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# Fictionality and Perceived Realism in Experiencing Stories: A Model of Narrative Comprehension and Engagement

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*This article offers a theoretical framework to explain circumstances under which perceptions of “unrealness” affect engagement in narratives and subsequent perceived realism judgments. A mental models approach to narrative processing forms the foundation of a model that integrates narrative comprehension and phenomenological experiences such as transportation and identification. Three types of unrealness are discussed: fictionality, external realism (match with external reality), and narrative realism (coherence within a story). We gather evidence that fictionality does not affect narrative processing. On the other hand, violations of external and narrative realism are conceived as inconsistencies among the viewer’s mental structures as they construct mental models of meaning to represent and comprehend the narrative. These inconsistencies may result in negative online evaluations of a narrative’s realism, may disrupt engagement, and may negatively influence postexposure (reflective) realism judgments as well as lessen a narrative’s persuasive power.*

The power of stories is well noted (Bruner, 1986; Green & Brock, 2000; Strange, 2002). From nothing more than a sequence of textual, visual, and/or auditory symbols, we construct worlds that are cognitively and emotionally engaging (Oatley, 2002) to the point that we may have difficulty returning to the real world and may even see aspects of the real world differently afterward (Gerrig, 1993). This experience of engagement is referred to with terms such as *transportation*, *absorption*, and *entrancement* (e.g., Gerrig, 1993; Nell, 1988). Recent research suggests that narrative engagement mediates relationships between exposure and acceptance of story-related beliefs (Green, 2004; Green & Brock, 2000); for example, the relations between exposure to entertainment education content and health-related attitudes and practices (Slater & Rouner, 2002) and between television programs and public policy preferences (Slater, Rouner, & Long, 2006).

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An important factor related to experiential engagement with stories appears to be the level of realism we see reflected in them (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2007; Green, 2004; Hall, 2003; Zhang, Hmielowski, & Busselle, 2007). It seems plausible that stories we consider authentic and true to life are most engaging (Green, 2004). But, it is also plausible that engagement with a story leaves us with a sense that the story was authentic. In either case, it is remarkable that the power of narrative is not diminished by readers' or viewers' knowledge that the story is invented. On the contrary, successful stories—those that engage us most—often are both fictional *and* unrealistic.

Our purpose in this article is to explore the notions of realism and fictionality in narratives. We begin with the mechanisms that underlie, facilitate, and inhibit engagement with narratives as they relate to the notion of realism. We focus on how perceptions of unrealness are linked to narrative processing. We use a mental models approach to explain how meaning is constructed from a narrative. In this approach, transportation (Green & Brock, 2000, 2002) into narrative is interpreted as a flow-like state accompanied by a loss of awareness of self and the actual world. Transportation is realized in constructing mental models of the narrative. Identification, in the form of perspective taking, also is integrated into the model. With this framework, we demonstrate that a viewer's knowledge of a narrative's fictionality does not disrupt the construction process. Then, we build into our model two types of perceived realism: First, the extent to which stories or their components are similar to the actual world ("external realism") and, second, plausibility and coherence within the narrative ("narrative realism"). We suggest that violations of both types of realism result from an inconsistency between the mental models that represent the narrative, general knowledge structures, and incoming narrative information. These inconsistencies prompt negative cognitions, interfere with the processing of the narrative, and inhibit the sense of being lost in the narrative. Further, online judgments (Hastie & Park, 1986) of the unrealness of a narrative may be stored in memory and subsequently influence memory-based, offline judgments of perceived realism, resulting in an assessment of the narrative as "unrealistic." Finally, we propose that observed inconsistencies undermine a narrative's potential to entertain, persuade, or enlighten.

This article addresses narratives in general, regardless of media. Certainly, different media have different attributes. For example, written texts require the reader to imagine scenes and scenery, whereas television and film provide images. Also, readers set the pace at which they process written texts, whereas consumers of electronic media have little control over the rate at which information is presented and must be comprehended. Although stylistic devices and representational conventions may differ from medium to medium, understanding the narrative—as "the representation of an event or a series of events" (Abbott, 2002, p. 12)—should be explainable by similar fundamental processing mechanisms regardless of the medium in which narrative representations occur. This assertion is supported by the fact that scholars have used similar theoretical approaches to explain the processing of narratives in both written texts (e.g., Graesser, Olde, & Klettke, 2002) and

film (e.g., Ohler, 1994). In the present article, our primary concerns are not with delineating differences between media but with audience members' comprehension of and engagement with narratives. The model of narrative comprehension and engagement presented here explicates the relationships among comprehension mechanisms, engagement-related experiences, and subsequent perceptions of the story, and ultimately extends to the influences of narratives on audience members.

### **Mental models of meaning in narrative**

Psychologists distinguish between the text on the page and the construction, performance, or realization of the story in the mind of the reader (Bruner, 1986; Gerrig, 1993; Nell, 1988; Oatley, 2002). As Oatley (2002) describes this process, "the reader becomes the writer of his or her own version of the story" (p. 43). Bordwell (1985) suggests that the story is "the imaginary construct we create progressively and retroactively . . . the developing result of picking up narrative cues, applying schemata, and framing and testing hypotheses" (p. 49). This conception of narrative processing positions the audience member as an active participant and defines reading or viewing as an active process that occurs online and in real time as the audience member constructs or realizes the story from the text.

Mental models offer a theoretical explanation for the process through which an audience member constructs meaning from a narrative, as well as the activity in which the audience member is engaged while doing so. Mental models are cognitive structures that represent some aspect of the external world (Johnson-Laird, 1983; van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983). For example, most individuals have a mental model of how a car is propelled even though they cannot actually see the force and mechanisms that transform power from the engine into the rotation of the tires. There are a number of different types of mental models as well as schemas involved in processing narratives.

The primary mental model in story comprehension is the situation model (Ohler, 1994; Wyer, 2004; Zwaan, Langston, & Graesser, 1995; Zwaan, Magliano, & Graesser, 1995). This is "the microworld of what the story is about [including] the spatial setting and the chronological sequence of episodes in the plot" (Graesser et al., 2002, p. 234). In their event-indexing model of story comprehension, Zwaan et al. (1995) suggest that "events and intentional actions of characters are the focal points of situation models. As each incoming story event or action is comprehended the reader monitors and updates the current situation model" (p. 292). We might visualize a situation model as a mechanism in which information is assembled. This mechanism is in motion as the narrative progresses. Before it lie bits of information that are yet unknown—events, behaviors, or facts that have not yet been encountered in the narrative. Behind it lies a coherent and logical assemblage of the information that has been encountered so far in the narrative, albeit with questions and uncertainties that may provide suspense or require resolution. Within the situation model, at what would be the present moment in the narrative's progression, the mechanism

assembles new information with information that the reader or viewer has already encountered (e.g., setting, characters, and events). It also refers backward to answer questions or clarify uncertainties. The assembly process is successful to the extent that incoming information can be incorporated into the story as it exists up to that point. That is, new information can be comprehended in light of that which is already known. It is unsuccessful when the reader or viewer has difficulty incorporating new information into the extant mental models. It is tempting to invoke the metaphor of a train moving along its tracks. But this would be inaccurate because with the situation model, the tracks are not assembled until the train passes. In front of the train would lie unrelated pieces of rail, wooden ties, and railroad spikes. Behind it would lie an intact railway. Under the train, representing the present moment in the narrative, the pieces are being put together and the track is being constructed as the narrative unfolds. Most important is that, at any given moment, the track being assembled must fit with the track that already has been assembled both immediately previously and miles back on the narrative's path.

Individuals construct mental models of a story from preexisting schemas and stereotypes (stereotypes being a specific category of schemas that represent people or groups; Fiske & Taylor, 1991). Schemas are distinguishable from mental models in that schemas exist independent of the story, whereas mental models are cognitive representations of events and states of affairs constrained in the time and space of the narrative (Brewer, 1987; Johnson-Laird, 1983; Markman, 1999; Roskos-Ewoldsen, Davies, & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2004). Because a story cannot make explicit all the details necessary for a coherent story, the viewer relies on schemas from previous experience to create a model of the story at hand (Rapaport & Shapiro, 1995). Thus, a viewer or reader uses preexisting, generic schemas of, for example, people and events to construct specific mental models that represent a specific story.

In addition to the schemas that we use all the time and that contain information that applies both to the real world and to any narrative world we might encounter (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Graesser et al., 2002), schemas for story and genre are also important, at least initially, in processing narratives (Ohler, 1994). Story schema separates narrative experience from real life by imposing a narrative form or structure and by implying causality among events. Unlike real life, stories have a beginning, middle, and end (Lacey, 2000; Nell, 1988). Thus, when we turn on a television program or when someone says, "Let me tell you a story," we retrieve a story schema and with it the expectation, among other expectations, that upcoming information will be causally and temporally related and that some conflict will be explicated and resolved. Similarly, activation of a genre schema and therefore retrieval of knowledge about genre allows us to anticipate the nature of the upcoming story. If, for example, someone says, "In a park, a police officer discovered an old woman standing over a corpse" or if the opening scene of television program shows us this, our schema for the mystery genre may be activated. Science fiction, romantic comedy, and crime drama all follow a story structure but differ in issues, conflicts, and, possibly, the story progressions they present (Graesser et al., 2002). Different genres have typical

patterns of story, setting, and characters, and if readers possess such knowledge, they are able to use the general pattern to construct the story for an unknown instance of a particular genre (Segal, 1995a).

In addition to the situation model, the processing of a narrative requires cognitive representation of the world in which the story occurs and representations of the characters who inhabit that world. It may be impossible to truly separate these intertwined mental models. However, for the purpose of exploring the role of consistency and inconsistency among elements of narrative, we conceive of the story world and the characters as represented by conceptually separate mental models that interact with and are subordinate to the situation model.

### **Story world**

The *story world model* is a relatively static mental model representing “a conceptual domain that is temporally and spatially coherent” (Segal, 1995a, p. 71). It covers setting and all that setting implies: place, time period, and general contemporary state of affairs. Part of the story world model is the “story world logic”—a set of implicit constraints and rules that indicate what is possible in the story world and what is not (Segal, 1995a). If the park in which a police officer finds an old woman and a corpse is set in 1960s East Berlin, not only are time and place set but also logical implications are inferred. For example, DNA evidence is not yet possible but fingerprinting is; cell phone technology is not yet available; and East and West Berlin are divided in the Cold War. Each of these points becomes a rule in the story world logic and each applies universally to all characters at all times.

The story world model starts with the assumption that the fictional world works like the actual world. Segal (1995a) points out that the “first approximation” of the story is that it complies with temporal and spatial constraints that rule the real world and that the characters behave, think, and feel the way real people do. The “default condition is verisimilitude” (Segal, 1995a, p. 72). Often, however, the story world deviates from real life, forcing the audience to modify its understanding of the story world logic while trying to maintain coherence in the story world (Segal, 1995a). Using the actual world as a default makes sense. This heuristic saves time and energy because we can simply assume that a fictional world functions like the actual world, leaving only the task of tracking differences. In 1960s East Berlin, travel by car, train, and plane was technologically possible, just as today. However, idiosyncratic of that time and place, such travel may be restricted by the East German government.

Although story world logic is an important feature in processing narratives, often the perceiver is not overtly conscious of it. However, it may be activated or brought to consciousness. For example, an audience member knows at some level that cell phones do not exist in 1960s Berlin. But the audience member would become overtly aware of this knowledge only if the logic is violated, for example, by the police officer answering a ringing cell phone.

## Characters

Characters within a narrative are represented by *character models* (Rapp, Gerrig, & Prentice, 2001). They also originate from previous knowledge, often in the form of stereotypes (Graesser et al., 2002). The old woman in the park initially would be represented by an “old-woman” stereotype. Then, the character model may begin to evolve if we learn, for example, that she slipped a handgun into her coat pocket as the police officer approached. The police officer also would be merely a stereotype until we learn more about her. Once developed, character models contain characters’ identities and traits as well as their motivations and goals (Magliano, Zwaan, & Graesser, 1999; Zwaan, Langston, et al., 1995). Character models may be established as viewers infer traits based on characters’ behaviors through the course of events (Rapp et al., 2001). Characters’ identities and traits remain relatively constant as the story progresses or, more precisely, as the situation model moves forward. Conversely, characters’ relationships both to their own goals and to other characters evolve with the progression of situation model. Thus, as the setting, characters, and central objects are established, the situation model is initiated and more information can be incorporated. For example, when the police officer rolls the body over, we discover a large spot of dried blood in the center of the victim’s chest.

Zubin and Hewitt (1995) argue that the “relation between the story and the story world in which it takes place, is fluid” (p. 130). Different theoretical approaches, such as the constructionist theory (Graesser et al., 2002) and the event-indexing model (Zwaan, Langston, et al., 1995), articulate the scope of the situation model somewhat differently. We find it useful to distinguish between that which is constantly changing—situation model—and that which is relatively more constant throughout the narrative—story world and character models.

In summary, a situation model can be thought of as the vehicle through which characters interact and experience events within a given story setting. When initiating engagement with a narrative, audience members use preexisting knowledge structures about places, times, people, and events, as well as stories and genres to begin constructing mental models and, from them, an understanding of the narrative at hand. Characters develop as new information about them is presented; settings vary from the real world to the extent that exceptions are implied or explained. The more a story world varies from what we know, the more work we must do to construct it (Segal, 1995a) but also the more rewarding that work may be.

## Loss of self-awareness and flow

Mental models can explain how readers or viewers construct meaning from a narrative. But this does not yet capture the phenomenological experience of becoming lost in a narrative (Nell, 1988). Green and Brock’s transportation-imagery model (Green, 2004; Green & Brock, 2000, 2002) is the most recent and one of the most compelling descriptions of intense narrative engagement. The transportation-imagery model describes a phenomenological experience in which “all of the person’s mental

systems and capacities become focused on the events occurring in the narrative” (Green & Brock, 2002, p. 324). Readers “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). This transportation experience is compared to Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) concept of *flow*—the experience of total absorption into an activity. During both transportation and flow, “the person’s attention is completely absorbed by the activity [and individuals] stop being aware of themselves as separate from the actions they are performing” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 53; cf. Green & Brock, 2002). According to flow theory, absorption is facilitated by a balance between the ability of the individual and the challenge of the task (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 1997). Sherry (2004) applied this concept in arguing that media activities are enjoyable to the extent that media users’ ability to comprehend the story matches the program’s complexity or that video games are enjoyable to the extent the player’s abilities match the game’s level of difficulty. Invoking the concept of flow is important because it suggests that engagement in narrative requires engagement in an activity and near complete focus on that activity. In art or music, for example, flow is centered on the creation of the artistic piece. In the case of narrative then, flow should be centered on the construction of meaning. For example, as information about the corpse, the woman, and the police officer is presented, a complex set of models must be constructed. The gun in the old woman’s pocket suggests she may be more than an innocent passerby. That the blood is dry suggests she is not the killer or at least she did not just kill the victim. The old woman tells the officer that she was out for a walk and stumbled upon the body. We can see that this would seem likely to the officer because we know the officer is unaware of the gun in the woman’s pocket. Our knowledge of the gun suggests there is more to the woman’s story. This narrative experience is engaging to the extent that cognitions are focused on assembling coherent models of the setting, events, characters, and their relationships, as well as hypothesizing explanations and anticipating incoming information: Did the woman bring the gun or might she have taken it from the dead man?

High levels of experiential engagement with a narrative can be seen as a flow-like state centered on the construction or realization of the narrative. “Being lost” (Nell, 1988) can be understood as losing self-awareness as a result of complete focus on constructing and elaborating mental models to represent the narrative at hand. Transportation into narrative then can be seen as the extent to which an audience member becomes absorbed into the activity of constructing mental models.

### **Deictic shift**

When we engage with a narrative, not only might we lose awareness of our self and surroundings but we also enter the story world. This psychological relocation into the story separates narrative experience from absorption in nonnarrative activities, such as sport or art. Deictic shift theory is useful in explaining this transition from the actual world to the story world. Deictic shift theory (Duchan, Bruder, & Hewitt,

1995) maintains that in addition to creating the mental model of the story, readers must locate themselves in the story by shifting the center of their experience from the actual world into the story world: They are performing a “deictic shift” (Segal, 1995b). The term *deixis* refers to an expression (a word, symbol, or action) that requires contextual information in order to have meaning. Words such as *I*, *now*, or *here* refer to different things depending on speaker, time, and location. The deictic center is the cognitive structure that contains elements of a particular time, space, and person—usually, the here and now of a person (Segal, 1995b). Experiencing a narrative requires that the readers switch to the time and location of the narrative and the subjective world of the characters from whose point of view the story is told. Readers are motivated to perform this deictic shift because deictic adverbs such as *here*, *now*, *today* make sense only from the deictic center of the story (Galbraith, 1995).

Boundaries, such as a chapter heading or rising curtain, cue the audience to create mental space and to shift deictic centers in preparation for an upcoming narrative experience (Segal, 1995a, p. 74). Deictic shift theory also explains why people get the impression of direct experience when processing a narrative. In order to understand the story, readers place themselves in the deictic center of the story rather than remaining with their own, actual location, and literally perceive the story from a perspective inside the story world (Zubin & Hewitt, 1995).

Indicators of deictic shift in filmic narratives are somewhat different from those in written fiction but serve the same function. For example, psychological verbs describing states of mind of the characters that are typical in fictional texts (Segal, 1995a) are rather unusual in film because they require a narrator. But characters in film do use deictic verbs and adverbs in their direct speech, as well as nonverbal deictic markers like pointing at something or looking in someone’s direction. Psychological events are either expressed directly (“I hate you”) or conveyed through facial expressions or gestures. Formal devices such as close-ups, cuts, or still frames enhance this effect. Kuno (1987) compares the perspective that language can create with perspectives that camera angles create visually. The emotional closeness suggested by the screen may help construct a powerful deictic center in filmic narratives. Moreover, there are always cues present as to location and time from which a viewer may infer setting.

### **Deictic shift, transportation, and identification**

In principle, there must be 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. At a phenomenological level, this has two consequences. First, when readers or viewers locate themselves within the mental model of the story, they perceive the story “from the inside” and have the feeling of experiencing directly what happens. Segal (1995b) points out that deictic shift theory is “consistent with phenomenological experience. When reading fictional text, most readers feel they are in the middle of the story, and they eagerly or

hesitantly wait to see what will happen next” (p. 14). Thus, transportation can be seen as a flow experience in constructing the mental models of a story that is accompanied by the positioning of oneself in the story world. To the extent that this activity occupies cognitive resources, the audience member must give up consciousness of his or her actual self and surroundings.

The second consequence of the deictic shift, at the phenomenological level, is that readers or viewers identify with the character from whose position a story is told, in the sense that they adopt a point of view that is not theirs and see the fictional world through someone else’s eyes (Cohen, 2001; Oatley, 1994, 1999). Thus, identification as it is implied by deictic shift theory encompasses taking on perspectives and perceiving the events in a story with the bias of a character. In our example, the situation is described as the police officer discovering the woman and the corpse, suggesting the perspective of the officer. Alternatively, if the example had begun with the woman noticing the approaching police officer, then the old woman’s perspective would have been suggested.

There are interpretations of identification that are contingent on the actual or wishful similarity of a character to the reader, or on a reader’s liking of a character (Liebes & Katz, 1990), that involve the reader or viewer giving up his or her own identity and momentarily confusing identities (Zillmann, 1994). As Cohen (2001) suggested, it is useful to keep these different notions separated. He argues in favor of the point-of-view-interpretation of identification and defines it as “a process that consists of increasing loss of self-awareness and its temporary replacement with heightened emotional and cognitive connections with a character” (p. 251). Cohen emphasizes that identification is not an attitude, an emotion, or a perception, but a phenomenological process. This is consistent with deixis theory, which describes the importance of point of view in constructing the situation model. As a process, identification is no different from social interaction of everyday life, where it is fundamentally important to take on the perspective of another person and anticipate reactions while planning one’s own actions (Cohen, 2001). Kuiken and colleagues compare this position to a metaphor rather than simile: The reader *is* the character for the duration of the story instead of recognizing similarities between him- or herself and the character (Kuiken, Miall, & Sikora, 2004; Kuiken, Phillips, et al., 2004).

So far, we have described a theoretical framework of narrative processing with mental models. In order to understand the story, viewers must construct a situation model, character models, and a story world model with a specific story world logic. Moreover, they must position themselves at the deictic center within the situation model. We argued that this enables the viewers to take on the perspective of a character (identification).

We have redefined transportation as experiencing flow while constructing mental models. We now turn to ways in which this process may be disrupted by issues of unrealness. We focus on three reasons viewers may perceive a story as untrue: (a) The story is invented, (b) the story is unlike what happens in the real world, or (c) the story is incoherent.

## The realness of fiction

When we turn to fiction, we know that narratives are invented for the purpose of entertaining us. From a rational standpoint, it is perplexing that consumers of fiction care about people and events that they know are not real (Lamarque, 1981; Riffaterre, 1990; Yanal, 1999).<sup>1</sup> One possibility for resolving this problem is to assume that emotions we feel toward fictional characters are substantially different from those we have in real situations. However, there is little evidence to support this. Gendler and Kovakovich (2005) argue that “far from being exceptional, emotional responses to nonactual situations are a fundamental feature of our cognitive repertoire” (p. 247). Emotions toward fictional situations bear similarity to emotions we have in other hypothetical situations, such as feeling empathy or experiencing emotions by merely remembering or anticipating situations (Currie, 1997; Moran, 1994). In everyday decision making, we consider different possible courses of action. Anticipating the possible outcomes of those actions also activates emotional responses. Such “simulated emotions” are crucial for deciding which actions to take (Bechara, Damasio, Damasio, & Anderson, 1994; Damasio, 1999; Harris, 2000). Without having automatic emotional responses to imagined situations, we would not be able to think ahead, plan our actions, or determine different courses of action depending on different predicted outcomes. Fictional emotions—emotions that are evoked by fictional accounts—are similar to simulated emotions in that they also relate to nonexistent situations. Gendler and Kovakovich (2005) argue that fictional emotions operate using the same cognitive mechanisms as simulated emotions.

A different approach to coping with the question of why consumers of fiction care about a story and its characters is to assume that they consciously suppress their awareness that fiction is indeed fictional. This assumption is commonly referred to as “suspension of disbelief” (Worth, 2004).<sup>2</sup> Suspension of disbelief builds on the assumption that recipients must actively abandon their disbelief in the nonauthenticity of fiction in order to engage in emotions and enjoyment. However, this position has received criticism from both philosophy and empirical research in psychology (e.g., Gendler & Kovakovich, 2005; Gerrig & Rapp, 2004; Worth, 2004; Yanal, 1999). Some evidence is grounded in the concept of mental simulation. Worth (2004) uses the notion of “mental simulation” to argue that readers or viewers run emotions “off-line”<sup>3</sup> in the sense that they perceive the same input as the characters. Thus, they are able to understand and simulate how the characters feel. Although the experience of entering a fictional world is merely psychological, the experience is cognitively similar to physically experiencing a real situation, rendering the distinction between real and unreal meaningless (Worth, 2004). Conceptualizing narrative experience as a mental simulation does not require the reader to deal with fictionality in a special way:

When we enter into a fictional world, or let the fictional world enter into our imaginations, we do not “willingly suspend our disbelief”. I cannot willingly decide to believe or disbelieve anything, any more than I can willingly believe it

is snowing outside if all visual or sensory cues tell me otherwise. When engaging with fiction, I do not *suspend a critical faculty*, but rather I *exercise a creative faculty*. I do not actively suspend disbelief— I actively create belief.  
(Worth, 2004, p. 447)

This argument is supported by psychological research showing that texts are approached with initial credulity and not with incredulity, unless otherwise prompted. Understanding and acceptance are thought of as the same process, whereas disbelieving requires additional mental resources (Gilbert, 1991). Gilbert, Krull, and Malone (1990) found that both true and false information were represented as true by default. This biased subsequent judgments such that information that was presented as false was more often mistaken as true. Also, when processing was interrupted and subjects did not have an opportunity to think about the information more thoroughly and “unaccept” or “unbelieve” it, they were more likely to mistake false information as true than the reverse. In a similar way, time pressure and cognitive load lead to an increase in mistaking false information as true (Gilbert & Gill, 2000; Gilbert, Tafarodi, & Malone, 1993). Gilbert concludes that “[p]eople are credulous creatures who find it very easy to believe and very difficult to doubt” (p. 117).

Gilbert’s research focused on false information rather than fictional texts, yet the two are similar in that the events described in both types of text do not exist in the actual world. Given this, Gilbert’s results have two consequences. First, credulity as default implies that people do not have to overcome incredulity or suspend disbelief. Instead, they immediately construct a mental representation of the story without worrying about the epistemological status of the story. Also, the primary reaction to a fictional narrative is not to literally believe that a fictional character exists or existed or that an event has actually happened. The application of Gilbert’s findings in narrative processing suggests that perceivers believe that the fictional character is in danger, in joy, or in distress (Yanal, 1999). We do not think of our police officer as real or fictional, but as a person investigating what appears to be a murder. Second, the same credulity is used to process context-free assertions—that is, information about the state of affairs that apply to both the fictional and the actual world (Gerrig & Prentice, 1991). Information in the narrative is unintentionally accepted as true and must be “unaccepted” effortfully. Along these lines, Gerrig and colleagues actually reverse the argument of a “willing suspension of disbelief” into a “willing construction of disbelief” (Prentice & Gerrig, 1999; Prentice, Gerrig, & Bailis, 1997). “Our central claim is that people must engage in effortful processing to disbelieve the information they encounter in literary narratives” (Gerrig & Rapp, 2004, p. 268). Gilbert (1991) points out that the assumption of default believing is implicitly made in dual-process theories (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) where resource depletion reduces the ability to reject propositions that normally would not be believable. This means that people end up believing false propositions and not holding some neutral stance toward them. Gilbert (1991) concludes that it

would seem, then, that for models of persuasion to make sense, they must implicitly assume that acceptance occurs prior to or more easily than rejection, or both, and that as a result, this initial acceptance remains even when subsequent attempts at rejection are experimentally impaired. (p. 111)

Fictionality is not a problem for consumers of fiction. Within our mental models approach, we conceptualize the information that a story is fictional as part of the mental model that viewers create from a narrative. We conceive of this representation as a link between the story world model, the situation model, and the general knowledge of what fictionality means. This makes fictionality simply one more concept among many elements of the story that are represented, such as the events, the characters, or the causal links among them. The link from fictionality to the mental models of a story is created at the beginning of the story, and it may be initially linked to all incoming elements. Usually, fictionality is not prompted in the course of a story, as perceivers are busy processing the occurring events, and the pragmatic status of a text is not relevant to the events and actions of the characters. The situation model and the story world model will become stronger as their elements are activated during the narrative. The link to the concept of fictionality, however, if not activated, should become weaker. Thus, when processing the story, or thinking about it later, the fictionality concept should not readily activate. But when prompted or primed to think about the pragmatic status of the story, viewers are capable of retrieving information and implications related to fictionality. This also is a possible explanation for a lack of source discounting under heuristic processing conditions (e.g., Shrum, Burroughs, & Rindfleisch, 2004). Thus, the representation of fictionality can be compared to *tacit knowledge*—knowledge that exists and is usually not used in a conscious way or verbalized but when retrieved can influence actions and thoughts (Polanyi, 1958).<sup>4</sup>

Rather than being a problem for the audience, fictionality as an element of the mental model is functional for narrative experience in that it alerts the audience that the story world logic may not conform to the actual world and that extensions may be necessary. Extending the story world rules in deviation from the actual world is a *normal activity* in processing fiction, and moreover it leaves intact the other, unspecified rules of the real world. As Segal (1995a) points out, if external cues associated with the narrative, such as the book jacket, identify the text as fictional, readers are prompted to create a unique story world for this fictional narrative that is based on, but not necessarily identical to, the actual world. In opening up possibilities to accept premises different from the real world, information on fictionality in the mental model relieves us of too hastily dismissing the fictional world as faulty.<sup>5</sup>

### **Perceived realism**

In the next two sections, we address the remaining two reasons viewers may perceive a story as unrealistic: The story world may be unlike the actual world or the story may

be incoherent. Here, we are distinguishing between external realism judgments—the extent to which fictional content is consistent with the actual world—and narrative realism judgments—the extent to which there is consistency among logic, motivations, and events within a fictional narrative. In order to discuss these two types of realism, it is also necessary to distinguish *online* realism judgments from *reflective* realism judgments: Online judgments are those that occur as one is constructing the mental models necessary to understand a narrative. Reflective judgments occur as one retrospectively and probably more holistically evaluates the realness of narrative. (For a discussion of online and memory-based judgments, see Hastie & Park, 1986.) We propose that both external realism and narrative realism may be judged either online or reflectively. Finally, we argue that audience members have no inherent motivation to make positive judgments about realism while viewing and may have little motivation to do so afterward. On the other hand, negative evaluations of realism are both prevalent and important because they interfere with engagement. Online realism judgments are made while the viewer is engaged with a narrative. They are likely to be focused on a specific instance or moment within the narrative and they are unlikely to be positive.

### External realism

Underlying most perceived realism research is an assumption that either content perceived as more realistic has greater influence or, in one case (Potter, 1986), content must be perceived as somewhat realistic to have influence. Although many conceptual dimensions of external realism have been offered, such as magic window, plausibility, probability, and social utility (for reviews, see Busselle & Greenberg, 2000; Potter, 1988), the commonality is for respondents to judge “the degree of similarity between mediated characters and situations and real-life characters and situations” (Shapiro & Chock, 2003, p. 170). From a mental models perspective, realism judgments can be thought of as a judgment of the consistency between the mental models representing a narrative that are constructed as part of a narrative experience (i.e., story world, character models, and situation models) and a viewer’s appropriate, counterpart real life and media experiences as reflected in schemas and stereotypes.

In the case of filmic narratives, most research has focused on memory-based realism judgments (Busselle & Greenberg, 2000; Wilson & Busselle, 2004). Sometimes participants are shown a narrative and then asked to assess aspects of its realism (e.g., Bahk, 2001; Bilandzic & Busselle, 2006; Taylor, 2005). More often, respondents complete questionnaires containing items that measure perceptions of the realism of a genre or genres, or of television in general (e.g., Busselle, 2001; Perse, 1986; Pinkelton, Austin, & Fujioka, 2001; Potter, 1986). Little research has focused on the online judgments viewers may make while viewing. Shapiro and Chock (2003; Experiment 3) demonstrated that, when prompted to do so, participants could monitor realism as they view and that across program segments perceived realism is highly correlated with perceived typicality (also see Bradley &

Shapiro, 2005; Shapiro & Fox, 2002). To investigate unprompted, online realism judgments, Busselle and his colleagues (Quintero-Johnson & Busselle, 2004; Wilson & Busselle, 2004; Zhang et al., 2007) used a thought-listing procedure and found negative relationships between memories of critical thoughts about a program while viewing and postviewing realism judgments.

It is generally assumed that respondents report high realism when they observe similarity between the fictional and the real worlds. This may be the case with reflective, postexposure realism judgments but there is little reason to expect online recognition of positive realism. Simply put, if one is viewing realistic content, there is no reason to judge its realism. This argument is supported from several perspectives. From a limited capacity standpoint (Lang, 2000), assessing realism should interfere with processing other incoming information related directly to the narrative itself (Bradley & Shapiro, 2005; Busselle, Ryabovolova, & Wilson, 2004). Moreover, critical evaluation should undermine enjoyment or escapist goals (Prentice & Gerrig, 1999). Also, the redundancy of judging the truth of something initially accepted as true is inconsistent with a Spinozan model of veracity assessment (Gilbert, 1991). As both cognitive psychologists (Gilbert, 1991; Gilbert et al., 1993) and communication scholars (Bradley & Shapiro, 2005) have argued, and as we have argued above regarding fictionality, individuals should accept information as true, “unless deliberative processing subsequently finds the proposition to be false” (Bradley & Shapiro, 2005, p. 312). Thus, we may conclude that if fictional content meets some threshold of realism, judgments about realism are unnecessary and unlikely (except when prompted by a researcher or a conversation about realism).

Conversely, observed dissimilarity or unrealness may be impossible to overlook. The occurrence in a narrative of a behavior or event that is noticeably inconsistent with a viewer’s relevant, preexisting schemas or stereotypes should prompt realism judgments, which should be negative or critical, at least initially. This is not because the viewer is monitoring realism but because such inconsistencies should interfere with the smooth construction of mental models and thus motivate an evaluation of realism. These prompted online judgments should be more specific than reflective, memory-based realism judgments used in traditional perceived realism research. Rather than requiring an evaluation of the realism of a program or category of content elements (e.g., cops or crimes), online judgments focus on the specific moment and content that prompted the judgment. This is the difference between an overall assessment, such as “police officers on TV behaving like real police officers,” and a judgment about a specific moment in a specific narrative, such as “Lenny (of *Law & Order*) can’t really break down that apartment door without a search warrant.”

Reflective realism measures have been linked to experiential engagement. Focus group participants told Hall (2003) that television programs were realistic if they were emotionally engaging. Green (2004) found that the extent to which readers judged a short story to be realistic was related to their feeling of being transported into that story. We suggest that the relationship between realism and narrative engagement may be related to negative online realism judgments, where observations of

inconsistency interfere with engagement, or, in the positive case, the absence of online assessments is part of an engaging narrative experience. Given that consistency is the default and realism is assumed, consistency should lead to no realism evaluation at all. For example, a viewer is unlikely to observe that the police officer behaves as one would expect a police officer to behave, and is therefore realistic. Inconsistency, on the other hand, should present itself as abnormal or unexpected and result in the perception that the narrative was in some way flawed or unrealistic. A viewer likely would take notice if a police officer behaves unexpectedly by, for example, breaking down in tears over an unfamiliar victim. Certainly, such behavior could be explained, but if not, the authenticity of the portrayal of the character would be questioned.

Schemas and stereotypes are important for the assessment of realism or, more accurately, a lack of realism, about people and events. Genre schemas are central to story world models and their accompanying logic. Knowledge about genres helps the viewer find the appropriate story world logic. Segal (1995a) points out that genre knowledge makes comprehension of stories easier and that “the genre’s constraints become its verisimilitude” (p. 72)—such that, as Todorov (1977) has described, genre patterns become a benchmark for judging the verisimilitude of a narrative even if it is the “antiverisimilitude” of the murder mystery making the most unsuspected person turn out to be the murderer. Todorov (1977) lays out that there is a multiplicity of verisimilitudes, depending on the consistency of the narrative at hand with genre patterns: “Comedy has its own verisimilitude, different from tragedy; there are as many verisimilitudes as there are genres” (p. 83).

Whether a lack of external realism leads to a disruption of narrative processing should depend in part on how much the story explains deviations from the real world. Deviations that are not explained, such as the use of cell phones in the 1960s, may prompt critical thinking during reception, which should disrupt the construction of mental models. When the flow of processing is disturbed, viewers are likely to disengage from the film and, at least momentarily, lose the sense of transportation. Similarly, we assume that identification will be hindered because critical thinking should move the viewer away from the narrative’s deictic center. Ultimately, this also should interfere with enjoyment (Green, Brock, & Kaufman, 2004; Zhang et al., 2007). However, an inconsistency between, for example, an event and the logic of the story world may be resolved by the narrative if the story makes the deviation plausible. For example, the police officer could use a cell phone despite the setting if it is revealed that the officer is a member of a secret, hi-tech government agency that is decades ahead of the times technologically and whose members carry cell phone-like devices. In this case the existence of such an agency and the officer’s identity as a member are revealed to audience members and can be incorporated as mental models of the ongoing narrative are constructed.

Of course, the narrative must achieve or maintain coherence among different schemas and mental models, such as the story world and the genre. For example, the introduction of a secret government agency may be consistent with the story world surrounding our old woman and police officer but inconsistent with a classic

mystery genre and its logic. There is no place in the story worlds of Miss Marple or Sherlock Holmes for hi-tech gadgetry. Indeed, simplicity may be part of a genre's charm. On the other hand, the *absence* of gadgetry would be troublingly inconsistent in the story world of James Bond.

### **Narrative realism**

We have pointed out that consumers of fiction do not expect strict verisimilitude. The extent to which real-world rules and premises are relevant to the processing of a narrative depends partly on genre. Yet even the most authentic genres, such as crime dramas, are unrealistic in ways that viewers find acceptable. Shapiro and colleagues have referred to *relative* realism in pointing out that audiences are able to judge even unlikely events that are not part of their own experiences as more or less realistic by evaluating “how realistic an event is if that sort of event were to happen” (Shapiro, Pena-Herborn, & Hancock, 2006, p. 278)—or, in other words, by employing some sort of commonsense plausibility criterion. Content can vary from realistic to unrealistic within the confines of a clearly unrealistic genre or story world. For example, crime-drama viewers do not notice that cops are impossibly good marksmen despite never practicing or that crimes are solved with impossible speed and efficiency. Instead of being concerned with verisimilitude, audience members are concerned with coherence and logic within a particular fictional context (Graesser et al., 2002; Shapiro & Fox, 2002). We refer to this aspect of realness as “narrative realism.”

The constructionist approach to narrative processing assumes that two interrelated activities are central to processing: coherence and explanation (Graesser et al., 2002). The first focuses on constructing a situation model in which actions, events, and states make sense together. The second focuses on explaining “*why* the explicit actions, events and states occur” (Graesser et al., 2002, p. 247). This includes, for example, how actions fit with the traits and motives of characters (Rapp et al., 2001). In fact, it may be less accurate to say that audience members are concerned with coherence and explanation and more accurate to say that audience members begin to question or counterargue if a narrative becomes incoherent or unexplainable. Some evidence of this comes from experiments in which consistency within stories is manipulated. For example, individuals read more slowly and were less likely to agree that an event would occur when the event was described as having taken more time than the story suggested had transpired (Rapp & Gerrig, 2002; Experiment 1). Similarly, reading times were greater when an object's properties changed from early in a story to later (e.g., a sweater described first as green and then as blue) and its relation to a character changed (e.g., first too large and then too small; Kaup & Foss, 2005). Also, reading times were found to increase when characters' traits and behaviors were inconsistent (e.g., a vegetarian eating a cheeseburger; Albrecht & O'Brien, 1993). In each case, reading slowed—apparently because inconsistencies interfered with comprehension. Unlike a reader, a viewer of television or film cannot slow the

rate at which he or she processes a story. Instead, observed inconsistencies should interfere with comprehension and engagement. Television viewers report similar concerns regarding coherence and explanation and link these to realism judgments. Hall (2003) found that focus group participants judged a program to be realistic if it is “internally coherent ... doesn’t contradict itself ... and leaves nothing jarringly unexplained” (p. 363). Shapiro, Barriga, and Beren (2004) found that participants took longer to make realism judgments about stories containing incongruent emotional reactions. Prentice and Gerrig (1999) also suggest that doubt is prompted by “obvious cues,” which can lead to questioning the narrative and a retreat from the story world (p. 531).

If coherence and explanation are audience members’ main concerns, then intrusive violations of narrative realism should be troubling for them. Again, we integrate these violations into the mental models framework: Violations of narrative realism occur when incoming information from the narrative is inconsistent with what is already represented in the situation model, the story world model with its specific story world logic, or the character models. For example, the audience should be confused if the officer and the woman agree that the victim probably suffered a heart attack. This conclusion is clearly inconsistent with the dry blood on the man’s chest, which we know both characters have seen. This is similarly true of fantastical story worlds: Yoda’s use of a handgun would be unrealistic, whereas his use of a light saber (which doesn’t really exist) is realistic, not because of external realism, but because it is consistent with the *Star Wars* story world.

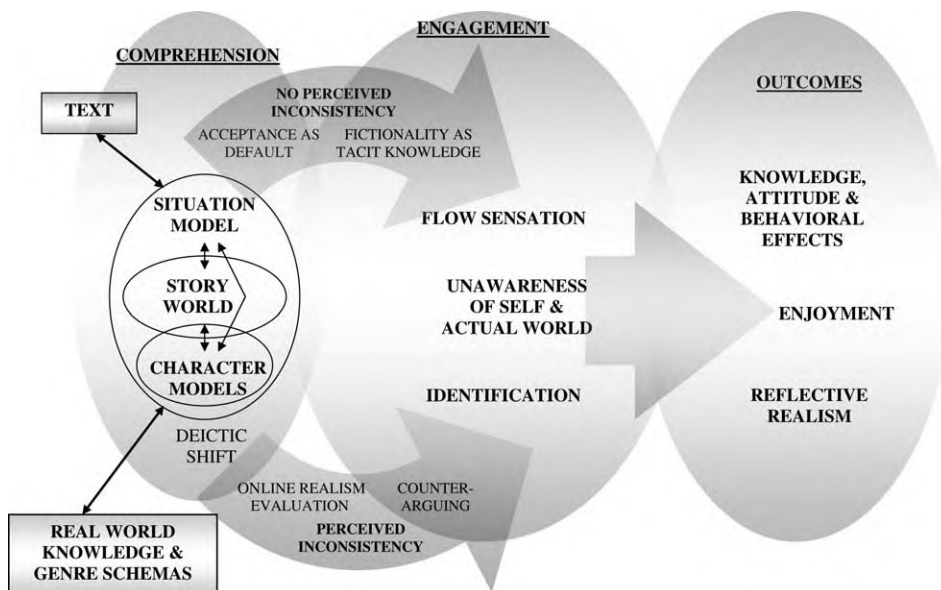
Thus, we propose that spontaneous, online, narrative realism judgments should occur when audience members notice—or fail to overlook—something in a story that appears incoherent or unexplainable. This should take the form of counterarguing, something that engaged audience members should not be motivated, and may be ill equipped, to do (Green & Brock, 2002; Slater & Rouner, 2002). Yet, it is something viewers or readers must do when they cannot make sense of new information or cannot incorporate new information into the current models of the narrative at hand. As in counterarguing provoked by violations of external realism, negative cognitions caused by violations of narrative realism disrupt the construction of the mental model and lower the experience of transportation. In the same way, identification is interrupted because the viewer or reader is drawn from the story world and forced to think about the story from a more distanced perspective.

### **Narrative comprehension, engagement, and (un)realness in narratives**

Our model of narrative comprehension and engagement describes how viewers or readers construct meaning from narratives, how they engage with the narrative to experience the flow-like sensation of transportation as well as identification with characters, and how they may disengage due to violations of realism. The theoretical framework we developed is useful to explain why some aspects of unrealness do not disturb narrative experience and its subsequent influence, whereas others do.

The process starts with viewers or readers constructing three types of mental models in order to represent a narrative (see Figure 1). The situation model tracks the events and actions of the characters, as well as spatial and chronological cues. Character models contain the identities, traits, and goals of individual characters. The story world model is a more static structure, defining the spatial and temporal setting, as well as the story world logic that represents the rules of the specific fictional world. Deviations from the actual world must be introduced by the narrative and made to seem plausible. For each of the models, consumers of stories use their general world knowledge as a point of origin or departure from the real world and to fill in gaps that are not made explicit by the story. Genre schemas in particular are useful because they provide information about typical patterns of story world logic, typical plots, and characters.

In order to understand a narrative, and as part of comprehension, individuals must shift the center of their experience from the actual world into the fictional world and position themselves within the mental models of the story. This deictic shift enables them to experience the story from the inside and to assume the point of view implied by the story. Transportation is redefined as a fluent and smooth construction of mental models or experiencing a state of flow in this activity. Viewers or readers may for short periods or longer durations lose their awareness of the actual world, which may result in phenomena such as forgetting one's self or losing the sense of time. Identification in the form of taking on the perspective of a character is the third component of narrative experience.



**Figure 1** Model of narrative comprehension and engagement.

Based on our description of audience members' active construction of mental models representing characters, settings, and situations, as well as their use of previously held schemas representing people, places, times, stories, and genres, we can make specific predictions about what may prompt spontaneous evaluations of realness and subsequent disengagement from a narrative. We argue that the events that lead to spontaneous evaluations of realness by audience members can be understood as violations of consistency between structures used in realizing the narrative. These structures are the text, real-world knowledge, and the mental models. The locations of potential consistency or inconsistency are represented by double-headed arrows in Figure 1. We focused on three aspects of unrealness that may manifest in inconsistencies and subsequently interfere with the construction of mental models. First, viewers or readers may be bothered by a narrative's fictionality; second, by its divergence from the actual world; or, third, by flaws or incoherence within the narrative. We have essentially ruled out fictionality as a source of disruption. Consumers of fiction need not suspend their disbelief in order to emote with the characters of a story. Fictionality is not a problem for the audience; knowledge of fictionality is integrated into the mental models of the narrative but normally remains tacit during the narrative experience. In fact, tacit knowledge about a narrative's fictionality prepares the viewer or reader for a possible need to extend the story world logic.

The remaining two aspects of unrealness we defined as external realism—an unexplained divergence of the narrative from external reality—and narrative realism—incoherence or implausibility within the narrative. We point out that audience members have no reason to assess realism, especially during the narrative experience, except when inconsistency is observed, suggesting to the audience that realism is lacking. Violations of either type of realism cause disruptions of the narrative experience. The central argument here is that perceptions of external and narrative realism are always relative to the mental model constructed from the story. In the case of external realism, we assume that not all deviations of the fictional world from the actual world result in negative online cognitions about a narrative's realness. Only deviations from the actual world that are *not* incorporated into a specific story world logic should provoke counterarguing. In the case of narrative realism, we do not expect negative online cognitions about a narrative's realness when the story world is internally consistent and no inconsistencies become evident between the mental models of the narrative and new information coming from the story.

When inconsistencies are observed, negative online cognitions about a narrative's realness disrupt the flow of constructing a mental model from a narrative and will reduce the phenomenological experience of transportation. As shifting one's deictic center into the mental model of the narrative is dependent on constructing the model, we can also assume that identification will be inhibited. Also, negative online cognitions should prevent the perceiver from losing his or her awareness of self and the actual world. A final consequence of the online evaluations of unrealness is that they should negatively affect memory-based realism judgments, as well as other outcomes that depend on narrative engagement, such as effects or enjoyment.

## **Caveats and testable propositions**

The model implies a number of testable predictions. It predicts relations between the availability and the focus of cognitive resources while viewing and engagement in a narrative experience. For example, the more cognitive energy is allocated to constructing mental models, the more engaged the audience member should become. Conversely, the more cognitive energy is allocated to critical evaluation, the less engaged the audience member viewer should be. Further, observed inconsistencies should prompt shifts in allocation of cognitive energy and should have predictable effects on reflective evaluations of realism, as well as enjoyment. The model predicts that spontaneous, online realism judgments are causal antecedents of both transportation and reflective, memory-based realism judgments. Based on these fundamental assumptions, we can propose further hypotheses concerning other influences in this process. For example, individual differences in viewers or readers may interact with other constructs in the model. Some individuals will be more likely to observe inconsistencies than others, and moods and traits should interact with situations and content categories, increasing or decreasing the occurrence of critical evaluations. Viewers, for example, may be predisposed to look for inconsistencies as a result of interactions between tastes or attitudes and content, such as the disliking of an actor, director, or genre, or a mood that is inconsistent with the activity of viewing in general or with the viewing of a particular genre. Viewers or readers also may be predisposed to look for inconsistencies due to more enduring traits, such as high need for cognition or a relatively lower ability to experience transportation (i.e., transportability; Bilandzic & Busselle, 2007; Dal Cin, Zanna, & Fong, 2004). Such predispositions have two predictable outcomes. One is avoiding stories or avoiding certain content categories. The other is an increased tendency to observe inconsistencies while processing the narrative. Both are testable propositions. Further, the individual's likelihood of engaging in critical evaluation may increase during a narrative experience. On one hand, boredom, which may result from a mismatch between a story's complexity and an individual's ability, may render cognitive resources more available and increase critical evaluation, increasing the likelihood of observing inconsistencies. On the other hand, critical evaluation may serve as a defense mechanism when viewers or readers find content overly arousing or in some way noxious, for example, while watching a horror film. Such noxious arousal may also prompt a viewer to retrieve knowledge of fictionality as a defense, independent of observing inconsistency.

Another possible factor in our model is content. The examples we have used in this article may suggest a focus on content that is more mystery or suspense oriented. The principles we have suggested should apply to a broad range of content. However, the relative importance of identification and emotion versus cognitive activity more in line with suspense or mystery viewing likely varies from genre to genre. For example, mystery may focus viewers' attention on consistencies between clues and conclusions, whereas drama may focus attention

on consistencies between characters motivations and emotional reactions to events.

The model we have proposed describes processes leading to engagement and disengagement with narratives and the roles of fictionality and inconsistency in those processes. In and of itself, understanding engagement and its underlying mechanisms is important for understanding exposure to narratives and the rewards of narrative experiences, such as entertainment and enjoyment. Ultimately, better understanding of the experience of being engaged with narrative should help us to better understand when narratives are more and less likely to influence our perceptions and beliefs about the real world.

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## Notes

- 1 This conundrum is often expressed as a *fictional paradox* consisting of three plausible assumptions that together are implausible: (a) we feel emotions toward fictional characters and events, (b) we know that fiction is not real, and (c) we only respond emotionally to things we know to be real. For a full discussion of the fictional paradox, see Worth (2004) and Yanal (1999).
- 2 For a recent review of the concept, see Böcking and Wirth (2005).
- 3 A variation of such a “simulationist” view is expressed by Currie (1997) and Oatley (1999).
- 4 Iser (1993) uses the term *tacit knowledge* for the distinction between reality and fiction. However, Iser refers to expert knowledge in the literary community in the sense that the distinction between fiction and reality is widely used and taken for granted. His goal is to question this tacit knowledge and analyze its usefulness and, however, not apply the notion of tacit knowledge to the reader and the influence on story processing.
- 5 In fact, this phenomenon that we adjust rules for a possible world is conceivable for real-world stories, too, when we have to contextualize a story in another historic and cultural context. For example, to kill a human who is not an enemy is illogical by today’s standards in Western societies, but is explainable within a religion that dictates human sacrifice to the gods.

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## **« Fictionnalité » et réalisme perçu des histoires :**

### **Un modèle de compréhension et d'implication narratives**

Rick Busselle

Helena Bilandzic

#### **Résumé**

Cet article propose un cadre théorique visant à expliquer les circonstances dans lesquelles les perceptions d'« irréalité » affectent l'implication dans les narratifs et les jugements subséquents de perception de réalisme. Une approche par modèles mentaux du traitement des narratifs forme la base d'un modèle qui intègre la compréhension narrative et les expériences phénoménologiques telles que le transport et l'identification. Trois types d'irréalité sont commentés : la « fictionnalité », le réalisme externe (concordance avec une réalité externe) et le réalisme narratif (cohérence d'une histoire). Nous réunissons ici des preuves à l'effet que la fictionnalité n'affecte pas le traitement narratif. D'autre part, les violations des réalismes externe et narratif sont perçues comme des incohérences dans les structures mentales des spectateurs, puisque ceux-ci construisent des modèles mentaux de significations afin de représenter et comprendre le narratif. Ces incohérences peuvent avoir pour résultats des évaluations négatives du réalisme d'un narratif sur le coup. Elles peuvent également interrompre l'implication, influencer négativement les jugements de réalisme à posteriori (jugements réflexifs) et amoindrir la puissance persuasive d'un narratif.

# **Fiktionalität und wahrgenommener Realismus beim Erleben von Geschichten: Ein Modell zum narrativen Verstehen und Erleben**

Rick Busselle

Helena Bilandzic

Dieser Artikel bietet einen theoretischen Rahmen, um Bedingungen zu erklären unter denen die Wahrnehmung von Unwirklichkeit die Art und Weise des Erlebens von Geschichten und daraus resultierend Realismusurteile beeinflusst. Unter Rückgriff auf einen Mentale-Modelle-Ansatz zur Verarbeitung von Narrationen werden narratives Verstehen und phänomenologische Erlebensweisen wie Transportation und Identifikation im Modell integriert. Drei Typen von Unwirklichkeit werden diskutiert: Fiktionalität, externaler Realismus (Passung mit der externalen Realität) und narrativer Realismus (Stimmigkeit mit der Geschichte). Unsere Daten zeigen, dass Fiktionalität die narrative Verarbeitung nicht beeinflusst. Allerdings wird deutlich, dass Verletzungen des externalen und narrativen Realismus als Inkonsistenzen in den mentalen Strukturen der Zuschauer wahrgenommen werden, da Zuschauer mentale Bedeutungsmodelle konstruieren, um die Geschichte abzubilden und zu verstehen. Diese Inkonsistenzen könnten in negativen Ad-Hoc-Bewertungen von narrativem Realismus resultieren, könnten Erleben stören oder postrezeptive (reflektierende) Realismusurteile negativ beeinflussen - und letztendlich die persuasive Kraft der Narration verringern.

**La Ficción y el Realismo Percibido en la Experiencia de las Historias:**  
**Un Modelo de la Comprensión y el Compromiso Narrativo**

Rick Busselle

**Resumen**

Este artículo ofrece un marco teórico para explicar las circunstancias bajo las cuales las percepciones de “irrealismo” afectan el compromiso de las narrativas y los juicios de las percepciones de realismo subsecuente. Un modelo mental de aproximación de los procesamiento narrativos forma un modelo fundacional que integra la comprensión narrativa y las experiencias fenomenológicas como por ejemplo la transportación y la identificación. Tres tipos de irrealismo son discutidos: ficción, realismo externo (correspondencia con la realidad externa), y realismo narrativo (coherencia dentro de una historia). Juntamos evidencia que la ficcionalidad no afecta el procesamiento narrativo. Por otro lado, las violaciones al realismo externo y narrativo son concebidas como inconsistencias entre las estructuras mentales de la audiencia dado que ellos construyen modelos mentales de significación para representar y comprender la narrativa. Estas inconsistencias pueden resultar en evaluaciones online negativas de una narrativa de realismo, pueden trastornar el compromiso, e influir negativamente sobre los juicios de realismo después de la exposición (reflectiva) así como también disminuir el poder persuasivo de la narrativa.

# 故事体验中的虚构和真实性感知：故事理解及投入模式

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## 摘要

本文提供了一个理论框架来解释在何种条件下“不真实”的感知如何影响对故事的投入以及随后对所感知之真实性的判断。以解释叙事处理的心里模式为基础，本文发展了一个融故事理解和现象性体验（比如超越和认同）为一体的模式。三种“不真实”的情况得以讨论，它们包括虚构、外在真实（和外在现实吻合）、和叙述真实（故事内部的一致性）。我们所收集的证据表明：虚构对故事处理过程没有影响。另一方面，当受众构建有关意义的心里模式以理解故事时，对外在真实和叙述真实的违背在受众的心里结构中被视为不一致。这些不一致可能引发对叙述真实性的负面的即时评估、中断对叙事的投入、造成对反刍性真实判断的负面影响、以及减弱故事的说服力量。

## 경험적 이야기의 허구성과 인지된 사실주의:

### 이야기 이해와 관여모델

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#### 요약

본 논문은 비실재성의 개념들이 이야기들에 있어서의 관여와 후속적으로 인지된 사실성의 판단에 있어 영향을 미치는 환경을 설명하기 위한 이론적 토대를 제공하고 있다. 이야기 전개에 대한 정신적모델 접근은 교통과 동일시와 같은 이야기적인 이해와 현상학적인 환경들을 통합시키는 모델의 토대를 형성한다. 세가지 유형의 비실재성들이 논의되었는바, 그들은 허구성, 외적 사실주의 (외적인 사실성에 일치되는), 그리고 이야기적인 사실주의 (이야기내에서의 일치)이다. 우리는 허구성은 이야기 과정에 영향을 주지 않는다는 증거를 확립하였다. 한편, 외적인 그리고 이야기적인 사실주의의 위반들은, 그들이 그 이야기를 대표하고 이해하기 위한 의미있는 전신적 모델을 형성하는 과정에서 관찰자의 정신적 구조들 사이에서의 비일관성을 인지하고 있다는 것을 발견했다. 이러한 비일관성들은 이야기의 사실주의에 대해 부정적인 온라인 평가를 산출하거나, 관여를 방해하거나, 이야기의 설득력을 감소시키고 추후노출 (반영적인) 사실주의 판단에 부정적으로 영향을 줄 수 있는 것이다.