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Employers and Employees: How Narrative Perspective Influences Agent Placement in a Simulated Work Environment

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Abstract: Virtual character agreement has an underlying spatial component, where increased physical distance is associated with decreased shared attitude (Matthews & Matlock, 2010). This work addresses the relationship between expected character interaction and agent placement in a simulated work environment.

After imagining being either an employer or an employee in a meeting about salary adjustments, participants drew an employee figure in a virtual office environment. When taking the employee's perspective, participants placed virtual agents reliably closer to their employer's agent when expecting to discuss a pay raise, and farther away when expecting to discuss a pay cut. No inter-agent differences were found when readers took the employer's perspective.

These results suggest that agent viewpoint is important in virtual environments. Not only does inter-agent distance influence employer/employee agreement, as previous work has shown, this relationship seems to be bi-directional, where narrative content also influences agent placement.