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Characterization: A Content Analysis of Pulitzer-Awarded and Traditional News Features

Linda J. Tobler

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

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ABSTRACT

Characterization: A Content Analysis of Pulitzer-Awarded and

Traditional News Features

Linda J. Tobler

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Master of Fine Arts

Characterization in Pulitzer-awarded features and traditional features was measured using a characterization typology developed by the author. Although some of the results were statistically constrained by a small *n,* those results which were statistically significant reflect that what separates Pulitzer-winning features from regular features are those elements of characterization particular to scene: a character's distinctive physical characteristics, clothing and possessions; the setting and environment as it defines a character; a physical description of character that is not lineament nor habitual posture or expression but bodily appearance in the immediate moment; a character's movements and actions, facial expressions, words, and thoughts. In an era when the predicted demise of newspapers is more fact than fiction, the reader's experience with newspapers is paramount. Crucial to the news reading experience is the reader's enjoyment: how "I" experienced a story through empathy, parasocial interaction, and/or identification. Perhaps a solution to newspapers' loss of readership is scene: within scene, fear, anguish, exhilaration, and joy are not only the experiences of the characters, but also that of the reader's.

Keywords: image, language, character, character construct, characterization, feature story, Pulitzer, newspaper, Internet age, scene, narrative structure, news writing, reader enjoyment, experience, empathy, parasocial interaction, identification, journalist.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Whether in news or novels, character is crucial. Haiti's earthquake, while otherwise a fascinating natural phenomena, is a tragedy of horrorific proportions when seen through the eyes of those afflicted in the disaster. It is defined by people. Characters and events are inextricably intertwined. So much so that Henry James defined them as one in the same:

> What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character? What is either a picture or a novel that is *not* of character? What else do we seek in it and find in it? It is an incident for a woman to stand up with her hand resting on a table and look out at you in a certain way; or if it be not an incident I think it will be hard to say what it is. At the same time it is an expression of character. (1948, p. 13)

In the newsroom, journalists are admonished to *show,* not tell. Despite the admonishment, the people in news stories are often cynically referred to as "talking heads" – a testament to the shallowness of the people featured who are as flat as the newspaper within which they appear. However, it is in the feature story that the rigid mold breaks. It is distinctly separate from hard news and the inverted pyramid: its structure is that of beginning, middle, and end; its action rises and falls and reaches a climax; it utilizes dialogue and fiction techniques like foreshadowing; and, finally, its characters are well developed (Moore & Lamb, 2005, p. 44). Character is crucial: it is people with whom the reader identifies. "Beyond an interesting twist and vivid imagery, compelling narrative requires strong character development, to draw the reader into the character's world" (Moore & Lamb, 2005, p. 44).

If it is in the feature that characters are well developed, then, by extension, Pulitzer prize-winning features epitomize excellence in characterization. "One could certainly argue that all of

the stories that focused on human subjects provided excellent character development" Moore and Lamb (2005, p. 44) note of Pulitzer-awarded features. Considered one of journalism's most prestigious honors, the Pulitzer Prize recognizes feature stories based on "quality of writing, originality and concision" (Pulitzer.org, 2009). If these features are considered "distinguished examples" (Pulitzer.org, 2009) of characterization excellence, then in terms of people, how does one show, rather than tell? What defines excellence in character development? How is characterization different in Pulitzer stories, versus that in other features? The purpose of this thesis is to both develop the typology by which characterization is defined; then use that scale to compare the characterization in Pulitzer winners with these features' contemporaries published in papers of approximately the same size and similar resources.

Humans are naturally narcissistic: the media is replete with stories of people. This study focuses on the development of character in newspaper stories. Why? The printed page is a medium in which the reader can become immersed. Despite the technological wizardry of e-books and the vast repository of books and newspapers found in electronic versions online, Mangen (2008) concluded that the reader's cognitive immersion is connected to the tangible, tactile materiality of the printed pages themselves. When we read, it is both a cognitive exercise, and a motor-sensory or *haptic* experience of the skin, muscles, and joints. Books and newspapers possess a temporal and spatial permanence, a concrete tangibility. This tangibility becomes, while the reader reads, an extension of the reader's body (Mangen, 2008). In the process of cognitive immersion the newspaper becomes transparent: it is the "means through which we experience something else" (Mangen, 2008, p. 413). Its static nature permits readers' self-paced perusal and subsequent "complete unfolding of affective responses" (Zillmann, 2006a, p. 175). The newspaper medium is a forum suited to character development and, subsequently, the

reader's experience with or through character. The news is communicated, in large part, via the written word; it offers the opportunity to study how living people are brought to life with language, or remain lifeless, in its pages.

Reality is a construction of language (Whorf, 1956). This theory of linguistic relativity, or the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, suggests that

> It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection. The fact of the matter is that the "real world" is to a large extent unconsciously built upon the language habits of the group. (Whorf, 1956, pg. 134)

If reality is literally constructed with language, characters, too, become living beings with words. Although news is "the first draft of history" (Astor, 2006, p. 70), as Frus (1994) points out, that events and people appear in a newspaper does not provide convincing evidence of their existence. After the fact they no longer exist (Frus, 1994). "The fact that the story is true of course does not relieve the novelist of the responsibility of making the characters and events convincing," Gardner admonished (1984, p. 23). The same is true for journalists: cognitively, readers experience fact and fiction identically (Gerrig, 1993). People are brought to life, the reader convinced of their reality, through language.

The foundational premise of this thesis is that the reader chooses to read a newspaper for a particular intent: for a use or gratification. The theory of uses and gratifications, Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974) explained, is

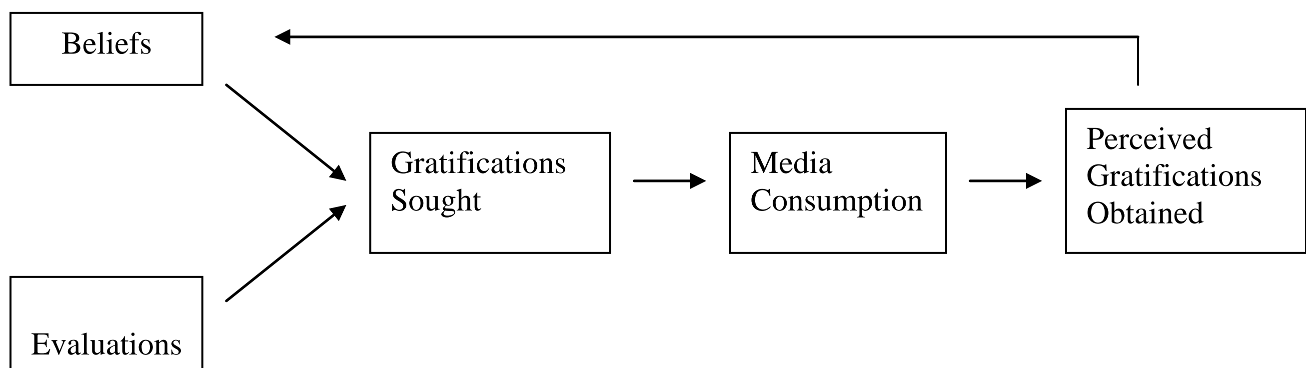
> (1) the social and psychological origins of (2) needs, which generate (3) expectations of (4) the mass media or other sources, which lead to (5) differential patterns of media

exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in (6) need gratifications and (7) other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones. (p. 20)

The core concept of uses and gratifications is audience activity, which is the utility, intentionality, selectivity, and involvement of the audience with the media (Blumler, 1979). Rayburn and Palmgreen (1984) postulated that both the audience's expectation or belief that an object possesses a particular attribute or that a behavior will satiate a need, as well as the audience's evaluation or degree of emotion, positive or negative, toward the attribute or behavioral outcome influences attitudes, behavioral intentions, and behaviors. This principle is demonstrated with the expectancy-value model (Rayburn & Palmgreen, 1984):

Figure 1

Expectancy-Value Model



The degree to which the audience's needs are gratified not only influences the perception of the particular news source, i.e., a news story or newspaper, but the perception of the genre in general to provide the gratification sought (Rayburn & Palmgreen, 1984). In other words, readers choose to reader a newspaper to the extent that the reading experience gratifies, and this gratification – or lack of – not only subsequently determines whether the reader will read *a* particular newspaper in the future, but *any* newspaper in the future. Given that newspapers' circulation is

based upon their ability to meet the needs and gratifications sought by readers, this thesis addresses those needs by examining “the mass communication process from the communicator’s end” (Windahl, 1981, p. 176). This thesis focuses on the journalist’s development of character as a means to gratify the needs of readers.

Audiences seek a media experience as a diversion, both to escape and for emotional release; for personal relationships, including companionship and social utility; for personal identity, including personal reference, reality exploration, and value reinforcement; and surveillance, to acquire news and information (McQuail, Blumler, & Brown, 1972). Rosengren and Windahl (1972) noted that audiences seek media experience for personal interaction, be it as a supplement, complement or substitute to interpersonal relationships. This mediated interaction may be motivated by needs of compensation, change, escape, or vicarious experience. The audience’s varying needs result in different degrees of media involvement (Rosengren & Windahl, 1972). This thesis theorizes that these needs may be met, to a substantial degree, through the characters with whom the reader interacts. Character is the vehicle through which the reader experiences a news story. Characterization via language elicits emotion in the reader. The reader’s intensity of emotion is the measure he or she uses in determining the character’s realness. Whether through empathy, parasocial interaction, or identification, the reader, if the character is perceived as real, experiences the story through the character. The cognitive, affective, behavioral journey alongside character is the experience the reader obtains through the character, and may determine the reader’s media choices. Character is not merely incidental to news, but perhaps critically necessary to newspapers’ survival in the Internet Age.

Character, and its development via language, is key to the reader’s experience in a feature story. For this reason, this study examines characterization in typical and Pulitzer-winning

features. It is hoped that the comparison of characterization between typical and Pulitzer-winning features illuminates not only excellence in characterization, but demonstrates the methods by which journalists can develop characters with whom the reader interacts.

This thesis begins with a theoretical foundation of key concepts to explain character and its development via language; explains what the reader experiences with or through a character via empathy, parasocial interaction, and/or identification, which may tie reader to writer; presents and defines the criteria with which characterization is measured; defines the feature story and its potential for characterization in narrative structure and scene; offers a brief history of the Pulitzer prizes, particularly the feature category; measures characterization in both Pulitzer-winning and typical feature stories; then offers results and conclusions.

The first three sections of Chapter 2 comprise the theoretical foundation of this study. Section 2.1 defines the concept of character. To better explain how character is created via language, the origin of language and its relationship to images is delineated. Life-like characters are redefined as images created from language. The reader's cognitive process of character construction is explained. Section 2.2 begins with the crucial role character plays in the reader's media experience. Theories which explain how the reader emotionally connects to character, and how this connection subsequently facilitates the reader's enjoyment of a news story, is shown. The practical mechanics of characterization follows in Section 2.3. Given the theoretical construct of character, how character is created in the mind's eye via language, the reader's subsequent empathy, parasocial interaction, and/or identification with character, and the mechanics of characterization, this section concludes with the argument that characterization in typical feature news stories is inadequate for the reader to experience enjoyment.

This lays the theoretical foundation. Sections 2.4 and 2.5 of the literature review are a more practical discussion on the feature story and Pulitzer-awarded features as the focus of this study. Section 2.4 defines the feature story and its specific characteristics which facilitate characterization and, by extension, reader enjoyment. Section 2.5 covers the history of the Pulitzer prizes from their inception as a standard of excellence, which initially garnered meager recognition, to the intense competition Pulitzer fame and recognition now inspires. Despite the criticisms of the Pulitzers, they are a measure of excellence and are used in this study for that reason. Chapter 2 concludes by theorizing that the character which comes alive is the means by which the reader experiences empathy, parasocial interaction, and/or identification, and that characterization which enlivens characters – and ties reader to writer via reader enjoyment – is likely found in Pulitzer-awarded features. The study's hypotheses and research questions finish the chapter. Chapter 3 delineates the study's design and methodology, which details the specific approach taken to compare characterization in Pulitzer-awarded feature stories to that of regular, typical feature news stories. The results of the study are reported in Chapter 4. While the small data set limited the results of the study, the study's finding that elements which comprise scene are statistically significant in Pulitzer-winning features is discussed in Chapter 5. This study concludes, in Chapter 6, that scene is essential to the reader's experience of enjoyment.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

2.1 The Construct of Character

What is character? The etymology of character, as Flower (1993) noted, "derives from the Latin *caracter,* a marking instrument, which originated in the Greek *charasso,* to engrave. So a character has come to mean the graphic sign or symbol of an identity" (p. 234). Character is also "a mental representation of someone for whom we have no direct evidence" (Gerrig & Allbritton, 1990, p. 380). A character is a mental representation, an identity constructed from indirect evidence – or characterization. Characterization is the representation of a personality; description by statement of characteristics; a trait or sum of traits that serve as an index to the intrinsic nature of a person (Elwood, 1959, p. 6-7). Iser explained that the writer's words which describe a character offer "the prestructuring of potential meaning" (1974, p. xii). The reader "is induced to construct the imaginary object. It follows that the involvement of the reader is essential to the fulfillment of the text, for materially speaking this exists only as a potential reality – it requires a 'subject' (i.e., a reader) for the potential to be actualized" (Iser, 1975, p. 18). Character thus emerges "in the cooperative interaction between text and reader" (Wilson, 1980, p. 118). Character, then, is a mental representation, an identity which is constructed from the writer's words and which exists as an actuality only in the mind of the reader.

To understand the tool of character creation which is language, one must begin at the beginning – both the beginning of life, and the elemental beginning of language: words. Human beings are not born with language, but initially experience life through the senses. Langer labeled this felt experience, or "everything that can be felt, from physical sensation, pain and comfort, excitement and repose, to the most complex emotions, intellectual tensions, or the steady feeling-

tones of a conscious human life" (1957, p. 15). To comprehend a sensory experience, one transforms it from sensation to symbol: an image (Feinstein, 1982). It is in the effort to communicate the sensation that one then retransforms the image into language or a symbol system (Feinstein, 1982). According to Paivio's dual-coding theory of language (1971, 1986), the brain represents language with two systems: a verbal system, which includes speech and text; and a nonverbal system, which includes images and emotion. The brain's nonverbal representation, Sadoski (1992) explained, "is meant literally, in the way our memories preserve and *re-present* for our consciousness the stored experiences of the past (p. 270, emphasis in original). The two parallel systems exchange information: a word for an image; an image for a word; different words for the image, etc., in a relationship that is fluid, porous, and malleable (Fleckenstein, 2004). The use of a word – *blue* – thus elicits vicarious sensory experience, vivid images, and emotion – the material with which a living character is created in the mind's eye. Language creates character because it elicits images: *blue* is a young woman's melancholy moodiness.

Images create living characters. The living character clearly seen in the mind's eye is the product of concrete language. *Blue* is concrete because the word is represented both in the verbal and nonverbal systems – it is both a word and an image. A fallibility of language is that we lack the entirety of human experience. We have not viscerally connected all words to images, sensory experience, and emotion. We may comprehend a word only intellectually, peripherally, perceiving only the surface meaning of the text. These words are perceived as abstract, and, as such, are far less easily defined and remembered (Paivio, 1971, 1986; Altarriba & Bauer, 2004). Character descriptions comprised of abstract language present a more difficult challenge to the reader because the language fails to elicit images from which the reader sees the character.

Abstract language stymies the images from which life-like characters are drawn in the mind's eye. This is not to say that character is not created with abstract words, but that the reader struggles to see the character, because the reader is unable to get past the surface meaning of the words. To show character, rather than tell, one utilizes concrete language.

We return to the definition of character: "a mental representation of someone for whom we have no direct evidence" (Gerrig & Allbritton, 1990, p. 380). A mental representation is a plain-vanilla definition of an image. A character in a text may be strikingly real not only because it is defined by and comprised of images, but because it is an image, and possesses the characteristics of an image. Various researchers and academics have enlarged and expanded what we know about images, and what we then know of character constructed in the mind. The image is first defined and its characteristics explained. These concepts are then applied to character.

The Princeton Handbook of Poetic Terms (Preminger, Warnke, & Hardison, 1986) defines an image as "the reproduction in the mind of a sensation produced by physical perception," then notes

> More specifically in literary usage, *imagery* refers to images produced in the mind by language, whose words and statements may refer either to experiences which would produce physical perceptions were the reader actually to have those experiences, or to the sense-impressions themselves. (p. 93)

Concrete language brings to mind an image, which is a mental reproduction of physical sensation. Fleckenstein's definition of an image, which follows, not only highlights the physical sensations which characterize an image, but emphasizes that an image evokes an actuality for the reader. Fleckenstein defined an image as

> the evocation of a reality in the apparent absence of reality. It is characterized by its multimodality, which means it contains within aspects of various physical experiences of reality, including visual, auditory, cutaneous, kinesthetic, gustatory, olfactory, and organic images. In addition to its multimodality, mental imagery also includes static and active manifestations, “snapshots” and “films.” (2004, p. 623)

Because an image evokes a reality, it possesses, in the mind’s eye, the presence and physical characteristics of something that is real. For this reason, an image is a temporal-spatial experience (Fleckenstein, 2004, p. 617). Fleckenstein noted that an image is both static and active; Franklin argued that an image is movement, expressed in text as a noun plus an active verb (Franklin, 1994). An image is also emotion: in human cognition, imagery and emotion are so conceptually related that emotional reactions are referred to as autonomic imagery (Mandler, 1975, p. 194). Demonstrated in concrete terms, when one eats a slice of pizza, one smells the aroma; tastes the pizza; feels its texture and temperature on fingers, lips, and tongue; experiences the sensation of chewing and swallowing; and also experiences emotions of curiosity (if the flavor is new or unexpected) and enjoyment or dislike. When the words *eat pizza* are read, the concrete language elicits an image of the smell, taste, touch, and the emotions of eating pizza. The words elicit an image and a reality for the reader.

A life-like character is defined by and comprised of images. It is also a singular, distinct image that, to the reader, is a living being. How does the character come alive for the reader? The reader experiences, though the senses, the image; the sensations of physical experience and emotion are real and consequently define the image – the character – as real.

> The dynamics of emotion that govern responses to actual situations, to their iconic or symbolic representation, and to the presentation of fictional events may be much the

> same. There is research evidence, in fact, that demonstrates considerable commonality in the mediation of affect by these different formats. (Zillmann, 2006b, p. 221)

Images are the evidence used to construct the character in the reader's mind and proof of the character's actuality. For example, "The judge slammed down his gavel" (Franklin, 1994, pg. 71) elicits, in the mind's eye, the sight of perspiration beaded on the angry judge's forehead; the movement of his arm that suddenly, abruptly swings up, then bears down with frustration; the violently percussive sound of the smack. Seen in the mind's eye, the character possesses an almost tangible, bodily form made perceptible to the senses through images elicited by language; he is defined by his temporal-spatial presence, movement, and the emotions the reader embeds in the image. The character comes alive: the reader sees the black robes, hawk-like eyes, and steel-gray hair above gold-rimmed glasses, and the sudden eruption of temper manifest by the slammed gavel. The reader derives from the image the judge's traits: a ruler of law, formidable, strict, and unyielding. Taken together, these characteristics comprise a mental representation and an identity: the judge is the living personification of Justice.

To this point, the disparate pieces of a character construct have been explained. These pieces are now brought together to form a cohesive whole which explains the reader's cognitive process of character construction. A character is a negotiated compromise between the writer, the reader, and the text. Reading, Iser explained, is

> the relationship among author, reader, and text as a dynamic one in which readers first follow the author's prestructured textual signals but then inevitably encounter gaps in those signals. Different readers then fill in those gaps in different ways, thus giving different concrete realizations to the potential meaning of the narrative text. (1978, p. 166)

The process of character creation begins with words which elicit images. These images, which draw on the reader's unique felt experiences, are the raw material with which the reader composes a mental representation – a model – in the mind's eye (Rapp, Gerrig, & Prentice, 2001). Character, however, is not created from a blank slate. The reader approaches a text with preexisting stereotypes of people (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2008). A schema is defined as a preliminary framework or structure; a stereotype is a specific category of schema that represents people or groups (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). Images gleaned from a text's words are applied to the reader's preexisting framework. The character construct the reader perceives is a negotiation between his or her preexisting assumptions and unique felt experiences and the writer's words. Character, Wilhelm noted,

> is a construct that the reader puts together from various indications throughout the story…There is room in every text for personal involvement and interpretation – in fact every text requires it – but these interpretations must be made within the constraints set by the information provided by the text. (1992, p. 52, 56)

The text, then, is crucial. The people journalists write about already exist. The journalist's words determine whether those individuals are perceived as cardboard cutouts – if they are seen at all – or perceived in the reader's mind as real people. Words, then, are the substance with which the writer makes those who are real come alive for the reader.

2.2 Character and the Mechanism of Enjoyment

Character is the crucial link through which the reader experiences a news story. Entertainment theory (Bryant & Vorderer, 2006), and several correlate theories which comprise this branch of uses and gratifications research, explains why. Entertainment is not a media product, such as a novel, movie, or videogame, but a response to or an experience through a

media product (Ahn, 2008, p. 12). In this context, that the news is referred to as "infotainment" is not an epithet but is indicative of its impact on the reader. The core concept of entertainment is enjoyment. "Enjoyment," Ahn explained, "does not refer to pleasure per se but a pleasurable response to or evaluation of media contents like characters…Enjoyment does not come from what the story was but comes from how 'I' experienced the story" (2008, p. 12). At the heart of affective disposition theory is that media enjoyment starts with, and is driven by, feelings about characters (Raney, 2006, p. 145). The consumer forms alliances with characters on a continuum of affect from extremely positive through indifference to extremely negative (Raney, 2006, p. 140). The consumer forms an affective disposition as he or she monitors the morals of characters and subsequently emotionally takes sides.

> We form more positive dispositions with characters whose actions and motivations we judge to be proper or morally correct, while we form more negative dispositions toward characters whose actions and motivations we judge as improper or morally incorrect…This intertwining of affective dispositions and moral judgment permits and governs our emotional involvement in the drama. (Raney, 2006, p. 141)

The subsequent degree of liking, loving, or hating of a character or characters determines the degree of involvement. "The key," Raney noted, "is the disposition: The lack of a positive or negative feeling toward the character (i.e., indifference) does not trigger an emotional response...No emotion, no enjoyment" (2006, p. 141). Character is the vehicle through which the reader experiences the story and must "come alive" for the reader to the extent that the reader is able to form a disposition – or emotions – toward the character.

Three entertainment theories – empathy, parasocial interaction, and identification, explain how the reader emotionally connects to a character, and each is delineated here prior to the

explanation of the entertainment mechanism through which the reader experiences enjoyment. Each of the three theories featured here offers a different perspective of the emotions character elicits in the reader. To some extent these theories both overlap and, to a lesser degree, conflict. The purpose is a multifaceted approach which, taken as a whole, explains the varying degrees of connection between reader and character, and the subsequent degree of reader enjoyment.

"When we see a stroke aimed and just ready to fall upon the leg or arm of another person," Adam Smith observed in 1759, "we naturally shrink and draw back our own leg or our own arm" (1971, p. 3). Why does the observer shrink back? The observer feels with, and feels for, the appraised victim. This is empathy (Zillmann, 2006a, 1994). Empathy is the emotion that accompanies the affective disposition the reader feels toward the character. "The stronger positive affect, the more intense the empathic reaction; the stronger negative sentiment, the more intense the counterempathic reaction" Zillmann observed (1994, p. 44). An emotion-inducing stimuli elicits a response in the reader that is governed, to varying degrees, by three behavioral factors. What the reader feels is instinctive, or *dispositional;* it is also *excitatory,* in that the reader experiences all of the emotions and physical responses as in a fight or flight circumstance; it is also *experiential,* in that the reader consciously, cognitively appraises the conditions and projects a course of action (Zillmann, 2006a).

> Respondents, partaking in an apparent environment as witnesses, need not respond in the indicated manner. But, although their cognitive apparatus does not serve the preparation of overt action in an environment that can be altered by such action, this apparatus is actively preparing the respondents for meaningful interaction, much as if such interaction was imminent. Some of these preparations may be reflexive and not require cognitive elaboration (Zillmann, 2006b, p. 227).

The emotions the reader feels is a response to both a character and the character's circumstance (Zillmann, 2006, p. 153).

How does the reader feel emotions, or empathy, through a character? The reader monitors a character's behaviors and intentions and develops an affective disposition toward a character (Zillmann, 2006). If the reader likes and cares for a character, when he or she sees that character in pain, the reader may vicariously mimic the facial expressions and gestures he or she sees, triggering his or her own emotions (Zillmann, 1994). The witness of another's pain may also elicit a reader's memories, or images, of a parallel experience. The vicarious sight may also elicit a complex of similar, pertinent experiences, emotions, and sensations (Zillmann, 1994). And, the reader may cognitively place him- or herself in the character's experiential role to the extent that the observer may become the person with whom he or she empathizes (Zillmann, 2006a).

> By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body and become in some measure him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them (Smith, 1971, p. 2-3).

The character's joy or agony is the reader's. If the character is someone the reader despises, however, the reader both rejects the good fortune of the character and simultaneously hopes, even welcomes, the character's bad fortune and victimization. The reader responds anti-empathetically: the character's anguish is the reader's satisfaction; the character's joy is the reader's distress. Empathy, then, is perspective-taking (Zillmann, 2006a).

The strength of Zillmann's theory of empathy is that it encompasses the reader's emotional experience through a character. Empathy may take the form of joy, anger, sadness, or loneliness: the theory encompasses those emotions *for* a character, as well as anti-empathetic

emotions *against* a character. Empathy accounts for the reader's emotions as a witness and/or as a vicarious participant. Empathy is an affective response elicited by character, and affirms the primacy of character in the reader's experience. Character is also central to a second type of reader response, that of parasocial interaction (Horton & Wohl, 1956).

Parasocial interaction is characterized as a one-sided *relationship* between reader and media persona (Rubin & McHugh, 1987). Horton and Wohl's concept – intimacy at a distance – is defined as an illusory friendship between television viewer and celebrity which develops through shared experience (Rubin & McHugh, 1987). Brown, Basil, and Bocarnea (2003) demonstrated that parasocial interaction occurs through multiple mediums, and the theory is utilized here because readers may experience parasocial interaction with characters in feature stories, when those characters "come alive" for the reader. This relationship is a "bond of intimacy" (Rubin & McHugh, 1987, p. 280) that develops the more the reader learns of the character, because the reader's uncertainty about the character is reduced (Rubin & McHugh, 1987). Readers "'know' such a persona in somewhat the same way they know their chosen friends: through direct observation and interpretation of his appearance, his gestures and voice, his conversation and conduct in a variety of situations" (Horton & Wohl, 1956, p. 216). The sense of "knowing" a character gives the reader license to parasocially interact; the interactions accumulate into a relationship.

A friendship begins with the first impression, and a parasocial relationship is little different. The first impression is comprised of only a few pieces of information about the character, but "feeds forward impulses for subsequent behavior that the individual should direct toward the person(a)" (Klimmt, Hartmann, & Schramm, 2006, p. 296). What the reader learns of the character determines the character's interest value, or attraction for the reader (Klimmt, et al.,

2006). Interpersonal and mediated relationships follow a similar process of development: the more the reader learns of the character, the greater the possibility of attraction and subsequent parasocial interaction with the character (Rubin & McHugh, 1987). Attraction, not duration of exposure, is the essential intermediary which facilitates parasocial interaction (Rubin & McHugh, 1987).

How does the reader parasocially experience a news story with a character? The reader is a spectator who stands outside the story (Klimmt, et al., 2006). His or her interpersonal involvement is dynamic, and varies in intensity (Klimmt, et al., 2006). If the reader's involvement is low, "the persona is not relevant to the [readers], as they do not devote major cognitive processing resources, emotional energy, and/or behavioral activity to the persona" (Klimmt, et al., 2006, p. 296). High involvement, on the other hand, leads to strong parasocial appreciation. The reader is not only cognitively preoccupied with a character's words and behaviors, but constructs a relation, or bond of intimacy with the character (Klimmt, et al., 2006). This "friendship" ties reader to character, and the reader experiences the story alongside the character, as he or she worries, fears, agonizes, and exhilarates over the character's fortunes. In other words, the reader empathizes. It is here that empathy and parasocial interaction overlap: much of what the reader emotionally experiences is for or with a character (Klimmt, et al., 2006). Because the reader likes and cares for a character, the reader may respond not only empathetically to the character, but anti-empathetically to characters the reader detests. In the journey the reader may also experience mood contagion – as when a laughing child elicits spontaneous happiness in observers – or self-generated emotions, like personal pride or shame when one's sports team wins or loses (Klimmt, et al., 2006). The reader may verbally, even physically respond to the character (Klimmt, et al., 2006). While empathy accounts for the

reader's emotional connection to character through the kaleidoscope of his or her perspective, parasocial interaction accounts for the reader's connection to character as a spectator.

Identification is neither perspective taking nor spectatorship. Identification is a phenomenological response to textual features (Buselle & Bilandzic, 2008; Cohen, 2001) in which the reader sees what a character sees, hears what a character hears, feels what a character feels, and, in sum, *is* the character for the duration of the story (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2008, p. 263). During the process of meaning comprehension, words such as *now*, *here* or *today* require context – the time and location of the story. The reader psychologically relocates him- or herself and experiences a deictic shift "that transports viewers or readers from their current location into the narrative, so they can understand what the statements of the characters mean and to which person or location they refer" (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2008, p. 262). The reader may be transported, and "lose track of time, fail to observe events going on around them, and feel they are completely immersed in the world of the narrative" (Green, 2004, p. 247). The reader phenomenologically experiences the words and images to the extent that the reader perceives the same stimuli as the character and consequently feels how the character feels (Cohen, 2001; Busselle & Bilandzic, 2008). Identification, then, is "a process that consists of increasing loss of self-awareness and its temporary replacement with heightened emotional and cognitive connections with a character" (Cohen, 2001, p. 251) such that the reader assumes the character's perspective and perceives events through the character's bias (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2008). If empathy is perspective and parasocial interaction spectatorship, identification is point of view.

Point of view, however, shares much with perspective, and in this the concepts of empathy and identification overlap. Both posit that the character's experience may be that of the reader's. Adam Smith's belief that "by the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we

conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body and become in some measure him" (1971, p. 2-3) is as true of empathy as it is of identification. These concepts also conflict: Zillmann (1994) denigrated the idea of identification, and suggested that a reader's assumption of a character's identity is improbable and not borne out by research. If identification is considered not as an attitude, emotion, or perception, however, but a phenomenological process elicited by the text, it is not only probable, but occurs to varying degrees of intensity as the reader constructs a text's meaning (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2008; Cohen, 2001; Cohen, 2006).

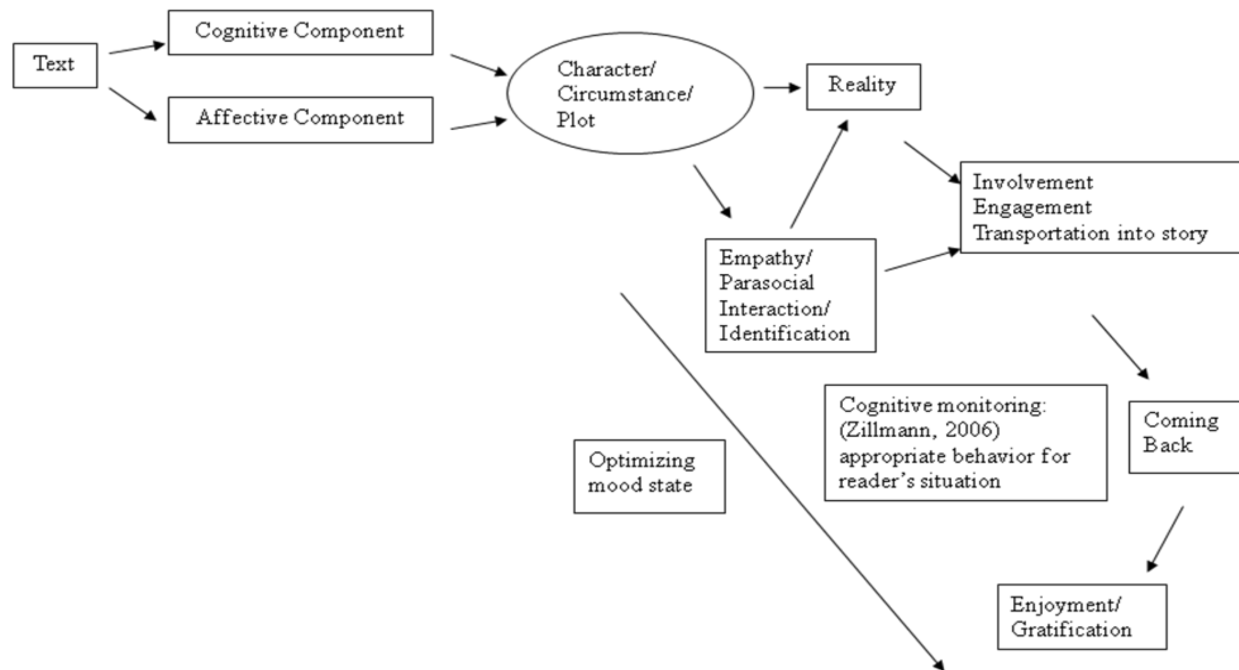
Empathy, parasocial interaction, and identification each offer a perspective on the reader's connection to character and variously define involvement, or the cognitive, affective, and behavioral participation induced by the media during media exposure (Rubin & Perse, 1987). This participation is the reader's engagement with the narration and its character (Slater & Rouner, 2002). Character, then, is crucial to the reader's engagement and experience with a news story. The entertainment mechanism, which follows, demonstrates why.

Character is the vehicle through which the reader experiences a news story. An image of a character is elicited, by language, in the mind's eye. If the character "comes alive" for the reader, the reader forms an affective disposition. This affective disposition – or emotion – determines the reader's journey alongside the character and perception of reality. The greater the emotion, the more the emotion defines the experience as real, and the greater the reader's involvement in the story (Ahn, 2008). The reader's involvement may be joy, anger, anguish, or exhilaration: the enjoyment the reader experiences is derived from the emotional journey itself. In other words, how "I" experienced the story determines the reader's enjoyment (Ahn, 2008). "Ultimately, the more the respondents are emotionally touched and taken in by dramatic events,

the more likely it is that they will appraise, in retrospect, the drama experience as positive and enlightening" (Zillmann, 1994, p. 48). Ahn (2008) demonstrated this mechanism with the following model, adapted here to the reader's news reading experience and involvement with character.

Figure 2

Reader Enjoyment/Experience Model



That the reader experiences an emotional journey is what the structural-affect theory (Brewer & Lichenstein, 1982) demonstrates. Psychologist D. E. Berlyne postulated that enjoyment is produced by a moderate increase in arousal or a temporary sharp rise in general arousal, or *arousal boost*, followed by a drop in arousal. The rise and subsequent drop in arousal is called an *arousal-boost-jag*, and produces enjoyment in the reader (Berlyne, 1971). Brewer and Lichtenstein found that narrative structure variations elicit varying emotions by eliciting arousal-boost-jag in the reader (1982). For example, a narrative's basic structure begins with a complication, builds to a climax, then resolves. This structure elicits suspense in the reader

(Brewer & Lichtenstein, 1982). Why? The initiating events occurs early and “makes significant consequences for the characters very likely to happen in subsequent developments” (Knobloch, Patzig, Mende, & Hastall, 2004, p. 261). The reader, unaware of the outcome, becomes concerned about the possible consequences to the characters (Brewer & Lichtenstein, 1982; Knobloch, et al., 2004). “Notice,” comment Brewer and Lichtenstein, “that it is the reader’s affect that is crucial. In this case the reader is placed in suspense, while the character doesn’t know that he is in danger” (1982, p. 481). The structural-affect theory demonstrates that character is the vehicle through which the reader experiences a story – but only to the extent that the character “comes alive” for the reader.

Readers seek out and select media which gratify their needs (Katz, et al., 1974), including that of enjoyment. Whether empathy, parasocial interaction, or identification, these processes are determinants for reader’s media selection. Zillmann noted that

> …empathic engagement is what fuels interest in tales – fictional or otherwise – and that all impetus for attending revelations of the characters’ fate would be lost if we were not loving disposed to care for them, or, for that matter, if we were not disposed by disdain to wish harm upon them. (2006a, p. 152).

Klimmt et. al. (2006) stated that the experiences of parasocial interaction motivate the reader’s subsequent media choices. Ang’s research concluded that identification is an important motivation for, and outcome of, media exposure (1985). None of these processes occur, however, without characters who live and breathe and with whom the reader interacts. Character is crucial to the reader’s experience, and the writer’s construction of character is tantamount to that experience.

2.3 Characterization: The Construct of Character

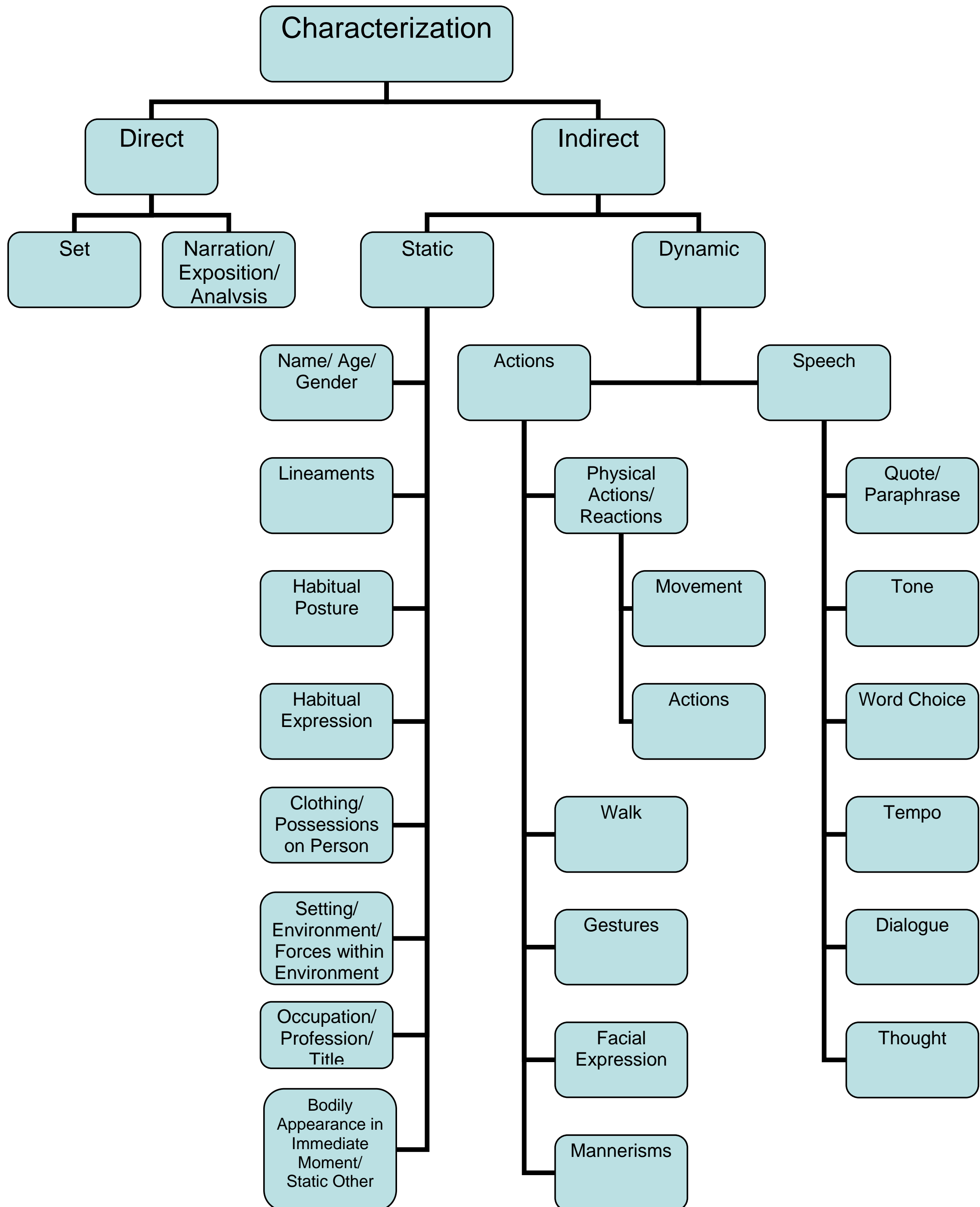
Characterization, in its broadest terms, is the mechanics, the *how* of character development. Characterization is what brings a character to life, elicits the reader's emotions, and determines the reader's experience. Maren Elwood, author of *Characters Make Your Story*, admonished writers,

> you must train yourself to observe with meticulous care, to be aware of the significance of what you see, and to *select* out of the mass of detail observed the one, two, or three details – that is, the most significant details – that will make the character you wish to create come alive for the reader. Your task is to furnish material from which the reader can create his own imaginative picture, but this picture must be, in its broad outlines, *the one you want the reader to create* (1959, p. 29, emphasis in original).

The journalist does not create character. Language is, however, the bricks and mortar with which a character is fashioned in text and who, through language, comes alive in the reader's mind. Reality is comprised of syntactic and semantic components (Potter, 1988). The syntactic aspect is the accurate presentation of situations or actions; the semantic element is "the manner in which characters treat one another and the manner in which the broad themes of humans in everyday life are exemplified" (Potter, 1988, p. 28). Characterization is the raw material which, when effectively wielded, addresses both of these elements in the construction of character who "comes alive" for the reader. What follows is, first, a chart which illustrates the various facets of characterization. This typology, developed from Elwood's work, is used to measure characterization in this study and is explained following the figure.

Figure 3

Characterization



Of all detail and description that characterizes, it is elementally direct or indirect characterization. The difference between them is the difference in newswriting between *telling* and *showing.* "Direct characterization is accomplished in only one way, by the writer's *telling* the reader what sort of person the [character] is" Elwood explained (1959, pg. 22, emphasis in original). *Narrative Digest* defined direct characterization as the writer's abstracted observations about a character (A Lexicon) – a general idea of a person expressed in abstract language. Direct characterization is the author's manifest point of view, and is utilized in a short space because few words are needed (Elwood, 1959; Burroway, 1982). "Alexis had a violent temper" (Elwood, 1959, p. 58) tells, rather than shows, as does "Myra was gentle, patient, and kind" (Elwood, 1959, p. 58). The character is presented as a "set piece" rather than "unrolled" (Macauley & Lanning, 1964, p. 61).

Elwood further explained that with direct characterization "…*you are attempting to make a character live by describing him from without;* whereas if you write your *characterization from within,* you present your actor to the reader in a scene in which *he* tells and acts out his own story" (Elwood, 1959, p. 145, emphasis in original). For this reason, direct characterization is not only the writer's presentation of a character as a "set piece," but is authorial interpretation – "'telling' the reader the character's background, motives, values, virtues, and the like" (Burroway, 1982, pg. 98-99). Jack Hart noted that direct characterization is "simple commentary by the author," and is the narrator's clear, distinct voice, which he called the author's "heavy presence" (1998a, p. 2). Journalists often show by relating facts, not presenting scene. This relating of facts, however, is telling, not showing. This may be done through narration, exposition, or analysis (Elwood, 1959). Narration tells the reader about something the actor did or about something that happened to him (Elwood, 1959, p. 146); exposition explains about a

character (Elwood, 1959, p. 146); analysis diagnoses or examines component parts of a character (Elwood, 1959, p. 147). By virtue of its brevity and its sheer utilitarian ease of use, journalists use direct characterization to tell what cannot be shown, to offer context, background, and explanation. Telling, then, becomes the narrative thread which ties together what is shown, because what is shown is scene: “the most vivid and immediate part of the story” (Scofield, 2007, p. 4) that “mimics life for the reader” (Rosenfeld, 2008, p. 10).

Telling implies a dry recitation of facts: it is explanation (Rosenfeld, 2008) and summary. Direct characterization may be merely a sonorous recitation; however, it may also be permeated with images. Elwood noted that direct characterization should include suggestive words and phrases, pictorial writing, appeals to the senses, figures of speech, contrast, and memory-evoking images and sensations (1959, p. 150). Even in the journalist’s use of images, direct characterization tells from without. “Mr. Malepe, the earnest, gap-toothed chairman of Extension 7, was shot down on one of the many undulating dirt roads of Diepsloot, falling dead in the darkness just a few feet from the Fly by Night Tavern,” (Bearak, 2009, p. A1) tells with vivid images and subtle irony: the man was killed, as he fled in the darkness, a few feet from the Fly by Night Tavern. The telling, however, remains outside of scene. While both direct and indirect characterization utilize images, the bright line of demarcation between them is scene. Although direct characterization uses images, “the writer clearly stands between the reader and the information. The people in the story whisper to the writer, who turns and speaks to the reader” (Brooks, Kennedy, Moen, & Ranly, 1996, p. 376). In indirect characterization images are the bricks the reader uses to construct immediate, vivid scene in the mind’s eye. “The storytellers move aside and allow readers to watch the action unfold” (Brooks, et. al., 1996, p. 376).

A scene, Scofield explained, is a passage rendered in detail, rather than summarized (2007, p. 15). A scene is action: characters do things (act and react) that “add up” meaningfully; and they have emotional and intellectual responses to the action (Scofield, 2007, p. 14). A scene has a structure of beginning, middle, and end; there is a situation at the beginning, a line of action, and then there is a new situation at the end (Scofield, 2007, p. 16). It makes now different from the past (Scofield, 2007, p. 15). For example, this segment of scene describes a police officer’s discovery of a neglected child:

> First he saw the girl's eyes: dark and wide, unfocused, unblinking. She wasn't looking at him so much as through him.
>
> She lay on a torn, moldy mattress on the floor. She was curled on her side, long legs tucked into her emaciated chest. Her ribs and collarbone jutted out; one skinny arm was slung over her face; her black hair was matted, crawling with lice. Insect bites, rashes and sores pocked her skin. Though she looked old enough to be in school, she was naked — except for a swollen diaper. (DeGregory, 2008, p. 1E)

Indirect characterization shows via scene in which the reader is shown the facts and allowed to reach his or her own conclusions concerning the character’s traits (Elwood, 1959, pg. 22).

> To make inferences about characters, we look for connections, for links and clues to their function and significance in the story. In analyzing a character or character’s relationships, we relate one act, one speech, one physical detail to another until we understand the character. (DeYanni, 1998, p. 60)

The journalist uses indirect characterization by “carefully cho[osing] a few details that hint at the underlying character. Through the choice of detail, they lead readers to certain inevitable

conclusions about the character they are describing. They create character, in other words, through careful reporting" (Hart, 1998a, p. 2). The example "She had the face of a discontented, petulant woman" (Elwood, 1959, p. 29) tells. The reader remains outside of scene, Elwood explained, because

> The writer of such a sentence attempts to force the reader to imagine the details that make a woman's face reveal a discontented and petulant character, instead of *giving* the details and allowing the reader to imagine the face. Most readers subconsciously refuse to imagine the details when such a vague picture is given. (Elwood, 1959, p. 30, emphasis in original)

In contrast, the sentence "Her small mouth was pulled together tightly, as if with a drawstring. Her eyes, once bright blue, were now the color of the sky at noonday and in them was a constant look of hurt surprise" (Elwood, 1959, p. 30) shows. The difference between them is scene.

Description, setting and environment, action, speech, and thought comprise indirect characterization. A character description is not only appearance, but includes sense impressions of smell, touch, and sound (Burroway, 1982). A character may be characterized by his or her setting or environment, which is defined as "surroundings, conditions, and forces within that environment. Setting is the more immediate surroundings of a story or a character and may be anything from a town to a telephone booth" (Elwood, 1959, p. 23). Action is what the character does (Elwood, 1959); a character's speech "consists of the *words* themselves, the *way* they are said, and the *tone* of voice used" (Elwood, 1959, p. 24-25, emphasis in original). A character's thoughts also delineate who he or she is. These elements: description, setting and environment, action, speech, and thought, are the foundation. A character construct or image, however, is either static, and is defined by appearance, or dynamic, defined by his or her actions, movements,

or statements. These foundational elements are distinguished as being either static or dynamic characterization.

Static is that which does not move; static characterization, then, is appearance only (Elwood, 1959). It is characterization without movement. A reader constructs a static character image from a character's name, age, and gender. This is merely a beginning. The character seen in the mind's eye also likely possesses distinguishing features, or distinctive physical characteristics, called lineaments.

> A man with bony hands and enlarged knuckles is usually classified as thoughtful, philosophical, a worker and a thinker. A man with small plump hands and smooth fingers, as a rule, takes things as they come, is more or less indolent and inclined to let the world go by with a shrug. (Elwood, 1959, p. 33)

Lineaments also include defining physical characteristics which lead the reader to perceive and mentally construct the character in light of the characteristic, such as cancer or a brain tumor. What the reader sees of a character's appearance includes the body in repose – habitual posture and facial expression – as well as clothing.

> People choose their clothes, and character-traits influence that choice. The way people wear their clothes also indicates character….These are a few of the details we notice and from which we reach our conclusions in probably less than a second of time: approximate cost, color, color combinations, style or lack of style, approximate age, cleanliness, suitability to the person, suitability to the occasion. (Elwood, 1959, p. 36)

Clothing is defined as the entirety of the character's physical appearance as it pertains to what is worn on the character's person, including jewelry, purse, or gun. Static characterization also includes a physical description of character that is not lineament nor habitual posture or

expression, but bodily appearance in the immediate moment. In sum, static characterization is that which the reader perceives of the character without movement or speech.

Two additional areas of static characterization need mention. While neither addresses the character's appearance directly, both strongly influence the reader's perception of character and appearance. The first is setting and environment; the other is occupation, profession, or title.

Setting and environment encompasses several facets. Elwood used setting and environment to define a character by either likeness or contrast (Elwood, 1959, p. 37). Setting and environment, however, also includes Tom Wolfe's concept of status life (1973, pg. 32), which he defines as the "entire pattern of behavior and possessions through which people express their position in the world or what they think or hope it will be" (Wolfe, 1973, p. 32). Hart more finely defined status life when he wrote "Characters drive distinctive brands of cars, wear clothes that say something about their values and reveal their place in the social structure via their houses, furniture and jewelry" (Hart, 1998a, p. 3). Setting and environment includes status life as it pertains only to environment, surroundings, and possessions (not on one's person) as a demonstration of character. Lastly, setting and environment includes Bement's definition of characterization through setting: "where the character has had any influence on his surroundings (such as his house or his room), or where the surroundings have influenced the character" (1931, pg. 103). Setting and environment defines the character not only by likeness or contrast, by surroundings and possessions, but accounts for both the character's influence on his or her surroundings, as well as the impact of the environment on the character.

The last of the types of static characterization is that of occupation, profession, or title. Whether formal or informal, a title necessarily imparts information about the character. A title helps to narrow down the characterization and prepares the reader for the specific detail that

makes the character an individual (Elwood, 1959). The reader's knowledge of occupation or profession also provides the context for the reader to mentally construct a setting and background of the character (Elwood, 1959). Titles are not only doctor, lawyer, even customer service representative, but also aunt or uncle, soldier or civilian, from which the reader derives an identity.

To this point characterization has been defined as the mechanics of character development, and the two basic types of characterization – direct and indirect – defined and explained. Direct characterization tells; indirect characterization shows. At the author's disposal are myriad ways to show, but it begins with either static or dynamic characterization. Static characterization is appearance and pertains to all information about a character which feeds into what the reader perceives of a character, with the exception of movement, action, or speech. The bare-boned elements of static characterization include name, age, and gender. For the character to come alive in the mind's eye, however, much more is needed, including lineaments, habitual facial expression and posture, clothing, bodily appearance in the immediate moment, setting and environment, and occupation, profession, or title. Much of what the reader knows of a character, however, is what the character does: those movements, actions, and statements which may propel the story forward but simultaneously define and illuminate who the character is (James, 1948). This is dynamic characterization.

Elwood termed dynamic characterization "moving picture technique" (1959, pg. 42) and noted that "action leads the field as the chief means of characterizing a story-actor" (p. 24). There are two basic types of dynamic characterization: bodily and muscular movements, which become actions, and speech. Thoughts, which on paper are little different than speech, are included as a facet of dynamic characterization.

Bodily and muscular movements are comprised of physical actions and/or reactions to emotional and physical impacts. These may take the form of a character's walk, gestures, facial expressions, and mannerisms, which are differentiated in this typology from all other physical actions. This facet of bodily and muscular movements, that of physical actions/reactions, encompasses all other movements, actions, and behaviors. While dynamic characterization implies the immediacy and present tense of behavior, a character's physical actions/reactions include those that may have occurred in the past. It is important to note that journalists often focus on a character's actions, which are different from movement. Action and movement are not synonymous. Rather, "Physical movement is generally necessary to the action, but it is not adequate to ensure that there will be an action" (Burroway, 1982, p. 110). Bement also differentiated action from movement when he noted that "…most action is double-barreled. It is made to serve two purposes at once: to characterize one or more of the actors, and to depict an event which is necessary to the main action of the story" (1931, pg. 93). For this reason, this facet of bodily and muscular movements, that of physical actions/reactions, is divided into two: movement and action. At times, these are difficult to differentiate. Movement is literal: it is physical action contained within a scene in the past or present tense but is primarily in the present tense; an action, while also within scene, may be comprised of many movements, includes choices and behaviors, and is in the present or past tense, although action is mostly in the past tense. Action propels the story forward, because it makes things happen or change (Scofield, 2007). In this way, while movement and action are differentiated, the character is defined by what he or she does.

The other elements of bodily and muscular movements – a character's walk, gestures, facial expressions, and mannerisms – are the distinctive details which become an image the

reader almost palpably sees, hears, and touches. A character's walk, Elwood explained, "is automatic and all automatic movements – that is, movements over which the conscious mind is no longer in complete control – allow more or less free expression of character, depending on the amount of control exercised." (Elwood, 1959, p. 44). While gestures are "a movement, or movements collectively, of the body, or of part of the body, to express or emphasize ideas, emotions, etc." (Webster's, 1996, p. 567), mannerisms are "a peculiarity of manner in behavior…that has become a habit," (Webster's, 1996, p. 823). An important aspect of what the reader sees is the character's face, particularly the mouth and eyes. "By the changing expressions of the mouth, the writer can show many character-traits through the outward evidences of emotion that are made evident through the muscular movement of the lips" (Elwood, 1959, p. 60). Evidence of who a character is is not only demonstrated with movements, actions, and behaviors, but also what the character says.

Speech is words, yes, and more. "It is not altogether what a man says that characterizes him, but the way in which he says it" (Elwood, 1959, p. 67). Speech, then, "consists of the *words* themselves, the *way* they are said, and the *tone* of voice used" (Elwood, 1959, p. 24-25, emphasis in original). Speech includes what is said as a quote or paraphrase; tone of voice and voice modulation; choice of words; tempo; dialogue; and thoughts. A quote consists of a character's exact words, contained within quote marks. A paraphrase is a summary, main idea, or fragment of the character's words and while attributed to the character, is not contained inside quotes. A character's tone is what the reader hears of a character. Tone is not words, but how the character sounds. A character's word choice is his or her distinctive words and speech patterns, including slang and dialect. What the reader hears is not only tone and choice of words, but the tempo with which the character speaks. Tempo is the speed with which a character talks and the spacing and

pacing of words (Elwood, 1959, p. 71). Speech is also dialogue – the back and forth of comment and response – and thoughts.

The typology of characterization presented here represents, elementally, how to fashion a character – a living being – with words. While direct characterization tells the reader who the character is – selfish, stingy, brash, passive – and offers narrative voice, indirect characterization shows via scene, which “allows a reader to feel as if he has entered the narrative and is participating in it” (Rosenfeld, 2008, p. 10). Characterization, then, is the crucial precursor to the reader’s interaction with character, whether that interaction occurs in the form of empathy, parasocial interaction, or identification. Only then does the reader connect to character and not only experience the news for him- or herself, but from the experience derives enjoyment.

We are brought again to the subject of character and news. To review the theoretical background covered thus far, character is an image, a negotiation between the writer, the reader, and the text. A character is an image the reader constructs from the text and from the reader’s own lived experience, elicited by the writer’s language, particularly concrete language. The reader sees in the mind’s eye an image which can be seen and heard, almost palpably touched. The character lives and breathes, and is realistic to the extent that the reader feels emotions toward the character. What the reader experiences cognitively, affectively, behaviorally with a character may be classified as perspective or empathy, in which the reader feels for or with a character. The reader may journey alongside the character as a spectator outside of the story, peering in as a friend in a parasocial interaction. Or, the reader may experience the story from the inside, seeing what the character sees, hearing what the character hears, and, in sum, become the character. This experience is the reader’s journey and the reader’s enjoyment: how “I” experienced the story. This occurs as the character comes alive through characterization.

Knowing this, characterization is the crucial link to the reader's experience. The problem is that what most characters lack in news stories, even those in typical features, is sufficient characterization.

Despite the admonishment to show, not tell, even the rudiments of characterization are wielded ignorantly, sloppily by most journalists (Hart, 1998b).

> Pick almost any story from the paper. Chances are it's between ten and twenty inches long. Most are. Chances are it refers to one or more human beings. Most do. Chances are it contains a half-dozen or so quotations. That's the formula. But those few quotes are all the humanity you're likely to find. (Hart, 1998b, p. 1)

It is here that the journalist's ignorance or mediocrity negatively impacts the reader: the reader, unable to connect to character, is denied the experience and enjoyment which would otherwise tie reader to writer. In contrast, "The best writers create moving pictures of people, images that reveal their characteristics and aspirations, their hopes and fears" (Clark, 2006, p. 134). The feature story, then, represents the possibilities – both in characterization and reader experience – of what may be. For this reason, the characteristics of a feature story are examined in the subsequent section.

2.4 The Feature Story

Characters who come alive on the news page are essential to the reader's enjoyment. They cannot exist, however, without a forum which facilitates characterization. If there is a news story genre in which its structure and purpose facilitates character development and reader enjoyment, it is the feature story. It is the stage on which characters may come to life.

News stories' typical structure, the inverted pyramid (Knobloch, et al., 2004), is a utility harnessed to meet readers' demand for immediacy, novelty, and brevity (Bell, 1995). The lead,

in thirty-five words or less, lists who, what, when, where, why, and how. “The most crucial information must be given in the first paragraph, the lead, with subsequent paragraphs arranged in descending importance of the information disclosed in them,” Johnson explained (2005, p. 4). The inverted pyramid has its virtues: it offers information quickly and briefly; utilitarian and functional, the reader is able to pick his or her own stopping point (Berner, 1986). The inverted pyramid is a utility which conveys information.

The feature story, distinct from hard news, is defined as a story with “a news hook that is generally human interest but can also include elements of consequence and impact, unusualness, diversity, and prominence” (Weldon, 2008, p. 34-35). It is a non-deadline driven news story that could, just as easily, have been published two weeks later (Clark, 2004). A feature is loosely tied to the news, because it can be inspired by the news, but is NOT a news story, as Roy Peter Clark noted (2004). Its structure, more often than not, is that of a nonfiction short story, and may have a beginning, middle, and end (Fedler, Bender, Davenport, & Drager, 2001). To understand the feature story one must realize it exists within a gray zone: it embraces scene, narrative structure, rhythm, imagery, foreshadowing, metaphor, irony, dialogue – much that is alien to the deadline, information-driven world of hard news. These elements, however, make possible not only characterization but the reader’s journey alongside characters enlivened by language. The feature’s possibilities are embraced only as a journalist realizes its potential. “In hard news, space is often at a premium. The facts are stacked at the top and, as a matter of course, often lopped from the bottom. Feature stories are more like a canvas” (Ehlert, 1991, p. 132). While the totality of a feature’s possible elements influence characterization and the reader’s subsequent experience, two elements of feature stories particularly set the stage for characterization: narrative structure and scene.

Defined first theoretically, narrative structure “recapitulates[s] past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which (it is inferred) actually occurred” (Labov, 1972, p. 359-60). Pentland argued that “Event sequence is the core of narrative structure” (1999, p. 713). Event sequence is literally succession: “things coming one after another in time or space” (Webster’s, 1996, p. 1337) and is, elementally, images across time, or movement driven by causality.

In practical terms, narrative structure begins with a complication, peaks to a climax, then resolves in an outcome. A complication, Franklin explained, “is simply any problem encountered by any human being; it’s an event that triggers a situation that complicates our lives” (1994, p. 72). The complication is the precipice of change. Each successive event or action has “a determinate place in the causal sequence of actions” (Culler, 1996, p. 97) and builds to the crisis action – the apex – at which the outcome is inevitable (Burroway, 1982, p. 6). In sum, narrative structure is that of complication, development, and resolution (Franklin, 1994), and mirrors famed narrative theorist Tzvetan Todorov’s minimal complete plot: the movement from one equilibrium, through a period of imbalance, to an equilibrium that is similar but never identical to the first (1968, p. 96). Burroway likened its structure to that of an inverted checkmark (1982, p. 8):

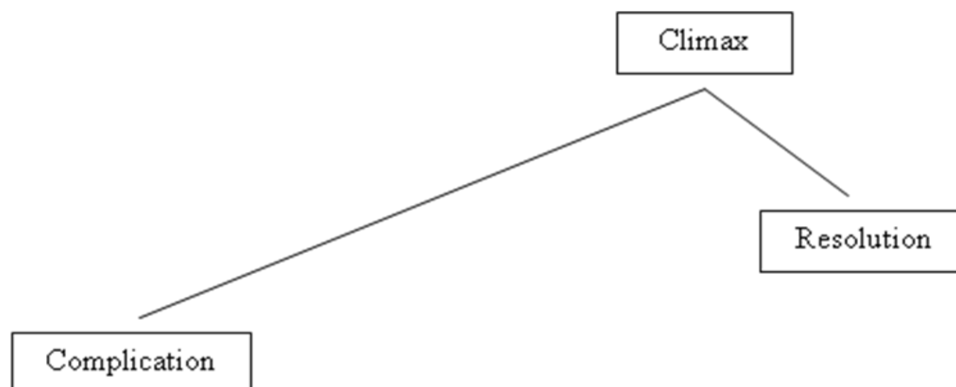


Figure 4: *Narrative Structure*

The opportunity narrative structure presents is that of characters who live and breathe as the events and action unfold with its attendant details: physical description and appearance, setting and environment, movement, and dialogue, intertwined with background, explanation, analysis, and summary. There is place for foreshadowing, metaphor, and irony. Narrative structure not only facilitates characterization but also facilitates the reader's enjoyment. The reader, via empathy, parasocial interaction, and/or identification, journeys alongside the character because narrative structure "corresponds to the way we experience events in our lives. Narrative is an imitation of our experiences, whether 'real' or 'imagined'" (Schokkenbroek, 1999, p. 69). Narrative structure is an opportunity: while events may simply be summarized, it may also be utilized as a stage for vivid scene.

Narrative structure and scene share the same structure of beginning, middle, and end (Scofield, 2007). However, scene is a detailed passage often presented in present action (Berner, 1986), and "the reader sees how something happened, sees the process" (Berner, 1986, p. 10). For instance, this scene demonstrates present action:

> The dawn is chill inside the barn, and Greg Smith's breath hangs in the air like puffs from a hand-rolled smoke. A Holstein stands motionless before him, and he strokes the cow's black and white face with a rough, stained hand. A few steps away, the sun outlines the open barn door on the earth, and there summer lingers, warm to the skin. (Sager, 1981, p. B1).

The result is that the character comes alive, "reveal[ed] at a particular moment" (Barnet, Berman, & Burto, 1971, p. 100-101). Vivid scenes may comprise a feature story, each a successive pearl on the necklace of narrative structure, with an underlying purpose of theme. "…all of these elements have been woven together upon a foundation, have been given direction and purpose,

have set out to say something, and have accomplished it" (Bement, 1931, p. 55). Each successive scene is linked and intertwined with the journalist's narration, exposition, and/or analysis. Scene offers a vantage point, a perspective, a point of view (Berner, 1986) from which the reader imaginatively sees, and allows the reader "to experience the event as its participants are experiencing it rather than filtered through the inverted pyramid" (Berner, 1986, p. 9), which is likely why Mark Twain commented, "Don't say the old lady screamed – bring her on and let her scream" (Murray, 1991, p. 17).

The feature story, then, represents the possibilities – both in characterization and reader experience – of what may be. This was not always so. Journalist Mike Sager of the *Washington Post* once derided features as

> a collection of quotes, strung together with somewhat simple transition paragraphs. The detail is sparse and usually limited to stock (what they're wearing, how they sigh, etc.) and the result is a flat story. I've heard this type called a Talking Head story; it reads as if the reporter had collected the heads of his characters, thrown them into a white room, and turned on the tape recorder. (Berner, 1986, p. 7)

More than thirty years later, the evolution of features has radically changed that perception. "News stories today are told in real time, not always chronologically, but without the choppy, ping-pong, he said-she said, quote, exposition, nut-graph style common to traditional straight newspaper coverage of news and events. There is dialogue, drama, depth" (Weldon, 2008, p. 26). In a study of features on American newspapers' front pages, Weldon found features account for fifty percent of stories on the front page (2008). Stepp noted that features need not take extensive time, space, nor capitulate to journalism lite (2005). Called "container stories" and "short-form narrative," (Stepp, 2005, p. 61) these features utilize narrative structure. These features "return to

the pre-inverted pyramid style of journalism" with "action that rises and falls and reaches a climax" (Moore & Lamb, 2005, p. 44). Features today carry the legacy of Tom Wolfe's new journalism: journalists now "attempt to reconstruct a news event as it might have happened" (Berner, 1986, p. 7).

If the feature story provides the setting and opportunity for characterization excellence and reader enjoyment, the award of a Pulitzer in this category signals the demonstration of excellence and is the reason why Pulitzer-winning features were chosen as a comparative sample in this study. What follows is a brief history.

2.5 Marking Excellence: A History of the Pulitzer Prizes

The Pulitzer Prize is as much of an irony as is the Nobel Peace Prize. Alfred Nobel, the Swedish inventor of dynamite, assured with the Nobel Prize history's association of his name with peace, not destruction. With the establishment of the Pulitzer Prizes, Joseph Pulitzer assured that his name would be teamed with journalistic excellence, not the yellow journalism his papers, particularly the *New York World*, pursued in a fierce circulation race to the bottom with William Randolph Hearst's *Journal* (Hohenburg, 1974). It was legacy that concerned Nobel and Pulitzer, and while the legacy of Nobel is peace, the legacy of the Pulitzer is one of journalistic excellence (Harris, 2007; Hohenburg, 1974).

The new school of journalism at Columbia University, as well as the accompanying Pulitzer prizes Joseph Pulitzer's money established, was not only done in the interests of legacy, but competition, too. Pulitzer caught wind that rival James Gordon Bennett of the *New York Herald* had begun to make plans of a journalism school funded by the *Herald's* being placed in trust as a permanent source of income for the school (Hohenburg, 1974). In 1902 Pulitzer proposed a benefaction of $2 million for a journalism school overseen by an advisory board

comprised of the heads of newspapers in the New York area, with $500,000 devoted to the prizes. “My idea is to recognize that journalism is, or ought to be, one of the great and intellectual professions,” Pulitzer wrote (Rothmyer, 1991, p. 5). The prizes were not to be awarded however, until the school had successfully operated for three years (Hohenburg, 1974). While the Pulitzers were to be awarded in areas of the arts and drama, three were specific to journalism: the public service gold medal, the editorial, and reporting (Hohenburg, 1974). (A fourth for journalism history was later dropped.) In his will, Pulitzer specified that the public service medal was to be awarded to “the most disinterested and meritorious public service;” while the criteria for the editorial was “clearness of style, moral purpose, sound reasoning, and power to influence public opinion in the right direction” (Hohenburg, 1974, p. 20). He further specified that the news writing prize would be awarded “to the best example of a reporter’s work,…the test being strict accuracy, terseness, the accomplishment of some public good commanding public attention and respect” (Hohenburg, 1974, p. 20) – and the standard of excellence was set.

Pulitzer’s plans were not set in motion, however, until after his death in 1911. The journalism school began operation in the fall of 1912, and the first Pulitzer Prizes were awarded in 1917, following their organization in 1915 (Hohenburg, 1974). While the American Academy of Arts and Letters would appoint the juries to consider nominations and subsequently forward their choices to the school’s advisory board for books and drama, the Columbia school’s own journalism faculty would choose the juries, then forward their recommendations to the board (Hohenburg, 1974). The advisory board, for its part, had the right to overrule juries, impose its own judgment, and name the prize winners (Hohenburg, 1974). Columbia University’s Trustees would then formally announce the winners at Columbia’s commencement (Hohenburg, 1974). In

sharp contrast to the fanfare that now accompanies Pulitzer award announcements, the first awarding of the Pulitzer prizes on June 6, 1917, was overshadowed by President Woodrow Wilson's April 2 request for a declaration of war against Germany, and the Pulitzer awards achieved little public notice (Hohenburg, 1974).

In those first, fledgling years, so few worthy entries were entered that in the first 10 years of awards the public service gold medal – the gold star of Pulitzers – was awarded only seven times (Rothmyer, 1991). In 1928, the submission of only eighteen stories in the reporting category led George B. Parker, editorial director of Scripps-Howard Newspaper, to comment, "In my opinion, all the editors and publishers in the country have shown an astonishing lack of appreciation of the Pulitzer prizes, an institution created in the interests of better American journalism" (Rothmyer, 1991, p. 4). Over time, however, Joseph Pulitzer's standard of excellence propelled the awards' fame and the number of entries equal to that standard (Rothmyer, 1991). It is the Pulitzer prize's recognition of excellence which is it mark, and its legacy, as 1976 Pulitzer winner Gene Miller commented years later. "…the prize establishes, if not demands, a standard of excellence. It is a measure recognizable in newsrooms everywhere" (Rothmyer, 1991, p. 208). The standard of excellence, and the accompanying fame when one is awarded, is the impetus that drives some news organizations to "support far higher quality journalism than might otherwise be the case" (Rothmyer, 1991, p. 9).

The Pulitzer is a mark of excellence awarded only after journalists' feats of courage, hard work, talent, and perseverance. The awards then point to the extraordinary efforts of journalists and news organizations. "Pulitzer Prize-winning stories have at times been genuinely daring and at others have set standards of excellence that have affected the whole profession," Rothmyer

wrote (1991, p. 9). Given the standard of work that wins a Pulitzer, it is difficult to name examples of excellence without leaving out the vast majority. A few, however, follow.

During the era of the Civil Rights movement, editor Ralph McGill of the Atlanta *Constitution* wrote a stinging editorial at the news that a Jewish temple had been bombed.

> This is a harvest. It is a crop of things sown. It is a harvest of defiance of courts and the encouragement of citizens to defy the law on the part of many southern politicians.
>
> It is not possible to preach lawlessness and restrict it. When leadership in high places fails to support constituted authority, it opens the gates to all those who wish to take the law into their own hands. The extremists of the Citizens' Councils, the political officials who in terms violent and inflammatory have repudiated their oaths of office and stood against the due process of law, have helped unloose this flood of hate. (Hohenburg, 1997, p. 74)

McGill's reward for his words were threats against his life. When he won the 1959 Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing, he commented, "I never really thought I'd make it" – in reference to his own life (Hohenburg, 1997, p. 74). Pulitzer work may risk a journalist's life. But it is not only in risk but in time and commitment that demonstrates excellence. Journalists not only ferret out difficult-to-find information but comb through and analyze thousands of documents, including court documents, as did the *Boston Globe's* investigative Spotlight Team when it uncovered the Catholic Church's movement of bishops, who had been accused of sexual abuse, from parish to parish (Harris, 2007). Journalists may spend months, even years, pursuing a story, as did Gene Miller, who won the 1976 Pulitzer for more than eight years' work to free two men wrongly convicted and sentenced to death for murder (Rothmyer, 1991). News organizations even

marshal the totality of their resources in the coverage of a story – as did the New Orleans *Times-Picayune* during Hurricane Katrina (Harris, 2007).

If there is a downside to the Pulitzers, it is not only the single-mindedness with which some news organizations pursue them (Rothmyer, 1991), but the accompanying copious amounts of money spent in their pursuit. Some have argued that money, or its lack, determines Pulitzer winners (Cunningham, 2002). In 2002 the *Columbia Journalism Review* found that, since 1950, the percentage of prizes won each decade by the big five – the *New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal,* and *Associated Press* – had risen from 26 percent to 41 percent (Cunningham, 2002, p. 34). The *Review* also found that while the number of Pulitzers awarded had increased from 85 to 140 as categories have increased, the number of winning publications remained unchanged (Cunningham, 2002, p. 34). “You can’t give a newspaper staff a Ford Escort, tell them to race like a Ferrari and expect to come in first,” commented a copy editor at *The Charlotte Observer* (Cunningham, 2002, p. 35). Others have argued, however, that Pulitzer winners, as only partly reflected in their monetary expenditures, are committed to and demonstrate journalistic excellence. The Pulitzer awards have been further criticized for being too political and establishmentarian (Harris, 2007, p. 32; Cunningham, 2002), skewed by Eastern bias and elite connections (Cunningham, 2002). The criticism notwithstanding, Cunningham noted that “Nevertheless, the Pulitzers, more than any other award, are the benchmark for newspaper excellence” (2002, p. 34).

The Pulitzer prizes have gradually changed over time, with new categories established to reflect the evolution of journalistic practices. Such was the case with the feature category, which was proposed and approved by the Pulitzer Prize Board in 1978 (Garlock, 1998). The standard of excellence was no less for this category than for any other, and equally brief. “For a

distinguished example of feature writing giving prime consideration to *high literary quality* and *originality*" (Garlock, 1998, p. ix, emphasis in original). A third criterion, that of concision, was later added (Pulitzer.org, 2009). Garlock argued that these Pulitzer-winning features are not only pieces of literature with nonfiction/short-story structure and characteristics, but "powerful reminders of what's *right* in American journalism" (1998, p. xi, emphasis in original). "The quality of the research, reporting and writing of these unique features is stunning. No two are written exactly the same way. But they all hold to one constant: strong emotions and content – powerful, touching, frightening, harrowing journalism" (Garlock, 1998, p. xi). If the research, reporting, and writing demonstrate excellence, then, by extension, these Pulitzer-winning features epitomize excellence in characterization and is the reason why they are utilized in this study.

2.6 Summary, Hypotheses, and Research Questions

The disparate threads of theory presented in this study are now synthesized into a cohesive whole. Character is a construct, an image negotiated between the reader, the writer, and the text. A character is a model possessing a temporal-spatial presence in the mind's eye, accorded movement and emotion. Whether he or she is perceived as a living, breathing human being or merely a talking head is dependent on the journalist's words. If Pulitzer-awarded features epitomize excellence in characterization, it is not only characterization that makes the people within come alive for the reader, but is the identical characterization which facilitates the reader's enjoyment: how "I" experienced the story.

This study theorizes that *the character which comes alive is the means by which the reader experiences empathy, parasocial interaction, and/or identification.* This characterization excellence likely demonstrated in Pulitzer-awarded features begins with concrete language,

which elicits images. Whether Pulitzer-awarded or regular feature, each will focus, to some degree, on those elements of character which are the initial, static elements of characterization: name, age, gender, title, description and appearance, setting and environment. However, in Pulitzer-awarded features a character may be presented via vivid scene and dynamic characterization, which the reader mentally constructs and in so doing "allows a reader to feel as if he has entered the narrative and is participating in it" (Rosenfeld, 2008, p. 10). The character that is brought to life through language is enlivened with indirect characterization in vivid scenes, which are framed with a scaffolding of narrative structure. Given that narrative structure is event sequence, this is a second reason why characters will not only be shown in scene, but though their actions. Scenes within a scaffolding of narrative structure are cohesively linked with direct characterization, particularly narrative, explanation, and analysis, which provide the background and context to scene. Given this theory, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H1: There will be more indirect, dynamic characterization in Pulitzer-prize winning feature stories, compared to regular newspaper features.

H2: There will be more direct characterization in Pulitzer-prize winning features, compared to regular newspaper features.

H3: In terms of static characterization, there is no difference between Pulitzer-prize-winning feature stories and regular newspaper feature stories.

Because there wasn't enough data to support hypotheses, the following research questions are proposed:

RQ1: Has indirect, dynamic characterization increased over time for regular newspaper stories?

RQ2: How has the degree of indirect characterization types changed in newspaper features over time?

RQ3: What are the specific differences in indirect and direct characterization between Pulitzer-awarded features and regular features?

The study’s methodology is explained in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

This study's methodology chapter begins by defining the independent and dependent variables. The independent variable is the feature story, and includes both Pulitzer prize-winning and regular, purposively chosen features; the dependent variable is characterization. The method of feature story sampling, the reliability of the coding method, and coding procedures are then explained.

3.1 Variables Used in the Analysis

Independent variable.

The independent variable is the feature story. There are two types: Pulitzer prize-winning feature stories and regular, purposively selected newspaper feature stories. A feature story is defined as regular, traditional or typical if it is not Pulitzer-awarded or authored by a Pulitzer-awarded journalist. Regular feature stories are representative the average feature story found in a newspaper. A feature story is defined as a story with "a news hook that is generally human interest but can also include elements of consequence and impact, unusualness, diversity, and prominence" (Weldon, 2008, p. 34-35). It is a non-deadline driven news story that could, just as easily, have been published two weeks later (Clark, 2004). A feature is loosely tied to the news, because it can be inspired by the news, but is NOT a news story (Clark, 2004). Its structure, more often than not, is that of a nonfiction short story, and may have a beginning, middle, and end (Fedler, et al., 2001).

To operationalize this variable, the first type is Pulitzer prize-winning feature stories. The winning feature for each year from 1979 to 2010 was selected for analysis.

To operationalize regular newspaper feature stories, each story selected for the study met the characteristics of a feature story stated above. One purposively chosen feature story was selected for each year.

Dependent variable.

The dependent variable is characterization and its associated factors or subtypes. A typology of characterization was developed for this study from Elwood's *Characters Make Your Story* (1959). The elements of characterization are delineated according to Elwood's definitions and use; however, these elements are further augmented and operationalized so that they are more effectively applicable to newswriting.

Direct characterization. Tells, rather than shows. This is accomplished in two ways: the writer's *telling* the reader what sort of person the [character] is (Elwood, 1959, pg. 22, emphasis in original) and "'telling' the reader the character's background, motives, values, virtues, and the like" (Burroway, 1982, pg. 98-99). While direct characterization may utilize images, the description is outside of scene. It is two-pronged:

Set piece. It is the writer's abstracted observations about a character (Narrative Digest, A Lexicon). *He was a dumpy little man with a curmudgeon's crankiness* (Narrative Digest, A Lexicon).

Narration, exposition, and analysis. This type of direct characterization is the narrator's clear, distinct voice, which Hart he called the author's "heavy presence" (1998a, p. 2). Journalists use direct characterization to tell what cannot be shown, to offer context, background, and explanation. This telling, then, becomes the narrative thread which ties together what is shown, because what is shown is indirect characterization or scene. *All Jessie Hatcher's life, the*

devil in him would come swimming out every time a drink of whiskey trickled in (Bragg, 1998, p. 541).

Indirect characterization. A writer's selection of detail, revealing the character. It is showing, rather than telling (Elwood, 1959). It is scene, in which an event is rendered in detail, rather than summarized (Scofield, 2007, p. 15). Rather than tell that a character is nervous: *He fidgeted in his seat and, with trembling hands, shifted coins and pencils around the top of his desk* (Narrative Digest, A Lexicon). The foundational elements of indirect characterization include:

Description. The character is described. Description is not only appearance, but sense impressions of smell, touch, and sound (Burroway, 1982).

Setting or environment. "Environment includes surroundings, conditions, and forces within that environment. Setting is the more immediate surroundings of a story or a character and may be anything from a town to a telephone booth" (Elwood, 1959, p. 23).

Action. What the character does. "…while in action, people reveal by facial expression, gestures, unconscious movement and physical reactions to emotional and physical impacts, the sort of characters they are…action, other things being equal, interests people more than any other means of character delineation open to the writer, except speech" (Elwood, 1959, p. 24).

Speech. "Consists of the *words* themselves, the *way* they are said, and the *tone* of voice used" (Elwood, 1959, p. 24-25).

Thought. What goes on in the reader's mind (Elwood, 1959).

Description, setting/environment, action, speech, and thought are the tools with which the writer shows. These foundational elements are either static or dynamic characterization and are parsed into the following elements:

Static characterization. Characterization without movement (Elwood, 1959).

Name, age, gender. For age, this also includes approximations of age: young, old, middle-aged, teen-aged, etc. *Annie Wauneka, 78, laughs loudly when recalling how she once bloodied the nose of a "disrespectful" white lawyer before an astonished Navajo Tribal Council* (Hart, W., 1988, p. A1).

Lineaments. "A feature or detail of a face, body, or figure, considered with respect to its outline or contour;" it is also "distinguishing features; distinctive characteristics" (dictionary.com). Lineaments include face and body contours, as well as distinctive physical characteristics of height, weight, and hair style. "…a man with bony hands and enlarged knuckles is usually classified as thoughtful, philosophical, a worker and a thinker. A man with small plump hands and smooth fingers, as a rule, takes things as they come, is more or less indolent and inclined to let the world go by with a shrug" (Elwood, 1959, p. 33). Lineaments, which are distinctive features and physical characteristics, also include distinctive, defining physical characteristics which lead the reader to perceive and mentally construct the character in light of the characteristic. *First the eyes: They are large and blue, a light, opaque blue, the color of a robin's egg. And if, on a sunny spring day, you look straight into these eyes – eyes that cannot look back at you – the sharp, April light turns them pale, like the thin blue of a high, cloudless sky.* (Steinbach, 1998, p. 184)

Habitual posture. "The woman who habitually holds her head tipped to one side is a different person from the woman who holds her head straight and her chin up" (Elwood, 1959, p. 34).

Habitual expression. The expression of the face in repose (Elwood, 1959, p. 35). *"Miss Manner's face was as guiltless of a wrinkle as her starched white uniform, and equally expressionless"* (Elwood, 1959, p. 57).

Clothing. What is worn on one's person. This category includes the entirety of physical appearance as it pertains to what one wears on one's physical persona, including jewelry, purse, gun, etc.

> Clothing is an extremely important means of characterization. People choose their clothes, and character-traits influence that choice. The way people wear their clothes also indicates character….These are a few of the details we notice and from which we reach our conclusions in probably less than a second of time: approximate cost, color, color combinations, style or lack of style, approximate age, cleanliness, suitability to the person, suitability to the occasion. (Elwood, 1959, p. 36)

The door swings open and Sally-Anne Benson is there, navy sweat-shirt, blue jeans, tan work boots (Camp, 1998, p. 202).

Setting/environment. "Environment includes surroundings, conditions, and forces within that environment" (Elwood, 1959, p. 23). The category of setting/environment encompasses several facets. Elwood used setting and environment to define a character by either likeness or contrast. "When using the first method, the surroundings you choose to depict will be in harmony with the character-traits of your actor. When using the second method, the surroundings will be in sharp contrast with the character-traits you aim to show" (Elwood, 1959, p. 37). However, this category also includes Tom Wolfe's concept of status life (1973, pg. 32), which he defines as the "entire pattern of behavior and possessions through which people express their position in the world or what they think or hope it will be" (Wolfe, 1973, p. 32). Hart more finely

defined status life when he wrote “Characters drive distinctive brands of cars, wear clothes that say something about their values and reveal their place in the social structure via their houses, furniture and jewelry” (Hart, 1998a, p. 3). The category of setting/environment includes that of status life as it pertains only to environment, surroundings, and possessions (not on one’s person) as a demonstration of character. Lastly, this category includes Bement’s definition of characterization through setting: “where the character has had any influence on his surroundings (such as his house or his room), or where the surroundings have influenced the character” (1931, pg. 103). *There’s a turn-of-the-century farmhouse here. Gray with white trim, it could be any one of a thousand prairie homes. There’s a single rural mailbox on a post across the road from the end of the driveway. It says Benson on the side, but the paint has been scoured by the wind and the name is almost illegible* (Camp, 1998, p. 202).

Occupation/profession/title. This category encompasses not only occupations and professions, but also titles, including informal titles, which often reference a character otherwise unnamed.

> The characterization given by naming an occupation is a general one, to be sure, but if given where it should be, in the very beginning of a story, it helps to narrow down the characterization and prepare the reader for the *specific detail* that will later characterize the actor *as an individual.* So, whenever your material will permit, give the *occupation* of your characters as an early part of their characterization. Furthermore, when the reader knows the occupation or profession of a character, his imagination automatically builds the correct setting and details of background for that character-actor. (Elwood, 1959, p. 39, emphasis in original)

Whether it is an occupation, profession, or merely informal title, all are titles that define the character. Informal titles, such as aunt or uncle, even soldier or civilian, necessarily impart information about the character. *Earlier, Zepp had tried to explain his position to a commanding officer, who told him he had a "damn fool belief." On June 10, Zepp was ordered to pack his barracks bag. When he refused, a sergeant – "Sgt. Hitchcock, a real hard-boiled guy, a Regular Army man" – held a gun to his head: "Pack that bag or I'll shoot"* (Blais, 1998, p. 21).

Physical Description in Immediate Scene/Static Other. A physical description of character that is not lineament nor habitual posture or expression, but bodily appearance in the immediate moment. *"The gray convolutions of the brain, wet with secretions, sparkle beneath the powerful operating theater spotlights,"* (Franklin, 1998, p. 7) is a physical description in the immediate scene. This category also includes still images which do not conform to the classifications named.

Dynamic characterization. The illustration of character through movement, action, speech, and thought. Elwood termed it "moving picture technique" (1959, pg. 42). There are two basic types of dynamic characterization: bodily/muscular movements, which include both movement and action, as well as speech. Thoughts, which on paper are little different than speech, are included in the category of speech.

Bodily/Muscular Movements. Includes physical actions/reactions, walk, gestures, facial expression, and mannerisms.

Physical actions/reactions to emotional and physical impacts. It is the character's movement that is *not* walk, gestures, facial expression, or mannerisms. While dynamic characterization that is movement implies the immediacy and present tense of behavior, this category is broadened to include actions/reactions and behaviors that may have occurred in the

past. It is important to note that journalists often focus on a character's actions, which are different from movement. "It is important to understand the difference between action and movement, which are not synonymous. Physical movement is generally necessary to the action, but it is not adequate to ensure that there will be an action," noted Burroway (1982, p. 110). Bement also differentiated action from movement when he noted that "…most action is double-barreled. It is made to serve two purposes at once: to characterize one or more of the actors, and to depict an event which is necessary to the main action of the story" (1931, pg. 93). For this reason, the category is divided into two: physical actions/reactions within a scene, and action. At times, these are difficult to differentiate. Movement is literal: it is physical action contained within a scene in the past or present tense but is primarily in the present tense; an action may be comprised of many movements, includes choices and behaviors, and is in the present or past tense, although action is mostly in the past tense. Action makes things happen or change (Scofield, 2007). In this way, this category includes both a character's movements and actions: in sum, the character is defined by what he or she does.

She kneels (movement) *and kisses Belky* (movement) *and hugs her tightly.* (movement)

Then Lourdes turns to her own sister. (movement) *If she watches over Belky, she will get a set of gold fingernails from El Norte.*

But Lourdes cannot face Enrique. He will remember only one thing that she says to him: "Don't forget to go to church this afternoon."

It is Jan. 29, 1989. His mother steps off the porch. (movement)

She walks away. (action) (Nazario, 2002).

Walk. "Walking is automatic and all automatic movements – that is, movements over which the conscious mind is no longer in complete control – allow more or less free expression

of character, depending on the amount of control exercised" (Elwood, 1959, p. 44). *He limps forward on bare feet, stumbling one way, then another…Enrique hobbles down a dirt road into the heart of the little town* (Nazario, 2002).

Gestures. "A movement, or movements collectively, of the body, or of part of the body, to express or emphasize ideas, emotions, etc." (Webster's, 1996, p. 567). *"Oh" – she waved a hand ruefully – "I'm forever disappointed with something"* (Hart, W., 1988, p. A12).

Facial Expression, which includes the mouth, eyes, and glance. "By the changing expressions of the mouth, the writer can show many character-traits through the outward evidences of emotion that are made evident through the muscular movement of the lips" (Elwood, 1959, p. 60). *There was one swift blaze of fury in her eyes, suddenly hidden by lowered lids. A moment later, she was twinkling and sparkling up at him, her face all gaiety and laughter* (Elwood, 1959, p. 60).

Mannerisms. "A peculiarity of manner in behavior…that has become a habit" (Webster's, 1996, p. 823).

Speech. "…it is not altogether what a man says that characterizes him, but the way in which he says it" (Elwood, 1959, p. 67). Speech includes what is said as a quote or paraphrase; tone of voice and voice modulation; choice of words; tempo; dialogue; and thoughts.

Quote/paraphrase. What is said, conveyed in either quotes or as a paraphrase. *"They're very critical," Dr. John Marta, an anesthesiologist, tells Cindy. "They might not make it. They're your kids out here. But they're mine in there," Marta says, pointing to the operating room. "I'll do everything I can. But I can't make any guarantees"* (Curtain, 1998, p. 371).

Tone and voice modulation. For the reader to hear the character, the writer must "relate the sound of the voice to a specific sound with which the reader is familiar" (Elwood, 1959, p. 69). *"This is a frightening place to be," whispers the doctor* (Franklin, 1998, p. 10).

Choice of words. Distinctive words and speech patterns, including slang and dialect. *"When we was growing up," says Richard Gaskins, 74, whose grandfather settled in Willisville well before the turn of the century, "anybody old, you had to respect 'em. Now, the young here got no love for anybody at all"* (Nunes, 1982, p. B1).

Tempo. "The speed with which a character talks and the spacing or pace of his words and sentences are sound indexes to your actor as a person" (Elwood, 1959, p. 71).

Dialogue. A back-and-forth conversation between two people. It is a quote/paraphrase followed by another quote/paraphrase that is a response. It is included here because it is also speech.

"Dad," she shouted. "Come home! Right away!"

I was stunned. I had never heard her like this before. "What's wrong?" I asked. "What happened?"

"It's – it's Kristin. She's been shot…and killed." (Lardner, 1998, p. 458).

Thoughts. A character's thinking. *God only knows what was going on in her mind, Lisa Nawricki thought. I hope she gets help because she needs it. I'm going to wonder about his baby for the rest of my life. I hope whoever adopts him never tells him he was found by a dumpster. That's a heck of a way to start life: Your mother threw you away.* (James, S., 1998, p. 393)

3.2 Sampling

A census of all Pulitzer prize-winning features was coded for characterization. The first features category Pulitzer Prize was awarded in 1979; in 2004, no prize in this category was

awarded. This study compares the characterization in Pulitzer-awarded feature stories to the characterization in regular, purposively selected feature stories published in newspapers of comparable size and resources. In an effort to compose a data set comparable to that of Pulitzer-awarded feature stories, Pulitzer-winning features which were published in either non-daily or national publications, because no comparable publication existed, were not coded for this study. In total, five were excluded:

- 1981 Pulitzer winner "The Death of a Playmate," by Teresa Carpenter, published in *The Village Voice.*
- 1982 Pulitzer winner "The Federal Bureaucracy," by Saul Pett of the *Associated Press.*
- 1991 Pulitzer winner "Grady's Gift," by Howard Raines, published in *New York Times Magazine.*
- 1994 Pulitzer winner "Against All Odds," by Ron Suskind, published in *The Wall Street Journal.*
- 1999 Pulitzer winner "Beyond the Statistics: A Druggist Confronts the Reality of Robbery," by Angelo Henderson, published in *The Wall Street Journal.*

Twenty-six Pulitzer winners were coded; one purposively selected feature article was also evaluated for each year ($n = 52$). The actual publication of each Pulitzer-awarded feature was done in the calendar year prior to the award; for this reason, a Pulitzer-winning feature was compared with a purposively chosen feature published in the same year.

To purposively select comparative feature articles, a circulation list of U.S. newspapers was obtained from *Editor & Publisher*. The circulation of the newspaper in which each Pulitzer-winning feature was published was noted; the newspaper either directly above or below the

winning paper in the *Editor & Publisher* list was then chosen from which to select a comparative feature story. This was done with the intent that features produced from newspapers of similar resources be compared. For each newspaper selected, a random number generator was used to select a week in a 52-week calendar year. A feature was selected from the Sunday paper of that week. (Sunday was chosen because feature stories are often showcased on this day of the week.) If a feature article matching the selection criteria was not found in the Sunday paper, the selected newspaper was searched going forward in the week so that the randomly chosen week was adhered to, until a feature article matching the selection criteria was found.

To compare a Pulitzer winner with a regular feature story of similar length and space in which to compare character development, the longest feature in each newspaper was chosen. If a question arose as to which story to choose among several, that which epitomized Pulitzer's standard of "high literary quality" and "originality" (Garlock, 1998; Pulitzer.org, 2009) was chosen. Also, because Pulitzer-awarded features were authored by one journalist, randomly selected stories written by multiple writers were excluded, as were feature stories written by Pulitzer-awarded journalists.

The number of words of the regular, purposively chosen feature determined the same length of text which was coded in the Pulitzer-winning story with which it was compared so that approximately the same length of story, whether Pulitzer prize or regular feature story, was evaluated.

3.3 Reliability

After identifying the variables and writing the coding instructions, the study's author trained a fellow graduate student to code for characterization in news stories. The two coders then separately coded three Pulitzer-awarded features and three randomly chosen features (equal

to approximately 10% of the sample). A Pearson's correlation test, which measured intercoder reliability, was .951 for all characterization categories.

3.4 Coding

The intent of this research is a measure of characterization as an aggregate; that is, the amount and type of characterization demonstrated in Pulitzer-awarded features as compared with regular feature news stories. For this reason, the characterization of all characters within a news story was coded. On occasion, the writer endows inanimate objects with human characteristics. This research focuses on the characterization of people. For this reason, only the characterization of people was coded.

To code for characterization, the coder proceeded sentence by sentence through the news story. When the coder read a sentence with information that describes or refers to a character, that information was coded with a tally marked under the appropriate type of characterization on the characterization coding sheet. If a sentence contained more than one instance of characterization, each instance was appropriately coded.

As each sentence or phrase that pertains to a character was read, the information was first determined to be an instance of either direct of indirect characterization. An instance of direct characterization was tallied under the appropriate sub-category; if the instance was one of indirect characterization, it was determined to be either static or dynamic, then tallied under the appropriate sub-category. See the coding instructions book (Appendix A) and coding sheet (Appendix B) for complete details and instructions.

CHAPTER 4

Results

4.1 Hypotheses Results

H1 There will be more indirect, dynamic characterization in Pulitzer-winning feature stories, compared to regular newspaper features.

The hypothesis was not supported. Indirect, dynamic characterization in Pulitzer-winning features and regular features was compared using an independent samples *t* test. The summed mean of indirect, dynamic characterization for Pulitzer-winning features was 35. 81 with a standard deviation of 31.72. The mean of indirect, dynamic characterization for regular features was 30.04 with a standard deviation of 11.02. The difference was not statistically significant at the specified $<.05$ level, $t(50) = .88$, $p = .39$. The null hypothesis, that there is not more indirect, dynamic characterization in Pulitzer-winning feature stories, is supported.

H2 There will be more direct characterization in Pulitzer prize-winning features, compared to regular newspaper features.

The hypothesis was not supported. Direct characterization in Pulitzer-winning features and regular newspaper features was compared using an independent samples *t* test. The mean number of direct characterization in Pulitzer-winning features was 51.15 with a standard deviation of 28.38. The mean of direct characterization in regular features was 43.12 with a standard deviation of 23.52. The difference of means was not statistically significant at the specified $<.05$ level, $t(50) = 1.11$, $p = .27$. The null hypothesis, that there is no difference in direct characterization in Pulitzer-awarded stories, is supported.

H3 In terms of static characterization, there is no difference between Pulitzer-awarded feature stories and regular newspaper feature stories.

The hypothesis was supported. The comparison of static characterization between Pulitzer prize-winning features and regular newspaper features was done using an independent samples *t* test. The mean of Pulitzer-prize winners was 48.50 with a standard deviation of 24.63; the mean of regular features was 38.04 with a standard deviation of 17.07. The difference was not statistically significant at the specified <.05 level, $t(50) = 1.78$, $p = .081$.

4.2 Research Questions Results

RQ1 Has indirect, dynamic characterization increased over time for regular newspaper features?

Indirect, dynamic characterization has not increased over time for regular feature stories. The median publication year for all news stories was 1993. All regular features published prior to 1993 were compared with those regular features published in 1993 and later using an independent samples *t* test. The mean of regular features published prior to 1993 was 31.77, with a standard deviation of 12.92. The mean of regular features published in 1993 through 2009 was 28.31, with a standard deviation of 8.92. The difference was not statistically significant at the specified <.05 level, $t(24) = .80$, $p = .44$.

RQ2 Which indirect characterization factors changed in newspaper features over time?

The only indirect characterization factor to change in newspaper features over time was titles, which increased. Using an independent samples *t* test, the means of indirect characterization factors of newspaper features published prior to 1993 was compared with the means of indirect characterization factors of newspaper features published in 1993 and later. The mean of titles within features prior to 1993 was 14.65 with a standard deviation of 8.33. The mean of titles published in 1993 and later was 23.27 with a standard deviation of 12.12. The difference was statistically significant at the specified <.05 level, $t(50) = -2.987$, $p = .004$.

RQ3 What are the specific differences in indirect and direct characterization between Pulitzer-awarded features and regular features?

The indirect characterization factors which differ between Pulitzer prize-winning features and regular features include lineaments, clothing/possessions on person, setting/environment, bodily appearance in the immediate moment/static other, movement, action, facial expressions, quotes/paraphrases, and thoughts. The direct characterization factor which differs is set characterization. Using an independent samples *t* test, the indirect and direct characterization of Pulitzer-winning features and regular features was compared. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: *Results*

	Pulitzer Feature		Regular Feature			
Category	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	$t(50)$	p <.05
Indirect						
Lineaments	4.85	5.73	1.08	1.57	3.23	.00
Clothing/ Possessions on person	1.88	1.61	.69	1.35	2.90	.01
Setting/ Environment	10.50	8.05	3.62	4.65	3.78	.00
Static Other	1.12	2.20	.23	.59	1.98	.057
Movement	3.85	5.65	1.42	2.3	2.03	.05
Action	14.62	19.02	4.62	5.08	2.59	.02
Facial Expressions	.88	.95	.38	.75	2.1	.04
Quotes/Paraphrases	14.12	8.95	22.65	8.91	-3.45	.00
Thoughts	.65	1.20	.04	.20	2.59	.02
Direct						
Set	5.23	4.72	2.46	2.67	2.60	.01

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

The most striking differences between Pulitzer-awarded and regular features emerge in answer to Research Question 3. This, then, is where the discussion begins. The question asked: What are the specific differences in indirect and direct characterization between Pulitzer-awarded and regular features? The answer not only distinguishes the differences but illuminates the similarities between Pulitzer-awarded and regular features.

The data, and the statistically significant results, also answer the study's original questions: In terms of people, how does one show, rather than tell? What defines excellence in character development? How is characterization different in Pulitzer stories, versus that in other features? More than any other question, however, this study begins to answer: What comprises a Pulitzer-awarded feature story? The answer is as much found in the similarities between the two groups as in their differences.

5.1 Similarities

We begin with the similarities. The similarities between the two groups include the use of name, age, and gender; as well as that of profession, occupation, and titles. These impart identity and for this reason are considered together.

The name, age, gender category's mean for Pulitzer-awarded features was approximately 11 instances per story; the mean for regular features was approximately 13 instances per story. The mean of the titles category for both Pulitzer-awarded and regular features was identical – nearly 19 references per story. The reason for the similarities is that journalists universally use a name, a gender, a title as a tool of identity.

A name is a “character tag,” Elwood explained, “the first means by which the reader begins to become acquainted with the particular actor in the story” (1959, p. 32). A feature may begin by introducing a character not as a specific, particular individual – an identity which a name imparts – but as a gender or title, which are often used interchangeably as a universal, everyman reference prior to a specific identity which is supplied later in the story. “It was not done the proper way, the old man said. The burial of his son had been spoiled, and it pained him that his final memory of the young man was so stained by discontent” (Zucchino, 1998, p. 327) introduces the reader to an old man who could be *any* old man. The man’s name is initially untold, inviting the reader’s empathy, parasocial interaction, or identification unimpeded by a specific identity.

The anonymity proffered by a gender or title emphasizes those singular, paramount characteristics of character which highlight the stereotypical or universal. A masked man remains a hero or villain by virtue of his anonymity which emphasizes those elements of characterization which define him. Pulitzer winner George Lardner Jr. noted that his daughter “had been shot in the head and face by an ex-boyfriend who was under court order to stay away from her. When police burst into his apartment, they found him sprawled on his bed, dead from a final act of self-pity” (1998, p. 459). The man is a villain characterized only by the title “ex-boyfriend,” his murderous act, his obsessive abusiveness demonstrated in his defiance of a protective order, and his cowardice alluded to in the phrase “final act of self-pity.” Those characters whom the journalist wishes to remain strangers are unnamed for another reason. Journalists may not name a person but use only a gender – “the girl” – or title – “the waiter” – if that person is a function within the story. A nameless, and, consequently, faceless character is, in many cases, specifically unnamed so that he or she remains either on the periphery of the

narrative and the reader's eye which focuses on specific, named people central to the plot, or so that the character's characteristics remain paramount and unimpeded by a specific identity.

A title necessarily imparts an identity, albeit a utilitarian identity. It also plays a separate role: that of a character's credibility and the reason why he or she is quoted in a story. For instance, the following quote appears in *The New York Times* in a feature of two heroin addicts, who are exemplars in an evolving tragedy:

> "We're seeing a substantial increase in the use of heroin," said Dr. Stephan G. Lynn, a senior emergency-medicine doctor at St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital Center at 113th Street and Amsterdam Avenue. "It is occurring in a younger, more affluent population. And there is a larger number of white patients than in the past." (Wren, 1999, p. 29)

Stephan Lynn's comments are given credence by virtue of his titles both as a doctor and as a senior emergency-medicine doctor at a hospital located in a specific geographic region.

What elements comprise a Pulitzer-awarded feature? The first answer is that it begins, as do almost all news stories, with name, age, gender, and titles: the initial rudiments of identity. These also comprise the extent of the similarities between Pulitzer-awarded and regular features. From this point, however, their differences begin to emerge, beginning with direct characterization which narrates, explains, or analyzes.

5.2 Differences

Although the mean for direct characterization which narrates, explains, or analyzes is little different between Pulitzer-awarded features and regular features, this measure reflects the imprecision of the typology. Direct characterization which narrates, explains, or analyzes is the thread which offers explanation, context, and background: it is the story's cohesion. Pulitzer-awarded features contained nearly 46 instances of narration, explanation or analysis in a story;

regular features contained approximately 41 instances. The typology does not differentiate, however, the use of images, metaphor, or irony; it is irrespective of the skill with which a particular journalist wields this characterization tool. A 1984 feature of Washington Redskins defensive lineman Dave Butz noted that

> The bank he's friendly with is First National Bank of Belleville. He began working there after his rookie year with the Big Red, and has put in some time at the bank in the off-season most years since.
>
> At First National, Butz became interested in computers. He now has three of his own. One is on loan from the Madison Bank in Washington. He's now helping that bank with promotions. (Kelly, p. 3B)

This explanation tells: it is a mundane list of facts. Butz, however, is consigned to remain a stranger because the description lacks concrete images. In contrast is Isabel Wilkerson's explanation of 10-year-old Nicholas Whitiker:

> When the television picture goes out again, when the 3-year-old scratches the 4-year-old, when their mother, Angela, needs ground beef from the store or the bathroom cleaned or can't find her switch to whip him or the other children, it is Nicholas's name that rings out to fix whatever is wrong. (1998, p. 485)

Although the second example tells, it does so with concrete images. What separates Pulitzer-awarded features from regular features is that the journalist uses images to tell – even in summary or explanation. The distinct differences in narration, exposition, and analysis between Pulitzer-prize features and regular features, although they clearly exist, are not told in the numbers.

Direct characterization which narrates, explains, and analyzes marks a divergence between Pulitzer-awarded and regular features not reflected in the statistics. The statistics, however, do demarcate distinct differences. These differences not only set Pulitzer prize-winning features apart, but demonstrate which elements Pulitzer-awarded journalists utilize to comprise vivid scene: a character's distinctive physical characteristics, clothing and possessions; the setting and environment as it defines a character; a physical description of character that is not lineament nor habitual posture or expression but bodily appearance in the immediate moment; a character's movements and actions, facial expressions, words, and thoughts. And although it is not scene, the use of direct, set characterization is also distinctly different between the two groups.

Pulitzer-winning journalists used direct, set characterization approximately five times in a story; journalists of regular features used direct, set characterization half as often. The reason is that Pulitzer-awarded journalists understand its use: often, he or she tells the reader what sort of person the character is, then immediately supports it. The abstract characteristic defines the direct and indirect characterization which follows. For instance, Isabel Wilkerson's portrait of a10-year-old child asked to fill the role of a man begins with an abstract characteristic, which is followed with the explanation imbedded with concrete images:

> Of all the men in his family's life, Nicholas is perhaps the most dutiful. When the television picture goes out again, when the 3-year-old scratches the 4-year-old, when their mother, Angela, needs ground beef from the store or the bathroom cleaned or can't find her switch to whip him or the other children, it is Nicholas's name that rings out to fix whatever is wrong. (1998, p. 485)

Dave Curtain, who won the 1990 Pulitzer prize for his story "Adam & Megan" uses the same technique:

> Megan can't wait for Abby – "my baby" – to grow up so she'll have a girl to play with. Megan loves to play hide-and-seek and, like her mother, she is meticulous. She follows her mother around the grocery store straightening the cans on the shelves. And Megan loves to hug, especially Abby and the family dog, Max. (1998, p. 370).

Megan's meticulousness is demonstrated by her behavior in the grocery store. Pulitzer-awarded journalists use set characterization directionally.

The difference that remains between Pulitzer-awarded and regular features are those elements which are used to construct scene. It should be noted that in a Pulitzer-awarded feature, all elements of characterization, particularly those of scene, were based on theme, reflected even in their titles: "Zepp's Last Stand" is the story of an 83-year-old conscientious objector who refused to fight in World War I, was dishonorably discharged from the military, and who has fought all his life for an honorable discharge distinction instead; "A Boy of Unusual Vision" describes the perspective of a blind boy and what he sees. Theme provided the underlying purpose.

Although Pulitzer-awarded journalists' clay was that of language, their text was permeated with visual images and reflected the importance of a character's appearance to readers' imaginative sight. They described distinctive physical characteristics nearly five times more than did journalists of regular features. On average, Pulitzer-awarded journalists mentioned a distinctive physical characteristic nearly five times in a story, while journalists of regular features mentioned a physical characteristic, on average, once in a story. Distinctive physical characteristics played into a story's newsworthiness, however. Seven of the 26 Pulitzers

considered in this study focused on a physical disability, illness, or disease, on topics ranging from a brain tumor to AIDS to burn victims.

By comparison, a character's clothing and possessions, bodily appearance in the immediate moment, even facial expression, were mentioned far less, even in Pulitzer-awarded features. Clothing and possessions were mentioned approximately twice in a Pulitzer-awarded feature; they were mentioned less than once in an regular feature. Bodily appearance in the immediate moment was mentioned approximately once per story; a character's bodily appearance was mentioned once in every five regular features. A character's facial expression was noted .88 of the time in a Pulitzer-awarded story; it was mentioned half as often in a regular feature. These aspects of appearance were not mentioned without specific purpose.

Of all that is distinctive between Pulitzer-awarded and regular features, it is that of setting and environment, movement and action, and quotes. Although setting and environment is static, and movement and action dynamic, these elements intertwine and are considered together.

Beginning with the numbers, the mean number of instances of movement in Pulitzer-awarded features was approximately four times in a story; the mean number of times movement was illustrated in a regular feature was just over one time. However, because action is comprised of movements and the two thus work in tandem, this statistic tells only half the story. Pulitzer-awarded features had, on average, nearly 15 instances of action; regular features had not quite five instances per story – one-third of what Elwood called "the chief means of characterizing a story-actor" (1959, p. 24). Action propels a story forward (Scofield, 2007); without it, the movement and actions the journalist describes remain at the edges – the inconsequential periphery of the story, while quotes strung together make up the body of the story. The amount of movement and action in a Pulitzer-awarded feature together indicate that many Pulitzer-

awarded features are comprised of vivid scenes, not inconsequential movement. This is supported by the amount of setting and environment Pulitzer-awarded features contained: roughly 10 instances in a story, compared with nearly four instances in a regular feature. The greater amount of both setting and environment, movement and action, suggests an interplay within scene between a character, his actions, and the environment. This example, from Dave Curtain's Pulitzer winner, illustrates the point:

> As Cindy prepares dinner at 5 p.m., she realizes there is no hot water. Bill, still wiping the sweat from his sundrenched brow, heads down to the basement to light the pilot light on the hotwater heater. He doesn't know that propane has leaked into the basement. He lights a match.
>
> Suddenly a fiery explosion rocks the house.
>
> "There was a boom and I saw a fireball," Cindy says later. "I didn't know what happened. I though the house was hit by lightning."
>
> "Call the hospital!" Bill shouts breathlessly. Trying to run, he staggers up the basement stairs. Only the collar of his shirt is left dangling from his neck. (1998, p.370).

Of all that reveals character, none does more so than the character's actions and words (Elwood, 1959). That a character's words define him or her is aptly illustrated by the quotes statistic. The mean of quotes in Pulitzer-awarded features is 14.12; the mean of quotes in regular features is far larger: 23.65. In Pulitzer-awarded features, the quotes are used carefully and intentionally and *far less* than their regular counterparts, which affirms that the stories of Pulitzer-awarded journalists are not strings of quotes, but scenes purposefully strung together according to theme. For example, these two quotes from a regular feature tell little about the people who speak them:

> "My wife saw the cover of a magazine from the Homebuilders Association, and we got plans from that," he said.
>
> "I love to wallpaper," said Mrs. Butz. (Kelly, 1984, p. 3B)

In contrast, these quotes from Jon Franklin's Pulitzer-winning story, "Mrs. Kelly's Monster," demonstrate not only the surgeon's character, but the gravity of the situation as well:

> "There's one chance of three that we'll end up with a hell of a mess or a dead patient," Dr. Ducker says.
>
> "I reviewed it in my own heart and with other people, and I thought about the patient. You weigh what happens if you do it against what happens if you don't do it. I convinced myself that it should be done." (Franklin, 1998, p. 7)

In sum, of all the questions this study purports to answer, chief among them is this: What elements comprise a Pulitzer prize-winning feature story? Although this study is only a beginning, the answer largely defines which elements Pulitzer-awarded journalists utilize to comprise vivid scene: a character's distinctive physical characteristics, clothing and possessions; the setting and environment as it defines a character; a physical description of character that is not lineament nor habitual posture or expression but bodily appearance in the immediate moment; a character's movements and actions, facial expressions, words, and thoughts. If these factors are particular to Pulitzer-awarded features, they are also indicative of journalistic excellence and provide insight into what that excellence entails. That the characters live and breathe is not only tacitly acknowledged by the reader by reason of the news as fact, but come alive as vivid images within scene.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

This study began with the theoretical construct of character. A character, it is theorized, is an image, "a mental representation of someone for whom we have no direct evidence" (Gerrig & Allbritton, 1990, p. 380). The only evidence presented in a text is characterization, which, through concrete language, evokes an actuality – a living being – in the mind's eye. The reader experiences, though the senses, the image; the sensations of physical experience and emotion are real and consequently define the image – the character – as real. The writer's words are the malleable clay which brings the character alive for the reader.

This study then surmised that character is the vehicle through which the reader experiences a news story. The reader's experience is that of enjoyment – how "I" experienced the story – and is driven by feelings about characters. The reader's involvement may take the form of empathy, parasocial interaction, and/or identification, but is dependent on the character's construction in the text – and the journalist's words. Characterization may tell the reader who the character is – the writer's manifest point of view expressed in abstract language – but also tell through narrative, explanation, or analysis. Characterization may also show through scene, in which the *character* "tells and acts out his own story" (Elwood, 1959, p. 145). Adam Smith noted that "When we see a stroke aimed and just ready to fall upon the leg or arm of another person, we naturally shrink and draw back our own leg or our own arm" (1971, p. 3). Smith's observation assumed an onlooker's presence in the scene; this is as true of text as it is of bodily presence. It is scene – the reader's ability to *see* a character – which elicits emotion in the reader. The greater the emotion, the more the emotion defines the experience as real, and the greater the reader's involvement in the story (Ahn, 2008).

This study postulated that if there is an opportunity for characterization in news, it is within the feature story, given not only the opportunities the canvas proffers, but its narrative structure, particularly detailed passages – or scene. In vivid scene the character comes alive, "reveal[ed] at a particular moment" (Barnet, et al., 1971, p. 100-101). If the feature story offers the possibility, a feature story awarded a Pulitzer demonstrates the achievement of excellence in character development. In sum, this study theorized that the characterization in Pulitzer-awarded features both enlivens the character and is the means by which the reader experiences empathy, parasocial interaction, and/or identification.

If this is the case, the results of this study reflect that the distinct difference in characterization between Pulitzer-awarded features and regular features is, indeed, scene. These elements – a character's distinctive physical characteristics, clothing and possessions; the setting and environment as it defines a character; a physical description of character that is not lineament nor habitual posture or expression but bodily appearance in the immediate moment; a character's movements and actions, facial expressions, words, and thoughts – are those which comprise scene in Pulitzer-awarded features and those which bring the character to life for the reader. This is the characterization which elicits empathy, parasocial interaction, and/or identification, and is the motivation – the impetus – for media selection. This is the characterization which ties reader to writer.

6.1 Study Limitations

This study is not without limitations. The results of this study are, in large measure, the consequence of a small *n.* Given that there are 31 Pulitzer-awarded features of which five were not considered in this study, the amount of data was necessarily constrained. The small data set, in statistical terms, limited the statistical power and, consequently, the results of the study

(Trochim, 2005). The greater the *n* the more the differences between Pulitzer-awarded features and regular features emerge; the smaller the sample size the more difficult it is to distinguish those differences (Trochim, 2005). Although the mean of indirect, dynamic characterization for Pulitzer-awarded features was larger, approximately 36 instances in a story, compared with the mean of roughly 30 instances of indirect, dynamic characterization in purposively chosen regular features, the difference was not statistically significant to demonstrate more indirect, dynamic characterization in Pulitzer-winning stories. The mean of both types of direct characterization in Pulitzer-winning stories, roughly 51 instances of direct characterization in each story, was not statistically significant when compared with the direct characterization mean of approximately 43 instances in regular features. Although each of these instances possibly points toward an affirmation of Hypotheses 1 and 2, the small data set stymied statistically significant results.

The limited data size also likely influenced the results of Hypothesis 3, in which no statistically significant difference in the amount of static, indirect characterization was found between Pulitzer-winning stories and regular features. Also, given the limited sample size, the study did not demonstrate a statistically significant degree of change in indirect, dynamic characterization over time; the study showed that the only indirect characterization factor to change over time was that of titles: prior to 1993, titles appeared approximately 15 times in a feature story whether it was a Pulitzer-awarded or regular feature, but more than 23 per story after 1993.

There are additional reasons for the inconclusive results. First, Pulitzer-winning features were compared to much shorter regular news features, although the length of a feature story was a criterion in the data selection. The length of a purposively chosen regular feature story determined the number of words of a Pulitzer-winning feature that were coded. Pulitzer-winning

features, which were far longer stories, were not entirely coded. Given that the structure of most Pulitzers was that of beginning, middle, and end, and that many Pulitzer stories began with an explanation or summary of the story, the scenes and action which differentiate these stories from their regular counterparts were not coded. This also explains the large standard deviation – 19 – in the action category for Pulitzer features. In a future study, paragraphs from each story should be randomly selected to ensure a more equal comparison.

Second, in a few cases, the newspaper of comparable circulation to a particular year's Pulitzer winner had also previously garnered one, or several, Pulitzers. The regular feature selected was more likely to have many of the characteristics which characterize a Pulitzer winner. For instance, the 2008 Pulitzer feature winner was "Pearls Before Breakfast," published in the *Washington Post*. A newspaper of comparable circulation was *The New York Times.* Given the study's selection guidelines, a feature was necessarily selected from the *Times* for analysis. These purposively selected features may have skewed, to some degree, the data and the results.

Third, the study's design, which compared two sets of data of identical size, many have also been an intrinsic weakness. In the future, a second study could compare a far greater number of purposively selected regular features, chosen from a pool comprised of newspapers not previously awarded a Pulitzer, with a census of Pulitzer-winning features to aggregate a much larger *n* and statistically significant results.

6.2 Professional Recommendations

This study would be of little benefit without, perhaps, professional recommendations for the structure and composition of feature stories. The construction of a feature begins before the journalist writes, during the reporting. Reporting must include sensory data and scene; it must be the careful, meticulous observations of the reporter.

> He must present, moment by moment, concrete images drawn from a careful observation of how people behave, and he must render the connections between moments, the exact gestures, facial expressions, or turns of speech that, within any given scene, move human beings from emotion to emotion, from one instant in time to the next. (Gardner, J., 1984, p. 24)

What the journalist commits to paper is that which emphasizes the concrete and the sensory, whether within or outside of scene. The construction of scene is built around theme, which provides underlying purpose and dictates the information utilized. Movement and action work in tandem to visually illustrate and define character. Quotes are used carefully and intentionally to demonstrate character and illuminate scene, rather than strung together to provide haphazard structure and direction. A feature's underlying purpose and direction stems from theme; narrative structure may also be utilized because its flexible frame provides not only the space to construct scene but its structural elements facilitate the maximum development of character and reader enjoyment.

In an era when the predicted demise of newspapers is more fact than fiction, the reader's experience with newspapers is paramount. It there is a last and final suggestion, it is this: crucial to the news reading experience is the reader's enjoyment: how "I" experienced a story. Perhaps a solution to newspapers' loss of readership is scene: within scene, fear, anguish, exhilaration, and joy are not only the experiences of the characters, but also that of the reader's.

Appendix A: Coding Instructions

1. The intent of this research is a measure of characterization as an aggregate; that is, the amount and type of characterization used in Pulitzer-prize winning feature stories as compared with randomly chosen feature news stories. For this reason, characterization of all characters within a news story is coded. On occasion, the writer endows inanimate objects with human characteristics. This research focuses on the characterization of people. For this reason, only the characterization of people is coded.
2. To code for characterization, the coder proceeds sentence by sentence through the news story. When the coder reads a sentence with information that describes or refers to a character, that information is coded with a tally marked under the appropriate type of characterization on the characterization coding sheet. A sentence may contain more than one instance of characterization. In this case, each instance is appropriately coded.
3. The purpose of the coding is to delineate characterization which *tells* from characterization which *shows.* As each sentence or phrase that pertains to a character is read, the information is first determined to be an instance of either direct of indirect characterization. Given that journalists are admonished to show, not tell, the coder first considers whether an instance is that of indirect characterization. **Indirect characterization** shows via scene. A scene is an event rendered in detail rather than summarized (Scofield, 2007, p. 15) and has a structure: a beginning, middle, and end. There is a situation at the beginning, a line of action, and then there is a new situation at the end (Scofield, 2007, p. 16) within which the reader is shown the facts and allowed to reach his or her own conclusions concerning the character's traits (Elwood, 1959, pg. 22). This is done in several ways:
    a. **Description**: the character is described. Description is not only appearance, but sense impressions of smell, touch, and sound (Burroway, 1982).
        i. For example: "He was a tall man with plenty of weight where weight ought to be. All his movements were swift and purposeful, yet he never seemed in a hurry. His gray eyes looked straight at you from under thick eyebrows that almost met. Today he wore a brown suit of Harris tweed, expensive and conservative. 'No pleats and no padding,' he always sternly admonished his tailor" (Elwood, 1959, p. 23). (The last sentence is an instance of indirect characterization that is speech.)
    b. **Setting or environment**: "environment includes surroundings, conditions, and forces within that environment. Setting is the more immediate surroundings of a story or a character and may be anything from a town to a telephone booth" (Elwood, 1959, p. 23).
        i. For example: "Dean Crawford's plain desk of fumed walnut stood, foursquare and sturdy, on the thick, two-toned blue rug. It said plainly, 'Let there be no nonsense here.' It bore no frivolous vase of flowers. No photographs in Florentine frames cluttered its polished surface. But in one of the drawers, close to Dean's hand, were unframed photographs of Emily in her wedding dress, of John playing tennis, and one of Elise taken in her bath at the age of six months. The chairs were handsome, but all except Dean's possessed an incredible stiffness that did not invite loitering" (Elwood, 1959, p. 23-24).

c. **Action**: what the character does. "…while in action, people reveal by facial expression, gestures, unconscious movement and physical reactions to emotional and physical impacts, the sort of characters they are…action, other things being equal, interests people more than any other means of character delineation open to the writer, except speech" (Elwood, 1959, p. 24).
    i. For example: "Dean drove away from the house that morning, outwardly unmoved by the goggle-eyed stares of the neighbors at the long, sleek lines of his new car. He drove easily, carefully, as he always did. Halted by the red light at the intersection of Grove and Main, he waited patiently and, in spite of wild honking from a cut-down flivver behind him, he did not put his car in motion until the green light flashed on. Then he swung the big car around with one hand, gravely saluting his friend, the corner policeman, with the other" (Elwood, 1959, p. 24).

d. **Speech**: "consists of the *words* themselves, the *way* they are said, and the *tone* of voice used" (Elwood, 1959, p. 24-25).
    i. Words: "No two people use the same words and with the same frequency or in the same arrangement. A man's background, as well as his character, determine his choice of words. A carpenter doesn't choose the same words as does a research scientist" (Elwood, 1959, p. 70-71).
    ii. Way: the words may be the same, but how they are delivered offers as much, or more, reflection of character as do the words, as the following two examples demonstrate.
        1. "'Get out!' old Buck Elkins rumbled, shaking a fat, hairy forefinger menacingly at Ed. 'If you weren't so damned good-looking, I'd fire you. But' – he glowered furiously at the young man before him – 'I have to consider our women customers. A profile counts more with them than the safety of their investment. So I'll keep you on, you lazy whelp.' Buck looked at Ed as he might have looked at a dose of bitter medicine, hard to take but necessary to his well-being. 'At least,' he added, 'until a better profile comes along.'" (Elwood, 1959, p. 67)
        2. "'Get out!' old Buck Elkins rumbled, shaking a fat, hairy forefinger playfully at Ed. 'If you weren't so damned good-looking, I'd fire you. But' – he closed one jovial blue eye in a Gargantuan wink – 'I have to consider our women customers. A profile counts more with them than the safety of their investment. So I'll keep you on, you lazy whelp.' Buck looked at Ed as an indulgent father looks at an unpredictable but brilliant son. 'At least,' he added, 'until a better profile comes along.'" (Elwood, 1959, p. 67)
    iii. Tone: "the tonal quality of a voice is often an excellent means of determining character, and, by that means, of portraying character" (Elwood, 1959, p. 68).
        1. For example: "The longer she talked the more her voice sounded like a siren going to a four-alarm fire" (Elwood, 1959, p. 68).

e. **Thought**:

   i. "'Two more restaurants opening next week,' Dean thought. 'I checked carefully on everything and they will both be money-makers from the start. Wish I could get John interested in the business. If only Emily wouldn't encourage him to fool around all the time in that laboratory he has fixed up in the basement. Chemistry! Sort of fiddling work. Nothing a man can get his teeth into.'" (Elwood, 1959, p. 25).

4. These five general categories of indirect characterization – description, setting/environment, action, speech, and thought – are the foundation of indirect characterization. These are the tools with which the writer shows. Once the information is determined to be an instance of indirect characterization, it is then determined to be either static or dynamic characterization (Dynamic characterization follows below). Static is that which does not move; **static characterization**, then, is appearance only. It is characterization without movement. An instance of indirect characterization that is static should be tallied under one of the types of static characterization that follows:
   a. **Name, age, gender**: For age, this also includes approximations of age: young, old, middle-aged, teen-aged, etc.
   b. **Lineaments**: are defined as "a feature or detail of a face, body, or figure, considered with respect to its outline or contour;" it is also "distinguishing features; distinctive characteristics" (dictionary.com). Lineaments include face and body contours, as well as distinctive physical characteristics of height, weight, and hair style. "…a man with bony hands and enlarged knuckles is usually classified as thoughtful, philosophical, a worker and a thinker. A man with small plump hands and smooth fingers, as a rule, takes things as they come, is more or less indolent and inclined to let the world go by with a shrug" (Elwood, 1959, p. 33). Lineaments, which are distinctive features and physical characteristics, also include distinctive, defining physical characteristics which lead the reader to perceive and mentally construct the character in light of the characteristic. For instance, a character with a speech impediment is perceived, even visually, differently than one who does not. A character with cancer, a brain tumor, etc., heavily influences the reader's character construct.
   c. **Habitual posture**: "The woman who habitually holds her head tipped to one side is a different person from the woman who holds her head straight and her chin up" (Elwood, 1959, p. 34).
      i. "Old John Hacker sat in his chair looking like an old bald eagle perched on a crag, ready to defend his right of possession with bill and claw" (Elwood, 1959, p. 34).
      ii. "Ollie Whimbledon, through long practice, had achieved a spine so flexible that it permitted him to melt into what gave the effect of a supine position, even in an office chair. The complete muscular relaxation that he could achieve in a chair, even slightly upholstered, passed belief" (Elwood, 1959, p. 35).
   d. **Habitual expression**: the expression of the face in repose (Elwood, 1959, p. 35).
      i. "Miss Manner's face was as guiltless of a wrinkle as her starched white uniform, and equally expressionless" (Elwood, 1959, p. 57).
   e. **Clothing**: "Clothing is an extremely important means of characterization. People choose their clothes, and character-traits influence that choice. The way people

wear their clothes also indicates character….These are a few of the details we notice and from which we reach our conclusions in probably less than a second of time: approximate cost, color, color combinations, style or lack of style, approximate age, cleanliness, suitability to the person, suitability to the occasion." (Elwood, 1959, p. 36) This category is expanded to include the entirety of physical appearance as it pertains to what one wears on one's person, including jewelry, purse, gun, etc.

f. **Setting/environment**: "environment includes surroundings, conditions, and forces within that environment" (Elwood, 1959, p. 23). The category of setting/environment encompasses several facets. Elwood used setting and environment to define a character by either likeness or contrast. "When using the first method, the surroundings you choose to depict will be in harmony with the character-traits of your actor. When using the second method, the surroundings will be in sharp contrast with the character-traits you aim to show" (Elwood, 1959, p. 37). However, this category also includes Tom Wolfe's concept of status life (1973, pg. 32), which he defines as the "entire pattern of behavior and possessions through which people express their position in the world or what they think or hope it will be" (Wolfe, 1973, p. 32). Hart more finely defined status life when he wrote "Characters drive distinctive brands of cars, wear clothes that say something about their values and reveal their place in the social structure via their houses, furniture and jewelry" (Hart, 1998a, p. 3). The category of setting/environment includes that of status life as it pertains only to environment, surroundings, and possessions (not on one's person) as a demonstration of character. Lastly, this category includes Bement's definition of characterization through setting: "where the character has had any influence on his surroundings (such as his house or his room), or where the surroundings have influenced the character" (1931, pg. 103). Note: In many instances, setting/environment/ surroundings are described to set the stage, to portent what is to come. Setting/environment should be tallied only as it characterizes an individual.

   i. Likeness: "Most women are satisfied with one set of curtains at their bedroom windows, but Nellie Courruthers had three. First there was a gossamer-thin white silk marquisette that hung like gathered mist next to the glass. Over that, draped back at the sides, ruffled curtains of pink net embroidered in rosebuds cascaded frothily to the thickly carpeted floor. Framing this confection was a lambrequin and drapes of pale blue hammered satin. 'So French!' Nellie fluttered, as she gazed on the display of expensive yardage for which the windows were an excuse" (Elwood, 1959, p. 38).

   ii. Contrast: "Margaret had never before seen a room like this one. The dark brown woodwork was old-fashioned before Margaret was born. Yellowed wallpaper, on which red and green and gold scrolls sprawled in a monotonously repeated design, was stained in places and peeling off in others. The tailored freshness of Margaret's trim linen suit and her smart pigskin suitcase struck incongruous notes in this atmosphere of age and decay" (Elwood, 1959, p. 38).

g. **Occupation/profession/title**: "The characterization given by naming an occupation is a general one, to be sure, but if given where it should be, in the very beginning of a story, it helps to narrow down the characterization and prepare the reader for the *specific detail* that will later characterize the actor *as an individual.* So, whenever your material will permit, give the *occupation* of your characters as an early part of their characterization. Furthermore, when the reader knows the occupation or profession of a character, his imagination automatically builds the correct setting and details of background for that character-actor" (Elwood, 1959, p. 39, emphasis in original). This category is expanded to encompass not only occupations and professions, but also titles, including informal titles, which often reference a character otherwise unnamed. Whether it is an occupation, profession, or merely informal title, all are titles that define the character. Informal titles, such as aunt or uncle, even soldier or civilian, necessarily impart information about the character.

h. **Physical Description in Immediate Scene/Static Other**: A physical description of character that is not lineament nor habitual posture or expression, but bodily appearance in the immediate moment. "The gray convolutions of the brain, wet with secretions, sparkle beneath the powerful operating theater spotlights," (Franklin, 1998, p. 8) is a physical description in the immediate scene. This category also includes still images which do not conform to the classifications named. For instance, that a character lies lifeless in the streets, a victim of an earthquake, characterizes and defines. This is an instance of static characterization. However, care must be taken to ensure that all other possibilities have been carefully considered before placing an instance in this category.

The instance of indirect characterization may illustrate a character through movement and action, or **dynamic characterization.** Elwood termed it "moving picture technique" (1959, pg. 42). There are two basic types of dynamic characterization: bodily/muscular movements, which become actions, and speech. Thoughts, which on paper are little different than speech, are included in the category of speech. An instance of dynamic characterization should be judged as either bodily/muscular movements or speech, then tallied according the particular sub-type listed:

a. **Bodily/Muscular Movements**

i. **Physical actions/reactions to emotional and physical impacts:** it is movement that is *not* walk, gestures, facial expression, or mannerisms. While dynamic characterization that is movement implies the immediacy and present tense of behavior, this category is broadened to include actions/reactions and behaviors that may have occurred in the past. It is important to note that journalists often focus on a character's actions, which are different from movement. "It is important to understand the difference between action and movement, which are not synonymous. Physical movement is generally necessary to the action, but it is not adequate to ensure that there will be an action," noted Burroway (1982, p. 110). Bement also differentiated action from movement when he noted that "…most action is double-barreled. It is made to serve two purposes at once: to characterize one or more of the actors, and to depict an event which is necessary to the main action of the story" (1931, pg. 93). For this

reason, the category is divided into two: physical actions/reactions or movement within a scene, and action, which moves the story forward. At times, these are difficult to differentiate. Movement is literal: it is physical action contained within a scene in the past or present tense but is primarily in the present tense; an action, while also within scene, may be comprised of many movements, includes choices and behaviors, and is in the present or past tense, although action is mostly in the past tense. Action makes things happen or change (Scofield, 2007). Physical actions/reactions are tallied under movement; action is tallied under action. In this way, this category includes both a character's movements and actions: in sum, the character is defined by what he or she does.

ii. **Walk**: "Walking is automatic and all automatic movements – that is, movements over which the conscious mind is no longer in complete control – allow more or less free expression of character, depending on the amount of control exercised" (Elwood, 1959, p. 44).
    1. Coralie tiptoed hesitatingly into Aunt Sophronia's room as if fearful she would rouse the old woman into her habitual waking state of harsh invective. Reluctantly her eyes went to the bed. It came to her with a shock that never again would the smooth expanse of the candlewick bedspread be disturbed by the bony frame of Aunt Sophronia. Aunt Sophronia was dead. In sudden decision, Coralie brought her heels down hard on the maplewood floor. She went clicking briskly about the room, gathering up the bottles of medicine, drinking-glasses, wisps of gauze; all the miserable evidences of Aunt Sophronia's bitter fight. Death had won in the end and so had put a dramatic period to Aunt Sophronia's domination of Coralie (Elwood, 1959, p. 45-46).

iii. **Gestures**: "a movement, or movements collectively, of the body, or of part of the body, to express or emphasize ideas, emotions, etc.," (Webster's, 1996, p. 567).

iv. **Facial Expression**, which includes:
    1. **Mouth**: "by the changing expressions of the mouth, the writer can show many character-traits through the outward evidences of emotion that are made evident through the muscular movement of the lips" (Elwood, 1959, p. 60).
        a. For example: "I suppose Clint Sawyer must have had teeth, but not once during the interview did I see them. When he talked, his thin lips parted just enough to let the words slip out, then he pressed them tightly together again. His smile, a line stretching across his mouth, was distinctly alarming. It took me a moment to realize that the singular grimace was meant for a smile, no doubt self-congratulatory, since he had definitely gotten the better of me" (Elwood, 1959, p. 61).
    2. **Eye and Glance**

a. For example: "Jim looked at Elaine sharply, his dark brown eyes under bushy black eyebrows taking a swift inventory of her mink coat, the diamond that sparkled on the third finger of her left hand, and the hat that even he could see was a French model. His eyelids drooped a little, but not enough to hide the cold, acquisitive gleam that shone between the narrowed slits." (Elwood, 1959, p. 57). This is indirect characterization, as opposed to the direct characterization: "Jim was selfish, cold, and calculating" (Elwood, 1959, p. 57).

3. The following are examples of facial expression:
    a. "The heavy muscles of Saylor's jaw tightened, drew into ugly knots. His heavy black eyebrows drew together, above his small black eyes, eyes that glittered now with demoniacal fury" (Elwood, 1959, p. 60).
    b. "A slow red mounted in Alec's face, but his cool smile did not change" (Elwood, 1959, p. 60).
    c. "There was one swift blaze of fury in her eyes, suddenly hidden by lowered lids. A moment later, she was twinkling and sparkling up at him, her face all gaiety and laughter" (Elwood, 1959, p. 60).

v. **Mannerisms**: "a peculiarity of manner in behavior…that has become a habit," (Webster's, 1996, p. 823).

b. **Speech**: "it is not altogether what a man says that characterizes him, but the way in which he says it" (Elwood, 1959, p. 67). Speech includes what is said as a quote or paraphrase; tone of voice and voice modulation; choice of words; tempo; dialogue; and thoughts.

i. **Quote/paraphrase**: what is said, conveyed in either quotes or as a paraphrase. Note: a quote/paraphrase in a paragraph which pertains to one thought or idea is tallied as one quote. However, if a paragraph contains more than one, as indicated by more than one attribution, even if that attribution is the same source, each quote/paraphrase is tallied. A new or subsequent paragraph that is a quote/paraphrase from the same source is separately tallied.

ii. **Tone and voice modulation**: For the reader to hear the character, the writer must "relate the sound of the voice to a specific sound with which the reader is familiar" (Elwood, 1959, p. 69).
    1. For example: "Albert's voice always made me think of a foghorn with gravel in it" (Elwood, 1959, p. 69).

iii. **Choice of words**: distinctive words and speech patterns, including slang and dialect.

iv. **Tempo**: "The speed with which a character talks and the spacing or pace of his words and sentences are sound indexes to your actor as a person" (Elwood, 1959, p. 71).

v. **Dialogue**: a back-and-forth conversation between two people. It is a quote/paraphrase followed by another quote/paraphrase that is a response. It is included here because it is also speech.

vi. **Thoughts**: the text indicates that the information is what the character thought. Thought also includes stream-of-consciousness.

5. After the coder has determined that an instance of characterization is not indirect characterization, it is then an instance of **direct characterization**: it is what is told, not shown. There are two types of direct characterization: set piece; or narration, exposition, and analysis. Direct characterization is purposefully enumerated last so that all other possibilities are exhausted first. An instance of characterization that meets the delineated criteria of direct characterization is then tallied under the appropriate sub-category:

a. **Set piece:** the character is presented as a "set piece" rather than "unrolled" across scenes (Macauley & Lanning, 1964, p. 61). "Direct characterization is accomplished in only one way, by the writer's *telling* the reader what sort of person the [character] is" Elwood explained (1959, pg. 22, emphasis in original). *Narrative Digest* defined direct characterization as the writer's abstracted observations about a character (A Lexicon) – a general idea of a person expressed in abstract language. Direct characterization is the author's manifest point of view, and is utilized in a short space because few words are needed (Elwood, 1959; Burroway, 1982). These are examples of direct characterization:

i. Alexis had a violent temper (Elwood, 1959, p. 58).

ii. Myra was gentle, patient, and kind (Elwood, 1959, p. 58).

iii. He was an honest man (Elwood, 1959, p. 58).

iv. He was a cowardly man (Elwood, 1959, p. 58).

v. Mildred was a mean, selfish, stingy, and cruel woman (Elwood, 1959, p. 56).

vi. Dean Crawford was a hard man to deal with, if you started playing tricks; but he was honest even with his enemies. He loved his wife and children, although he did not understand them, and the fact that he owned the finest home in Maplewood gave him a rich, warm feeling deep inside, though he never put the feeling into words (Elwood, 1959, p. 22).

vii. Mrs. Touchett was certainly a person of many oddities, of which her behavior on returning to her husband's house after many months was a noticeable specimen. She had her own way of doing all that she did, and this is the simplest description of a character which, although it was by no means without benevolence, rarely succeeded in giving an impression of softness. Mrs. Touchett might do a great deal of good, but she never pleased (James, 2001, p. 19).

viii. She had the face of a discontented, petulant woman (Elwood, 1959, p. 29).

Of the last example Elwood wrote, "The writer of such a sentence attempts to force the reader to imagine the details that make a woman's face reveal a discontented and petulant character, instead of *giving* the details and allowing the reader to imagine the face. Most readers subconsciously refuse to imagine the details when such a vague picture is given" (Elwood, 1959, p. 30, emphasis in original). Direct characterization *tells.* Indirect characterization *shows*. Elwood demonstrates indirect characterization of the same woman: "Her small mouth was

pulled together tightly, as if with a drawstring. Her eyes, once bright blue, were now the color of the sky at noonday and in them was a constant look of hurt surprise" (Elwood, 1959, p. 30). Hart noted that "Newspaper writers who describe their subjects as timid or brash, forceful or passive, are pursuing the same kind of direct characterization" (Hart, 1998a, p. 2).

   b. **Narration, Exposition, Analysis:** direct characterization is not only the writer's presentation of a character as a "set piece," but is authorial interpretation – "'telling' the reader the character's background, motives, values, virtues, and the like" (Burroway, 1982, pg. 98-99). Jack Hart noted that direct characterization is also "simple commentary by the author," and is the narrator's clear, distinct voice, which he called the author's "heavy presence" (1998a, p. 2). Journalists often show by relating facts, not presenting scene. This relating of facts, however, is telling, not showing. This may be done through narration, exposition, or analysis (Elwood, 1959). Narration tells the reader about something the actor did or about something that happened to him (Elwood, 1959, p. 146); exposition explains about a character (Elwood, 1959, p. 146); analysis diagnoses or examines component parts of a character (Elwood, 1959, p. 147). By virtue of its brevity and its sheer utilitarian ease of use, journalists use direct characterization to tell what cannot be shown, to offer context, background, and explanation. This telling, then, becomes the narrative thread which ties together what is shown, because what is shown is scene.

6. The same procedure should be followed by the coder throughout the news story until the coding is complete. For review, the pattern of coding is as follows: the coder reads, sentence by sentence, the news story. Because a sentence may contain more than one instance of characterization, each instance of characterization is determined to be
   a. Direct or indirect characterization. The coder compares the instance of characterization with the criteria which define each category of indirect characterization:
      i. Description
      ii. Setting or environment
      iii. Action
      iv. Speech
      v. Thought
   b. If the instance meets the criteria of one of these categories, the instance is further determined to be either static or dynamic characterization. The coder asks: is it appearance, a static image? Or is the image one of movement or behavior, speech, or thought? If it is an instance of static characterization, the coder selects one of the following for static characterization and tallies it under the appropriate sub-category:
      i. Name, age, gender
      ii. Lineaments
      iii. Habitual posture
      iv. Habitual expression
      v. Clothing
      vi. Settings/environment
      vii. Occupation/profession/title

viii. Other

c. If the instance is one of dynamic characterization, the coder then selects either bodily/muscular movements or speech, then tallies the instance under the appropriate sub-category:
    i. Bodily/muscular movements
        1. Physical actions/reactions to emotional and physical impacts
            a. Movement
            b. Action
        2. Walk
        3. Gestures
        4. Facial expression
        5. Mannerisms
    ii. Speech
        1. Quote/paraphrase
        2. Tone and voice modulation
        3. Choice of words
        4. Tempo
        5. Dialogue
    iii. Thoughts

d. If the coder determines that the instance meets none of the criteria which delineate indirect characterization, the instance is considered direct characterization and is tallied under the appropriate sub-category:
    i. Set piece
    ii. Narration, Exposition, Analysis

Appendix B: Characterization Coding Sheet

Characterization Coding Sheet

Pulitzer Winner	Random Article

Year ______

Title ______

Author ______

Newspaper ______

Indirect																				Direct	
Static								Dynamic													
Description								Actions						Speech							
Name, age, gender	Lineaments	Habitual Posture	Habitual Expression	Clothing/ Possesions on person	Occupation / Profession/ Title	Setting/ Environment/ Forces within Environment	Other	Physical Actions / Reactions		Walk	Gestures	Facial Expression	Mannerisms	Quote/ paraphrase	Tone	Word Choice	Tempo	Dialogue	Thought	Set	Narration, Exposition, Analysis
								Movement	Action												

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