically, I would predict that when individuals enter a narrative world in a state of negative self-reflection, heightened self-concept accessibility would increase the likelihood of identification as a means to escape the self and reduce self-focus. I tested this prediction in Study 6.

Study 6

In this study, I had participants complete a rating scale intended to lead them to reflect on discrepancies between either their view of their current and ideal selves (self-discrepancy condition) or their view of the current and ideal worlds (world-discrepancy condition) prior to reading the introversion narrative from the previous studies presented in this chapter. In addition, I again utilized the mirror manipulation to place participants in either a baseline level or heightened level of self-concept accessibility. In the world-discrepancy condition, I expected to replicate the finding from Study 5: I predicted that
participants whose self-concept accessibility was heightened (i.e., high-SCA participants) would report lower levels of identification and self-rated introversion compared to participants in the baseline-SCA condition. However, I predicted that participants in the self-discrepancy condition would, overall, report higher levels of identification and trait incorporation than would world-discrepancy participants, and, moreover, that these levels would be even higher if participants’ self-concept accessibility were heightened by the presence of a mirror (which I believed would further increase participants’ desire to escape the self).

Method

Participants. Ninety-four undergraduate students (44 males and 50 females, with a mean age of 18.7 years) participated individually or in groups of up to five. They received partial course credit for their participation.

Materials and Procedure. An experimenter directed participants to individual cubicles and distributed booklets containing all of the experiment’s materials. As in Study 5, the cubicle contained a rectangular mirror with either the reflective side or non-reflective side facing up. The experimental booklet was identical to the one used in the introversion narrative condition in Study 5, save for the discrepancy rating task, which was included before the narrative, on the second and third pages. In the self-discrepancy condition, participants first completed ten items on which they rated their agreement on statements about their current selves (e.g., “I am an extremely intelligent person,” “I am an extremely generous person,” and “I am extremely attractive person”) on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 9 (strongly agree). On the next page, these participants then
completed ten items, using the same scale, on which they rated their agreement on parallel statements about their ideal selves (e.g., “Ideally I would like to be an extremely intelligent person”; see Appendix N). These consecutive rating tasks were adapted from ones previously shown to elicit thoughts about discrepancies between one’s actual and ideal selves and place participants in a temporary state of negative self-focus (Van Hook & Higgins, 1988). In the world-discrepancy condition, participants completed two similarly constructed scales, with the first set of items asking participants to reflect on the current state of the world (e.g., “The world is an extremely safe place”) and the second set asking them to reflect on their evaluation of the ideal world (e.g., “Ideally the world would be an extremely safe place”; see Appendix O). In both conditions, participants were told the rating scales were being tested for use in future research and were unrelated to the present study. After the discrepancy task, all participants then read the introversion narrative and completed the measures of identification and self-rated introversion/ extroversion, the transportation scale, and the memory test.

---

8 I conducted a pilot test (N = 41) in which I randomly assigned participants to complete either the self- or world-discrepancy scales and then complete the Positive Affect/Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS: Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) immediately afterward. Results revealed that overall levels of both positive and negative affect did not significantly differ between the two conditions (ps > .18). However, analyzing the individual items separately revealed that self-discrepancy participants, compared to world-discrepancy participants, reported feeling more inadequate, $F(1, 40) = 2.69, p < .01$, and more worthless, $F(1, 40) = 1.98, p < .09$, which suggests that the induction did place participants in a negative state of self-focus, as intended.
Results

Identification. I computed an average score for participants’ level of identification ($\alpha = .90$) and submitted the scores to a 2 (discrepancy condition: self, world) X 2 (self-concept accessibility condition: baseline, high) ANOVA. Results revealed a significant main effect of discrepancy condition: as expected, participants in the self-discrepancy condition reported a higher mean level of identification ($M = 6.22, SD = 1.49$) than did participants in the world-discrepancy condition ($M = 5.08, SD = 1.35$), $F(1, 90) = 15.4, p < .01$. This effect was qualified by a significant discrepancy condition X self-concept accessibility condition interaction, $F(1, 90) = 5.83, p < .02$. In the world-discrepancy condition, the results replicated those obtained in Study 5: high-SCA participants reported a lower level of identification ($M = 4.72, SD = 1.18$) than did baseline-SCA participants ($M = 5.47, SD = 1.45$), $t(92) = 1.95, p < .059$. In the self-discrepancy condition, the reverse pattern of means emerged but was not significant: high-SCA participants reported a higher level of identification ($M = 6.55, SD = 1.50$) than did baseline-SCA participants ($M = 5.90, SD = 1.46$), $t(92) = 1.57, p < .12$. Furthermore, the mean level of identification for high-SCA participants in the self-discrepancy condition was significantly higher than the level reported by their high-SCA counterparts in the world-discrepancy condition, $t(92) = 4.53, p < .01$ (See Figure 3.3). Thus, as expected, increasing participants’ awareness of self-discrepancies increased the extent to which they identified with the character, and slightly more so when their level of self-concept accessibility was further heightened by the presence of a mirror.
Figure 3.3. The effect of discrepancy condition and level of self-concept accessibility on identification in Study 6.

_Self-rated introversion._ I computed an average score for participants’ self-rated introversion (α = .72) and submitted the scores to a two-factor ANOVA. Examination of the means revealed a pattern identical to the one obtained for identification (see Figure 3.4). First, a significant main effect of discrepancy condition emerged: self-discrepancy participants rated themselves higher in introversion (\(M = 5.83, SD = 1.14\)) than did participants in the world-discrepancy condition (\(M = 4.92, SD = 1.45\)), \(F(1, 90) = 11.50, p < .01\). This effect was qualified by a significant discrepancy condition X self-concept accessibility condition interaction, \(F(1, 90) = 6.21, p < .02\). In the world-discrepancy condition, high-SCA participants rated themselves lower in introversion (\(M = 4.51, SD = 1.29\)) than did baseline-SCA participants (\(M = 5.37, SD = 1.50\)), \(t(92) = 2.35, p < .03\). In the self-discrepancy condition, the reverse pattern emerged but was not significant: high-SCA participants rated themselves higher in introversion (\(M = 6.06, SD = 1.15\)) than did
baseline-SCA participants ($M = 5.61, SD = 1.21$), $t(92) = 1.34, p < .19$. In addition, the mean introversion rating reported by high-SCA participants in the self-discrepancy condition was significantly higher than the mean rating reported by high-SCA participants in the world-discrepancy condition, $t(92) = 4.20, p < .01$.

![Figure 3.4](image.png)

*Figure 3.4.* The effect of discrepancy condition and level of self-concept accessibility on self-rated introversion in Study 6.

I predicted that the significant discrepancy condition X self-concept accessibility interaction for participants’ introversion ratings would be explained by participants’ level of identification. To test the predicted mediation, I conducted a linear regression with the discrepancy X SCA interaction term (as well as both main effect terms) as the independent variable, identification scores as the mediator, and introversion ratings as the dependent variable. As indicated earlier, the interaction term significantly predicted both
introversion ratings, $\beta = .25, t(90) = 2.45, p < .02$ and identification, $\beta = .24, t(90) = 2.30, p < .02$. However, when both the interaction term and identification scores were entered as predictors of participants’ introversion ratings, identification emerged a significant predictor of participants’ self-ratings, $\beta = .26, t(89) = 2.52, p < .02$, while the interaction term did not, $\beta = .19, t(89) = 1.87, p < .07$. A Sobel test indicated that the mediation was significant, $z = 1.97, p < .05$. This result suggests that the extent to which participants internalized the character’s trait can be explained by the pattern of identification produced by the interaction between discrepancy type and self-concept accessibility condition.

_Transportation and Memory for Story Events_. As in Study 5, I calculated an average transportation score ($\alpha = .51$) and memory score ($\alpha = .88$) and submitted both to a two-factor ANOVA. Results confirmed that neither the main effects of discrepancy condition and self-concept accessibility condition nor the interaction was significant for either transportation or memory (all $F$s < 1). Thus, it does not appear that the reported results for identification and self-rated introversion can be attributed to varying levels of absorption (or distraction) experienced by participants in the different conditions.

**Discussion**

Overall, the results supported my prediction that leading participants to reflect on their own self-discrepancies would increase their likelihood of identifying with a character and internalizing the character’s traits. It appears that when forced to acknowledge their own shortcomings, participants were indeed more motivated to step into the shoes of the character, assumedly as a means of escaping the self. Furthermore,
the results add an important qualification to those from the previous study by showing the heightened self-concept accessibility does not necessarily impede identification in all instances: high-SCA participants in the self-discrepancy condition reported significantly higher levels of identification and trait incorporation than did high-SCA participants in the world-discrepancy condition and even somewhat higher levels than did baseline-SCA participants in the self-discrepancy condition.

I had predicted that heightening the self-concept accessibility of self-discrepancy participants would significantly increase their likelihood of identification and trait incorporation compared to baseline-SCA participants in the self-discrepancy condition; however, as reported, this prediction was not borne out by the results. One possible explanation might lie in the choice to use the introversion narrative in this study: perhaps fully identifying with an introverted character did not provide the optimal means of escaping the self. As noted earlier, introversion itself has been shown to be related to self-consciousness and self-reflection, and, as Study 5 revealed, participants reported lower levels of identification with an introverted character than with an extroverted one. Thus, perhaps a more pronounced difference in identification and trait incorporation might have emerged between the high-SCA and baseline-SCA participants in the self-discrepancy condition if the character in the narrative possessed a subjectively more desirable trait, or at least one that did not remind participants of their own negative state of self-reflection.

Taken together, the four studies presented in this chapter extend the findings from Studies 1 and 2 by illustrating the importance of considering the impact of the readers’ psychological states on their likelihood of experiencing identification and internalizing
characters’ traits. In addition, the results of Study 6 further suggest that identification can be influenced both by incidental features of the reading context (such as the presence of a mirror in the room) as well as the motivational states that readers bring with them when they enter the world of a narrative.

The studies presented to this point have shown how the likelihood and extent of identification in general can be influenced by features of a narrative or its readers. In the next chapter, I seek to demonstrate that the experience of identification might be strategically channeled in order to get readers to adopt the perspective of a type of character whose identity they might not typically be so apt to assume – one who is a member of a stereotyped outgroup – and, as a result of identifying with such a character, to exhibit lower levels of stereotyping and prejudice.
CHAPTER 4

SPECIAL APPLICATION: IDENTIFICATION AS A MEANS TO REDUCE STEREOTYPING AND PREJUDICE

The 1975 Broadway musical *A Chorus Line* was groundbreaking not only in its structure – presenting seventeen Broadway dancers auditioning for a director on a mostly bare stage, revealing their personalities and relaying their life experiences in monologues and intermittent musical numbers – but also in its depiction of central characters who were homosexual, something of a rarity at the time. In the words of several of the original cast members, “The idea of a character coming out and acknowledging he was gay – ‘admitting’ is the way they termed it then – was astonishing” (Viagas, Lee, and Walsh, 1990, p. 16). Anticipating the potential for resistance to one of the show’s gay characters, the creators of the show chose to wait to have the character reveal his sexuality until partway through the show, after audiences had gotten to know and like him, so that when he eventually disclosed his identity, audience members would be more likely to accept it – and him. Their decision was apparently an astute one: *A Chorus Line* ran for over six thousand performances, and its success was based in no small part on audiences’ responses to its compelling, diverse characters (Mandelbaum, 1989).
In the studies to be presented in this chapter, I sought to determine if I could apply the same strategy employed by the writers of *A Chorus Line* – the delayed revelation of a character’s stigmatized group membership – to encourage higher levels of *identification* with such a character. Specifically, I aimed to apply the lessons learned from the previous studies to show that the experience of identification, having been triggered by elements I have shown to increase its likelihood, might be sufficient for readers to “overcome” the disclosure of a character’s stereotyped group membership, particularly if the revelation occurs later rather than earlier in the narrative. Furthermore, as a result of experiencing greater identification with a stigmatized character, I expected that readers of such a “late revelation” narrative would exhibit greater reductions in prejudice toward the character’s group than would readers of an “early revelation” narrative. In Study 7, I tested these predictions using a narrative in which I varied the timing of the disclosure of a male character’s sexual orientation.

**Study 7**

*Method*

*Participants.* Seventy-eight male undergraduate students (with a mean age of 18.8 years) participated individually or in groups of up to five. For this study, only participants who identified their sexual orientation as heterosexual, in an item on a mass pre-testing questionnaire they completed a month prior to the study, were invited to participate. They received partial course credit for their participation.

*Materials and Procedure.* For this study, I utilized the version of the “campus volunteering” narrative from Study 1 that elicited the highest level of identification: the
version written in first-person voice that provided a high level of access to the character’s thoughts and feelings. I created three new versions of this story: one in which the character was identified as homosexual in the first paragraph of the story (specifically, the character, who refers to himself as John, receives a call from his boyfriend, Mike), a second in which the character was identified as homosexual about two-thirds of the way through the narrative (the character receives the call from his boyfriend, Mike, before participating in the clean-up project), and a third in which the character was identified as heterosexual about two-thirds of the way through the narrative (the character receives a call from his girlfriend, Michelle, before participating in the clean-up project). From this point on, I will refer to these three versions of the story, respectively, as the “gay/early,” “gay/late,” and “straight” narratives.

The basic procedure for this study was similar to that of Study 1 in most respects, with the following exceptions. First, as part of a mass pre-testing questionnaire, all participants had completed the eight-item Attitudes toward Homosexuals Scale (Herek & Capitanio, 1999), to provide a baseline attitude score for each participant. This measure requires participants to rate their agreement with such statements as, “A man who is a homosexual is just as likely to be a good person as anyone else” and “I think male homosexuals are disgusting” using a five-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). I also included this scale in the study booklet, immediately following the identification measure, to assess participants’ attitudes after reading the narrative they were assigned.

In addition, to assess the extent to which readers believed that the character possessed traits associated with common stereotypes of male homosexuals, I added two
semantic-differential items to the study booklet. These two items both utilized a 9-point semantic-differential scale, the first item anchored with the endpoints feminine and masculine, the second with the endpoints calm and emotional. Because none of the character’s behaviors or responses in the story were, at least ostensibly, indicative of either dimension, I believed participants’ responses to these items would represent the application of stereotypes to the character in the absence of any “evidence” in the traits implied by the character’s actions or responses to story events.

In addition, I included the trait self-rating measure from Study 1, replacing the target item measuring participants’ interest in community involvement with one measuring the gay-stereotypic trait emotional. Previous research suggests that when individuals take the perspective of a stereotyped group member, they tend to show less stereotypical judgments of the target other but show increased levels of stereotyping in their judgments of the self and in their behavior (e.g., Galinsky, Wang, & Ku, 2008). Thus, I included this item to determine if identification with a character who belongs to a stereotyped group might also influence the extent to which readers incorporated a stereotypical trait into their self-concepts.

Next, as a check on my manipulation of the character’s sexual orientation, I included the following item at the end of the booklet: “Without looking back, what was the sexual orientation of the character?” This item presented participants with three response options – gay, straight, don’t know. Finally, at the end of session, participants received the campus flyer measure of volunteering intentions used in Study 1.
Results

Eight participants who failed identify the sexual orientation of the character as intended (three participants in the gay/early narrative condition and four participants in the gay/late narrative condition who identified the character’s orientation as straight, and one participant in the straight narrative condition who identified the character’s orientation as gay) were omitted from the data set. Thus, I conducted all of the following analyses with the seventy participants who did correctly identify the character’s orientation.

Identification. I submitted participants’ average scores on the identification measure (α = .85) to a one-way analysis of variance. The results revealed a significant effect of narrative, $F (2, 67) = 5.78$, $p < .01$. I conducted planned contrasts to compare the mean level of identification reported by participants in the gay/late narrative condition with the level reported by participants in both the gay/early and straight narrative conditions. The contrasts confirmed that readers of the gay/late narrative experienced a significantly higher level of identification with the protagonist ($M = 6.41$, $SD = 1.29$) than did readers of the gay/early narrative ($M = 5.57$, $SD = 1.18$), $t(68) = 2.45$, $p < .02$, but that there was no difference in the level of identification reported by readers of the gay/late narrative and straight narrative ($M = 6.68$, $SD = 1.47$), $t(68) = .79$, $p > .40$ (see Figure 4.1).

---

9 Retaining these participants does not significantly alter any of the analyses reported.
Figure 4.1. The effect of narrative condition on identification in Study 7.

**Attitudes toward Homosexuals.** There were no differences between conditions on the pre-test measure of their attitudes toward homosexuals, $F(2, 66) = 1.05, p < .36$. Thus, I used participants’ pre-test scores as a covariate in the analysis of their post-narrative attitudes toward homosexuals. Results from the analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) revealed a significant effect of narrative, $F(2, 66) = 18.76, p < .001$. The planned contrasts showed that readers of the gay/late narrative reported a significantly more favorable attitude toward homosexuals ($M = 4.25, SD = .50$) than did readers of both the gay/early narrative ($M = 3.29, SD = .66$), $t(67) = 5.50, p < .01$) and the straight narrative ($M = 3.55, SD = 1.02$), $t(67) = 3.96, p < .01$ (See Figure 4.2). In addition, only in the gay/late narrative condition did I observe a significant positive correlation between participants’ identification scores and their attitude ratings, $r(21) = .54, p < .01$, which suggests that the more these participants reported stepping into the shoes of the character,
the more favorable were their attitudes toward homosexuals after emerging from the story world. A positive but non-significant correlation between the two variables emerged in both the gay/early narrative condition, $r(22) = .31, p < .15$ and the straight narrative condition $r(21) = .12, p > .50$.

![Figure 4.2](image)

**Figure 4.2.** The effect of narrative condition on the favorability of participants’ attitudes toward homosexuals in Study 7.

**Stereotyping of the Character.** Just as I predicted that readers of the gay/early narrative would be the *least* likely to identify with the protagonist, I expected these same readers to be the *most* likely to show signs of stereotyping in their perceptions of the character. Because scores on the two items measuring the extent to which participants perceived the character to possess the stereotypical traits *feminine* and *emotional* were not significantly correlated, $r(68) = .094, p > .40$, I analyzed each item separately. I again
included participants’ pre-test scores on the Attitudes toward Homosexuals scale as a covariate for both analyses.

First, for the ratings of femininity, results from the ANCOVA revealed a significant effect of narrative, $F(2, 66) = 18.76, p < .001$. The planned contrasts showed that readers of the gay/late narrative rated the character as lower in femininity ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 1.37$) than did readers of the gay/early narrative ($M = 5.13$, $SD = 1.16$), $t(67) = 2.56$, $p < .02$ but higher in femininity than did readers of the straight narrative ($M = 2.95$, $SD = 1.29$), $t(67) = 3.21$, $p < .01$ (see Figure 4.3). In other words, on this dimension, readers of the gay/late narrative showed a measurable (but not complete) reduction in the tendency to stereotype the gay character. Furthermore, a significant negative correlation between participants’ identification scores and their ratings of the character’s femininity emerged in both the gay/late narrative condition, $r(21) = -.54$, $p < .01$ and the straight narrative condition $r(21) = -.45$, $p < .04$. In the gay/early narrative condition, the correlation between these two variables was not significant, $r(22) = .04$, $p > .80$. 

62
Results for participants’ ratings of the character’s level of emotionality also revealed a significant effect of narrative, $F(2, 66) = 11.12, p < .001$. The planned contrasts showed that readers of the gay/late narrative reported a significantly lower rating of the character’s emotionality ($M = 4.13, SD = 1.33$) than did readers of the gay/early narrative ($M = 5.71, SD = .99$), $t(67) = 4.59, p < .001$. However, there was no difference in the emotionality ratings provided by readers of the gay/late narrative and readers of the straight narrative ($M = 4.61, SD = 1.62$), $t(67) = 1.31, p < .01$. Only in the gay/late narrative condition did a (marginally) significant negative correlation between participants’ identification scores and their ratings of the character’s emotionality emerge, $r(21) = -.37, p < .08$. These two variables were not significantly correlated in either the gay/early narrative condition, $r(22) = .001, p > .90$, or the straight narrative condition $r(21) = .24, p > .30$. 

*Figure 4.3.* The effect of narrative condition on ratings of the character’s level of femininity in Study 7.
Thus, on both stereotype ratings, readers of the gay/late narrative, who had reported identifying more with the gay character than did readers of the gay/early narrative, also showed less reliance on stereotypes in the impression they formed of the character than did their counterparts in the gay/early narrative condition. Furthermore, the more they identified with the character, the less likely were readers of the gay/late narrative to display stereotyping in their evaluations of the character.

*Self-Rated Emotionality.* I submitted participants’ scores on the single-item rating of their own level of emotionality to a one-way ANOVA. Results revealed a significant effect of narrative, $F(2, 67) = 3.95, p < .03$. The planned contrasts showed that readers of the gay/late narrative rated themselves as higher in emotionality ($M = 5.91, SD = 2.26$) than did readers of the gay/early narrative ($M = 4.42, SD = 2.38$), $t(68) = 2.21, p < .04$,
but no higher than did readers of the straight narrative ($M = 6.17, SD = 2.33$), $t(68) = .38$, $p > .70$ (See Figure 4.5). Thus, participants who discovered the character was homosexual early in the story were considerably less likely to incorporate this stereotypical trait into their self-concepts than were participants who discovered the character’s homosexuality later in the story. Furthermore, in all three conditions, participants’ self-ratings of emotionality were not significantly correlated with their identification scores (all $ps > .30$).

![Figure 4.5. The effect of narrative condition on participants’ self-rated emotionality in Study 7.](image)

**Intentions to Volunteer.** As in Study 1, I coded participants’ responses to the campus flyer measure “0” if they did not provide their contact information, “1” if they provided their contact information but did not select campus clean-up projects from the list of potential volunteering opportunities, and “2” if they provided their contact information and selected campus clean-up projects.
information and selected campus clean-up projects from the list. I submitted participants’ scores to a one-way ANOVA. Results revealed a marginally significant effect of narrative condition, $F(2, 67) = 2.45$, $p < .09$. Planned contrasts revealed that readers of the gay/late narrative expressed a greater intention to volunteer ($M = .74$, $SD = .92$) than did readers of the gay/early narrative ($M = .33$, $SD = .48$), $t(68) = 1.81$, $p < .08$, but the same level of intention as did readers of the straight narrative ($M = .78$, $SD = .85$), $t(68) = .19$, $p > .80$ (see Figure 4.6). Thus, just as the gay/early participants appeared especially likely to distance themselves from a trait dimension stereotypical to homosexuals, they were also the least likely to adopt a behavior performed by the story’s character. Furthermore, a positive correlation between participants’ reported level of identification and their level of intention to volunteer emerged in both the gay/late narrative condition, $r(21) = .58$, $p < .01$, and straight narrative condition, $r(21) = .35$, $p < .10$, but participants’ identification and volunteering intention scores showed no association in the gay/early narrative condition, $r(22) = .06$, $p > .70$. 
Evaluations of the Character/Transportation. No differences emerged in the mean favorability of participants’ evaluations of the character in the three conditions, as indicated by a one-way ANOVA ($F < 1$). This result is particularly noteworthy given the between-condition differences in ratings of the character on stereotypical trait dimensions, reported above. Apparently, the timing of the revelation of the character’s sexuality influenced the extent to which readers viewed the character in stereotypical terms but not how good or likable they believed (or were willing to report) the character to be. In addition, results from a one-way ANOVA showed that readers in the three conditions appeared to be equally transported by the story ($F < 1$), which suggests that the differences between conditions cannot be explained by participants’ level of absorption in the story.

Figure 4.6. The effect of narrative condition on intentions to volunteer in Study 7.
Discussion

The findings from this study confirmed my prediction that delaying the revelation of a character’s stigmatized group membership would have a significant impact on readers’ likelihood of experiencing identification with such a character and, as a result, their likelihood of exhibiting stereotyping in their judgments about the character and the favorability of their attitudes toward the character’s group. If participants found out that the protagonist in the narrative was homosexual later, versus earlier, in the story, they reported higher levels of identification with the character, and, as a result, were more likely to express favorable attitudes toward homosexuals, less likely to perceive the character as embodying traits stereotypical to homosexuals, and more likely to adopt the intention to volunteer. Indeed, the fact that readers of the gay/late narrative were no less likely to identify with the character than readers who believed the character to be heterosexual suggests that waiting to disclose a potentially aversive or threatening feature of the character until identification has assumedly been triggered dramatically increases readers’ acceptance of such a characteristic. At the same time, readers of the gay/early narrative were less likely to rate themselves high on the gay-stereotypic trait of emotionality or to adopt the character-specific behavior of volunteering in campus clean-up projects than were readers of the other two narratives, which suggests that these participants were motivated to distance themselves from the character (but not, as reported, to view the character any less favorably compared to participants in the other two conditions). In addition, the finding that readers of the gay/late narrative were no more likely to incorporate the stereotypical trait into their self-concepts than were readers of the straight narrative suggests that identification with the gay character did not result in
increased self-stereotyping, as previous research on perspective-taking has shown; I will return to this point in the next chapter.

In sum, these results build on those obtained in Study 2 by suggesting that readers are not necessarily less likely to identify with a character who does not share a relevant ingroup membership; if given the opportunity to experience identification with a character before his/her outgroup status is disclosed, readers appear more willing to remain in the character’s shoes for the duration of the narrative. More broadly, these findings exhibit the powerful potential of narratives in general, and the experience of identification in particular, to transform readers’ attitudes and beliefs about stigmatized group members.

In the final study, I aimed to extend the findings of Study 7, both by investigating the power of the technique of delayed revelation with a new stereotyped group and by subjecting this technique to what I believed would be an even stronger test by having the protagonist behave in an ambiguously stereotypical fashion. Specifically, in the narrative for Study 8, I varied whether the protagonist was identified as Caucasian or African American and, in the latter case, varied the timing of the revelation to occur earlier or later in the story. In addition, in the final section of the story, the character was depicted behaving in a manner that could be construed as unfriendly and hostile, which is a trait stereotypical of African Americans (e.g., Devine, 1989). I predicted that if (white) readers discovered that a character was African American later rather than earlier in the story, they would be less likely to interpret the character’s behavior as hostile and, furthermore, show more positive attitudes toward African Americans, as a result of identifying with the racial outgroup character to a greater extent. More broadly, I also
hoped to show in this study that identifying with a character can lead readers to interpret or construe even less desirable behaviors of the character (in contrast to the positive behaviors of volunteering and voting performed by the characters in the previous studies’ narratives) in a more favorable light.

Study 8

Method

Participants. One hundred thirty-nine undergraduate students (82 males, 57 females, with a mean age of 19.2 years) participated individually or in groups of up to five. For this study, only participants who identified their race as Caucasian, in an item on a mass pre-testing questionnaire they completed three weeks prior to the study, were invited to participate. They received partial course credit for their participation.

Materials and Procedure. As in Study 7, I utilized a narrative featuring elements shown in Study 1 to elicit high levels of identification: first-person voice and the provision of a high level of access to the character’s thoughts and feelings. I again created three versions of the story: one in which the (male) character’s race is revealed to be African-American in the first paragraph of the story (specifically, the character refers to himself as Jamal, a name more common among African Americans; see Appendix P), a second in which the character is revealed to be African-American about halfway through the way through the narrative (see Appendix Q), and a third in which the character’s race is implied to be Caucasian about halfway through the narrative (the character refers to himself as Jeremy). For simplicity, from this point on I will refer to
these three versions of the story, respectively, as the “Black/early,” “Black/late,” and “White” narratives.

The content of the opening section of the narrative, describing the character attending to various morning routines before leaving his dorm for the day, was similar to the content of the “campus volunteering” narrative used in the previous studies, save for the revelation of the character’s race. For this study, however, I rewrote the last section of the narrative (which, for all participants, came after the revelation of race occurred) to depict the character engaging in a series of behaviors, adapted from Srull and Wyer (1979), that were intended to be ambiguous in regard to the level of unfriendliness or hostility they implied. For instance, the character takes his car to a second mechanic when told by the first that the repairs cannot be finished immediately, avoids a petitioner on the sidewalk, demands his money back from a store clerk without obvious reason, and claims to have diabetes to workers at a blood drive in order to avoid having to donate. Srull and Wyer (1979) had found that if participants had been primed with negative trait adjectives before reading a scenario depicting an actor engaging in these types of behaviors, they were subsequently more likely to interpret the actions as hostile than were participants who had been primed with neutral or positive trait adjectives. In addition, Devine (1989) showed that if participants had been primed with words related to stereotypes about African Americans, such as ghetto, basketball, and jazz (but, importantly, not words related to hostility), they were also more likely to interpret these behaviors, as performed by a Caucasian target, as indicative of hostility than were participants who had been primed with non-stereotypical words.
In addition, I added a single item to assess the extent to which readers believed the character to be hostile. This item utilized a 9-point semantic-differential scale, anchored with the endpoints not hostile and hostile, and was embedded among six other items assessing traits not implied by the actions of the character (e.g., boring-not boring, studious-not studious, etc.). In this study, the two general character evaluation items used in the previous three studies (good and likable) were inadvertently omitted. Finally, as a check on the manipulation of the character’s race, the following item was included at the end of the booklet: “Without looking back, what was the race of the character?” This item presented participants with three response options – African American, Caucasian, - and Don’t Know/Can’t Remember.

As part of a mass pre-test questionnaire, all participants had completed the eight-item Modern Racism Scale (McConahay, 1986), to provide a baseline score for each participant. This measure requires participants to rate their agreement with such statements as, “Over the past few years, Blacks have gotten more economically than they deserve” and “Blacks are getting too demanding in their push for equal rights” using a nine-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 9 (strongly agree). I also included this scale in the study booklet, immediately following the character evaluation items, to measure participants’ attitudes toward African-Americans after reading the narrative they were assigned.

Results

Ten participants who failed to identify the race of the character as intended (two participants in both the Black/early and Black/late narrative conditions who identified the
race as Caucasian, and six participants in the White narrative condition who identified the character’s race as African American) were omitted.\textsuperscript{10} Thus, I conducted all of the following analyses with the one hundred twenty-nine participants who correctly identified the character’s race.

\textit{Identification.} I submitted participants’ average scores on the identification measure ($\alpha = .92$) to one-way ANOVA. The results revealed a significant effect of narrative, $F(2, 127) = 4.54, p < .02$. I conducted planned contrasts to compare the mean level of identification reported by participants in the Black/late narrative condition with the level reported by participants in both the Black/early and White narrative conditions. The contrasts confirmed that readers of the Black/late narrative experienced a significantly higher level of identification with the protagonist ($M = 6.09$, $SD = 1.41$) than did readers of the Black/early narrative ($M = 5.07$, $SD = 1.60$), $t(127) = 2.98, p < .004$, but that there was no difference in the level of identification reported by readers of the Black/late narrative and White narrative ($M = 5.71$, $SD = 1.77$), $t(127) = 1.11, p > .20$ (See Figure 4.7).

\textsuperscript{10} Retaining these participants does not alter any of the analyses reported.
Figure 4.7. The effect of narrative condition on identification in Study 8.

**Hostility Ratings.** I submitted participants’ scores on the single item evaluating their perception of the character’s hostility to a one-way ANOVA. Results revealed a marginally significant effect of narrative, $F(2, 127) = 2.47$, $p < .09$. The planned contrasts showed that readers of the Black/early narrative rated the character as more hostile ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 1.95$) than did readers of the Black/late narrative ($M = 2.45$, $SD = 1.45$), $t(128) = 2.01$, $p < .05$. There was no difference in the hostility ratings reported by readers of the Black/late narrative and readers of the White narrative ($M = 2.52$, $SD = 1.87$), $t(127) = .17$, $p > .80$ (see Figure 4.8). A significant negative correlation between participants’ identification scores and hostility ratings emerged in both the Black/late condition, $r(40) = -.38$, $p < .02$, and White narrative conditions, $r(40) = -.35$, $p < .02$. A non-significant negative correlation between these two variables emerged in the Black/early condition, $r(42) = -.20$, $p < .19$. No significant differences between
conditions emerged on any of the six non-stereotypical trait items included in the scale (all $p > .20$).

![Figure 4.8](image.png)

**Figure 4.8.** The effect of narrative condition on participants’ ratings of the character’s level of hostility in Study 8.

*Modern Racism.* There was no significant difference in the mean pre-test Modern Racism scores of participants in the three conditions, $F(2, 127) = .89, p > .70$. Thus, I used the pre-test scores as a covariate in the analysis of their post-narrative Modern Racism scores. Results from the ANCOVA revealed a significant effect of narrative, $F(1, 126) = 5.63, p < .01$. The planned contrasts showed that readers of the Black/late narrative reported a significantly lower mean Modern Racism score ($M = 3.19, SD = 1.26$) than did readers of the Black/early narrative ($M = 4.25, SD = 1.73$), $t(128) = 3.19, p < .01$. There was no difference in the mean scores for readers of the black/late narrative and readers of the White narrative ($M = 3.41, SD = 1.64$), $t(128) = .68, p > .40$ (see Figure 4.9). In addition, a significant negative correlation between participants’
identification scores and their Modern Racism scores emerged in both the Black/late
condition, $r(40) = -.40$, $p < .01$, and the White condition, $r(40) = -.37$, $p < .02$. This
finding is similar to the one obtained for participants’ hostility ratings: the more
participants in both the Black/late and White narrative conditions reported identifying
with the character, the less likely they were to exhibit stereotyping and prejudice toward
African Americans. This pattern could suggest that the experience of greater
identification with a character, regardless of race, might decrease negative evaluations of
or responses to outgroups (however, because the identification scores of participants in
the straight narrative condition in Study 7 were not correlated with their reported levels of
favorability toward homosexuals, I hesitate to draw a firm conclusion). A non-significant
negative correlation between the two variables emerged in the Black/early narrative
condition, $r(42) = -.18$, $p > .20$.

![Figure 4.9](image)

*Figure 4.9.* The effect of narrative condition on Modern Racism scores in Study 8.
Transportation. As in the previous studies, readers in the three conditions appeared to be equally transported by the story, as indicated by a one-way ANOVA \( (F < 1) \). Thus, the lower level of identification reported by participants in the black/early condition cannot be explained by their level of engagement with or immersion in the story.

Discussion

The results of this final study provide additional evidence of the power of the “delayed revelation” narrative technique introduced in Study 7 and, furthermore, strongly indicate that identifying with an outgroup character can reduce stereotyping and prejudice, even when the character behaves in a fashion that could potentially be interpreted in line with stereotypes specific to the character’s group. More generally, these findings suggest that identification with a character increases the likelihood that readers, upon reflection, will give a character, regardless of race, the benefit of the doubt and construe the character’s behavior in a more positive light, perhaps as a result as interpreting the character’s motives more charitably while walking in his shoes through the world of the narrative. Together, Studies 7 and 8 demonstrate how identification, once triggered, can be effectively directed to encourage and sustain readers’ identification with a character whose perspective and identity they might not typically be likely to assume and, furthermore, show how the lessons learned from the previous studies regarding the narrative-based antecedents of identification with characters can be applied to change readers’ attitudes and beliefs about characters and the groups they represent once they emerge from the story world.
CHAPTER 5

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The present studies have taken several steps toward a clearer understanding of the experience of identification and its fundamental antecedents and consequences. First, Studies 1 and 2 demonstrated that first-person narration, the provision of information about a character’s inner responses to story events, and the presence of a central character who shares a salient ingroup membership with readers, proved to be a potent combination in short stories, significantly increasing the likelihood of identification occurring. Furthermore, these two studies revealed that, as a result of identifying more with a particular character, readers were more likely to adopt the character’s motivations and behaviors than were readers who experienced a lower level of identification: in Study 1, readers who identified most with a character who volunteered in a campus service project subsequently reported the highest interest in community involvement and expressed the highest intention to volunteer in campus projects themselves, and in Study 2, readers who identified most with a character who voted were most likely to go to the polls and cast a ballot on Election Day.

Studies 3 through 6 demonstrated that the psychological and motivational states of readers also play an important role in determining their likelihood of identification and
incorporation of a character’s traits. Specifically, Studies 3, 4, and 5 revealed that chronically or temporarily higher levels of self-concept accessibility reduced the likelihood of readers’ experiencing identification and internalizing a character’s traits (specifically, introversion or extroversion), assumedly by making it more difficult for them to relinquish their personal identities and assume the identity of a character, and that lower levels of self-concept accessibility increased identification likelihood and trait internalization. Study 6 suggested an important qualification to these results: if readers were placed in a negative state of self-reflection prior to reading a story, they were more likely to experience identification and incorporate a character’s traits into their self-concepts, perhaps as a means to escape the self.

Studies 7 and 8 revealed that encouraging identification with a character who is a member of a stigmatized group could be a means to reduce readers’ stereotyping and prejudice. In a first-person narrative granting access to the character’s thoughts and feelings, delaying the revelation of a character’s homosexuality or identity as an African American until identification with the character had assumedly begun to occur was shown to be an effective technique not only for ensuring that readers continued to identify with the character but also for evoking lower levels of stereotype reliance in readers’ subsequent evaluations of the character and lower levels of prejudice toward the character’s group.

In addition, the fact that in most studies cross-condition differences in identification were observed despite the fact that readers reported being equally transported by the narrative suggests that the factors that increased identification did not exert their influence by making the narrative any more absorbing for readers, but, as
predicted, by facilitating the adoption of the character’s identity and perspective.
Likewise, in most studies, no differences emerged between conditions on the overall favorability of participants’ ratings of the character, which supports the claim that identification is distinct from the conscious evaluations or judgments readers make about a character. As a whole, the results from these eight studies validate the conceptualization of identification as an immersive, simulative experience with the power to dramatically change readers’ self-concepts, intentions, behaviors, and attitudes.

Limitations of the Present Research

*Ecological validity of the narratives*

One obvious limitation of the present work was the strict reliance on short-form narratives that were deliberately narrow in their focus on a single main character and in their limited plot development: each story took readers through a day (or evening) in the life of the character during which interactions with other characters were kept to a minimum or were peripheral to the central plot. This high level of control over the elements of the narratives allowed the effects on identification of key factors, such as the voice of the narrative or the group membership of the protagonist, to be tested in isolation of other narrative elements (e.g., interactions and relationships between the protagonist and other characters, other characters’ responses to or evaluations of the main character, etc.) that might also influence readers’ responses. However, what was gained in internal validity was admittedly sacrificed in the ecological validity of the narratives employed. In future studies, I will seek to replicate these basic findings using published works of fiction to determine the generalizability of the observed effects.
Applicability of the findings to long-form stories and novels

On a related note, one could ask if the features of the narrative that were shown to be key to increasing identification in the reported studies would have the same effect in longer stories and novels, which allow for more extensive character development – as well as more time and opportunity for identification with characters to occur. The results of Studies 1 and 2 suggested that a combination of identification-heightening elements (e.g., first-person voice plus high access to a character’s internal responses) was necessary to increase identification levels in the short stories utilized. In comparison, would the increased level of closeness and familiarity with a character likely fostered by long-form narratives override the effect of less identification-conducive elements of a narrative and allow readers to assume the perspective of a character? For example, would readers of novels written in third-person voice come to experience a high level of identification with protagonists the more time they are able to spend with them, especially if the characters’ thoughts, feelings, and motivations are provided by an omniscient narrator? Or would readers of such a novel still experience higher levels of identification if it instead utilized first-person narration? Addressing such questions would reveal how fundamental to the experience of identification the factors investigated in the reported studies truly are.

Focus on readers’ adoption of positive characteristics and behaviors

On the whole, the present studies focused on the extent to which readers adopted relatively prosocial motivations and behaviors, such as volunteering and voting, and positive characteristics or traits, such as an interest in community involvement or
extroversion, as a result of experiencing identification. It remains to be seen whether or not identification might lead individuals to adopt more negative or harmful beliefs, goals, traits, and behaviors as well. Findings from several of the reported studies are suggestive in this regard. First, the results of the studies reported in Chapter 3 showed that readers were more likely to view themselves as either more extroverted or introverted as a result of identifying with a character who possessed either trait, in spite of the fact that introversion is likely to be less subjectively desirable than is extroversion (as the findings from Study 5 indicated). In addition, Study 8 revealed that experiencing a high level of identification rendered readers more inclined to construe ambiguously unfriendly and hostile behaviors performed by a character in a more favorable light, which might indicate either a higher threshold of acceptability for such actions or a tendency to interpret or construe them in a more charitable fashion.

But what about more objectively harmful actions, such as smoking cigarettes, displaying antisocial or aggressive behaviors, or engaging in unsafe sexual activity, to take three examples whose depiction in the media has been a source of constant concern (e.g., Bushman, 1995; Charlesworth & Glantz, 2005; Gunasekera, Chapman, & Campbell, 1995)? Would identifying with a character who performs such behaviors, particularly later in a story or novel, after identification had been triggered, lead readers to be more accepting or tolerant of them or more willing to deny or trivialize the danger or risk involved? Such findings would suggest that there could be a potential “dark side” to identification that might lead readers to endorse or adopt anti-social or self-destructive traits, goals, or behaviors, as a result of assuming the identity and perspective of a protagonist.
Lack of focus on the emotional consequences of identification

Finally, though these studies have demonstrated the impact of identification on individuals’ self-concepts, intentions, and behaviors, none of them focused on the impact of identification on readers’ emotions. I would predict that the experience of a character’s emotional states would be another likely offshoot of identification – readers who identify with a character should experience joy when the character enjoys a windfall and sorrow when the character has a downturn in fate, as if the events were happening to them. Of course, readers in the spectator mode might also be expected to experience emotions that rise and fall in response to events that befall a particular character, particularly if they experience affinity for the character; however, I believe such emotional responses would likely be ones directed toward a character rather than ones experienced as the character. In other words, I would predict that identification would be more likely to elicit empathetic emotions, which lead readers to experience the emotions of characters, whereas spectatorship would be more likely to evoke sympathetic emotions, which lead readers to experience emotions for characters (Eisenberg, 2002; Gruen & Mendelsohn, 1986; Oatley, 1994). In general, demonstrating the unique emotional consequences of identification in future studies will provide further evidence for the power of identification to transform readers’ minds and hearts.

Proposed Extensions and Future Directions

Other Means of Measuring Identification

Because identification is a process of mental simulation that occurs entirely in the imaginations of readers, measuring it presents a considerable challenge to researchers,
especially because assessing individuals’ experience of identification in real time as they are reading poses the distinct threat of disrupting the experience as it occurs. In the studies reported, I opted to measure readers’ levels of identification by asking them to reflect on and report the extent to which they adopted the perspective, thoughts, feelings, and motivations of the character, after they had emerged from the world of the story. Although the measure I devised, which was guided by recommendations derived from recent conceptualizations of identification (e.g., Cohen, 2001), seemed to serve my purposes well, one worthwhile endeavor for future research will be to devise and test alternative ways of assessing readers’ levels of identification, which is particularly important given the current lack of standard, validated measures for researchers to employ.

One likely candidate would be the Inclusion of Other in Self (IOS) Scale (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992), which measures the degree of overlap between individuals’ mental representations of the self and other by presenting them with a series of increasingly overlapping pairs of circles and asking respondents to select the pair that best characterizes how they view their relationship with another individual. This measure nicely captures the idea of psychological merger that characterizes identification; in future studies, I will include the IOS scale as an additional measure of identification to determine how well it corresponds to scores on the measure employed in the present research.

In addition, one potentially viable means of capturing identification during the process of reading might be to utilize neurological measures of readers’ patterns of brain activity, particularly ones likely to be associated with mental simulation, to determine
their level of correspondence to readers’ reported levels of identification. Particularly relevant is previous work showing that different patterns of brain activation resulted when participants were instructed to imagine themselves performing a particular motor action versus imagining watching another individual perform the same behavior (Ruby & Decety, 2001) or to imagine their own versus another person’s emotional reactions to future events (Ruby & Decety, 2004). Assuming that these different experimental tasks correspond to the proposed distinction between identification (in which an individual experiences a character’s behaviors and emotions as though they were one’s own) and spectatorship (in which one observes the actions or infers the internal responses of others), such findings suggest that neuroimaging might prove extremely useful not only in measuring key indicators of identification but also in differentiating the experiences and consequences of identification and spectatorship.

*Identification as an Avenue for Vicarious Need Satisfaction and Identity Experimentation*

Just as identification allows readers to experience a character’s sensations, thoughts, emotions, and behaviors vicariously, I also propose that taking on the identity of a character might afford readers the opportunity to satisfy various social or psychological needs vicariously as well. For example, if readers enter the world of narrative in a state of low self-esteem, perhaps identifying with a character who enjoys some triumph or success or one who possesses an admirable trait or characteristic could be one means by readers might restore their own level of self-regard. Likewise, readers who are lonely or socially withdrawn might find that identifying with characters who have fulfilling friendships or romantic relationships offers a temporary satisfaction for
their own desire for meaningful interactions or their need for belongingness (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Perhaps readers might even use identification to relieve more negative needs and motives, such as revenge, which could, in turn, reduce their likelihood of acting on such urges in their own lives. More generally, identification may provide readers with a safe haven for identity experimentation, the opportunity to try out new roles, relationships, personalities, motives, and actions, some of which readers might never have the opportunity to experience outside the world of the narrative. In this regard, identification may also be beneficial to readers for practicing or developing particular skills or attributes they currently lack, such as assertiveness, self-efficacy, and social competence. Thus, in future research I will seek to determine if the motivational states or aroused needs of readers lead them to identify more with characters whose traits or actions might allow them to satisfy a heightened drive or deficiency vicariously – and, as a consequence of identification, if readers’ need states or perceptions of personal shortcomings are indeed reduced.

Identification with Characters in Visual Narrative Forms

At both the theoretical and empirical levels, this dissertation has focused on the dynamics of identification with characters in literary fiction. How might the findings apply to readers’ responses to characters in visual narrative forms, such as films or television programs? Some have suggested that individuals are far less likely to experience true identification with characters on television or in films, in large part because audience members are inevitably positioned as spectators to the proceedings on screen, making it difficult, if not impossible, to place themselves in characters’ minds.
while watching the action unfold (Houston, 1984; Oatley, 1994). Indeed, films rarely and only sparingly use first-person perspective camera shots, perhaps due to the limitations a strictly first-person vantage point inevitably imposes on directors’ ability to relay the story and audience members’ ability to infer a main character’s emotions or mental states without the benefit of seeing his/her visage (Brinton, 1947; Zillmann, 1994). Thus, I agree with those who posit that while written narratives are equally conducive to identification and spectatorship, films by and large favor the spectator mode. This argument follows logically from the conceptualization of identification as an imaginative process in which readers mentally simulate the events of a narrative from the perspective of a character, which seems to be especially – and perhaps exclusively – likely with literary fictional works.

Perhaps a more compelling case could be made for video games and virtual reality programs representing visual narrative forms more likely to encourage identification with characters. Virtual reality environments by design give users the opportunity to immerse themselves in computer-generated environments, often ones that are imaginary worlds, which they typically experience from a first-person visual perspective (Blascovich, Loomis, Beall, Swinth, Hoyt, & Balienson, 2002). Likewise, many modern video games give players the option of viewing the action from a first-person perspective; for example, the increasingly popular “first-person shooter” games place individuals in the role of an armed protagonist as they navigate a fictional world (Jansz & Tannis, 2007). Although both virtual reality and first-person video games directly place individuals in the roles and identities of protagonists, it remains to be seen whether they are able to invite true identification. For one, these forms of media
typically emphasize visual and visceral experiences at the expense of providing detailed information about the characters and their cognitive and psychological responses, which the present studies would suggest could limit the extent to which individuals are truly able to assume the identity and perspective of their protagonists. In addition, one might assume that players of these games will tend to be aware of their role in guiding the controls and manipulating the movement and actions of the character they are portraying, which, similar to the argument made for films above, might make these visual media more conducive to spectatorship than identification. Because virtually no work has compared people’s responses to protagonists in literary versus visual narratives, another worthwhile future goal would be to strive for a deeper understanding of how and to what extent individuals experience the perspective of characters in each narrative form.

A General Model of Readers’ Relationships with Characters

Although I have posited that identification and spectatorship represent two distinct orientations between readers and characters, the relationship and potential interaction between the two modes is certainly worthy of future exploration, with the ultimate aim being to formulate a model of the potentially dynamic relationship between readers and characters in literary fiction. Some theorists have proposed that identification is a temporary experience, one that varies in intensity during the course of reading a story or novel (Cohen, 2001), which suggests that readers could potentially “switch” between identification and spectatorship while immersed in the narrative. In fact, perhaps all individuals start out reading narratives in the spectator mode as their default orientation until (or unless) some element related to the story or their psychological state triggers
identification with a particular character. If so, then the features the reported studies showed to increase identification – such as first-person narration, a shared ingroup membership with a character, or lowered self-concept accessibility – may serve to accelerate a switch from spectatorship to identification and potentially increase the intensity and duration of readers’ identification experience once it is set in motion.

In addition, readers often do not complete a story or novel in a single sitting, and they likely use the time away from the narrative to reflect on the proceedings and characters before re-entering the story world (Cupchik & Laszlo, 1994). The evaluations of a character that readers might form during these breaks could include a growing sense of affinity toward a character or a perception of similarity between a character and the self. Thus, it is possible that the same character might alternately be a target of identification, a role model, a source for social comparison, or a friend to readers, depending on their particular stance in relation to the character at any given point. Thus, one broad aim of future work will be to propose and test a model of the possible time course of readers’ potentially dynamic, shifting responses to and orientations toward characters, in order to better understand how readers reconcile (or assimilate) their experiences in the modes of spectatorship and identification.

The Role of Identification in Understanding Priming Effects

Previous research has shown that the activation of goals, traits, and stereotypes via priming can influence individuals’ behaviors, often without their conscious awareness or intention. For example, individuals who had been primed with words related to the elderly walked more slowly down a corridor (Bargh, Chen, & Burrows, 1996), those
primed with stereotypes related to professors performed better on a test of general knowledge (Dijksterhuis & van Knippenberg, 1998), and those primed with African American faces exhibited greater hostility in an interpersonal interaction (Chen & Bargh, 1997). Although such prime-to-behavior effects are fairly robust, the precise mechanisms behind them, as well as the variables that might strengthen such effects, remain unclear (see Dijksterhuis & Bargh, 2001 and Wheeler & Petty, 2001, for a review). In this regard, the findings from the present studies may be instructive. One could interpret the reported results as evidence that identifying with a target other strengthened the effect of primed constructs on individuals’ judgments and behaviors: although all participants in a given study were primed with the same traits, goals, and behaviors displayed by a character, those who identified more with the character showed larger effects of the primes on their self-ratings, intentions, and actions. Thus, it appears that the greater subjective experience of the character’s personality, motivations, and behavior that identification affords led to a greater impact of the primes on individuals than did the mere activation of these constructs. In addition, beyond simply strengthening priming effects, I believe identification itself represents a unique form of priming that activates an entire identity for individuals, leading them to experience (and subsequently apply to the self) an activated set of traits, thoughts, emotions, and behaviors as a unified whole. Moreover, the results of Studies 7 and 8 suggest an additional benefit of such “identity priming” might be the reduction of traditional stereotype priming effects. As a result of identifying more with a stigmatized group characters, participants in the “delayed revelation” conditions in these studies, compared to their counterparts in the “early revelation” conditions, showed fewer signs of
activating and applying stereotypes, perhaps because priming the individualized identity of the character via identification overrode the effects of activating his group membership (and its associated stereotypes), a point to which I will return in the next section.

Identification versus Perspective-Taking

The present research also raises intriguing and important questions regarding the distinction between identification and perspective-taking more generally. Previous research on perspective-taking has shown that, similar to the results observed in the present studies, the process of actively attempting to adopt and understand the perspective of others produces greater overlap in individuals’ mental representations of the self and other, one consequence of which is the reduction of stereotypes and prejudice when the target of perspective-taking is a member of a stigmatized group (e.g., Davis, Conklin, Smith, & Luce, 1986; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000).

However, I believe that identification differs dramatically from traditional conceptualizations and inductions of perspective-taking, both in its phenomenology and its consequences. Most obviously, whereas perspective-taking entails the conscious, effortful process of attempting to understand another’s thoughts, feelings, and experiences, identification is, I argue, a relatively natural, spontaneous response that does not rely upon the intention to adopt the perspective of the other. Second, studies on perspective-taking have shown that the process of actively attempting to adopt and understand the perspective of others increases the activation of individuals’ self-concepts, and that this heightened activation of the self mediates the effects of perspective-taking on self-other overlap (e.g., Davis, Conklin, Smith, & Luce, 1986).
Because it increases the activation of the self, some have argued that the process of perspective-taking is inherently egocentric, requiring individuals to anchor on their own perspective and then adjust from that anchor to approximate others’ points of view, with such adjustments often insufficient (e.g., Epley, Keysar, Van Boven, & Gilovich, 2004). Thus, although the self-other merger that results from perspective-taking may result in both “inclusion of self in other” (i.e., projection) and “inclusion of other in self” (i.e., introjection), the balance may be tipped toward the former: in essence, the target may become more “self-like” through the ascription of self-descriptive traits. For example, Galinsky & Ku (2004) established the importance of possessing an egocentrically positive self-concept for seeing more of ourselves in others as a result of perspective taking: their results revealed that perspective takers high (but not low) in trait or state self-esteem exhibited a more favorable evaluation of a target other.

In contrast, the results reported in Chapter 3 revealed that reducing the activation of individuals’ self-concepts increased the likelihood of identification and trait incorporation, which suggests that the cognitive processes that occur during identification could be quite distinct from those that occur during perspective-taking. In fact, I prefer to conceptualize identification not as perspective-taking but rather as perspective-receiving to reflect the fact that readers who experience identification are the temporary recipients of a character’s perspective and identity and, furthermore, that such reception is more likely to occur if readers are able to relinquish (rather than anchor on) their self-concepts. In line with this view, I would predict that, unlike perspective-taking, identification is more likely to result in the internalization of the other’s traits than in the projection of one’s traits onto the other.
One notable exception concerns the likelihood of incorporating others’ stereotypical traits into the self-concept. Interestingly, previous research has found that instructions to take the perspective of a member of a stereotyped group decrease stereotype reliance in perceptions of the target but also lead perspective-takers both to perceive themselves and to act in a more stereotypical fashion. For example, participants who were asked to imagine themselves in the shoes of a cheerleader subsequently rated themselves as lower in intelligence (Galinsky, Wang, & Ku, 2008), and white participants who wrote a “day in the life” essay from the perspective of an African American subsequently performed worse on a math test (Wheeler, Jarvis, & Petty, 2001). In contrast, in Study 8, I found that readers of the gay/late narrative, who reported the highest level of identification with a homosexual character, did not exhibit signs of increased self-stereotyping, in that they did not rate themselves as any higher on the stereotypical trait of emotionality than did readers of the straight narrative. Thus, in addition to reducing the likelihood of exhibiting stereotypical judgments about others, identification may also reduce the extent to which individuals apply stereotypes to the self (and perhaps prevent the activation of stereotypes altogether).

In addition, there are several key differences between the methods researchers of perspective-taking have used and the methods I utilized in the present research. Most obviously, whereas studies on perspective taking have explicitly instructed participants to imagine themselves in the shoes of real target others, in my studies participants encountered fictional others without any instructions to try to identify with them. As noted earlier, I would expect that such instructions would most likely disrupt identification, which I propose is a relatively effortless, perhaps unintentional response to
a character, especially if they increase the activation of individuals’ self-concepts. Furthermore, I would predict that identifying a “character” as a real-life other might increase the salience of the self-other distinction and thus make it more difficult for individuals to immerse themselves in the mind of the other and experience full identification. In addition, prior investigations of perspective-taking have typically asked participants to either read or write narratives from the vantage point of another person. While most researchers have considered these two inductions to be equivalent in their effects as well as their effectiveness (Galinsky, 2002), I believe that writing a narrative about a target other, especially in the absence of individuating information about the target, would be more likely to lead individuals to anchor on their self-concepts when attempting to take the other’s vantage point than would reading a narrative, in which the other’s perspective is provided. Thus, in future studies it will be vital to compare the consequences of such methodological variables as the inclusion of perspective-taking instructions, the identification of a target other as real versus fictional, and the modality (reading versus writing) of the perspective-taking induction. In general, testing all of these claims regarding the nature of identification and the proposed differences between identification and perspective-taking will be crucial for validating my claim that identification represents a unique – and uniquely powerful and consequential – phenomenological experience.
Conclusion

In sum, the present studies have hopefully shown that identification represents not just a concept worthy of theoretical and empirical scrutiny but one with a number of important implications and applications. For one, these studies suggest that even the most elementary choices authors of narratives make about the language they use and the characters they depict can have a dramatic effect on the persuasive and transformative impact of their works. At the same time, each study demonstrated how the power of identification can be harnessed and directed toward such positive ends as increasing individuals’ engagement in beneficial behaviors like volunteering and voting and reducing prejudice and stereotypes. However, the journey down the rabbit hole has just begun, and I look forward with the same sense of wonder Alice felt on her journey as I continue to explore the mysterious and relatively uncharted “wonderland” that the investigation of identification with fictional characters represents.
LIST OF REFERENCES


Green, M. C. (2004). Transportation into narrative worlds: The role of prior knowledge and perceived realism. *Discourse Processes, 38*, 247-266.


APPENDIX A

FIRST-PERSON, HIGH THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS NARRATIVE USED IN STUDY 1
I awoke with a start, convinced I had overslept and missed my morning class. I shot up and was about to bolt to the closet to throw on some clothes when reality set in. It was Saturday morning, and not only did I not have any classes to rush to, I had about forty-five minutes until I needed to be out the door. I felt my heart rate start to go down, and I shook my head and smiled at my momentary panic. “Nice one, Paula,” I said aloud. Relief set in and blended with the pleasure I felt anticipating the day ahead. I threw up the blinds to the single window in my dorm room and let my eyes adjust to the sudden light that filled the room. “Should be a great day!” I thought. I turned off my alarm clock, grabbed my towel, flip flops, and shower caddy, and headed down the hall toward the bathroom, eager to get the day started.

A little later, as I was going back to the room after my shower, I noticed the poster that my RA had put up on the bulletin board across from the bathroom a week ago – the poster that, in fact, had given me my day’s plans in the first place. It read:

**CAMPUS CLEAN-UP PROJECT THIS SATURDAY!!**

Come out and join us for the campus clean-up project. We’ll spend the day picking up litter, planting new trees, and washing graffiti from buildings and sidewalks around campus. We’re meeting outside the dorm at 12 noon today – be there if you can!

“You bet I’ll be there!” I thought to myself as I headed back to my room.
I saw that clock on the wall above the bulletin board read 11:45. I hurried back to the room, quickly threw some sunscreen, a hat, an apple, and bottle of water into my backpack, and I was on my way. As I was heading down the stairs and starting to get myself psyched up for the day’s activities, my friend Chris called me on my cell phone to ask if I wanted to play tennis that evening. Anticipating tired feet and sore muscles at the end of the afternoon, I suggested we play the next day instead, provided the weather was as agreeable as it seemed to be today.

Outside, I noticed that all of the RAs from the dorm were organizing the assembled students into teams for the day’s activities. The RA from my floor noticed me emerge from the building and immediately came over to hand me a box of “equipment”: gloves, seeds and planting soil, trash bags, sponges, soap, and a campus map with my team’s designated “clean-up areas” marked. I smiled when I saw that I would be cleaning up the area outside the dorm I lived in freshman year. “That place could have used some cleaning up freshman year,” I joked to myself. I also noticed that I’d be spending an hour picking up litter around the lake near the center of campus, another area sorely in need of help. I closed my eyes and let out a deep sigh before joining my RA and the rest of my team, mostly students from my own floor with a few new but friendly faces mixed in. “Ready to do some cleaning up?” my RA yelled excitedly, rallying the troops for the mission of planting, sweeping, and scrubbing on which we were about to embark. “Yes, I’m definitely ready for my day off to begin!” I thought.
APPENDIX B

THIRD-PERSON, HIGH THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS NARRATIVE USED IN STUDY 1
She awoke with a start, convinced she had overslept and missed her morning class. She shot up and was about to bolt to the closet to throw on some clothes when reality set in. It was Saturday morning, and not only did she not have any classes to rush to, she had about forty-five minutes until she needed to be out the door. She felt her heart rate start to go down, and she shook her head and smiled at her momentary panic. “Nice one, Paula,” she said aloud. Relief set in and blended with the pleasure she felt anticipating the day ahead. She threw up the blinds to the single window in her dorm room and let her eyes adjust to the sudden light that filled the room. “Should be a great day!” she thought. She turned off her alarm clock, grabbed her towel, flip flops, and shower caddy, and headed down the hall toward the bathroom, eager to get the day started.

A little later, as she was going back to the room after her shower, she noticed the poster that her RA had put up on the bulletin board across from the bathroom a week ago – the poster that, in fact, had given her her day’s plans in the first place. It read:

**CAMPUS CLEAN-UP PROJECT THIS SATURDAY!!**

Come out and join us for the campus clean-up project. We’ll spend the day picking up litter, planting new trees, and washing graffiti from buildings and sidewalks around campus. We’re meeting outside the dorm at 12 noon today – be there if you can!

“You bet I’ll be there!” she thought to herself as she headed back to her room.
She saw that clock on the wall above the bulletin board read 11:45. She hurried back to her room, quickly threw some sunscreen, a hat, an apple, and bottle of water into her backpack, and she was on her way. As she was heading down the stairs and starting to get herself psyched up for the day’s activities, her friend Chris called her on her cell phone to ask if she wanted to play tennis that evening. Anticipating tired feet and sore muscles at the end of the afternoon, she suggested they play the next day instead, provided the weather was as agreeable as it seemed to be today.

Outside, she noticed that all of the RAs from the dorm were organizing the assembled students into teams for the day’s activities. The RA from her floor noticed her emerge from the building and immediately came over to hand her a box of “equipment”: gloves, seeds and planting soil, trash bags, sponges, soap, and a campus map with her team’s designated “clean-up areas” marked. She smiled when she saw that she would be cleaning up the area outside the dorm she lived in freshman year. “That place could have used some cleaning up freshman year,” she joked to herself. She also noticed that she’d be spending an hour picking up litter around the lake near the center of campus, another area sorely in need of help. She closed her eyes and let out a deep sigh before joining her RA and the rest of her team, mostly students from her own floor with a few new but friendly faces mixed in. “Ready to do some cleaning up?” her RA yelled excitedly, rallying the troops for the mission of planting, sweeping, and scrubbing on which they were about to embark. “Yes, I’m definitely ready for my day off to begin!” she thought.
APPENDIX C

FIRST-PERSON, LOW THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS NARRATIVE USED IN STUDY 1
I awoke with a start. I shot up and was about to bolt to the closet to throw on some clothes when reality set in. It was Saturday morning, and not only did I not have any classes to rush to, I had about forty-five minutes until I needed to be out the door. I felt my heart rate start to go down, and I shook my head and smiled at my momentary panic. “Nice one, Paula,” I said aloud. I threw up the blinds to the single window in my dorm room and let my eyes adjust to the sudden light that filled the room. I turned off my alarm clock, grabbed my towel, flip flops, and shower caddy, and headed down the hall toward the bathroom.

A little later, as I was going back to the room after my shower, I noticed the poster that my RA had put up on the bulletin board across from the bathroom a week ago – the poster that, in fact, had given me my day’s plans in the first place. It read:

**CAMPUS CLEAN-UP PROJECT THIS SATURDAY!!**

Come out and join us for the campus clean-up project. We’ll spend the day picking up litter, planting new trees, and washing graffiti from buildings and sidewalks around campus. We’re meeting outside the dorm at 12 noon today – be there if you can!
I saw that clock on the wall above the bulletin board read 11:45. I hurried back to the room, quickly threw some sunscreen, a hat, an apple, and bottle of water into my backpack, and I was on my way. As I was heading down the stairs, my friend Chris called me on my cell phone to ask if I wanted to play tennis that evening. I suggested we play the next day instead, provided the weather was as agreeable as it seemed to be today.

Outside, I noticed that all of the RAs from the dorm were organizing the assembled students into teams for the day’s activities. The RA from my floor noticed me emerge from the building and immediately came over to hand me a box of “equipment”: gloves, seeds and planting soil, trash bags, sponges, soap, and a campus map with my team’s designated “clean-up areas” marked. I saw that I would be cleaning up the area outside the dorm I lived in freshman year. I also noticed that I’d be spending an hour picking up litter around the lake near the center of campus, another area sorely in need of help. I joined my RA and the rest of my team, mostly students from my own floor with a few new but friendly faces mixed in. “Ready to do some cleaning up?” my RA yelled excitedly, rallying the troops for the mission of planting, sweeping, and scrubbing on which we were about to embark.
APPENDIX D

THIRD-PERSON, LOW THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS NARRATIVE USED IN

STUDY 1
She awoke with a start. She shot up and was about to bolt to the closet to throw on some clothes when reality set in. It was Saturday morning, and not only did she not have any classes to rush to, she had about forty-five minutes until she needed to be out the door. She felt her heart rate start to go down, and she shook her head and smiled at her momentary panic. “Nice one, Paula,” she said aloud. She threw up the blinds to the single window in her dorm room and let her eyes adjust to the sudden light that filled the room. She turned off her alarm clock, grabbed her towel, flip flops, and shower caddy, and headed down the hall toward the bathroom.

A little later, as she was going back to the room after her shower, she noticed the poster that her RA had put up on the bulletin board across from the bathroom a week ago – the poster that, in fact, had given her her day’s plans in the first place. It read:

CAMPUS CLEAN-UP PROJECT THIS SATURDAY!!

Come out and join us for the campus clean-up project. We’ll spend the day picking up litter, planting new trees, and washing graffiti from buildings and sidewalks around campus. We’re meeting outside the dorm at 12 noon today – be there if you can!
She saw that clock on the wall above the bulletin board read 11:45. She hurried back to the room, quickly threw some sunscreen, a hat, an apple, and bottle of water into her backpack, and she was on her way. As she was heading down the stairs, her friend Chris called her on her cell phone to ask if she wanted to play tennis that evening. She suggested they play the next day instead, provided the weather was as agreeable as it seemed to be today.

Outside, she noticed that all of the RAs from the dorm were organizing the assembled students into teams for the day’s activities. The RA from her floor noticed her emerge from the building and immediately came over to hand her a box of “equipment”: gloves, seeds and planting soil, trash bags, sponges, soap, and a campus map with her team’s designated “clean-up areas” marked. She saw that she would be cleaning up the area outside the dorm she lived in freshman year. She also noticed that she’d be spending an hour picking up litter around the lake near the center of campus, another area sorely in need of help. She joined her RA and the rest of her team, mostly students from her own floor with a few new but friendly faces mixed in. “Ready to do some cleaning up?” her RA yelled excitedly, rallying the troops for the mission of planting, sweeping, and scrubbing on which they were about to embark.
APPENDIX E
IDENTIFICATION MEASURE
Rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements about how you felt while reading the story. Circle the number that corresponds to your response for each item.

1. I felt like I could put myself in the shoes of the character in the story.
   | Strongly Agree | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | Strongly Disagree |
   | Strongly Agree | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | Strongly Disagree |

2. I found myself thinking what the character in the story was thinking.
   | Strongly Agree | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | Strongly Disagree |
   | Strongly Agree | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | Strongly Disagree |

3. I found myself feeling what the character in the story was feeling.
   | Strongly Agree | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | Strongly Disagree |
   | Strongly Agree | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | Strongly Disagree |

4. I could empathize with the situation of the character in the story.
   | Strongly Agree | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | Strongly Disagree |
   | Strongly Agree | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | Strongly Disagree |

5. I understood the events of the story as though I were the character in the story.
   | Strongly Agree | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | Strongly Disagree |
   | Strongly Agree | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | Strongly Disagree |

6. I was not able to get inside the character’s head.
   | Strongly Agree | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | Strongly Disagree |
   | Strongly Agree | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | Strongly Disagree |

7. At key moments in the story, I felt I knew what the character was going through.
   | Strongly Agree | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | Strongly Disagree |
   | Strongly Agree | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | Strongly Disagree |

115
APPENDIX F

FLYER USED TO MEASURE INTENTION TO VOLUNTEER IN CAMPUS BEAUTIFICATION PROJECTS
Upcoming Opportunities to Get Involved at OSU!

In the current and upcoming quarters, the Campus Cooperative is offering many opportunities for you to get involved in community service. The Cooperative brings together OSU faculty, staff, and students to become active together in projects on campus and the neighborhoods near the university.

**IF you’re willing to be contacted about getting involved with the Campus Cooperative, please provide your name and email address on the line below:**

NAME: _______________________________ EMAIL: _______________________________

**IF you are interested in being contacted, please check off any of the following service opportunities that you would like to join others and be involved with (check all that apply):**

_____ Habitat for Humanity
_____ Earth Day Projects
_____ Campus Clean-Ups
_____ Tutoring and Mentoring (after-school program)
_____ Political Awareness Rallies
_____ Meals-on-Wheels
_____ Soup Kitchens
_____ AIDS Task Force
_____ Race for the Cure (breast cancer)
APPENDIX G

FIRST-PERSON, OHIO STATE CHARACTER NARRATIVE USED IN STUDY 2
When I woke up, the first thing I did was pick up the pamphlet I’d placed on my bedside table the night before: “A Voting Guide for Ohio State Students.” “Smart thinking, Paula,” I told myself when I remembered picking up the pamphlet at the student activities fair last week. I flipped through the guide to make sure I knew about all the issues and candidates that were on the ballot, and I did a quick double check to make sure I had correctly written down my voting location. I let out a sigh, satisfied that I had done everything I could to prepare myself for this day.

An hour later, after I’d eaten breakfast, showered, and dressed, I stepped from my front door and headed for my car. Easing myself into the seat I noticed that the dome light didn’t come on, and it occurred to me that I may have left the lights on. “Uh-oh,” I thought to myself, as I started to get a bad feeling in the pit of my stomach. Checking the switch my suspicion was confirmed. “Well, may as well give it a shot,” I said to myself as I turned the key in the ignition. There was the grinding of the motor…and then nothing. “Darn, and the polling place is gonna be packed for this one,” I said to myself.

Realizing that there was no one around on the street to ask for a jumpstart, and that my roommate had left for class already, I got out of the car and headed for the sidewalk. As I began to walk to my polling place, which was about a mile and a half away, I laughed off my bad luck and reasoned to myself, “I could probably use the exercise anyway. At least the rain seems to be holding off!” Naturally, as soon as the thought entered my mind, I felt the first drop of rain, and in a matter of seconds a downpour was upon me. “Wouldn’t you know it?” I thought to myself. I quickly grabbed my umbrella from my backpack and continued on to the polling station, undaunted.
Arriving about twenty-five minutes later I saw the line had already extended outside the door. As I came up a woman walked out, having apparently just finished her vote. “How long did you have to wait?” I heard someone ask near the end of the line. “Two hours! But I like to complain, and here’s my chance to do something about it,” I heard her say with a little laugh as she hurried off as if late for something important. With this response I heard a collective groan from the cluster at the end of the line and saw a few grimaces from those further up. I winced a bit, but upon reflection smiled as I knew that despite the wait I still wanted to vote. “Besides, Issue 319 is really important and every vote really counts on these local issues,” I reminded myself as the line shuffled slowly forward.

Time passed, and though my feet began to ache, I took my mind off of things by pulling out my headphones and a magazine I silently thanked myself for remembering to pack just in case I faced a wait like this! Finally, I reached the front of the line and signed in with the poll worker. After another few minutes it was finally my turn to vote. I took a moment to acquaint myself with the computerized, touch-screen system the polling station was using for the first time. “Very cool,” I said aloud. Of course the process of pressing various buttons took only a few moments, and after I recorded my last vote I was on my way. On my way out, a poll worker handed me a sticker proclaiming, “I voted today,” which I proudly stuck on my shirt. I left the polling station, squeezing past other voters waiting their turn, and sighed contentedly. Now that I had logged my votes I was ready for the rest of my day.
APPENDIX H

FIRST-PERSON, DENISON CHARACTER NARRATIVE USED IN STUDY 2
When I woke up, the first thing I did was pick up the pamphlet I’d placed on my bedside table the night before: “A Voting Guide for Denison Students.” “Smart thinking, Paula,” I told myself when I remembered picking up the pamphlet at the student activities fair last week. I flipped through the guide to make sure I knew about all the issues and candidates that were on the ballot, and I did a quick double check to make sure I had correctly written down my voting location. I let out a sigh, satisfied that I had done everything I could to prepare myself for this day.

An hour later, after I’d eaten breakfast, showered, and dressed, I stepped from my front door and headed for my car. Easing myself into the seat I noticed that the dome light didn’t come on, and it occurred to me that I may have left the lights on. “Uh-oh,” I thought to myself, as I started to get a bad feeling in the pit of my stomach. Checking the switch my suspicion was confirmed. “Well, may as well give it a shot,” I said to myself as I turned the key in the ignition. There was the grinding of the motor…and then nothing. “Darn, and the polling place is gonna be packed for this one,” I said to myself.

Realizing that there was no one around on the street to ask for a jumpstart, and that my roommate had left for class already, I got out of the car and headed for the sidewalk. As I began to walk to my polling place, which was about a mile and a half away, I laughed off my bad luck and reasoned to myself, “I could probably use the exercise anyway. At least the rain seems to be holding off!” Naturally, as soon as the thought entered my mind, I felt the first drop of rain, and in a matter of seconds a downpour was upon me. “Wouldn’t you know it?” I thought to myself. I quickly grabbed my umbrella from my backpack and continued on to the polling station, undaunted.
Arriving about twenty-five minutes later I saw the line had already extended outside the door. As I came up a woman walked out, having apparently just finished her vote. “How long did you have to wait?” I heard someone ask near the end of the line. “Two hours! But I like to complain, and here’s my chance to do something about it,” I heard her say with a little laugh as she hurried off as if late for something important. With this response I heard a collective groan from the cluster at the end of the line and saw a few grimaces from those further up. I winced a bit, but upon reflection smiled as I knew that despite the wait I still wanted to vote. “Besides, Issue 319 is really important and every vote really counts on these local issues,” I reminded myself as the line shuffled slowly forward.

Time passed, and though my feet began to ache, I took my mind off of things by pulling out my headphones and a magazine I silently thanked myself for remembering to pack just in case I faced a wait like this! Finally, I reached the front of the line and signed in with the poll worker. After another few minutes it was finally my turn to vote. I took a moment to acquaint myself with the computerized, touch-screen system the polling station was using for the first time. “Very cool,” I said aloud. Of course the process of pressing various buttons took only a few moments, and after I recorded my last vote I was on my way. On my way out, a poll worker handed me a sticker proclaiming, “I voted today,” which I proudly stuck on my shirt. I left the polling station, squeezing past other voters waiting their turn, and sighed contentedly. Now that I had logged my votes I was ready for the rest of my day.
APPENDIX I

THIRD-PERSON, OHIO STATE CHARACTER NARRATIVE USED IN STUDY 2
When she woke up, the first thing she did was pick up the pamphlet she’d placed on her bedside table the night before: “A Voting Guide for Ohio State Students.” “Smart thinking, Paula,” she told herself when she remembered picking up the pamphlet at the student activities fair last week. She flipped through the guide to make sure she knew about all the issues and candidates that were on the ballot, and she did a quick double check to make sure she had correctly written down her voting location. She let out a sigh, satisfied that she had done everything she could to prepare myself for this day.

An hour later, after she’d eaten breakfast, showered, and dressed, she stepped from her front door and headed for her car. Easing herself into the seat she noticed that the dome light didn’t come on, and it occurred to her that she may have left the lights on. “Uh-oh,” she thought to herself, as she started to get a bad feeling in the pit of her stomach. Checking the switch her suspicion was confirmed. “Well, may as well give it a shot,” she said to herself as she turned the key in the ignition. There was the grinding of the motor…and then nothing. “Darn, and the polling place is gonna be packed for this one,” she said to herself.

Realizing that there was no one around on the street to ask for a jumpstart, and that her roommate had left for class already, she got out of the car and headed for the sidewalk. As she began to walk to her polling place, which was about a mile and a half away, she laughed off her bad luck and reasoned to herself, “I could probably use the exercise anyway. At least the rain seems to be holding off!” Naturally, as soon as the thought entered her mind, she felt the first drop of rain, and in a matter of seconds a downpour was upon her. “Wouldn’t you know it?” she thought to herself. She quickly
grabbed her umbrella from her backpack and continued on to the polling station, undaunted.

Arriving about twenty-five minutes later she saw the line had already extended outside the door. As she came up a woman walked out, having apparently just finished her vote. “How long did you have to wait?” she heard someone ask near the end of the line. “Two hours! But I like to complain, and here’s my chance to do something about it,” she heard her say with a little laugh as the woman hurried off as if late for something important. With this response she heard a collective groan from the cluster at the end of the line and saw a few grimaces from those further up. She winced a bit, but upon reflection smiled as she knew that despite the wait she still wanted to vote. “Besides, Issue 319 is really important and every vote really counts on these local issues,” she reminded herself as the line shuffled slowly forward.

Time passed, and though her feet began to ache, she took her mind off of things by pulling out her headphones and a magazine she silently thanked herself for remembering to pack just in case she faced a wait like this! Finally, she reached the front of the line and signed in with the poll worker. After another few minutes it was finally her turn to vote. She took a moment to acquaint herself with the computerized, touch-screen system the polling station was using for the first time. “Very cool,” she said aloud. Of course the process of pressing various buttons took only a few moments, and after she recorded her last vote she was on her way. On my way out, a poll worker handed her a sticker proclaiming, “I voted today,” which she proudly stuck on her shirt. She left the polling station, squeezing past other voters waiting their turn, and sighed contentedly. Now that she had logged her votes she was ready for the rest of her day.
APPENDIX J

THIRD-PERSON, DENISON CHARACTER NARRATIVE USED IN STUDY 2
When she woke up, the first thing she did was pick up the pamphlet she’d placed on her bedside table the night before: “A Voting Guide for Denison Students.” “Smart thinking, Paula,” she told herself when she remembered picking up the pamphlet at the student activities fair last week. She flipped through the guide to make sure she knew about all the issues and candidates that were on the ballot, and she did a quick double check to make sure she had correctly written down her voting location. She let out a sigh, satisfied that she had done everything she could to prepare myself for this day.

An hour later, after she’d eaten breakfast, showered, and dressed, she stepped from her front door and headed for her car. Easing herself into the seat she noticed that the dome light didn’t come on, and it occurred to her that she may have left the lights on. “Uh-oh,” she thought to herself, as she started to get a bad feeling in the pit of her stomach. Checking the switch her suspicion was confirmed. “Well, may as well give it a shot,” she said to herself as she turned the key in the ignition. There was the grinding of the motor…and then nothing. “Darn, and the polling place is gonna be packed for this one,” she said to herself.

Realizing that there was no one around on the street to ask for a jumpstart, and that her roommate had left for class already, she got out of the car and headed for the sidewalk. As she began to walk to her polling place, which was about a mile and a half away, she laughed off her bad luck and reasoned to herself, “I could probably use the exercise anyway. At least the rain seems to be holding off!” Naturally, as soon as the thought entered her mind, she felt the first drop of rain, and in a matter of seconds a downpour was upon her. “Wouldn’t you know it?” she thought to herself. She quickly
grabbed her umbrella from her backpack and continued on to the polling station, undaunted.

Arriving about twenty-five minutes later she saw the line had already extended outside the door. As she came up a woman walked out, having apparently just finished her vote. “How long did you have to wait?” she heard someone ask near the end of the line. “Two hours! But I like to complain, and here’s my chance to do something about it,” she heard her say with a little laugh as the woman hurried off as if late for something important. With this response she heard a collective groan from the cluster at the end of the line and saw a few grimaces from those further up. She winced a bit, but upon reflection smiled as she knew that despite the wait she still wanted to vote. “Besides, Issue 319 is really important and every vote really counts on these local issues,” she reminded herself as the line shuffled slowly forward.

Time passed, and though her feet began to ache, she took her mind off of things by pulling out her headphones and a magazine she silently thanked herself for remembering to pack just in case she faced a wait like this! Finally, she reached the front of the line and signed in with the poll worker. After another few minutes it was finally her turn to vote. She took a moment to acquaint herself with the computerized, touch-screen system the polling station was using for the first time. “Very cool,” she said aloud. Of course the process of pressing various buttons took only a few moments, and after she recorded her last vote she was on her way. On my way out, a poll worker handed her a sticker proclaiming, “I voted today,” which she proudly stuck on her shirt. She left the polling station, squeezing past other voters waiting their turn, and sighed contentedly. Now that she had logged her votes she was ready for the rest of her day.
The first social event of my college life – my dorm’s official “Welcome Party” – was a mere few minutes away and, having never really considered myself the life of the party, I was understandably nervous. The prospect of meeting new people, particularly ones who could potentially become close friends, made me happy, even though I always felt a little anxious about the experience of interacting with new people. I hadn’t really had a chance to get to know anyone at the university during orientation week besides my roommate, who, not being the friendliest person, had barely spoken a word to me since we met on our first day here. Because I was strapped with a less than ideal roommate and didn’t really yet know a soul in the city, I found myself becoming less antsy about jumping into a brand new social pool.

I gave myself a final once-over in the mirror. “Good thing I bought this new jacket,” I thought to myself, remembering how I had pictured wearing it on an occasion like this when I first tried it on at the mall in my hometown a few weeks earlier. Satisfied with what I saw, I let out a deep sigh and headed out. On my way down on the elevator, I was joined by a few others, who I assumed all lived on my floor. I smiled politely and, when one of the others asked us, apparently to break the ice, if we were excited about the party, I nodded, slightly embarrassed, while the rest let out a spontaneous chorus of “Oh yeah”. When we reached the main floor of the dorm and the elevator door opened, I saw a virtual mob of people in the lobby, all heading out the door to our mutual destination – a Greek house in the middle of campus, where the party was to be held. I started to feel the familiar pangs of anxiety these situations usually evoked in me, but I took a deep breath to calm myself down as I joined the group.
Instead of getting right in the middle of the moving blob of people, I decided to hang near the back of the crowd and take it all in. When I noticed a girl wearing the same exact jacket as me, I thought to myself, “Guess we both ‘fell into The Gap!’” and laughed at my (admittedly) dumb joke and glad I didn’t say it out loud. Apparently a couple of the RAs from the dorm were at the head of the pack, and one of them decided to rally their charges with a spirited cry of “Go Bulldogs!” Even though I’d only been at school a few days, I had heard this chant enough to know what the expected reply was, and as the others let out a respectable “Woof!” I laughed to myself, enjoying the silliness of the display.

When we arrived at the house, I was immediately impressed with all of the effort that had apparently gone into planning the party. The entire bottom floor of the house had been decorated with balloons, streamers, and party lights, and there were two different snack tables loaded with enough food and drinks to feed an army. There was even a makeshift dance floor and a DJ, who was already pumping out the dance music. It didn’t take long for people to hit the floor and, as one who usually prefers staying on the sidelines, I found a good spot to watch the action on a couch near the dance floor. Eventually a guy and a girl come up and sat on the sofa with me and struck up a conversation. We introduced ourselves to each other and shared a little bit of our backgrounds with each other as we tapped our feet to the DJ’s surprisingly good selection of songs. It turned out that Julia, the girl in the pair, was from a town not too far away from my own hometown, and we discovered we even knew some of the same people from back home. I found out that I was in the same 8:30 AM Intro to Economics class as the guy, Brian, so after commiserating about our mutual fate of such an early Monday
morning start, we made a plan to meet outside the dorm and go to the first class session together. I felt better now that I was starting to get acquainted with some new people, especially ones as friendly as Julia and Brian. “This party’s not as scary as I thought it might be,” I thought with relief.

A little later, I was taking a break from my perch on the sofa and hitting the snack table, when the DJ announced to the crowd that he was going to mix things up and start the “karaoke round,” a decision that was met with both cheers and groans. I was in the latter camp, being averse to public humiliation in the name of fun, and when I turned around and realized the DJ was handing me one of the microphones to help kick things off, I grabbed it with more than a little terror. Shaking slightly with anxiety, I was relieved to see the DJ hand out two other mikes to a girl and guy who were also standing at the snack table. Together, we assumed our position by the TV the DJ wheeled out in front of us and looked at each other as we awaited our fate. “Wonder what song he’s gonna make us do,” the girl asked. Soon enough we had our answer. “Everyone ready to go back to the 70s?!” the DJ shouted to the crowd, which drew a lot of whoops and cheers from our growing audience. Before the song title came up, I somehow knew what it was going to be: the ever-popular disco anthem “I Will Survive” by Gloria Gaynor. We all laughed when the opening bars of music began, and even though I knew the song well from hearing it at a lot of wedding receptions that summer, I wasn’t about to belt it out in a room full of strangers, so I stepped back and assumed the role of back-up singer for our trio as the other two took center stage. Even before we finished the final lines of the song the applause began, as did shouts of “Encore!” from the crowd, but I didn’t really feel up to staying up there for one more song, especially when I saw the DJ put up
another karaoke favorite, “Love Shack.” So I handed my mike off to another eager singer who thankfully came up to join the group and re-joined the crowd to watch the performance.

Having had my fill of loud music, I stuck around for a couple more tunes before heading for a quieter locale within the house; luckily, I found a den near the rear of the first floor that was unoccupied, so I went in for a break from the noise and stimulation of the proceedings outside. I took a seat on a bean bag and found a catalog describing the different campus organizations and social groups that I had learned a little about during the school’s activities fair that afternoon. I glanced at the pages on the sororities and fraternities, but because I had never really been the most socially inclined person in the world, I didn’t think that pledging would be the best option for me. The catalog naturally reminded me of the clubs and teams I belonged to in high school, so I spent the next twenty minutes or so reminiscing and looking forward to the new memories I’d inevitably create here at the university.

I was finally interrupted by one of my dorm’s RAs, who popped his head into the room and announced, “Time for the Wolf Lake Run!” I was puzzled by this vague reference, but all the same I got up and joined the crowd, who were all running out the front door of the house. In the chaos, I managed to learn from a few others that the “Wolf Lake Run” referred to the tradition of incoming freshman to cap the year’s first party by jumping fully clothed into the lake on the edge of campus and finishing the festivities there. Considering that I didn’t think I had any partying or socializing left in me, I thought to myself, “No one’ll miss me if I skip this part,” and I ducked out of the
sprinting mob to walk back home. As I approached the dorm, I smiled and said to myself, “Not a bad way to start the year!”
APPENDIX L

INTROVERSION/EXTREVERSION MEASURES
For each of the items below, circle the number along the scale that best represents how you feel the statement represents yourself.

1. I am the life of the party.
   
   **Strongly**  
   **Disagree**

2. I like being the center of attention.

   **Strongly**  
   **Disagree**

3. I consider myself to be an honest person.

   **Strongly**  
   **Disagree**

4. I am skilled in handling social situations.

   **Strongly**  
   **Disagree**

5. I often initiate conversations with others.

   **Strongly**  
   **Disagree**

6. I am a hard worker.

   **Strongly**  
   **Disagree**

7. I am quiet around strangers.

   **Strongly**  
   **Disagree**

8. I enjoy time spent by myself.

   **Strongly**  
   **Disagree**

9. I am a private person.

   **Strongly**  
   **Disagree**
10. I make friends easily.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Consider the following scenario: Imagine that it is your first official day of college and you show up by yourself to the university’s student dining hall for dinner. Rate how likely you believe the following responses would be to this situation. For each item, circle the number on the scale that represents your response.

1. I would find an empty table and wait for others to join me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all Likely</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>Extremely Likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2. I would find a table where others are sitting and ask to join them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all Likely</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>Extremely Likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

3. I would prefer to eat with others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all Likely</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>Extremely Likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

4. I would prefer to eat alone.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all Likely</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>Extremely Likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

5. I would feel anxious in this situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all Likely</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>Extremely Likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

6. I would feel at ease in this situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all Likely</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>Extremely Likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
APPENDIX M

EXTROVERSION NARRATIVE
The first social event of my college life – my dorm’s official “Welcome Party” – was a mere few minutes away and, having always considered myself the life of the party, I was understandably excited. The prospect of meeting new people, particularly ones who could potentially become close friends, made me happy, especially since I always enjoyed the experience of interacting with new people. I hadn’t really had a chance to get to know anyone at the university during orientation week besides my roommate, who, not being the friendliest person, had barely spoken a word to me since we met on our first day here. Because I was strapped with a less than ideal roommate and didn’t really yet know a soul in the city, I found myself becoming even more eager about jumping into a brand new social pool.

I gave myself a final once-over in the mirror. “Good thing I bought this new jacket,” I thought to myself, remembering how I had pictured wearing it on an occasion like this when I first tried it on at the mall in my hometown a few weeks earlier. Satisfied with what I saw, I put on a confident grin and headed out. On my way down on the elevator, I was joined by a few others, who I assumed all lived on my floor. I grinned widely and, when one of the others asked us, apparently to break the ice, if we were excited about the party, I joined in on the spontaneous chorus of “Oh yeah” we let out. When we reached the main floor of the dorm and the elevator door opened, I saw a virtual mob of people in the lobby, all heading out the door to our mutual destination – a Greek house in the middle of campus, where the party was to be held. I started to feel the familiar pangs of excitement these situations usually evoked in me, and I felt energized as I joined the group.
Instead of just hanging near the back of the crowd and taking it all in, I decided to get right in the middle of the moving blob of people and begin introducing myself to some of my fellow partygoers. When I noticed a girl wearing the same exact jacket as me, I went up to her and said, “Guess we both ‘fell into The Gap,’ huh?” and we both laughed at my (admittedly) dumb joke and the fact that I actually said it out loud. Apparently a couple of the RAs from the dorm were at the head of the pack, and one of them decided to rally their charges with a spirited cry of “Go Bulldogs!” Even though I’d only been at school a few days, I had heard this chant enough to know what the expected reply was, so I joined the others and, at the top of my lungs, let out a respectable “Woof!” and laughed heartily, enjoying the silliness of the display.

When we arrived at the house, I was immediately impressed with all of the effort that had apparently gone into planning the party. The entire bottom floor of the house had been decorated with balloons, streamers, and party lights, and there were two different snack tables loaded with enough food and drinks to feed an army. There was even a makeshift dance floor and a DJ, who was already pumping out the dance music. It didn’t take long for people to hit the floor and, never one to prefer staying on the sidelines, I found a good spot right in the middle of dance floor to join in on the action. Eventually I was able to strike up a conversation with a guy and a girl who had come up and started dancing near me. We introduced ourselves to each other and shared a little bit of our backgrounds with each other as we moved to the DJ’s surprisingly good selection of songs. It turned out that Julia, the girl in the pair, was from a town not too far away from my own hometown, and we discovered we even knew some of the same people from back home. I found out that I was in the same 8:30 AM Intro to Economics class as
the guy, Brian, so after commiserating about our mutual fate of such an early Monday morning start, we made a plan to meet outside the dorm and go to the first class session together. I felt great now that I was starting to get acquainted with some new people, especially ones as friendly as Julia and Brian. “This party’s pretty much living up to my expectations,” I thought contentedly.

A little later, I was taking a break from my place on the dance floor and hitting the snack table, when the DJ announced to the crowd that he was going to mix things up and start the “karaoke round,” a decision that was met with both cheers and groans. I was in the former camp, not being averse to a little public humiliation in the name of fun, and when I turned around and realized the DJ was handing me one of the microphones to help kick things off, I grabbed it with more than a little enthusiasm. Bouncing with excitement, I was happy to see the DJ hand out two other mikes to a girl and guy who were also standing at the snack table. Together, we assumed our position by the TV the DJ wheeled out in front of us and looked at each other as we awaited our fate. “Wonder what song he’s gonna make us do,” the girl asked. Soon enough we had our answer.

“Everyone ready to go back to the 70s?!” the DJ shouted to the crowd, which drew a lot of whoops and cheers from our growing audience. Before the song title came up, I somehow knew what it was going to be: the ever-popular disco anthem “I Will Survive” by Gloria Gaynor. We all laughed when the opening bars of music began, and because I knew the song well from hearing it at a lot of wedding receptions that summer and didn’t have any reservations about belting it out for a room full of strangers, I took center stage and assumed the role of lead singer for our trio. Even before we finished the final lines of the song the applause began, as did shouts of “Encore!” from the crowd, and I was
more than happy to stay up there for one more song, especially when I saw the DJ put up another karaoke favorite, “Love Shack.” This time I shared my mike with another eager singer who came up to join the group for the performance.

Having had my fill of loud music, I stuck around for a couple more tunes before heading for a quieter locale within the house; luckily, I found a den near the rear of the first floor that was occupied by a small group of people who apparently also wanted a break from the noise outside. I introduced myself to everyone and took a seat on a bean bag. I had walked in on a conversation about the different campus organizations and social groups that we had all learned a little about during the school’s activities fair that afternoon. They were talking about the university’s fraternities and sororities and their reputation for giving new students a real social outlet. I chimed in that I was interested in pledging and suggested that we might look into the process together. The conversation naturally reminded us all of the clubs and teams we belonged to in high school, so we spent the next twenty minutes or so mutually reminiscing and looking forward to the new memories we’d inevitably create here at the university.

Our discussion was finally interrupted by one of my dorm’s RAs, who popped his head into the room and announced, “Time for the Wolf Lake Run!” We were all puzzled by this vague reference, but all the same we got up and joined the crowd, who were all running out the front door of the house. In the chaos, I managed to learn from a few others that the “Wolf Lake Run” referred to the tradition of incoming freshman to cap the year’s first party by jumping fully clothed into the lake on the edge of campus and finishing the festivities there. Considering that I still had some partying and socializing left in me, I thought to myself, “I’m not gonna miss this part,” and I continued on with
the sprinting mob. As we approached the lake, I smiled and said to the person next to me, “Not a bad way to start the year!”
APPENDIX N

SELF-DISCREPANCY RATING SCALES USED IN STUDY 6
Before you read the story for today’s study, we would like you to complete a few items we are testing for a future experiment. First, for each of the items below, circle the number along the scale that best represents how you feel the statement represents the person that you are now.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Accuracy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I am an extremely intelligent person.</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I am an extremely attractive person.</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I am an extremely honest person.</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I am an extremely generous person.</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I am an extremely respected person.</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I am an extremely brave person.</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I am an extremely assertive person.</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I am an extremely well-traveled person.</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I am an extremely patriotic person.</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I am an extremely sensitive person.</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For each of the items below, circle the number along the scale that best represents how you feel the statement represents the person that you would IDEALLY like to be.

1. Ideally, I would like to be an extremely intelligent person.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely Accurate

2. Ideally, I would like to be an extremely attractive person.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely Accurate

3. Ideally, I would like to be an extremely honest person.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely Accurate

4. Ideally, I would like to be an extremely generous person.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely Accurate

5. Ideally, I would like to be an extremely respected person.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely Accurate

6. Ideally, I would like to be an extremely brave person.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely Accurate

7. Ideally, I would like to be an extremely assertive person.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely Accurate

8. Ideally, I would like to be an extremely well-traveled person.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely Accurate

9. Ideally, I would like to be an extremely patriotic person.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely Accurate

10. Ideally, I would like to be an extremely sensitive person.
    Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely Accurate
APPENDIX O

WORLD-DISCREPANCY RATING SCALES USED IN STUDY 6
Before you read the story for today’s study, we would like you to complete a few items we are testing for a future experiment. First, for each of the items below, circle the number along the scale that best represents how you feel the statement represents the world as it is now.

1. The world is an extremely peaceful place.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely Accurate
   Accurate

2. The world is an extremely clean place.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely Accurate
   Accurate

3. The world is an extremely unified place.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely Accurate
   Accurate

4. The world is an extremely harmonious place.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely Accurate
   Accurate

5. The world is an extremely safe place.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely Accurate
   Accurate

6. The world is an extremely unpolluted place.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely Accurate
   Accurate

7. The world is an extremely virtuous place.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely Accurate
   Accurate

8. The world is an extremely secure place.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely Accurate
   Accurate

9. The world is an extremely fair place.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely Accurate
   Accurate

10. The world is an extremely nonviolent place.
    Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely Accurate
        Accurate
For each of the items below, circle the number along the scale that best represents how you feel the statement represents the world that you would IDEALLY like it to be.

1. Ideally, I would like the world to be an extremely peaceful place.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Completely Accurate

2. Ideally, I would like the world to be an extremely clean place.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Completely Accurate

3. Ideally, I would like the world to be an extremely unified place.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Completely Accurate

4. Ideally, I would like the world to be an extremely harmonious place.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Completely Accurate

5. Ideally, I would like the world to be an extremely safe place.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Completely Accurate

6. Ideally, I would like the world to be an extremely unpolluted place.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Completely Accurate

7. Ideally, I would like the world to be an extremely virtuous place.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Completely Accurate

8. Ideally, I would like the world to be an extremely secure place.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Completely Accurate

9. Ideally, I would like the world to be an extremely fair place.
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
   Completely Accurate

10. Ideally, I would like the world to be an extremely nonviolent place.
    Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
    Completely Accurate
APPENDIX P

BLACK/EARLY NARRATIVE USED IN STUDY 8
I awoke with a start, convinced I had overslept and missed my morning class. I shot up and was about to bolt to the closet to throw on a clean pair of boxer shorts and some clothes when reality set in. It was Saturday morning, and not only did I not have any classes to rush to, I had about forty-five minutes until I needed to be out the door. I felt my heart rate start to go down, and I shook my head and smiled at my momentary panic. “Nice one, Jamal!” I said aloud to myself. Relief set in and blended with the pleasure I felt anticipating the day ahead. I threw up the blinds to the single window in my dorm room and let my eyes adjust to the sudden light that filled the room. I turned off my alarm clock, grabbed my towel, flip flops, and shower caddy, and headed down the hall toward the bathroom, ready to get the day started.

A little later, as I was returning to my room, I saw that the clock on the wall above the bulletin board read 11:45. “Just enough time for a quick breakfast,” I thought to myself. When I got back to the room, I went straight to the box of strawberry Pop Tarts I always kept on the shelf next to my bed. I saw that I only had one packet left, so before sticking the last two in the toaster I made a mental note to myself to pick up some more when I was running errands with my friend Chris that afternoon. As I scarfed down the tarts and washed them down with a bottle of milk from my mini fridge, I did a quick check of my email and checked the weather forecast online. I was excited to see that it was supposed to be a brisk, sunny day, because Chris and I had planned to spend most of the day outdoors.

After finishing my breakfast, I did my normal ritual of opening my closet door and staring at the clothes hanging inside until inspiration struck and told me what to wear that day. Today inspiration settled on a hoodie and jeans, which seemed like a good
choice considering the weather would be slightly cool. I figured I’d be doing a lot of walking, so I threw on some comfortable sneakers. Finally, before leaving, I threw some sunscreen, a hat, an apple, and bottle of water into my backpack, just to be safe, and I was on my way.

As I was heading down the stairs, I was about to call my friend Chris to tell him I was heading over to his dorm to meet him, when I realized I had forgotten my cell phone in my room. “Good going,” I told myself. I sprinted back up to get it and, just as I was about to call Chris, he called me to let me know he was already downstairs waiting in his car. I was glad he offered to drive. My car badly needed a tune-up, but when I had taken it to the mechanic the day before, he told me he couldn’t have it fixed by the next day. So I told him I’d just take it somewhere else, which I ended up doing. When I exited the dorm, I saw Chris’s car in the parking lot a few hundred feet away. I also saw a guy at the corner carrying a clipboard and what looked like a petition, so I waited until he had approached another passerby – and then I passed right by them to get to Chris’s car.

We headed to the park to start the day off. We sat in the sun for about an hour, catching up on our respective dating lives, complaining about classes and exams, and trading notes on the movies we’ve seen recently. Chris had packed a Frisbee in his bag, so we threw that around for awhile before deciding it was probably time to run our errands. We first went to a hardware store downtown. I asked the clerk there, an elderly man with a gray hair and mustache, for help finding some replacement light bulbs for my desk lamp; I had remembered to pack an old bulb in my bag, so I pulled it out to give him as a reference. He went to the back of the store and emerged a few moments later, telling
me he found a bulb that was the right size. I thanked him, paid him the $3.29 he was due, and went to find Chris in the store. However, when I looked down at the bulb the clerk had given me, I realized it was not the right one, so I took it back to the counter and demanded my money back.

After leaving the hardware store, we walked a few blocks to our favorite grocery store. Upon entering, we saw that the Red Cross had set up a stand by the door and a volunteer was asking all who entered to consider donating blood that day. I lied and told the volunteer that I had diabetes and couldn’t give blood. Chris and I decided to split up at the store, since we needed different items, and I was able to find most of what I was looking for, including my replacement Pop Tarts. By the time we left the store, it was getting kind of late, so I just asked Chris to drive me to the mechanic’s garage so I could pick up my car and drive myself back to the dorm. We made plans to meet up for lunch the following Wednesday. Luckily, my car was ready when we got there, so I left the garage smiling, glad my day off was so productive.
APPENDIX Q
BLACK/LATE NARRATIVE USED IN STUDY 8
I awoke with a start, convinced I had overslept and missed my morning class. I shot up and was about to bolt to the closet to throw on a clean pair of boxer shorts and some clothes when reality set in. It was Saturday morning, and not only did I not have any classes to rush to, I had about forty-five minutes until I needed to be out the door. I felt my heart rate start to go down, and I shook my head and smiled at my momentary panic. “Nice one!” I said aloud to myself. Relief set in and blended with the pleasure I felt anticipating the day ahead. I threw up the blinds to the single window in my dorm room and let my eyes adjust to the sudden light that filled the room. I turned off my alarm clock, grabbed my towel, flip flops, and shower caddy, and headed down the hall toward the bathroom, ready to get the day started.

A little later, as I was returning to my room, I saw that the clock on the wall above the bulletin board read 11:45. “Just enough time for a quick breakfast,” I thought to myself. When I got back to the room, I went straight to the box of strawberry Pop Tarts I always kept on the shelf next to my bed. I saw that I only had one packet left, so before sticking the last two in the toaster I made a mental note to myself to pick up some more when I was running errands with my friend Chris that afternoon. As I scarfed down the tarts and washed them down with a bottle of milk from my mini fridge, I did a quick check of my email and checked the weather forecast online. I was excited to see that it was supposed to be a brisk, sunny day, because Chris and I had planned to spend most of the day outdoors.

After finishing my breakfast, I did my normal ritual of opening my closet door and staring at the clothes hanging inside until inspiration struck and told me what to wear that day. Today inspiration settled on a hoodie and jeans, which seemed like a good
choice considering the weather would be slightly cool. I figured I’d be doing a lot of walking, so I threw on some comfortable sneakers. Finally, before leaving, I threw some sunscreen, a hat, an apple, and bottle of water into my backpack, just to be safe, and I was on my way.

As I was heading down the stairs, I was about to call my friend Chris to tell him I was heading over to his dorm to meet him, when I realized I had forgotten my cell phone in my room. “Good going, Jamal,” I told myself. I sprinted back up to get it and, just as I was about to call Chris, he called me to let me know he was already downstairs waiting in his car. I was glad he offered to drive. My car badly needed a tune-up, but when I had taken it to the mechanic the day before, he told me he couldn’t have it fixed by the next day. So I told him I’d just take it somewhere else, which I ended up doing. When I exited the dorm, I saw Chris’s car in the parking lot a few hundred feet away. I also saw a guy at the corner carrying a clipboard and what looked like a petition, so I waited until he had approached another passerby – and then I passed right by them to get to Chris’s car.

We headed to the park to start the day off. We sat in the sun for about an hour, catching up on our respective dating lives, complaining about classes and exams, and trading notes on the movies we’ve seen recently. Chris had packed a Frisbee in his bag, so we threw that around for awhile before deciding it was probably time to run our errands. We first went to a hardware store downtown. I asked the clerk there, an elderly man with a gray hair and mustache, for help finding some replacement light bulbs for my desk lamp; I had remembered to pack an old bulb in my bag, so I pulled it out to give him
as a reference. He went to the back of the store and emerged a few moments later, telling me he found a bulb that was the right size. I thanked him, paid him the $3.29 he was due, and went to find Chris in the store. However, when I looked down at the bulb the clerk had given me, I realized it was not the right one, so I took it back to the counter and demanded my money back.

After leaving the hardware store, we walked a few blocks to our favorite grocery store. Upon entering, we saw that the Red Cross had set up a stand by the door and a volunteer was asking all who entered to consider donating blood that day. I lied and told the volunteer that I had diabetes and couldn’t give blood. Chris and I decided to split up at the store, since we needed different items, and I was able to find most of what I was looking for, including my replacement Pop Tarts. By the time we left the store, it was getting kind of late, so I just asked Chris to drive me to the mechanic’s garage so I could pick up my car and drive myself back to the dorm. We made plans to meet up for lunch the following Wednesday. Luckily, my car was ready when we got there, so I left the garage smiling, glad my day off was so productive.