

Communicating Evaluation in Narrative Understanding

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No utterance can be put together without value judgment. Every utterance is above all an *evaluative orientation*. ... the disjuncture between referential meaning and evaluation is totally inadmissible. Referential meaning is molded by *evaluation* and it is *evaluation* after all which determines that a particular referential meaning may enter the purview of speakers”

(Voloshinov/Bakhtin 1973:105)

Narratives, be they personal, third person, or fictional, are the main means by which we interpret, represent, and communicate life experience and its personal significance. This paper examines how a person evaluates the narrative life experience of another. The context in which the evaluations are communicated is one in which the person talks about what the narrative means as it is read sentence by sentence. Since the narratives are about the narrator's personal well-being and inter-personal interaction, *evaluation* processes are central both to the narrator and to the comprehender of the narrative communication. We report what comprehenders of narratives evaluate, how they evaluate them, and the kinds of linguistic devices they use in expressing evaluations when they talk about their understanding of the narrative life experience of another person to a third party listener.

Labov and Waletzky (1967) and Labov (1972) were the first to examine and report on the “evaluative” function of personal narratives. They asked the narrator to tell what happened during an experience where the narrator had been in serious danger. They regarded evaluation as “the means used by the narrator to indicate the point of the narrative, its *raison d'être*, why it was told, and what the narrator was getting at” (Labov 1972:366). In Labov and Waletzky's (1967)

view, narration is a temporally ordered sequence of clauses. Evaluation was a disruption of the temporal order of events by the narrator in order to reflect upon and express the significance of the narrative. By departing from the temporal sequence, the narrator communicates something more important than the reference or mere recapitulation of the events. To make a point, the narrator uses evaluative devices that mark some narrative units off as more important than others. The point was to show which events were dangerous or unusual, strange, uncommon, or valenced and non-neutral and was often accompanied by expression of emotion.

In Labov and Waletzky's (1967) study, the narrators were under an instruction to report on events that were life threatening. It is not surprising, then, that their narrators reported and reflected upon events that were dangerous and emotionally charged. The key assumption of their analysis is that people, through narration, *evaluate* events in terms of their personal significance and express how the events affect the narrator's well-being. It is through narration, then, that one can understand how the narrator construes events in terms of the possible harms or benefits that ensue from them.

Goodwin and Goodwin (1987) examined how people make evaluations in spontaneous conversation among multiple participants. Evaluations for them are "assessments" and serve important interactional functions in building collaboratively a conversation. An assessment is a particular type of speech act through which the speaker evaluates objects or events in a conversation. As such, the speaker takes a position toward the phenomena being assessed as well the participants in the conversation. By assessing something, say as "beautiful", the speaker publicly commits himself to a particular evaluation of what he has witnessed and is now communicated to others. In turn, recipients are affected by the speaker's assessments and can judge whether the speaker can properly evaluate the events. The public display of the experience of one participant also provides resources for the interactive organization of co-experience with participants. As such, affect and emotions are public displays that constitute assessments and are pervasive and central to the organization of the interaction.

In our study where a reader is asked to talk about sentences, the author of the written text or the written text itself is analogous to the role of the speaker. Here the reader talks about the experience of a third (fictional) party. The author, in effect, describes and makes to the reader assessments or evaluations about the experiences of the characters and their emotional displays. The reader of the text is thus in the role of a recipient. The reader, in turn, reports to the experimenter how the reader understands and evaluates the life experiences of the characters in the story. The reader's talk is a kind of "reported speech" phenomena (Bakhtin 1981) in that the reader is retelling and evaluating the

other's experience as the narrative unfolds. The reader, in reporting her interpretations, explanations, and evaluations, can, in effect, co-construct the narrative by assuming the perspective of the characters.

In this paper, we address the question of why assessments or evaluations occur, where they occur, how they occur, and what is evaluated during understanding and talking about the experiences of another in a narrative. For us, evaluation is a means of reflecting upon events that affect us personally. Evaluation is very general and is not restricted to narration. Appraisal or evaluation processes may constitute the basis for personal and inter-personal understanding and interaction. Appraisal or evaluation is believed to underlie all emotional experience (Lazarus 1991; Stein and Levine 1989). We often appraise events in terms of our own or other's well-being. Evaluative understanding enables us to generate coping strategies that deal with changes that events bring about in our lives (Folkman and Lazarus 1990). Evaluation of what others do and say affect the goals and plans that govern how a person interacts with another.

We studied how, when, and under what circumstances a person would make and communicate *evaluative* inferences when he or she tried to understand the experiences of other people. We asked people to read about the fictional experience of another and to tell us about how they understood that person's experience, one event at a time. In effect, we asked people to read, interpret, and reflect upon a story character's experience. We allowed the readers opportunity to engage in evaluative processes while they read and tried to comprehend the story. Their talk about how they understood particular events allowed the study of how different kinds of events *constrain* the ways of evaluation as well as which linguistic expressions were used to communicate these evaluations. The situation we studied was one where the comprehender is communicating about a fictional person's life experiences to a third party so that it allowed the comprehender to take different perspectives, voices, or positions of evaluation. The comprehender could take on the voice of the character in the narrative or evaluate events from his or her own perspective or from that of a third person (Bakhtin 1981, 1984).

In understanding events, readers engage heavily in trying to explain why something is happening (Graesser, Singer, and Trabasso 1994; Singer, Graesser, and Trabasso 1994; Schank 1986; Trabasso and Magliano 1994). Evaluations can serve an explanatory function as well as making a point. They can be used as reasons to justify why a course of action is appropriate as a means or why a particular end is desirable, attainable, or beneficial. If so, then evaluation serves a rationality function, consistent with the belief that rational beings operate in their best interests by deliberately choosing appropriate means and ends (Rescher 1988).

An episode of a narrative is highly structured and its clauses are meaning-

fully related by causal and logical as well as temporal relations. In our view, the narrative clauses refer to interpreted events and include not only those that are externally referenced with respect to states of the world but also those that are richly subjective, mental, and internal. Evaluations, as internal states, form a part of the interpretation expressed in any clause within an episode and do not stand apart from the narration. What and how the narrator feels, thinks, believes, desires, or values are mental states that are part of the experience being narrated and can be referential as well as evaluative. These internal states, responses, or reactions are meaningfully related, constrained by, and dependent upon other events in the narration. As such, evaluation can occur throughout the episode.

To begin our study of how evaluations are communicated during comprehension of a narrative, an example of an episode from a narrative is presented. We then describe and define its episodic content and structure. Following this orientation, we present a verbal protocol of someone who is reading, and communicating her understanding of each sentence in the narrative as she reads it. An experiment is then described in which we collected 64 verbal protocols during comprehension of narratives, subjected them to an analysis of the ways of evaluation, and examined how they were linguistically expressed. We conclude by discussing our findings with reference to issues of rationality, adaptation and emotion, and narrative meanings.

1.1. *Example narrative episode and structure*

Consider the following episode from a three-episode narrative, called the Betty story (taken from Suh and Trabasso 1993):

1. There was a girl named Betty.
2. Betty found that her mother's birthday was coming soon.
3. She really wanted to give her mother a present.
4. She went to the department store.
5. She found that everything was too expensive.
6. She could not buy anything for her mother.
7. Betty felt sorry.

In the first sentence (1), we are introduced via a Setting statement to the main character and we are told that she is a girl. Settings typically introduce characters and set the space and time circumstances in which a story occurs (what Labov 1972 termed "orientation"). Settings or the circumstances that they provide enable the episodic events to occur (Stein and Glenn 1979).

Sentence (2) opens the episode that begins the story. This sentence contains what is termed an Initiating Event (Stein and Glenn 1979). Initiating Events

happen to or are experienced by the main protagonist. They are the main events of personal significance in that they typically have profound effects on the protagonist's goal states and well-being (Stein, Trabasso and Liwag 1993, 1994). We therefore expect that initiating events would be evaluated frequently in terms of their consequences.

In the present case, Betty's discovery of that her mother's birthday is coming soon has important personal and social implications and consequences for her in her relationship to her mother. In sentence (3), the personal significance of the discovery by the story character causes or results in a Goal. The Goal is expressed as a desire to attain some state, namely of her mother having a present. This desire to attain a particular goal state then motivates Betty to carry out various actions as Attempts in sentences (4), (5), and (6) to attain the goal. The Attempts in sentence (5) and (6) are enabled by the attempts in sentence (4). However, the Outcome, expressed in sentence (5), results in a failure to attain a desired goal object in sentence (6). This failed goal Outcome psychologically causes Betty to feel sorry in sentence (7). The last sentence is an Emotion, one of several kinds of internal events that can occur in response to an Outcome or an Initiating Event.

The sentences of the Setting and the first Episode of the Betty story can be represented as a causal network, following Trabasso, van den Broek and Suh (1989). Figure 1 presents a general, causal network representation of an episode, of which the sequence in the Betty story is specific case. The arrows in the causal network representation in Figure 1 indicate that the Setting allows or enables all events that follow it. The Initiating Events are typically references to external events. They can cause or enable other external events. Of importance here is that Initiating Events are interpreted and expressed through Internal Responses by the person. Internal responses include mental states, reactions, and processes. The content of internal responses is expressed as thoughts, beliefs, values, cognitions, perceptions, emotions, goals, and plans. Internal responses can psychologically cause or enable other internal responses. Once, however, a goal is formulated along with its plan, the person can intentionally carry it out the actions associated with the plan. Goals are desired or undesired states, activities, or objects. When a goal is about a desired state, activity, or object, the person would be motivated to attain or maintain it; when the goal is undesired, then the person is motivated to avoid or escape from it. Goals motivate plan formulation and the Attempts that follow from it. The Attempts carried out can enable other Attempts in the plan to also be accomplished. Attempts can also result in Outcomes that signify goal success or failure. Goal success or failure, as expressed in Outcomes, refer to whether or not the person has attained or maintained a desired state, activity, or object or has avoided or escaped from an

undesired state, activity, or object. Outcomes of goal success or failure can also become initiating events in that they can, in turn, psychologically cause a variety of Internal Responses that can lead to new episodes.

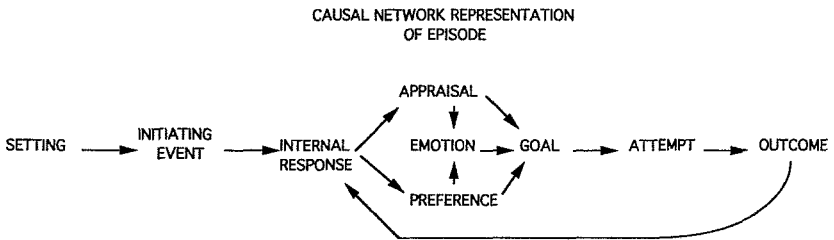


Figure 1. *Causal network representation of an episode from a story*

Internal responses are the main means by which the narrator or reader can express *evaluations* of events. Internal responses can be positively or negatively valenced in the expression of personally meaningful and significant evaluations. Does the narrator or reader view the event as good or bad, liked or disliked, as wanted or unwanted, or negative or positive emotionally? These expressions in the narrative or in understanding the narrative inform us about the valence of the evaluation of the events as well as the way in which the evaluation is communicated.

1.2. *Verbal protocols*

A principal way of finding out how people understand other people's lives is to give them an opportunity to talk about their understanding of particular events, states, and actions. In order to study how different people interpret the same events, we asked them to tell us about how they understood a series of sentences in narrative episodes that depicted the experiences of a fictional person or animal. In the psychological study of problem solving and understanding, what someone reports on how he or she thinks about a problem is known a *verbal protocol* and the protocols obtained are taken as basic data (Ericsson and Simon 1984). Verbal protocols may be obtained by asking questions after the person hears, reads, or sees an event (e.g., Stein and Levine 1987, 1990; Magliano and Graesser 1991). A second way is to ask the reader to "think-aloud" during comprehension of the text (Ericsson 1988; Trabasso and Suh 1993). In either case, the protocols may be regarded as a special form of communication in which one person communicates to another his or her understanding of a third person's narrative communication. Thinking-aloud was the method used in the present study since it was judged to be less constraining than question-answering.

2. “Thinking aloud”: A study of communicating one’s understanding during reading

In our study, people were asked to tell us about their understanding (i.e., to “think aloud”) while they read and tried to understand each narrative text, one sentence at a time. This procedure reveals information that the person mentally accessed in evaluations of events as they are experienced and interpreted. The think-aloud data came from a dissertation study carried out by Suh (1988; see Suh and Trabasso 1993, or Trabasso and Suh 1993 for details).

Eight college students each read eight three-episode stories where a protagonist was engaged in personal problem-solving and experienced events that affected personal well-being, that the protagonist tried to do something about, and to which the protagonist expressed positive or negative emotions when goal success or failure occurred. For example, a young woman named Jane, who is overweight, tries in the first episode to lose weight by jogging. In one version, she fails. In the fail version, in episode two, she takes up racquetball and, in episode three, she succeeds in losing weight. She is “frustrated over her failure” at the end of episode one but “happy” with the success in episode three.

The stories were identified by the character’s name. Half of the characters were female; half were male. There were eight stories with two versions each and each version had either a success or a goal failure in the first episode. In the Betty Story versions, the character wants to give her mother a birthday present and either succeeds or fails by buying a gift or not at a department store. She then knits a sweater which she either gives to her mother or puts away. In the Bill Story versions, the character is initially blind and tries to regain his eyesight medically. He either succeeds or fails. He then goes and takes water from a magical lake that either makes him younger or restores his eyesight. In the Ivan Story versions, an archer tries to kill a giant who has been terrorizing a village and succeeds or fails in his first attempt with a bow and arrow. Ivan then learns to use a sword and returns to the village as a hero or finally succeeds in killing the giant. In the Fred Story versions, a student who is poor in mathematics, takes a math course and either passes or fails an exam. He then forms a study group and becomes a good student or he finally passes the math exam. In the Jane Story versions, Jane is overweight and tries dieting. She either succeeds or fails. She then takes up racquetball and enjoys it or finally loses weight. In the Jimmy Story versions, a boy asks his mother for a bicycle and either gets it or is refused. He then obtains a delivery job at a grocery store, earns money, and buys a basketball or finally buys his bicycle. In the Mickey Story versions, a hungry mouse tries to get into a barn and either succeeds in finding food or fails to get in. He then gets into a house and has a lot of fun or finally finds food.

Finally, in the William Story versions, a second son wishes to become king. He attempts to impress his father and succeeds or fails. He becomes king and kills his brother or he kills his brother and then becomes king.

The stories ranged from 13 to 18 sentences in length (mean = 15 sentences). Each of the eight college students who participated as readers in the study was instructed to read the stories, one sentence at a time, and to tell the experimenter about his or her understanding of the events referred to in the sentence in the context of the story. The reader's communication was tape recorded and transcribed.

The readers generated an average of 2.70 clauses per sentence as they communicated their understanding. Of these, 75 per cent were inferences. Of the inferences, 68 percent were explanations. Thus, explanations of the content of the sentences predominated (Trabasso and Magliano 1994).

2.1. Example Protocol

Consider the following verbal protocol obtained from one of the college students (Reader E, Betty Story, TEXT Sentences 1–7):

Setting (1). ONCE THERE WAS A GIRL NAMED BETTY.

Reader: "There's a young female person whose name is Betty."

Initiating Event (2). ONE DAY, BETTY FOUND THAT HER MOTHER'S BIRTHDAY WAS COMING SOON.

Reader: "Betty, like all, like most children who love their parents, Betty found out that her mother's birthday was coming soon. Most children eventually discover that their parents birthday is around the corner or somebody tells them."

Goal (3). SHE REALLY WANTED TO GIVE HER MOTHER A PRESENT.

Reader: "This shows that Betty loved her mother and she wanted to thank her for all the things she had done by giving her something for her birthday."

Attempt (4). SHE WENT TO THE DEPARTMENT STORE.

Reader: "Betty decided that, you know, something *really fancy* would suit, show her feelings toward her mother instead of some *homemade* card that may or may not look any good."

Outcome (5). SHE FOUND THAT EVERYTHING WAS TOO EXPENSIVE.

Reader: "This is Betty discovering that on her childhood budget, she really has not the money necessary to buy the kind of gift that she wants to give to her mother."

Outcome (6). SHE COULD NOT BUY ANYTHING FOR HER MOTHER.

Reader: "This was because everything was *so* expensive."

Internal Response (7). BETTY FELT SORRY.

Reader: "Uhm, this is because she wanted to give her mother something *special*, as you can buy in a department store, but she didn't have the money and she felt that maybe she'd be short-changing her mother, without giving, if she didn't give her something from the department store."

In this protocol, we have underlined those words that index an evaluation on the part of the Reader E. In addition, we have italicized words that served as intensifiers. The first evaluation is made to the initiating event from the perspective of the character but is stated as a generalization (i.e., "like all") and involves an emotional state (love). The goal of the story character is explained by her emotional disposition, a preference of loving her mother. In addition, the goal is explained by another, superordinate goal of wanting to thank her mother. This goal is explained by what the mother has done for Betty in the past. The attempt in fourth sentence is also evaluated and explained as actions taken to express feelings and to find something "really fancy" and not something "homemade" that would not look *good*, an appraisal of the kind of gift. The outcome in the fifth sentence is interpreted as a goal failure and is explained by the Reader as a lack of money. This explanation is repeated for the explicit goal failure in the sixth sentence. The narrative then expresses the character's emotional reaction to the failure in her goal. Note how the Reader now explains why the character feels this way in terms of her goal and the circumstances that lead to its failure and in terms of not being able to provide an appropriate goal of value for her mother.

The protocol, of course, was elicited by asking the reader to talk to the experimenter about her understanding of each sentence in a story. Despite this constraint of elicitation, the reader co-participates in the construction of the narrative with author and the experimenter. Furthermore, she and other readers employed spontaneous conversational markers (e.g., "Uhm", well, so etc.) along with assessments and intensifiers etc. in taking turns with the author. Further-

more, there is an advantage to eliciting conversation about understanding in that all the readers talk about the same content thereby permitting us to study how they evaluate particular kinds of events such as initiating events, emotions, outcomes, etc.

2.2. Linguistic Devices

In this protocol, then, we see that evaluations occurred throughout the episode and provided coherence of interpretation. The evaluations were expressed primarily from the perspective of the character as either explanations of goals, attempts, or emotions or as causal consequences of events and outcomes. The evaluations were communicated as emotions and goals.

Readers made a wider range of evaluations than are illustrated here. They also used a range of linguistic devices for each of these evaluations. Table 1 (next page) summarizes the kinds of evaluations that we have observed over the 64 protocols that we examined for 8 readers.

In Table 1, we have indicated whose perspective is associated with each kind of evaluation. When readers evaluated events from their perspective, we found that they often used *appraisals*. Appraisals are summary evaluations that were expressed linguistically as “good” or “bad”. Appraisals are positive or negative in value. Appraisals reflect an evaluation of how appropriate something is according to a social norm or how beneficial or harmful something is according to a moral standard. Good or bad appraisals occurred rarely from the perspective of characters, although Reader E did make such an evaluation in understanding the Betty Story. Readers generally use their own or a third party perspective in making appraisals of external, initiating events, actions, or outcomes as good or bad. In contrast, internal responses were evaluated almost entirely from the character’s perspective. On rare occasions, readers took an emotional stance towards an outcome or emotional state of the character by expressing compassion or empathy.

Readers assumed the character’s perspective and expressed evaluations linguistically in four other ways. They expressed positive or negative valenced *preferences*. Preferences express a disposition or stance towards an object and carry with them a tendency to approach or avoid the object (Lazarus 1991). They are communicated as likes and dislikes.

Another form of evaluation that is expressed both non-verbally and through language is that of *emotion*. Emotions were expressed via a variety of discrete emotional states and reactions (e.g., ‘happy’ or ‘sad’) that were readily inferred as to their positive or negative valence.

A third form of evaluation occurs in an expressed desire to change the

Table 1. *Evaluative linguistic devices*

| Perspective of Evaluation | Ways of Evaluation | Valence | Linguistic Device |
|--------------------------------------|--|-----------|-------------------|
| Reader/ Third Party/ Character | Appraisal | Positive | "Good" |
| | | Negative | "Bad" |
| Character | Preference | Positive | "Like" |
| | | Negative | "Dislike" |
| Character/ Reader | Emotion | Positive | "Happy" |
| | | Negative | "Sad" |
| Character | Goal | Desired | "Want" |
| | | Undesired | "Don't Want" |
| Character | Goal Attainment/ Maintenance/ Avoidance/ Escape | Positive | "Success" |
| | | Negative | "Failure" |

current states of the character through *goals*. Goals were frequently marked by 'want' and negatively valenced by auxiliaries involving negation such as 'don't'. They also indexed by 'need,' 'have to', 'decided', 'desired', etc. Goals are important in that they organize the actions taken to achieve them and they result in *outcomes* of success or failure. Success or failure of goals is, of course, valenced from the perspective of the character's well-being.

3. Evaluations of episodic constituents

Evaluation is inferential in nature (Graesser *et al.* 1994). The linguistic expressions and devices used to report inferred evaluations of events are constrained by the circumstances of the story, the content of the current sentence, and by the reader's relevant world knowledge (Trabasso and Magliano 1994). The event in the current sentence, when interpreted from the character's perspective in the causal network, has causal antecedents or consequences. Evaluations, then, may be viewed as attempts by the reader to infer how and why the character responded to a particular event.

We now detail how the content and role that each episodic constituent plays in the episode constrains how it is evaluated and how it is explained or how causal consequences are inferred from it. For each type of sentence in the episode, we describe the possible options that readers follow for valenced linguistic expressions from either the Reader's, the Third Party's, or the Character's perspective. For each episodic event, we then provide examples from protocols that illustrate the event's constraints on evaluative expression.

3.1. *Initiating events*

Initiating events, along with outcomes, are probably the most important events in a narrative (Stein and Glenn 1979; Trabasso and Sperry 1985). Together, initiating events and outcomes tell us what happened. Initiating events and outcomes are the main changes that occur in minimal plots of state, transformation, state change.

Initiating events begin the complicating action of a plot or episode (Labov 1972; Mandler and Johnson 1977; Stein and Glenn 1979), result in a causal chain of events over several episodes (Trabasso, Secco and van den Broek 1984), and are highly connected causally to other events (Trabasso and Sperry 1985). In the causal network of Figure 1, initiating events cause psychologically a variety of internal responses. The changes brought by initiating events can thus be "good" or "bad" for the person. They can be beneficial and satisfy goals or they can be harmful and threaten or fail goals. The internal responses reflect appraisals and evaluations of the initiating events in terms of their impact on the person's well-being. The initiating events can violate expectations, beliefs, or values (Stein, Trabasso and Liwag 1993, 1994) and can result in high emotional arousal. However, the resultant states of these processes are valenced appraisals or evaluations that are expressed or summarized behaviorally and linguistically.

We found five evaluations of initiating events. All of these evaluations were

judged to be causal consequences. The ways of evaluation of initiating events are listed below in Table 2.

Table 2. *Evaluations of initiating events*

| Episodic Clause | Causal Relation | Ways of Evaluation | Valence | Linguistic Devices | Perspective |
|------------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| Initiating Event | Consequence | Appraisal | Positive | "Good" | Reader/ Third Party/ Character |
| | | | Negative | "Bad" | |
| | Consequence | Preference | Positive | "Like" | Character |
| | | | Negative | "Dislike" | |
| | Consequence | Emotion | Positive | Emotion States, e.g., "Pleased" | Character |
| | | | Negative | Emotion States, e.g., "Disappointed" | |
| | Consequence | Emotion | Positive | Emotion States (no examples) | Reader |
| | | | Negative | Empathy or Compassion, e.g., "Feel Sorry" | |
| | Consequence | Goals | Desire | "Want" | Character/ Reader/ Third Party |
| | | | Don't Desire | "Don't Want" | |

3.2. Reader appraisals of initiating events

Initiating events, it will be recalled, are often outcomes that signal a realized or a potential success or failure in a goal. They have major causal consequences to the Character. The Reader, as an observer, appraises and judges them as “good” or “bad”. For example, Reader R, in understanding a story about Jimmy, the boy who wanted a bike, has read that Jimmy had asked his mother to buy him one, but she refused. Reader R then interpreted the initiating event (1) of the second episode as follows:

(1) Text:

Next day, Jimmy’s mother told him that
he should have his own savings (Initiating Event/Attempt)

Reader:

“Mothers tell their children that (Initiating Event)
That is **not a bad idea** (Internal Response, (+) Reader appraisal)
It’s a **good way** to build responsibility (Internal Response/Goal, (+)Reader appraisal)
But this may be so that he can help (Goal)
pay for the bike”

In this example, the initiating event of the narrative leads to a positive appraisal and this appraisal, in turn, leads to goals. Evaluations by the Reader, then, can be seen as inferences that fill in missing events in a mental model or causal network representation of a story. This sequence, initiating event → appraisal → goal, is repeated by Reader R for the initiating event in a narrative about Ivan the Warrior where the appraisal is negative rather than positive as in (1):

(2) Text:

They said that the giant came to village
at night and hurt people (Initiating Event)

Reader:

“**That’s not good** (Internal Response, (-)Reader/Third Party appraisal)
That is **not** something you **want** to happen (Goal)
giant coming to the village at night (Initiating Event)
and I guess Ivan would **not be happy** (Internal Response,(-) Character emotion)
with that”

3.3. *Character preferences for/against initiating events*

Reader E interpreted the initiating event of the second episode of the narrative in the Jane story with a positive preference from the perspective of Jane. Recall that Jane was overweight, had tried to lose weight by dieting, and had failed. In (3), Reader E's causal sequence conforms to that of the causal network model of Figure 1: initiating event → positive preference → goal. Example (3) is from Reader E's protocol.

(3) Text:

One day, Jane saw a racquetball game (Initiating Event)

Reader:

“Well, she saw this game (Initiating Event)
 Maybe she likes it (Internal Response, (+) Character preference)
 and she's going to get involved in it” (Goal)

Reader M, in (4), evaluated the initiating event of the first episode of the Ivan Story as: initiating event → negative preference → goal → attempt. This evaluative sequence also conforms to the expectations of the causal network. Ivan was described in the first sentence of the story as a Warrior. The initiating events were in the second and third sentences.

(4) Text:

They said that the giant came to the village at night (Initiating Event)
 and hurt people. (Initiating Event)

Reader:

“They didn't like being hurt by the giant (Internal Response, (-) Character preference)
 No doubt that these people turned to Ivan (Attempt)
 and said why don't you go and kill the giant” (Goal)

Reader M's evaluation in (4) contrasts with Reader R's evaluation of the same initiating event in (2) in that Reader R took his own or a third party perspective in appraising the event, whereas Reader M expressed the Character's perspective in terms of a preference. These two examples illustrate how the same event can be construed in different ways by different people, depending upon whose perspective and which goals are being affected (cf. Stein *et al.* 1993, 1994, and Stein and Trabasso 1993, for how the same external events can lead to different valenced reactions).

3.4. *Emotions as reactions to initiating events*

Another way in which an evaluation of an event can be expressed is through an emotion. Linguistically, emotions are lexical entries and refer to valenced internal states or reactions, or expressions of an internal reaction. In the causal sequence for (5) conforms to that of the model in Figure 1: initiating events → emotion → goal. Examples of positive and negative emotions from the perspective of the Character for the Betty Story by Reader P in (5) and for the Ivan Story by Reader R in (6) are:

(5) Text:

One day Betty found out that her mother's birthday was
coming soon (Initiating Event)

Reader:

"Betty will try to get a present for her mother (Goal)
or other wise **make her happy** for her birthday" (Internal Response, (+)
Character Emotion)

(6) Text:

They said that Ivan came to village at night (Initiating Event)
and hurt people

Reader:

"That's not good (Internal Response,(-) Reader appraisal)
That is not something you want to happen (Internal Response/ Goal,
(-) Reader appraisal)
giant coming to the village at night (Initiating Event)
and I guess Ivan would **not be happy with that**" (Internal Response,
(-) character emotion)

Reader emotions, while rare in the protocols, represent the Reader's response to the events of the narrative. They could be reactions to the events as if they are happening to the Reader, albeit vicariously and at a safe distance, or they could be empathic or compassionate expressions of identification with character's plight. One example of compassion is expressed by Reader M to Jane's initiating event of becoming overweight in (7).

(7) Text:

Jane was very heavy.

(Initiating Event)

Reader:

“I immediately feel sorry for Jane

(Internal Response,
(-)Reader emotion)

probably she got teased a lot about being overweight
especially difficult when you are teenager”

(Initiating Event)
(Internal Response,(-)
Reader/Third Party
appraisal)

In this example, Reader M expresses her compassion but justifies with an explanation involving a possible consequence of Jane’s state and how teenagers, in general, appraise this kind of untoward situation. The appraisal of difficulty might represent yet another perspective, namely the voice of a disinterested, third party or a shared norm.

3.5. *Goals as evaluations of initiating events*

Since Goals were often conjoined with other evaluations in (1), (3), (4), (5), and (6), we do not discuss them separately. We note that Goals may be expressed in terms of “want” or “don’t want” but there are a variety of ways of stating or implying them. Some of the main ways are to use infinitives (to buy), prepositions (for), attempts (try to), etc. in conjunction with the desired goal state, activity, or object.

3.6. *Evaluations of goals*

Goals are evaluated in terms of the antecedent events that precede and cause them. Goals, then, are to be understood in terms of the initiating events, preferences, and emotions that occur or are inferred prior to them. They can also be understood as purposes or desires about future changes in states of attainment, maintenance, escape, or avoidance. Goals are “appropriate” when they can achieve these desired states that are caused by evaluations of initiating events. Table 3 summarizes our evaluation of goals.

3.7. *Character preference for/against goals*

Reader E, in reading that Jane, the overweight girl, decided to learn racquetball, explained this goal in (8) by reason of a positive preference and a future, desired outcome. These explanatory, causal antecedents are consistent with the expectations of the causal network model in Figure 1.

Table 3. *Evaluation of goals*

| Episodic Clause | Causal Relation | Ways of Evaluation | Valence | Linguistic Devices | Perspective |
|-----------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| Goal | Antecedent/Explanation | Preference | Positive | "Like" | Character |
| | | | Negative | "Dislike" | |
| | Antecedent/Explanation | Appraisal | Positive | "Noble" | Reader/Third Party |
| | | | Negative | "Not admirable" | |
| | Antecedent/Explanation | Emotion | Positive | Emotion States, e.g., "Love" | Character |
| | | | Negative | Emotion States, e.g., "Upset" | |
| | Consequence | Goal Attain/Maintain/Escape/Avoid | Positive | "Success" | Character |
| | | | Negative | "Failure" | |

(8) Text:

Jane decided to learn racquetball

(Goal)

Reader:

"Well Jane obviously liked racquetball(Internal Response,
(+)character preference)

Maybe she decided this could be a form of exercise she could use to lose a few pounds"

(Goal)

(+ Outcome)

In contrast, Reader C justified Jane's original desire to lose weight in (9) by antecedent reasons of the initiating event of being overweight and a negative preference regarding this state, a causal sequence consistent with Figure 1.

(9) Text:

Jane wanted to lose weight (Goal)

Reader:

“Well obviously if you are *50 pounds* overweight (Internal Response)
and you **do not like** your body (Internal Response,
(-)character preference)
you want to lose weight” (Goal)

3.8. Reader appraisal of goals

Readers react to Goals by appraising their appropriateness or value to the character. Reader R, in (10) evaluates the value of character Fred’s goal to pass a course in response to a history of having not done well in mathematics. The evaluation is stated as a positive appraisal, using “noble” rather than “good”.

(10) Text:

This time Fred was determined to pass the course (Goal)

Reader:

“That’s a **noble** thing (Internal Response,
(+)Reader appraisal)
to pass a math course” (Goal)

Subject R, however, expressed in (11) a negative appraisal of the goals and plans of a king named John who wanted to dispose of his older brother who was a rival to the throne. Negative preferences for one goal may be stated along with a preferred alternative goal/plan.

(11) Text:

John decided to poison William (Goal)

Reader:

“Well that is **not a particularly**
admirable behavior for a king (Internal Response,
(-)Reader appraisal)
but apparently he decided to poison William (Goal)
and apparently kill him (Goal)
I guess I suppose being king there are other ways (Goal)
to get rid of William
but he decided to poison” (Goal)

3.9. Character emotion

Readers can evaluate goals in terms of emotions as well as the initiating events and preferences that are antecedent to them. In (12) Reader C understood Jimmy's goal by justifying it causally in terms of its initiating event → positive appraisal → positive emotion → goal(s), a sequence consistent with the causal network model. She takes the Character's perspective by first referring to his perception of the event, and then the Character's emotional reaction to it. The emotion is explained by the Character's appraisal of a future, desired use of the goal object. The interpretation ends by quoting the Character's goals as thoughts:

(12) Text:

Jimmy wanted to buy a bike (Goal)

Reader:

"So Jimmy saw this beautiful bike (Initiating Event)

it was purple that his friend had (Initiating Event)

and he is all **keen** (Internal Response, (+) character emotion)

because he thinks bike racing

is a *really good sport* (Internal Response,(+) character appraisal)

and said "Ah I have got

to get myself a bike (Goal)

I want to join your team" (Goal)

Reader J, in (13) provides an example of explaining a goal with a negative emotion closely related in meaning to a negative preference that is caused by the initiating event of being overweight.

(13) Text:

Jane wanted to lose weight (Goal)

Reader:

"Jane was **not happy** (Internal Response, (–) character emotion)

being fat (Initiating Event)

she *wanted* to become thinner" (Goal)

3.10. Character outcome

Goals may be evaluated in terms of their potential success or failure and these possible outcomes are used to explain or justify them. Subject R, in (14),

provides an example where a goal is explained by a preference for the desired activity or by its possible, future benefits:

(14) Text:

Jane decided to learn racquetball (Goal)

Reader:

“Again may be she decided to learn it (Goal)
to help her become thinner (+ Outcome)
 or may be she just *liked* the game” (Internal Response, (+) Character preference)

3.11. *Evaluation of attempts*

When attempts are observed as external actions, they are evaluated from the Reader’s perspective as appropriate means to achieve a desired end. The focus of the evaluation of attempts can be on the means and whether or not they are the best way to attain the goal or they can be expressed in terms of successful or failed consequences to the goal. Table 4 (next page) summarizes the possible evaluations of attempts.

3.12. *Appropriate means to achieve goals*

Positive appraisals represent the Reader’s evaluation of observed actions. Reader R, in (15), evaluates Ivan’s second attempt to kill the giant with a positive appraisal but justifies the appraisal in terms of the Character’s ability (from the Setting), a goal, and the means available to the goal plan:

(15) Text:

When the giant came, Ivan shot an arrow at him (Attempt)

Reader:

“Uh, being an archer (Setting)
 It is a good way (Internal Response,
 (+) Reader appraisal)
 to kill the giant (Goal)
 I suppose with a bow and an arrow” (Attempt)

Possible negative outcomes are future consequences of attempts and may, in themselves, be evaluated. Reader M, in (16), evaluates attempts by Bill, a blind person, to cure his blindness by medication as not a good plan because it cannot attain his goal. The causal reasoning follows the sequence: goal →

Table 4. *Evaluation of attempts*

| Episodic Clause | Causal Relation | Ways of Evaluation | Valence | Linguistic Devices | Perspective |
|-----------------|---------------------------|---|----------|--|------------------------|
| Attempt | Antecedent/ Concurrent | Appraisal | Positive | Appropriate Means, e.g., “Good” or “Correct Way” | Reader/ Third Party |
| | | | Negative | Inappropriate Means, e.g., “Not a good way” | |
| | Consequence | Goal Attain/ Maintain/ Avoid/ Escape | Positive | Goal “Success” | Reader/ Third Party |
| | | | Negative | Goal “Failure” | |

attempt → possible negative outcome → negative preference, a sequence consistent with the expectations of Figure 1.

(16) Text:

Bill tried every medicine available (Attempt)

Reader:

“I think that’s probably not a good strategy (Internal Response
(-) reader appraisal)

because you don’t get cured blindness by medicine (- Outcome)
but he probably wanted to try everything possible” (Goal)

3.13. *Appropriate outcomes (ends)*

Attempts are evaluated in terms of the beneficial, successful or harmful, failed outcomes that they could produce. In the next example, (17), Reader D evaluates Betty’s attempts to knit a sweater in terms of its positive outcomes and her appraisal:

(17) Text:

Betty followed the instructions in the article (Attempt)

Reader:

“So she is making this sweater *correctly* (Attempt)

she knitted it **the way it was supposed to be knitted** (+ Outcome)

so it should turn out a **good** sweater” (+ Outcome, reader appraisal)

3.14. Evaluation of outcomes

Outcomes are evaluated in terms of their possible causal consequences to goals and emotions. Outcomes are judged in terms of whether or not the Reader believes that the Character succeeded in attaining or maintaining a desired state, or escaping or avoiding an undesired state. Table 5 (next page) summarizes the kinds of evaluations that readers made of outcomes.

Table 5. Evaluation of outcomes

| Episodic Clause | Causal Relation | Ways of Evaluation | Valence | Linguistic Devices | Perspective |
|-----------------|-----------------|---|----------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Outcome | Consequent | Goal Attain/ Maintain/ Escape/ Avoid | Positive | “Success” | Character/ Reader/ Third Party |
| | | | Negative | “Failure” | |
| | Consequent | Emotion | Positive | Emotion States, e.g., “Pleased” | Character |
| | | | Negative | Emotion States, e.g., “Frustrated” | |

3.15. Goal success or failure

Goal success evaluations are a consequence to outcomes in stories. They are often followed by a positive emotion. Reader R, in (18) makes such a goal success evaluation when a mouse named Mickey finally finds food. The causal sequence, consistent with the model, is: outcome → goal success → positive emotion.

(18) Text:

Mickey found lots of food (+ Outcome)

Reader:

“I guess the story ends happily (Internal Response, (+)
character positive emotion)

after successfully getting a good meal (+ Outcome)

Outcomes that result in goal failure may be evaluated by the reader as unsuccessful and failed goals that result in negative emotions. Reader R, in (19), interprets Betty’s failure to find a present for her mother as a causal sequence: outcomes → goal failure → negative emotion, in line with Figure 1.

(19) Text:

Betty couldn’t find anything for her mother (– Outcome)

Reader:

“Well apparently I guess everything was too expensive (Outcome)

she did not have enough money (Outcome)

she can’t buy a present for her mother (–Outcome)

and I suppose she is kind of disappointed” (Internal Response,
(–)character emotion)

3.16. Emotions

Examples (18) and (19) showed that emotions can serve as evaluations of goal success or failure. Emotions are ascribed to the character by the reader on the basis of an evaluation of outcomes in terms of success or failure of goals. When goal success is appraised, then a positive emotion is assumed to be the causal result; when goal failure is inferred, then the a negative emotion is inferred as a causal consequence. Reader M, in (20), evaluates Bill’s restoration of his eyesight by water from a lake as a “miracle” and predicts that Bill will be *very* happy. Thus, the causal sequence is outcome → positive appraisal → emotion.

(20) Text:

Bill's eyesight was restored (+Outcome)

Reader:

"I guess it was a miracle after all (Internal Response,
 (+) Reader appraisal)
 he was no doubt very happy" (Internal Response,
 (+) Character emotion)

Likewise, negative emotions follow from inferred goal failures. Reader M, in (21), evaluates an outcome as a goal failure that causes a negative emotion. She provides the listener with enough information to infer the goal failure, namely with a goal and an attempt, that in conjunction with the narrative outcome, and the negative emotion, are sufficient to infer a goal failure. The causal network sequence for this example is: goal → attempt → negative outcome → emotion.

(21) Text

Mickey found that the door to the barn was closed (- Outcome)

Reader:

"He probably was disappointed (Internal Response,
 (-) character emotion)
 since he was trying to get into the barn (Goal/Attempt)
 and get some food" (Goal)

3.17. Evaluations of emotion

Emotions, when explicitly stated in the narrative, represent the expressed results of appraisals of events by characters. In the cognitive theories of emotion (Arnold 1960; Lazarus 1991), emotions are a result of an appraisal of precipitating events in terms of one's well being. In some appraisal theories of emotion, the success or failure to attain or to maintain desirable states, and to escape or avoid undesirable states constitute appraisals of one's well being (Roseman 1984; Stein and Levine 1987, 1989, 1990). If an event is appraised as putting the person into a state of not having something that one desires or having something that one does not desire, negative emotions are experienced. If one is put into a state of having something that one wants or not having something that one did not want, positive emotions are experienced. In these appraisal theories, the *causal antecedents* of an emotional reaction would be a goal that has an outcome in which it either succeeds or fails. Goals and outcomes as causal

antecedents of emotions provides the basis for relational meanings between the events appraised and emotion (Lazarus 1991).

According to this analysis, readers would use goals and outcomes of goal success or failure to jointly explain a character's narrative emotion. Trabasso and Magliano (1994) analyzed the current corpus of protocols and found substantial support for this claim. Emotions are explained or justified in terms of the goals and outcomes, the character's preferences or the reader's appraisals, and other character emotions that precede them. Table 6 summarizes the evaluation of emotions.

Table 6. *Evaluation of emotions*

| Episodic Clause | Causal Relation | Ways of Evaluation | Valence | Linguistic Devices | Perspective |
|-----------------|------------------------|---|----------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Emotion | Antecedent Explanation | Preference | Positive | "Good" | Reader/ Third Party |
| | | | Negative | "Bad" | |
| | Antecedent Explanation | Goal Attain/ Maintain/ Avoid/ Escape | Positive | "Success" | Character/ Reader/ Third Party |
| | | | Negative | "Failure" | |
| | Antecedent Explanation | Emotion | Positive | Emotion States, e.g., "Proud" | Character |
| | | | Negative | Emotion States, e.g., "Desperate" | |

3.18. *Positive emotions*

Positive emotions are a consequence of goal success. In (22), Reader E predicts a positive emotion and makes a positive appraisal of the whole causal sequence: goal → successful outcome → emotion → Reader appraisal. The goals are stressed with intensifiers.

(22) Text:

Bill was happy

(Emotion)

Reader:

“Well this is good

(Internal Response, (+)Reader appraisal)

because he *desperately*

wanted his eyesight back

(desired Goal, Character)

We know he was *so determined*

at getting his eyesight back

(desired Goal)

and he was successful

(+Outcome, (+)Reader appraisal)

and that would make him *happy*”

(Internal Response, (+) Character emotion)

Reader’s naive theories of emotion frequently embody the more sophisticated ones referenced above (e.g., Stein and Levine 1989) in that they make generalizations from their perspective and use a Third Party voice to explain or justify the emotions. Example (23), taken from Reader R’s protocol on Bill the Blind Man has the following causal sequence: initiating event → goal → successful outcome → emotion.

(23) Text:

Bill was happy (Emotion)

Reader:

“That’s understandable

(Internal Response)

if you’re blind for a long time

(Setting/Initiating Event)

you want to see again

(Goal, Reader)

and it comes through

(+Outcome)

Getting what you want

(+Outcome Reader)

that’s a reason to be happy”

(Internal Response, (+)character emotion)

In explaining emotions, Readers may omit goals but imply them by referring to the outcome and predicting the emotion (cf. Trabasso and Magliano 1994, for several examples). Reader E does this in (24) in justifying Betty’s positive emotion.

(24) Text:

Betty was very happy

(Emotion)

Reader:

“She was probably very happy

(Event)

because she **finished this beautiful sweater**”

(+Outcome)

3.19. *Negative emotions*

Negative emotions in a narrative are evaluated and justified in the same way as positive emotions. However, Trabasso and Magliano (1994) found that when expectations of success fail, the readers often provide the attempted goal and contrast it explicitly with its failure. The contrast is often marked with “but” or “and”. Example (25) by Reader M on the Jane Overweight story provides this kind of goal → failed outcome → emotion causal explanatory sequence.

(25) Text:

Jane was frustrated (Emotion)

Reader:

“**I bet she tried to lose weight** (desired Goal)

and she didn't lose weight (–Outcome)

She is probably still being teased” (–Outcome)

Failed outcomes need not be explicit. They, too, can be inferred from a series of reasons that involve a goal, its attempt, and a negative emotion, i.e., goal → attempt → implied goal failure → negative emotion. Reader C does this in (26) where she interpreted Bill's emotional reaction to the failure of the drugs to restore his eyesight.

(26) Text:

Bill was desperate (Emotion)

Reader:

“Obviously this guy was *pretty* desperate (Internal Response,
(–)character emotion)

He *really* wanted to see (desired goal)

and he's trying all these medications” (Attempt)

Another means of expressing an evaluation of goal failure is to make a general evaluation of failure. This is done by Reader R in (27) for the Jane Story. Here, using Third Party generalizations, Reader R explains the emotion in a causal sequence that reinstates the episode: initiating event → goal → attempt → failed outcome → emotion → appraisal.

(27) Text:

Jane was frustrated

(Emotion)

Reader:

“It’s hard

(Internal Response,
(-)Reader appraisal)

when you are a few pounds overweight

(Initiating Event)

and you try *really hard* to lose them

(Goal/Attempt)

because your

goal is to get more friendship out of people

(Goal)

and you fail”

(-Outcome)

3.20. Preference and emotion explanations

Emotions in a narrative are interpreted and explained less frequently by preferences or other emotions. Example (28) is a case where Reader C explained an emotion with a Character appraisal and a Character preference: appraisal → preference → emotion.

(28) Text:

Her mother was happy

(Emotion)

Reader:

“Obviously because her mother thought that

the amount of money Betty spent was a lot (Internal Response, (-)Reader appraisal)

and she really liked the purse”

(Internal Response,
(+)Character preference)

Example (29) is a case where Reader M used a successful goal attainment and preference as well as a future successful outcome and an emotion to explain an emotion. The causal sequence is: successful outcome → positive outcome → positive emotion → positive emotion).

(29) Text:

Betty was very happy

(Internal Response/Event)

Reader: “She was probably happy

(Internal Response, (+)
character emotion)

because she finished this beautiful sweater

(+Outcome)

and anticipated lots of compliments

(+Outcome)

she was proud of it”

(Internal Response,

(+)Character emotion)

4. Discussion

The analysis of what people talk about in reporting their understanding of a narrative to a listener reveals that evaluation or appraisals occurred throughout the narrative episode and pervaded the talk of the readers. The ways of evaluation and their valences depended upon what was appraised. The evaluations differed across the categories of the episode with initiating events having the greatest variation in evaluative devices or expressions. Initiating events caused a variety of internal responses that were evaluative in nature and support appraisal theories of emotion (Arnold 1960; Lazarus 1991; Roseman 1984; Stein and Levine 1987, 1989, 1990).

The present study of narratives supports our claim that evaluation plays a important role in comprehension of the lives of others as expressed in narratives. Readers engage in extensive appraisal of experiences of others throughout the episode. Narrators, likewise, use evaluation and appraisal processes as a basis for selecting and reporting of the events in their past, how they felt about these events, how they coped with them, and what they learned from them. Appraisal and coping constitute what people talk about when they interpret and deal with events that affect their well being.

The present analysis is consistent with and complements those of Labov and Waletzky (1967) and Goodwin and Goodwin (1987). Our speakers (readers) publicly displayed their assessments of events, and used various linguistic devices to communicate their evaluations. In addition, we showed how these evaluations are used to communicate one's understanding of the experience of another in terms of how the speaker construes the events as affecting the well-being of the other. The kinds of evaluations we identified and which events to which they are applied occur in everyday, spontaneous conversation. We found, as did Labov and Waletzky (1967) and Goodwin and Goodwin (1987) that emotion terms are used to characterize evaluations of experience. Moreover, we also found that preferences, general appraisals, goals, and outcomes were means by which speakers express their evaluations or assessments. These, too, are likely to occur throughout spontaneous conversation and may well serve the organization functions that structure collaborative conversation especially in the co-construction of conversational narratives (see, for example, Chafe, *This Volume*, and Ervin-Trip, *This volume*). In our view, the shared understandings of events is an important aspect of the conversational interaction and also serves to achieve an organization among multiple participants.

Stein, Folkman, Trabasso, and Christopher (In press) analyzed thirty narratives made shortly after bereavement by a caregiver of a partner who died from AIDS. The analysis of the events reported in the narratives was done terms

of the caregiver's positive and negative beliefs, outcomes, and emotions. The relative frequency of positive appraisals predicted standardized measures of the caregiver's mental health at the time of bereavement and twelve months later. The greater the proportion of positive appraisals, the more likely the caregiver would evidence goals and plans for the future, high positive morale, and high positive mood states. Similarly, the greater the proportion of positive appraisals, the less likely the caregiver would feel depressed or have trouble in coping with his new life without his partner.

Stein, Trabasso and Liwag (1993, 1994) examined the appraisals that young children, two to seven years in age, make in narratives about events that cause emotions. Stein and Liwag (In press) report an extensive analysis on the ways of appraisal that these children use in evaluating the events in terms of goals and outcomes that caused their positive and negative emotions. In both cases, the children express evaluative understanding of what occurred to them in terms of emotions, beliefs, expectations, values, goals, and outcomes.

Appraising or evaluating events is believed to be adaptive. Appraising events in terms of possible harms and benefits to ourselves enables us to generate coping strategies that deal with these changes (Folkman and Lazarus 1990). In theories of causation, we evaluate events in terms of their causes so that we can learn to prevent either produce or prevent them (Collingwood 1938/1961). That is, by tracing causes or conditions and by assigning responsibility to agents (Hart and Honore 1956/1961, 1959), we can determine what it is that is affecting our well being and formulate plans to do something about it. This kind of causal reasoning appears to be quite general and applies to understanding not only our own experience but to the understanding of the experiences of others, be they real or fictive in nature (Hilton, Mathes and Trabasso 1992; Stein, Trabasso and Liwag 1993, 1994).

Appraisals are not limited to events that impact on our well being. Within a theory of rationality of means and ends (Rescher 1988), appraisals and evaluations can be made of goals and plans (ends and means) that are generated in response to events. These evaluations can be done in terms of the appropriateness of the goals and plans and whether their attainment would result in benefits. Further, actions carried out as attempts are also evaluated and monitored as to whether they are consistent with the goal plan, and whether they are an efficient and effective means to the desired ends. Actions can be evaluated as to whether they are within the resources and skill of the person and whether things are going well or badly. Outcomes of actions are also evaluated in terms of success or failure in achieving one's goals, and whether they result in harm or benefit. Our view of others as rational beings is expressed in our understanding of how

and why they act and feel and whether these actions are carried out in our best interests.

In seeking to understand another person in rational terms, we engage in seeking explanatory coherence. In the present study, the causal sequences of thoughts provided a causally coherent interpretation of why and how the person reacted to and dealt with the events that impacted on him. The positive or negative valence of the evaluations of events, namely, appraisals, preferences, emotions, goals, and outcomes also provide a semantic coherence. The readers maintained the valence of these categories over several sentences of the narrative. We may, in observing or vicariously experiencing the life of another, achieve coherence by posing why- and how-questions privately to ourselves. However, this understanding is more likely to be shared as part of a conversational interaction in which we communicate explanations and reasons for human action. The explanations and reasons may or may not refer to a factual state of affairs. They may be types of justification communicated to others which reflect implicit or explicit references to evaluation (Polkinghorne 1983).

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