

Narrative empathy

Discussion points for break-out rooms

1. Demarcation

What does narrative empathy entail and how does it relate to empathy with real-world people?

You could discuss:

- The definition of narrative empathy
- Relationship with other phenomena such as sympathy or emotional distress
- Relationship with empathy with real-world people?
- Role of the narrative in mediating the experience
- Interdisciplinarity issues with demarcation of the phenomenon

2. Measurements

How can we reliably measure readers' narrative empathy (during reading) and/or its triggers?

You could discuss:

- Pros and cons of current measurement tools
- Ensuring reliable and replicable measurement of narrative empathy
- Empirically testing reader background triggers and/or narrative triggers
- Capturing the fluctuation of empathy during the course of reading
- Choosing texts for empirical testing

3. Textual triggers

What narrative (linguistic or narratological) aspects trigger empathetic engagement with narrative characters?

You could discuss:

- Triggers already studied and yet to be studied
- Insights from narratology/literary theory that warrant empirical testing
- Role of textual triggers vs. role of reader/context
- Studying and measuring textual triggers
- Interdisciplinarity issues with studying textual triggers

The impact of narratives on empathic abilities

Discussion points for break-out rooms

1. Demarcation

What social-cognitive abilities are impacted by exposure to narrative, and how can we define these?

You could discuss:

- The definition of empathy
- Relationship with other phenomena such as theory of mind
- Mar's (2018) SPaCEN framework: process vs. content route
- Narrative impact on behavioral tendencies (e.g., pro-social behavior, attitudes, stereotyping)
- Interdisciplinarity issues with demarcation of the phenomenon

2. Measurements

How can we reliably measure the impact of narrative exposure on the social cognitive abilities?

You could discuss:

- Pros and cons of current measurement tools
- Performance-based measures vs. self-report questionnaires
- Use of “online” methods such as eye-tracking and fMRI
- Between-subject designs vs. within-subject designs
- Delayed testing/post-testing

3. Textual triggers

What narrative aspects drive the social cognitive potential of narratives?

You could discuss:

- The big three: fictionality, literariness, and narrativity
- Viewpoint/perspectivization techniques
- Aspects of narrative content, e.g., characters
- The use of textual manipulations
- Interaction between text and reader characteristics