The Influence of Fictional Narrative Experience on Work Outcomes: A Conceptual Analysis and Research Model

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Fictional narrative experience is assumed to have a profound impact on human behavior, but the possible outcomes and the processes through which fictional narrative experience influence behaviors have rarely been studied. This paper introduces a model of the consequences of fictional narrative experience through transportation and transformation processes. We discuss a framework for understanding the effects of fictional narrative experience, distinguishing affective and behavioral effects, and temporality of effects (short-term or persistent). Exemplary outcomes of fictional narrative experience are presented, including recovery, creativity and interpersonal behavior. Finally, we propose that the effects of fictional narrative experience are dependent upon a person's frame of reference, as well the extent to which a reader can identify with the main characters, the perceived usefulness of a narrative, and degree of verisimilitude in the narrative.

Keywords: fictional narrative, organizational behavior, transformation, transportation, verisimilitude

Reading books and watching movies, plays, and operas are activities that people carry out on a day-to-day basis in their lives. Activities like these provide people with distraction from daily demands and possibly initiate intellectual inspiration (Oatley, 2002). These activities can be referred to as the experience of *fictional narratives* (Brock, Strange, & Green, 2002; Oatley, 1999b). Fictional narrative experience may have an important and profound impact on how people feel and behave in their daily lives (Poulson, Duncan, & Massie, 2005). For instance, it has been suggested that narrative experiences provide personal insights such as reflection on life, and therefore are important for people in order to learn about themselves (Oatley, 1999b, 2002).

An increasing number of studies have been conducted on the impact of fictional narrative experience on human behaviors (Green, Strange, & Brock, 2002), and research on fictional narratives has been conducted in organization studies (Patient, Lawrence, & Maitlis, 2003; Phillips, 1995; Reitzug, 1989), cognitive psychology (Marsh, Meade, & Roediger III, 2003), and communication sciences (Appel, 2008; Appel & Richter, 2007). These studies show that the experience of fiction may alter people's beliefs about the world, such as beliefs in the existence of a just world (Appel, 2008; Marsh, Meade, & Roediger, 2003; Wheeler, Green, & Brock, 1999). However, the application of fictional narratives to the field of organizational psychology has been very limited (see for exceptions Islam, 2009; Poulson et al., 2005). Moreover, although anecdotal evidence exists on the impact of fictional narrative experience on organizational behavior (Green et al., 2002; Ross, 1999), we know very little about the impact of fictional narrative experiences on various work outcomes.

The study of fictional narrative experiences in organizational psychology is important for a number of reasons. First, fictional narratives reflect a broader perspective on business and management (Alvarez & Merchan, 1992; Czarniawski, 1998). People learn from fictional narratives, since narratives have been written and orally transported from generation to generation (DeMott, 1989; Patient et al., 2003). Moreover, fictional narratives may be part of and are useful in giving meaning to membership of a certain social group, and social identities may be formed through a collective understanding of narratives (Alvarez & Merchan, 1992; Phillips, 1995). Organizational cultures are primarily formed through stories and narratives (Schein, 1990, 1996). Through stories, people make sense of the world and link the abstract to the concrete (Weick, 1993; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). Moreover, fictional narratives contain preeminently metaphors of life and organization, which we use for our understanding of complex organizational phenomena (Cornelissen, 2005).

In this paper, we argue that people integrate fictional narrative experiences into their beliefs about the world and their work. This, in turn, influences how people think, feel, and act at their work. The study will shed light on the role of fictional narrative experiences in organizational psychology through presenting a theoretical model of the influence of fictional narrative experience. Using this model, we explain how fictional narrative experience influ-

ences work outcomes, including outcomes such as creativity and interpersonal behavior, through transportation and transformation processes. This paper also guides future research on the study of the effects of fictional narrative experience in an organizational psychology context.

This paper contributes to the field of organizational psychology in the following ways. First, the paper adds to the very scarce literature on the role of narratives in organizational psychology by explaining how reading a book or watching a movie may facilitate change of an individual, as manifested in various work-related experiences. Second, our paper contributes through presenting a model for understanding the effects of fictional narrative experience that may guide future empirical research on these effects. Despite anecdotal evidence of the influence of fictional narrative experiences on work outcomes (e.g., Ross, 1999), we explain how these experiences contribute to transformation of an individual.

Fictional Narrative Experience

Before discussing the possible impact of fictional narrative experience, it is important to define fictional narratives. We depart from the fictional narrative *experience*, which refers to an individual reading an actual fictional text. We follow the framework consisting of four quadrants resulting from distinguishing fiction versus nonfiction, and narratives versus non-narratives (Phillips, 1995), with our interest in this paper being on one of these four quadrants (i.e., fictional narrative). These quadrants are not mutually exclusive or collective exhaustive; they primarily serve as a general framework for understanding various perspectives on texts and knowing (Phillips, 1995).

First, fiction can be described as a general term for something created by the human mind (Phillips, 1995). In line with what Aristotle meant in his classic work *Poetics* (335 BC; trans. 1996), history (or nonfiction) refers to facts or, in other words, that which *has* happened. Fiction, however, is about everything that *may* happen. Although this distinction has been criticized by postmodern writers (see, e.g., Lyotard, 1984; Mead, 1932; Ricoeur, 1984), we follow Bruner's work (1986), in which he stated that two modes of thought, or ways of knowing, coexist, being the logico-scientific mode and the narrative mode. This first mode of thought aims for formal, empirical proof, is truth-seeking, and looks for universal truth conditions (Bruner, 1986). In this mode of thought, consistency, noncontradictions and testability are used to assess a text or a narrative. This mode of thinking is resembled in nonfiction, such as scientific research.

Bruner introduced the narrative mode of thinking, which establishes verisimilitude, or truthlikeness, and aims at particular connections between two events, rather than on universal truth conditions. Its central focus is on believability and not on consistency and noncontradictions. Narratives may even be defined by *violation* of an implicit canonical script, and therefore break norms of consistency and noncontradiction. Truth in fiction is not about empirical evidence, as for instance scientific research aims for, but about either coherent truth or personal truth (Oatley, 2002). Through fiction, people may understand complex matters such as human behavior, and therefore it presents a verisimilitude in which people perceive coherence. Thus, fiction acts as a simulation of real world issues people deal with in daily life, and through narratives people may see coherence among aspects of the world (Goldstein, 2009).

We define narrative by "the presence of at least two actions or events in chronological order which stand in some kind of relation to one another" (see for more extensive descriptions of narrative: Fludernik, 2006). Fundamental to a narrative is that there is a narrator (i.e., the person who utters the words of the story; not necessarily the author of the narrative), and the requirement of a human or human-like protagonist at the center of the narrative (Fludernik, 2006). While a narrative refers to a written or oral recording of at least two events that are causally related to each other (Bruner, 1986; Fludernik, 2006), story refers to a set of completed events, which is reported through a narrative (Fludernik, 2006; Genette, 1988). Accordingly, artifactual texts, such as sculptures and paintings (i.e., non-narratives), can express a story to an individual observing this work of art, but this story can only become manifest through a narrative, that is, a written or oral report of the story. In sum, fictional narratives are a version of reality which are not governed by rules of logico-scientific thinking, but by narrative necessity (Bruner, 1986), and may establish verisimilitude, or truthlikeness. Experience of fictional narratives by a reader will evoke a psychological process, consisting of felt emotions and cognitive involvement. This assumption from Bruner (1986) forms the basis of our argumentation about the role of fictional narrative experience in the workplace.

In previous scientific research, two features of fictional narratives have been found important in the way they influence people (Bruner, 1986; Neale, 1990), being the concept of (psychological) genre, and the concepts of *fabula* and *sjuzet*, which refer to the most-often used Russian terminology of story and plot (Bruner, 1986; Oatley, 1999a). Genre is defined as "a way of both organizing the structure of events, and organizing the telling of them" (Bruner, 1986). Extending this, psychological genre is defined as the reader's conception of what kind of story or text he is encountering. This is the subjective interpretation process of a reader of a fictional narrative and refers to how a reader approaches and experiences a text; because this is an idiosyncratic process, people may vary greatly among each other in how they experience a story and whether verisimilitude is established (Neale, 1990). Genre can be perceived differently among people and among reading occasions; while we reread a story, the conception of the structure of events, or the psychological genre, may change. Therefore, genre encompasses expectations of the reader as well as the broad spectrum in which a story takes place—both influencing the narrative experience of the reader.

Researchers have further distinguished *fabula*, or story, and *sjuzet*, or plot (Oatley, 1999a). Fabula refers to the story that is told in a text, or the linear events in the narrative. Sjuzet, however, refers to the plot, which is reconstructed by the reader from the discourse (Fludernik, 2006). It is through the existence of this difference that fiction may have such impact because although events in a story may be chronologically related, authors emphasize certain events through devoting attention to it, and reorder chronological event structure through flashbacks and flashforwards (Oatley, 1999a). Consequently, the reader subjectively makes sense of the plot of a narrative. Hence, the narrative experience is a subjective, individual experience (Oatley, 1999a). Readers of a book may devote special attention to work-related events in a story that resemble their own work situation and experiences.

Figure 1 depicts the conceptual model for impact of fictional narrative experience that we propose in our study. We will explain each of the paths in the model below.

The Effects of Fictional Narrative Experience

While reading a fictional narrative, people experience emotions in response to events happening in the story, and are also stimulated by the narrative to think about the events and how the narrative relates to the personal experience of the reader. Fludernik (2006) argues that fictional narratives are about experientiality: narratives communicate with a reader and must be experienced to convey thoughts and feelings. Therefore, fictional narratives create a verisimilitude (Bruner, 1986), or a narrative world (Gerrig, 1993).

Stories told in narratives may elicit strong emotions among the readers (Goldstein, 2009). Even when people know that they experience something fictional, they may be emotionally affected by the story (DeMott, 1989). Events in a story (e.g., the denial of a promotion at work, or a layoff) may remind a reader of personal experiences (Oatley, 1994). Through perspective taking, people identify with the main characters in a story and therefore experience similar emotions as the main characters experience (Davis, 1980; Kuiken, Miall, & Sikora, 2004). Hence, emotions are felt because the readers allow themselves to feel as the characters feel. It has been argued that because of the safety of the arena in which fiction takes place, people allow themselves to experience even stronger emotions than when they are confronted with similar events in real life, where emotional reactions are bounded to societal norms about how to behave in social situations (Goldstein, 2009; Oatley, 1999b).

Miall and Kuiken (2002) have proposed a typology of emotional reactions to fiction reading consisting of four types of feelings: evaluative, narrative, aesthetic, and self-modifying feelings. *Evaluative feelings* are reported by readers when they experience enjoyment, pleasure, or satisfaction as a result of carrying out the activity of experiencing the narrative. People may be intrinsically motivated to experience fictional narratives because of the pleasurable mood a fictional narrative may elicit. For instance, an individual who reads a romance novel while commuting to work using the metro may just enjoy reading. Evaluative feelings may be prompted during reading, but they may also affect the reader before or after the experience of a fictional narrative.

Narrative feelings differ from evaluative feelings in that these are the feelings that are evoked by the events, characters, and the setting of the story within the narrative. Narrative feelings arise from the content of the narrative, that is, the events and characters in the imagined world of the text (Miall & Kuiken, 2002). Thus, instead of pleasure in an activity (i.e., evaluative feelings), narrative feelings involve reactions to characters in a story (e.g., sympathy or empathy; Miall & Kuiken, 2002). Narrative feelings are prompted by the events within the imagined world of the narrative. *Aesthetic feelings* are reported by readers in response to the formal components of a narrative (e.g., the stylistic features of the text). For instance, a reader may be struck by a particular metaphor that is used in the narrative (Kuiken et al., 2004). As a consequence, readers slow their reading and pay greater attention to the fictional narrative through which an impact on their lives is more likely to occur (Miall & Kuiken, 2002). Through this type of feelings, people may alter their understanding of the text and the meaning of the story, and the metaphorical meaning of the story may be transported to the way of thinking of a person (Cornelissen, 2005).

Finally, *self-modifying feelings* refer to those feelings people have when a narrative changes the image people have of themselves. They restructure the understanding of a text and simultaneously the understanding of the self (Miall & Kuiken, 2002). It has been argued that self-modifying feelings may be the primary precursors of personal change through fictional narratives (Miall & Kuiken, 2002; Oatley, 2002); it is through these feelings that people's existing mental frameworks are challenged and people may reach new insights because they experienced something unfamiliar to what they have previously known.

The four types of feelings are not mutually exclusive; often they are experienced simultaneously while reading a narrative. However, the four types differ in their structure and processes. Evaluative feelings are less pervasive and enduring than self-modifying feelings. The most often reported feelings in response to the activity of reading are those of enjoyment, satisfaction, and pleasure (Miall & Kuiken, 2002). Mar, Oatley, Djikic, and Mullin (2011) describe various reasons why people come to select a book to read, such as to choose a book or a movie to influence one's own emotions. Moreover, when an individual has finished a book, evaluative feelings may persist; research of Stanhope, Cohen, and Conway (1993) have shown that people recall and relive events, themes, and setting many years after reading a book. It was shown that the higher the enjoyment in reading a book, the better people
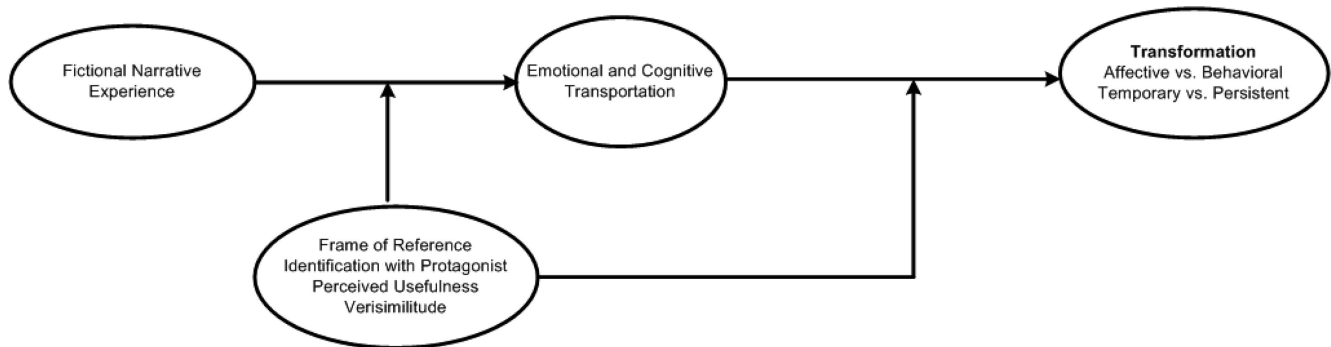

Figure 1. Conceptual model of the influence of fictional narrative experience on work outcomes.

remembered details from the narrative. Self-modifying feelings, finally, are assumed to have the strongest effects on long-term outcomes, such as creativity and interpersonal behavior (Kuiken et al., 2004).

Next to emotions, fictional narrative experience also elicits cognitive responses. Through the experience of narratives people may be intellectually stimulated and inspired. More specifically, people are stimulated cognitively by the plot and events of a story and curiosity can be evoked. When a reader experiences a work of fiction, the reader almost automatically cognitively involves in the story. For instance, when people read a story in which a small mystery is incorporated, they actively start thinking about solutions for the mystery introduced in the story (Gerrig, Love, & McKoon, 2009). Moreover, while reading a text or watching a movie, people are inclined to respond to events that happen in the narrative with participatory responses (Gerrig, 1993; Polichak & Gerrig, 2002). Participatory responses are mental products of readers' participation in a narrative, and include among others involvement with the protagonist (Green & Brock, 2002).

Thus, the reader actively takes part in the story as a bystander observing the story unfold. Instead of the traditional view of readers being passive consumers of fictional narratives, recent research shows that readers are actively involved in reading a narrative (Gerrig, 1993; Kuiken et al., 2004). Readers may be mentally able to replot the story, by thinking about how the protagonist should act or could have acted to avoid the situation that the protagonist is in (Gerrig, 1993). Thus, fictional narratives stimulate imagination of a reader by establishing verisimilitude, distant from the reader's own world, but yet close to the imagination of the reader.

Further, Polichak and Gerrig (2002) argue that readers use information from fictional narratives over time. Indeed, Marsh and colleagues (2003) showed that both true and false facts that participants in an experiment had learned from fiction, were used in knowledge tasks that they had to conduct a week after reading a story including both these true and false facts. In sum, while experiencing fictional narratives, people are both emotionally and cognitively involved in the story, and look actively for links between what they read and their own life. We now present a theoretical model of involvement in narratives, following previous work of Gerrig (1993) on the transportation metaphor, which has been extended by Oatley (2002) in his transportation–transformation framework.

From Transportation to Transformation

Gerrig (1993) proposed that while reading, people are transported into a narrative world. This is similar to Bruner's (1986) verisimilitude: fiction establishes a mimesis, or truthlikeness, which is distant from the conceptions we have of reality. Fiction can be an escape from the current world (including work) and one is transported during the experience. Transportation is defined as "a convergent process, where all mental systems and capacities become focused on events occurring in the narrative" (Green & Brock, 2000, p. 701; Gerrig, 1993). Gerrig argues that people enter a narrative world in which they are separated from the real world and they become absorbed by the story. People lose track of time and fail to observe events going on around them; a loss of self-awareness may take place (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2008, 2009).

Oatley (2002) suggested that narratives may not only lead to transporting the reader into a narrative world, but also change beliefs of an individual. While transportation refers to the process in which fiction serves as a pleasurable occupation of time or involvement in the narrative, transformation refers to change of the person as a consequence of the narrative experience. Oatley (2002) argued that transportation is a necessary condition for transformation; change will only occur when someone is transported in a narrative. Transformation may unfold through three distinct, yet related processes. We argue that *construction of mental schemas*, *changes in mental schemas*, and *establishment of new linkages among mental schemas* are the consequence of both transportation. People, while reading, are actively constructing meaning and they are emotionally highly involved in the story (Ross, 1999). By means of adaptation in schemas, or mental representations of the world, people can be transformed through narratives (Oatley, 2002). When we experience a fictional narrative, we enter this with our existing views of the world and how the world is constituted, or the schemas the reader possesses (Bruner, 1986). A schema is "an organized knowledge structure that reflects an individual's knowledge, experience, and expectations about some aspect of the world" (Neath & Surprenant, 2003, p. 265). People may hold schemas about almost any object in the world, and they may help people to know how to behave in social situations. For instance, schemas may indicate how an individual is supposed to behave when he or she experiences a failure at work. Schemas are triggered by stimuli from the environment and are hierarchically structured (Cooper & Shallice, 2006). A fundamental characteristic of schemas is that they are dynamic and continuously change over time. These changes are triggered by environmental stimuli, such as interaction with people, observation, and learning. We argue that fictional narratives represent such environmental stimuli that change schemas, because it challenges presuppositions of the reader, and offers multiple perspectives through the characters (Bruner, 1986).

Reader experience fictional narratives with existing schemas to understand the story (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2008; Stanhope et al., 1993), which interact with the environment, such that new information constitutes input for change of schemas. According to Schank and Berman (2002), readers regularly are confronted with new information (e.g., thoughts or actions of the characters) in a narrative that is inconsistent with existing schemas. A reader experiences defamiliarization with that which has been known thus far, and consequently, has to cross conventionally scripted boundaries (Bruner, 1986; Miall & Kuiken, 2002). As a result, three processes may occur; either existing schemas are adapted, new schemas are created, or schemas that previously were not linked are linked through the experience of fictional narratives (Schank & Berman, 2002).

New schemas are created when fictional narratives provide information about some aspect of the world that previously had been unknown to the reader. For instance, the movie *Wall Street* (Stone, 1987) informs an individual about prevailing behavioral norms in the stockbroker industry. Schemas are adapted when fictional narratives provide information that was inconsistent with existing schemas. For instance, a reader of a story of Coetzee taking place in South-Africa may update the reader's knowledge about cultural norms in South-Africa. New links among different schemas are established when fictional narratives contain informa-

tion that is inconsistent with the existing pattern of and linkages among schemas. In this sense, people can learn from stories (Schank & Berman, 2002), because they enable themselves to see through different eyes (Alvarez & Merchan, 1992). According to Pelowski and Akiba (2011), it is the self-image that an individual holds as well as the goals he or she has in terms of the ideal self that determine how that individual will respond to a fictional narrative. If the individual encounters information in a narrative that is inconsistent with the self-image, feelings of threat, anxiety, and anger may appear. However, if the individual is successful in integrating the information with the existing self-image (through changes in schemas), the self will be transformed.

Schemas that represent knowledge that has been obtained in the past may not always be accurate in someone's memory of the origin of the knowledge. It has been shown that schemas are influenced by confabulation, or additional information or details to schemas that were not part of the original episode (Neath & Surprenant, 2003). In other words, people may have false memories about knowledge that they have obtained in the past but in reality never experienced. It may therefore be that information obtained from fictional narratives may be cultivated by people to real-world beliefs. Indeed, research has shown that information from fiction may change various beliefs about the real world (Appel, 2008; Appel & Richter, 2007; Green & Brock, 2000; Marsh et al., 2003; Wheeler et al., 1999). In a study by Marsh and colleagues (2003) it was shown that after a week delay, facts learned from fiction were integrated in memory and were used in answering a general knowledge test. Thus, information from fictional narratives persists over time in the memory of a reader. However, it is yet unclear how fictional narrative experience influences work outcomes.

The Effects of Fictional Narrative Experience on Work Outcomes

We will now explore whether fictional narrative experience, through transportation and transformation, affects work outcomes. In line with previous research in organizational psychology, we propose a typology of work-related outcomes consisting of two dimensions with four quadrants. Figure 2 shows this framework.

The first dimension distinguishes affective from behavioral outcomes, in line with previous research on the affective and behav-

Figure 2. Conceptual domain of the transformation outcomes of fictional narrative experience.

ioral indicators of work outcomes (see, e.g., Harrison, Newman, & Roth, 2006). On the one hand, affects and attitudes are individual, intrapersonal assessments that are determined by employee general affective states, and include emotions, moods, and attitudes. On the other hand, behavioral outcomes are observable patterns of behavior of an individual employee, and include outcomes such as performance, creativity, and helping behaviors, and also include the behavioral consequences of knowledge, abilities and skills.

The second dimension of outcomes concerns the temporality of effects (Zaheer, Albert, & Zaheer, 1999). On the one hand, effects of fictional narrative experience can be rather short-lived, such as the opportunity to detach oneself from one's work after a busy day (Fritz, Yankelevich, Zarubin, & Barger, 2010). This effect is temporary and fades out over time, and may include psychological detachment and recovery activities. However, effects of fictional narrative experiences can be also persistent over time (Appel & Richter, 2007), through having a lasting effect on how an individual perceives him- or herself (Bruner, 1986). These effects include personal change of an individual as a consequence of experiencing fictional narratives, and behavioral changes such as creativity and interpersonal behavior. Combining the two dimensions creates four quadrants, each of these presented in more detail below.

Short-Term Effects of Fictional Narrative Experience

When fictional narrative experience is primarily aimed at evaluative feelings, (i.e., enjoyment of and pleasure), short-term effects may be evoked, which can be either affective or behavioral. Examples are experienced emotions, and detachment from work. Through a narrative experience, people influence their emotions, and have the opportunity to detach themselves from their work (Oatley, 2002; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). While watching a movie, people may be transported, and meanwhile take the opportunity to relax and unwind from work (Zijlstra & Sonnentag, 2006). Relaxation can be regarded as a state of low effort and high positive affect (Russell & Carroll, 1999; Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). In line with the Effort-Recovery Model, people invest energy into their work, which they have to recover to build up new energy reservoirs (Meijman & Mulder, 1998). Therefore, experiencing fictional narratives to detach oneself from work can have positive effects because it entails relaxation and fosters the experience of recovery (Beatty & Torbert, 2003; Fritz et al., 2010).

Besides temporary affective effects, fictional narrative experience can also constitute a recovery activity facilitating the quality of recovery from work (i.e., behavioral effects). People experience positive emotions when reading a fictional narrative and consequently recover from their work (Miall & Kuiken, 2004). Research including over 12,000 employees in the Netherlands (Jansen, Kant & Van den Brandt, 2002; Jansen, Kant, Van Amelsvoort, Nijhuis, & Van den Brandt, 2003) has shown that 38% of the employees have significant needs for recovery on a daily basis, with 75% of them also experiencing fatigue and stress. Therefore, a considerable number of employees are in need of recovery after work, and hence, fictional narrative experience can facilitate these needs. Through both physical and psychological relaxation, recovery may take place, and energy reservoirs can be built up for subsequent working days and weeks (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). More specifically, psychobiological systems are able to return to the prestressor state as a result of recovery processes. Long-term change,
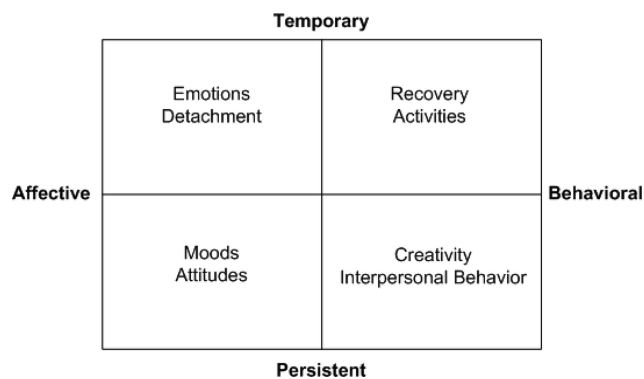
however, is unlikely because of the absence of cognitive stimuli (Pelowski & Akiba, 2011). In sum, fictional narrative experiences may facilitate psychological detachment from work, and therefore enhance temporary, daily recovery experiences from work.

Long-Term Persistent Effects of Fictional Narrative Experience

Earlier, we proposed that fictional narrative experiences change schemas of people and may create new linkages among schemas. Through changing existing schemas or creation of new schemas, people may change as a person, and behavior, such as creativity and interpersonal behavior, may be enhanced. First, people may find personal truths in fictional narratives (Oatley, 2002). Through fiction people are sometimes confronted with information that is inconsistent with that what constitutes self-image and self-identity. Through a process of broadening of mental schemas, people modify themselves (Miall & Kuiken, 2002), and may have different moods, attitudes, and perceptions of their personality (Djikic, Oatley, Zoeterman, & Peterson, 2009). Thus, fictional narrative experiences provide highly relevant personal insights for people, and present a personal truth for the reader.

This hypothesis of personal change through fictional narratives has been extensively researched (Appel, 2008; Appel & Richter, 2007; Marsh et al., 2003; Prentice, Gerrig, & Bailis, 1997; Wheeler et al., 1999). One of the most notable examples is the study of Ross (1999), who interviewed frequent readers about how the books they read changed their lives. She found that books could change people's lives through opening the readers' eyes for alternative ways of living and working, and providing insights into the issues people deal with in their lives, such as the meaning of work and life (cf. Weick, 1993).

Persistent behavioral outcomes include, for instance, creativity and interpersonal behavior. Creativity can be defined as "the production, conceptualization, or development of novel and useful ideas, processes, or procedures" (Shalley, Gilson, & Blum, 2000). Fiction, according to Ricoeur (1984), is inherently about creative processes, since mimetic activity is a creative initiation in the art of composition. There are two reasons for assuming fictional narrative experience to enhance creativity. First, because through fictional narrative experience people broaden their schemas, they enlarge their action repertoire. Fictional narrative experience causes a cognitive change in the reader, and therefore, an individual has more options to choose from in an uncertain and complex situation. Because of new linkages among schemas (i.e., how one may behave in certain situations), people will behave differently in situations of uncertainty and complexity (Pelowski & Akiba, 2011). Whereas other people may be bound toward more traditional ways of problem solving, people who have broadened their schemas are better able to be creative and invent novel solutions for problems in complex environments (Proulx & Heine, 2009). Hence, creativity will be enhanced through narrative experiences.

Second, when people read a fictional narrative, they are often confronted with ambiguity, through which people are motivated to seek meaning in such an ambiguous situation (Proulx & Heine, 2009). Existing schemas are challenged in ambiguous situations, and people will look for alternative meaning. For instance, Proulx and Heine (2009) showed that readers of an absurdist and ambiguous story by Kafka performed better on a creative task, because the reader starts to look for alternative meaning for complex matters.

Fictional narrative experience may also enhance interpersonal behavior, including perspective-taking and empathic concern. Through fictional narrative experience, a reader puts him/herself in the position of others and shows more empathic concern through helping others at the workplace (Alvarez & Merchan, 1992; Grant & Wade-Benzoni, 2009). A number of reasons exist for these effects. During reading, individuals practice their empathic skills because they have to empathize with the characters in a narrative. Because of exposure to the story, people may sympathize with people with whom they in real life would not necessarily sympathize (Mar, Oatley, Hirsh, dela Paz, & Peterson, 2006). As a consequence, in confrontation with opinions of characters in fiction, people practice their interpersonal skills which are exercised better in real life.

Another explanation is that highly empathic people enjoy reading more than people with fewer empathic skills (Mar et al., 2006). As a consequence, they practice their empathic skills by reading fictional narratives, whereas people with fewer developed empathic skills read fewer fictional narratives, and therefore have fewer opportunities to practice and enhance these skills. The studies of Mar and colleagues (2006, 2009 2006) indeed showed that exposure to fiction was related to higher empathic skills and social abilities.

Other persistent affective and behavioral outcomes are possible that may be more negative in nature. For instance, the novel *Das Schloss* by Kafka, showing the negative effects of bureaucratic systems, may lead to decreased faith in mankind, possibly leading to disengagement and ambivalence. Fictional narrative experiences may also lead to negative emotional reactions, such as anger, sadness, fear, and depression (Pelowski & Akiba, 2011). Hypothetically, reading sad stories or watching sad movies may cause people to become less happy, possibly negatively influencing their self-image, and eventually leading to less social behavior and interference with work demands. Finally, fictional narratives may also present role models for employees on the workplace by presenting characters in a story who behave in ways consistent with moral beliefs of a reader or who go against these moral beliefs, and therefore educate a reader in moral agency (Appel, 2008).

Boundary Conditions of the Effects of Fictional Narrative Experience

The model of fictional narrative experience that has been presented does not take individual and contextual differences into account. However, it has been argued that there are individual differences in reactions to fiction experience based on culture, cognitive skills, and personal histories (Graesser, Olde, & Klettke, 2002). The extent to which a fictional narrative is able to establish a verisimilitude for the reader will influence his or her responses. Since verisimilitude is about "believability" (Bruner, 1986), the establishment of verisimilitude is contingent upon interest, mood, identification with characters, and other factors (Mar et al., 2011; Miall, 2004; Seilman & Larsen, 1989). We identify four main factors that may influence the degree to which people become transported, and the degree to which transportation leads to trans-

formation: frame of reference, identification with the protagonist, perceived usefulness, and verisimilitude.

First, *frame of reference* influences the perceptions of people toward a fictional narrative (Marsh, 1986; Möller, Pohlmann, Köller, & Marsh, 2009). We define frame of reference as the context and set of presuppositions within which a person's perception and thinking seem to occur. It is through our frame of reference that we experience a story, and because every individual is unique in it, a fictional narrative is experienced idiosyncratically by every reader, in every reading occasion. In line with this, Pelowski and Akiba (2011) have argued that self-identity plays a crucial role in the understanding and assessment of art; people compare that what they encounter in the fictional narrative toward that what constitutes their self-identity. Therefore, experience of fictional narratives will be different for each individual, since each individual experiences with his or her own frame of reference.

A second moderator is *identification with the protagonist*. An essential aspect of storytelling is identification of the reader with the protagonist (Green & Brock, 2000; Nell, 2002). Stories are told by narrators about the lives of individuals which are similar to the life of the reader, and provide opportunities for identification with characters. The degree to which a reader can identify and sympathize with the protagonist largely influences the degree to which verisimilitude is established and readers are transformed.

Third, *perceived usefulness* of a fictional narrative may determine the degree of transportation and transformation. When readers are confronted with a fictional narrative that contains information that can be used in the real world, they will be more likely to perceive the narrative as useful and, therefore, are transported and transformed more easily (Dijkstra, Zwaan, Graesser, & Magliano, 1994).

Finally, *degree of verisimilitude* created by a narrative is important for readers to become transformed. According to Busselle and Bilandzic (2008), readers consciously suppress their awareness that fiction is indeed fictional, and therefore allow themselves to care about a story and the characters. However, this process of suppression of fictional awareness is enhanced by the degree to which verisimilitude can be established. On the one hand, readers judge the realness of fictional events compared to real-life events by asking themselves whether certain events in the story would be likely to happen in reality. On the other hand, readers judge the coherence and logic of the fictional text, thus the realness of the events within the story context. For instance, research has shown that inconsistencies of reality in stories lead to slower and more critical reading (Rapp & Gerrig, 2006). If one of the two verisimilitude judgments' outcomes is negative, it will be significantly harder for readers to become transformed. The assumption here is that a story must be perceived as realistic and creating verisimilitude to have an impact on people's lives (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2008).

All in all, the present paper presents a general overview of the impact of fictional narrative experience on people within the work situation. The list of moderators in the relations of experience of fictional narratives with transportation and transformation is not exhaustive, and one can argue the existence of multiple factors that possibly influence the degree to which individuals may read, become transported, and are transformed. Personality may influence the extent to which an individual is likely to be drawn into narratives (e.g., high openness to experience; Djikic et al., 2009).

Also, factors including general intelligence, language fluency, ethnicity, cultural background (Mar et al., 2006), and need for cognition (Appel & Richter, 2007) have been found to influence the constructs and relations in the current research model.

Empirical Evidence for the Conceptual Model of Fictional Narrative Experience

The research framework we presented in this paper may help guide researchers in conducting studies on the effects of fictional narrative experiences on work outcomes. Although empirical tests of the conceptual model have not yet been published, a number of studies have been conducted that tested parts of the framework. We discuss two studies that have been conducted and are in the process of publication.

Bal and Veltkamp (2011) conducted an experiment based on the framework under study to test whether fictional narrative experience could enhance empathy among readers. Ninety-seven students took part in an experiment in which participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions (fiction, $N = 50$, vs. nonfiction, $N = 47$). Participants read the first chapter from the book *Blindness* by Portuguese Nobel prize winner Saramago (fiction condition), or read a part of a newspaper (nonfiction condition). Participants filled out questionnaires directly before and after reading the text, as well as one week later, to be able to test for delayed effects (Appel, 2008). Participants reported on their level of empathy at all three occasions (Davis, 1983), and filled out questions on transportation (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2009) and transformation after reading the text. Analyses showed that when participants were highly transported into and transformed by the story by Saramago, their empathic skills improved over a period of one week, while this was not the case for people who read the newspaper. These findings suggest that when people are transported in and transformed by a fictional narrative, they tend to become more empathic over time (while controlling for previous level of empathy), while this is not the case for people who read nonfiction.

Another study was conducted among working employees to further test the framework and to investigate another quadrant of the conceptual domain of outcomes (i.e., recovery). Therefore, a study was conducted with 66 employees in various organizations. The study was designed similar to the previous study; participants were randomly assigned to the fiction ($N = 36$) or the nonfiction ($N = 30$) conditions, and they read either a Sherlock Holmes story by Doyle (fiction) or a newspaper (nonfiction). Directly before and one week after the experiment, participants reported on the level of recovery from work during the previous week (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). Analyses showed that for the fiction readers, the level of work recovery significantly improved when they became highly transported in the narrative, while for nonfiction readers, their level of transportation did not influence their level of recovery from work. We concluded that when people become transported, they may better recover from their work.

To sum up, the two studies show that fictional narrative experiences may have important effects on work-related outcomes, including empathy and recovery from work. The studies present promising results for the proposed model in this paper, by showing how transportation in a fictional narrative can facilitate changes in the reader over time.

Discussion

The aim of this paper was to present a research framework for understanding the role of fictional narrative experiences in work outcomes. Following the transportation–transformation metaphor of Oatley (2002), we argued that fictional narrative experience has both emotional and cognitive consequences for readers, and that through transportation and transformation, fictional narrative experience may have effects on a range of work outcomes, including higher creativity and interpersonal behavior.

Although many authors have pointed toward the possible impact of narratives, virtually no study has focused on the influence of fictional narrative experiences on work outcomes. This paper is the first in organizational psychology that systematically examined the processes that lead from the experience of fiction to work-related outcomes. A theoretical model based on research from a variety of scientific fields (e.g., social psychology and communication theory) has been presented that may guide future research on the role of fictional narratives in organizational behavior. It is through stories that people make sense of the world and people's lives are changed (Weick, 1993).

Research Implications

There have been very few studies conducted on the role of fictional narrative experience in organizational psychology. Therefore, multiple research strategies can be employed to conduct further research within this domain. Mar and colleagues (2006) advised experience-sampling methods (e.g., daily diaries) to investigate how people's daily work activities might be influenced by fiction experience. Furthermore, experimental designs and field studies may shed more light on the processes described in this paper. Because of the different frequencies of occurrence of the outcomes (recovery may happen on a daily basis, whereas enhancement of interpersonal behavior occurs less frequently), researchers should design their studies based on the level of outcomes that are under study.

It can be argued that the relations proposed in the current paper are reciprocal in nature. As Mar and colleagues (2006) mentioned, people with empathic skills might be more likely to read narrative fiction, while people with low empathic skills spend their time on other activities, thereby assuming a positive relation between empathy and experience of narrative fiction. Furthermore, people who experience fictional narratives frequently might be more or less satisfied with their jobs and work may be more or less central in their lives. On the one hand, it might be a healthy detachment from work, through which people can unwind from work and reload for a new workday. On the other hand, fictional narrative may be used by unsatisfied employees to psychologically detach from an unpleasant working life (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). Longitudinal research is needed to disentangle these reciprocal relations in the model (cf. Bal & Veltkamp, 2011).

Conclusion

This paper explored the potential consequences of fictional narrative experience on work behaviors. As shown in the transportation–transformation model, fictional narrative experience may influence a wide variety of work outcomes through both affective and cognitive consequences. We encourage future researchers to empirically test the underlying mechanisms of the model of fictional narrative experience.

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