Journal of Communication ISSN 0021-9916

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Fictional Narratives Cultivate Just-World Beliefs

Markus Appel

Department of Education and Psychology, University of Linz, A-4040 Linz, Austria

Cultivation research has identified several misrepresentations on television and has shown that the more people watch television, the more their beliefs correspond to the television world. In recent years, experimental research has demonstrated that fictional narratives are powerful means to change audience beliefs. Theories on the narrative structure of fictional narratives and disposition-based theories of media enjoyment suggest that televised fictional narratives tend to portray the world as a just place. We propose that the amount of fiction watched on television predicts the belief in a just world (BJW). Further, we assume this effect to be compatible with the television use/mean-world relationship expressed by cultivation theory. Two cross-sectional studies with N = 128 participants (German sample) and N = 387 (Austrian sample) corroborate our assumptions. The self-reported frequency of watching fiction on television was positively related to the BJW, whereas the general amount of television viewing was positively related to mean- and scary-world beliefs. In the German sample, mean-world beliefs were also affected by viewing tabloid-style (infotainment) television news.

doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2007.00374.x

The relationship between the reality depicted by the media and the worldviews held by the audience is a fundamental question of mass communication research. Starting from cultivation theory, we posit that watching fictional narratives on television goes along with an increased *belief in a just world* (BJW), whereas general television use and watching infotainment nonfiction are related to the *belief in a mean world*. After introducing relevant theory and research, we present two cross-sectional studies that corroborate our assumptions.

Cultivation of beliefs

Cultivation theory assumes that the "television world" differs from our daily experiences, which leads heavy viewers to believe in the television world rather than real-world statistics. Most prominently, the more people watch television, the more they overestimate crime-related incidents and believe in a mean and scary world

Corresponding author: Markus Appel; e-mail: markus.appel@jku.at
This article is based in part on research done for my doctoral dissertation (Study 1).

(Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli, & Shanahan, 2002). Meta-analytic studies yielded a significant but rather small relationship between watching television and fear-related beliefs (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999). Television portrays the world as a dangerous and treacherous place, and those who watch a lot of television tend to believe in a mean world. After much criticism (see Shanahan & Morgan, 1999, for a review), cultivation theory remains one of the most dominant theories in mass communication research of the 21st century, as indicated by frequency of use in the high-quality communication journals (Bryant & Miron, 2004). This may be partly due to the fact that over the years, cultivation research has been a dynamic enterprise. The violent and mean world has not been the only metamessage that research has focused on. Supplementary metastories have been identified. Researchers highlighted recurrent images of and messages about certain parts of our society, politics, and values that are related to sex-role traditionalism (Morgan, 1982), authoritarianism (Shanahan, 1995), or materialism (Shrum, Burroughs, & Rindfleisch, 2005) among the heavy viewers. The aim of this article is to draw attention to a metastory that so far has not been investigated systematically: the just world in fictional narratives. The reasonable and just line of events that constitute fictional narrations cultivates a belief in a just world. We will show that television use is related to both, a belief in a mean world and a belief in a just world, if the use of different genres is considered.

Fictional narratives change beliefs

There are numerous anecdotes about pieces of fiction shifting people's worldview. As Strange (2002) pointed out, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Beecher Stowe (1853/1981) seems to have changed many readers' beliefs about equal rights. Its publication is even connected to the outbreak of the U.S. Civil War. Apart from the vast amounts of literature on the effects of aggressive media content and pornography, fiction has been widely neglected by mass communication researchers—clearly in contrast to the regularly ascribed impact on individuals and societies. Among approaches aimed at filling this gap, the idea of a "persuasion through fiction" has received the widest attention. A growing body of research has demonstrated profound persuasive effects shortly after recipients encounter fictional stories (Gerrig & Prentice, 1991; Green & Brock, 2000; Prentice, Gerrig, & Bailis, 1997; Strange & Leung, 1999; Wheeler, Green, & Brock, 1999) and an even higher impact after a 2-week delay (Appel & Richter, 2007). People who read about a fictional character who quit school because of personal problems tend to attribute school dropouts to individual circumstances in the real world as well (Strange & Leung, 1999), whereas people who read about someone who thinks that wearing a seat belt is unsafe are less convinced about wearing seat belts themselves, and so forth (e.g., Appel & Richter, 2007; Prentice et al., 1997). Recipients seem to learn whatever "facts" fictional narratives teach them.

As there are many stories told outside the lab, one may doubt that there is a common message in fictional narratives. And, unlike expository or persuasive texts and programming (e.g., the news, ads, or political speeches), fictional narratives do not necessarily contain a line of argument. However, they usually follow a plotline

with relatively schematic elements (e.g., setting, event, attempt, reaction, and consequence; Rumelhart, 1975). Their endings typically include a resolution that brings together unconnected story lines, thus restoring balance and, ultimately, justice.

The just world as a metanarrative of fictional narratives

We claim that fictional narratives depict a world that is guided more by the principle of justice than the real world is. To support this assumption, we provide two lines of argumentation. First, the conventional structure of narratives is an interdependent (or causal) chain of events that leads to a resolution (Chatman, 1978). Second, fictional narratives tend to stimulate moral evaluation and entertaining programming contains characters that are easily identified as good or bad—leading to the better end for the good girl/guy.

To support the notion of a metastory that is valid for a vast majority of fictional programming, it seems useful to have a glimpse at the well-known conventions and norms that guide its production (Gerbner, 1969). Popular guidelines for (aspiring) screenwriters strongly recommend a plotline that leads to a resolution of the central problems, questions, and conflicts that have unfolded throughout the story. "The dramatic structure of the screenplay may be defined as a linear arrangement of related incidents, episodes, or events leading to a dramatic resolution" (Field, 2005, p. 29). As fictional stories come to an end, information is fit together as to finally make sense and provide the protagonists with an outcome that is probable or at least explainable based on previous story elements.[1] In newer fiction, there is seldom an ending deus ex machina (Aristotle in Halliwell, 1987), as the outcome of the narrative is typically layed out in the story and the plotline is guided by the principle of relatedness and, in many cases, causality (Chatman, 1978). There is usually a strong relationship between a character's traits and behavior and the development of the story, including the good and bad things that may happen to him or her—a dependency that is close to what is typically seen as just.

The assumption of justice on the screen is further supported by theories that address psychological experiences during the reception of entertaining media. In both the *structural affect theory* by Brewer and colleagues (Brewer & Lichtenstein, 1981; Jose & Brewer, 1984) and the *affective disposition theory* by Zillmann and colleagues (Zillmann, 1991; Zillmann & Cantor, 1976), the liking (appreciation or enjoyment) of a story depends on whether the outcome is perceived as just or unjust (see also Raney, 2005, and Raney & Bryant, 2002, for a recent conception). People appreciate a story if a positively evaluated protagonist (the hero) is rewarded and/or a negatively evaluated protagonist (the villain) is penalized. An unjust (which often means negative) ending will in contrast frustrate the recipient and may lead to a negative attitude toward the media product itself, thus reducing the probability of choosing similar fare in the future. As the entertainment industry is depending on its audience, from this perspective it may be argued that just outcomes can be considered the default (sub)plotline for televised narrative fiction. Or, as Raney and Bryant (2002, p. 404) put it in the case of crime drama, "the macrostory of

all drama seems to be that all injustice necessarily results in some restoration of justice." In a recent overview about equity and justice in entertainment media products, Schmitt and Maes (2006) accumulated case-based evidence for fictional narratives that contain a "good defeats bad" plotline (even if the scenery is as complex and colorful as in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy).

Both the contingency convention of fictional narratives and the disposition-based theories of media enjoyment underline the notion of a just world in fictional narratives. In the real world, however, individuals have to deal with fortunes and misfortunes that are unforeseeable and not a consequence of our previous behavior. Although individuals tend to overestimate their influence on incidents (cf. Langer, 1975), still they are often confronted with unpredictable and unexplainable events that appear to be beyond individual control (e.g., accidents, diseases).

Apart from fictional narratives, there are other genres that deal with the notion of justice as well, most notably nonfiction, including news, local and national news broadcasts, news magazines, talk–interview programs. There is no evidence that nonfictional television entails the justice metastory outlined above. Newsmakers and other producers of nonfictional television content may be tempted to produce just worlds because viewers appreciate "good news" (Schmitt & Maes, 2006; Zillmann, Taylor, & Lewis, 1998), but content analyses point in a different direction. Research indicates that nonfictional programming contains a lot of immoral, antisocial behavior that has no negative consequences. In a majority of cases, those immoral acts have no consequences at all and sometimes even positive ones (Potter, Warren, Vaughan, Howley, Land, & Hagemeyer, 1997; Stone, Hartung, & Jensen, 1987). Potter et al. stated that the low rates for punishment of antisocial acts in nonfictional programming correspond to the lack of punishment in the real world (as represented in criminology statistics). But in contrast to real-world statistics, people do believe that antisocial acts have serious consequences (as, e.g., indicated by people's evaluations of police records). Because nonfictional television as well as real-life statistics cannot account for this widespread belief in fair consequences, it may be the entertaining fare of fictional narratives that cultivate just-world beliefs.

The belief in a just world as a crucial individual difference variable

Fictional narratives are a powerful means of changing beliefs, and they deliver a just-world message. Starting from cultivation theory, we assume that heavy use of fictional narratives goes hand in hand with the belief that the real world is a just place. In addition to mass communication research, this assumption relates to the psychology of individual differences. Since Lerner (1965) first introduced the concept of the belief in a just world, it has become one of the well-established variables in the individual differences literature. The BJW is a tendency to see our world as a place where people generally get what they deserve. It is the belief that "good things tend to happen to good people and bad things to bad people despite the fact that this is

patently not the case" (Furnham, 2003, p. 795, who provides a recent review). The research on the BJW is guided by the assumptions that people differ in the endorsement of this belief, that this variation is quite stable, and that this trait can be measured through self-report scales.

A big part of (early) studies related the BJW to the evaluation of victims of undesirable incidents, like rape, accidents, cancer, or HIV infection. People high in the BJW tend to look down on victims and attribute the reasons for their misfortunes to the victims themselves (cf. Montada, 1998). People high in the BJW have the positive illusion (cf. Lerner, 1980) that social situations are under one's own control or that they are at least predictable (Lipkus, Dalbert, & Siegler, 1996). This aspect has led researchers to consider this belief as a buffer for emotional stress. It is positively related to life satisfaction for both people with and without recent experiences of victimization (Dalbert, 2001). Although the impact of the BJW as an independent factor and potential mediating and moderating processes have been of steady interest in recent years, few studies have focused on the origins of individual differences concerning this trait (for family influences, see Dalbert & Radant, 2004; Sallay & Dalbert, 2004; and Schönpflug & Bilz, 2004). Although media socialization has been acknowledged as a main source of the BJW (Lerner, 1980; Rubin & Peplau, 1975), we found no study coming from this research tradition that investigates the relationship between the BJW and the media use (see Schmitt & Maes, 2006, for a similar conclusion).

Television may cultivate both mean-world beliefs and just-world beliefs

With respect to the focal relationship between the media use and the BJW, one line of critique on cultivation research seems highly relevant and has produced empirical data. Researchers have argued that watching television does not induce fear but is instead related to public trust (Gunter & Wober, 1983; Zillmann, 1980; Zillmann & Wakshlag, 1985). These authors implicitly assume that public trust (a term employed synonymously for "belief in a just world") is negatively correlated with the belief in a mean world. Gunter and Wober compiled four ad hoc scales to measure personal fearfulness, mean-world beliefs, anomia, and just-world beliefs. The latter scale consisted of two items from the Just World Scale by Rubin and Peplau (1975). Internal consistencies for these measures were not reported. In this British study, action–adventure viewing (but not viewing British soap operas or news) was found to be positively related to the belief in a just world. The relationships with the mean- and scary-world measures did not reach statistical significance.

The results tentatively support the notion of a covariation between the use of fictional narratives and just-world beliefs. However, we are reluctant to embrace this study wholeheartedly. The method (i.e., an ad hoc two-item measure for the just-world belief, with no reliability scores for the cultivation indicators provided) as well as the conclusion may be the target of serious criticism. In contrast to Gunter and Wober (1983) who concluded that the relationship between the action–adventure use and the BJW is "the reverse of that proposed by Gerbner," it may be the case that

television viewing goes along with both a belief in a just world and a belief in a mean world. Although we have argued that fictional narratives portray the world as a just place and cultivate just-world beliefs, we do not think that this metastory affects mean-world beliefs.

Other genres have been identified as more violence laden, and they covary with mean-world beliefs. It has been shown in the United States that reality-based crime shows (like *Cops*, *L.A.P.D.*) are related to fear in the audience (Dowler, 2003; Oliver & Armstrong, 1995). Until recently, this kind of programming has not been available in major German language television stations. Concerning genre-based cultivation processes, interviews with German adolescents imply that the tabloid television news (*Boulevardmagazine*), which may be labeled as infotainment (containing a mixture of celebrity gossip, animal stories, and crime news), cultivate a mean- and scary-world view (Eggert, 2001).

Rationale and predictions of the present studies

A huge part of our daily media fare consists of fictional narratives that portray the world as a more predictable and just place than it really is. Cultivation theory claims that media content diffuses into our real-world belief system, leading to a linear correlation between television exposure and corresponding beliefs. Hence, those who watch a lot of fiction should have a stronger belief in the world as a just place. Although Gunter and Wober (1983) and Zillmann and Wakshlag (1985) may have shared part of this rationale, a systematic investigation of this covariation is lacking.

H1: The amount of viewing fictional narrations on television is positively related to the general belief in a just world.

This notion, however, does not contradict the basic cultivation message, that is, that watching television leads to a belief in a mean and scary world where distrust and safety precautions are necessary. Just-world research does not indicate that just-world believers fear victimization to a lesser extent. We therefore address the relationship between just- and mean-world beliefs in form of a research question.

RQ1: Is there a covariation between fear-related beliefs and the belief in a just world?

Based on classical cultivation research, we posit that the central assumption of traditional cultivation research is unaffected by the fiction–just-world relationship. Heavy television viewers believe in a mean and scary world.

H2: The amount of television viewing is positively related to the belief in a mean and scary world.

In recent years, genre-specific cultivation processes received a lot of attention. In Germany, qualitative data suggest a significant influence of televised tabloid news (*Boulevardmagazine*) on the cultivation process (Eggert, 2001). This leads to the following hypothesis:

H3: The amount of watching tabloid news on television (infotainment) is positively related to the belief in a mean and scary world, even if the general amount of television viewing is controlled.

Study 1

Method

Participants

One hundred and forty people volunteered to take part in the study, either after reading a newspaper advertisement or seeing a posted notice of the study at the Psychology Department of the University of Cologne, Germany. These participants received a stamped envelope along with the survey. We received 128 properly filled out questionnaires (91.4%). This sample consists of 73 females and 55 males, with a mean age of 33 years ($SD = 12.71$). Each respondent earned €20 for his or her participation.

Television use measures

People should indicate how many hours they watch television on an average workday and how many hours they watch television on an average day at the weekend. A blank was provided for their answers, which were then transferred into a measure of weekly television use (Sparks & Ogles, 1990). To assess the participants' viewing of specific genres, 19 television genres were listed, each with two typical examples of the German television fare. Genre viewing was rated on a 5-point scale, indicating how often people watch programs that belong to each genre (*never*, *seldom*, *sometimes*, *often*, *very often*). This list includes four fictional genres. These genres are *feature films*, *detective shows/crime drama*, *soap operas*, and *other television series and serials*. Viewing ratings for the four fictional genres were averaged. This composite measure of viewing fictional narratives was employed for hypothesis testing. The list further includes the genre of *infotainment news* (*Boulevardmagazine*), which was used as a stand-alone measure. In order to provide evidence for the discriminant validity of our results, a measure of watching serious nonfiction was calculated. This variable is the average of viewing *evening news*, *news magazines*, *political talk*, *art documentary*, and *science documentary*. Please note that no hypotheses were formulated for the additional genres. They were included to contrast our critical genres more clearly from other programs.

Belief measures

The tendency to see the world in general as a just place was assessed using the German version of the *General Belief in a Just World Scale* (Dalbert, Montada, & Schmitt, 1987). This assessment tool consists of six statements (e.g., "I feel that people get what they deserve") with a 6-point scale (extremes: *strongly agree*, *strongly disagree*). Previous studies report satisfactory scale statistics for the German version as well as its translations, including the English language translation (e.g., Furnham, 1995; items of the English version in Dalbert, 1999). In the present sample, its

reliability as indicated by Cronbach's alpha .74 was satisfactory. Included in the study was also the German version of the *Personal Belief in a Just World Scale* (Dalbert, 1999). The seven items ("I feel that I get what I deserve") are presented with the same 6-point scale. In this study, the reliability was very good (Cronbach's $\alpha = .94$). Based on Interpersonal Trust Scale by Rotter (1967), 11 items were created to measure interpersonal *trust* (or, as the items were recoded, *interpersonal distrust*). Five of these items originate from a pretested German-language questionnaire (Amelang, Gold, & Külbel, 1984). The questions (item example: "Most people only care about themselves") went with a 4-point scale (from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*). In our sample, Cronbach's alpha was .87. Scary-World Beliefs were measured with 10 items. The same 4-point scale was provided. Items were adapted from a previous study on the cultivation of mean-world views (Taschler-Pollacek & Lukesch, 1990). Cronbach's alpha amounted to .77 (item example: "It is dangerous to walk alone in the dark"). Finally, we included a short instrument on Fear-Related Behavior introduced by Bilsky, Pfeiffer, and Wetzels (1992). Eight items (e.g., "I try to avoid using public transport during the evening") were to be rated on a 5-point scale ranging from *never* to *always* (Cronbach's $\alpha = .75$).[2]

Procedure

The questionnaires were part of a larger survey on media socialization and media literacy, which contained a section for determining age, sex, and school education. People filled out the survey at home. Pretests indicated that this took an average time of about 2 hours for the whole survey, including about 15 minutes for the media use items and the belief scales.

Results and discussion

Interrelation of the belief measures

For all significance tests reported in this article, type I error probability was set to .05 (two-tailed, unless indicated otherwise). Our research included the question of whether or not the BJW is connected with fear-related beliefs (Research Question 1). Zero-order correlations indicate that the BJW is virtually independent from distrust ($r = -.06$), scary-world views ($r = .01$), and fear-related behavior ($r = .08$, all ps $>$ .37). As expected, positive interrelations were revealed for the fear measures, that is, for distrust/scary world ($r = .41$, $p < .001$), for distrust/fear behavior ($r = .21$, $p <$ .02), and for scary world/fear behavior ($r = .49$, $p < .001$).

Use of fiction and the BJW

Hypothesis 1 assumed that there is a positive covariation between the amount of fiction watched on television and the BJW. This key hypothesis of the present study was tested by means of a hierarchical regression analysis.

As indicated in Table 1, none of the demographic control measures had an impact on the BJW. Also, the amount of weekly television use did not predict just-world beliefs. Watching fiction on television was integrated last in the regression.

Table 1 Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis With Use of Fiction as the Predictor of the Just-World Belief Plus Infotainment and News/Nonfiction Use as Alternative Predictors (German Sample)

Predictor	*B*	*SE B*	β
Step 1			
Age	.00	.01	.06
Sex	−.30	.16	−.19
C1 (education)	.16	.14	.11
C2 (education)	−.06	.11	−.05
C3 (education)	−.01	.05	−.02
C4 (education)	−.07	.08	−.08
C5 (education)	−.02	.10	−.02
Step 2			
Weekly television	.00	.01	−.05
Step 3[a]			
Fiction	.24	.12	.22*
Step 3—alternatives			
Infotainment	−.03	.08	−.04
News/nonfiction	.06	.10	.07

Note: C1–C5: contrast codes for education.
[a]Belief in a just world as criterion: $R^2 = .07$ for Step 1, $F(7, 114) = 1.2$, $p = .32$; $\Delta R^2 = .00$ for Step 2, $F_{change}(1, 113) < 1$, $p = .66$; $\Delta R^2 = .03$ for Step 3 fiction, $F_{change}(1, 112) = 4.8$, $p = .03$; $\Delta R^2 = .00$ for alternative Step 3 infotainment, $F_{change}(1, 112) < 1$, $p = .82$; $\Delta R^2 = .00$ for alternative Step 3 news/nonfiction, $F_{change}(1, 112) < 1$, $p = .47$.
*$p < .05$.

As postulated in the central hypothesis, the use of fiction is significantly related to the BJW. People who watch fictional stories on television, stories that portray a just world, tend to believe that the real world is a just place. But no such relationship was found when the personal belief in a just world is taken as the criterion variable and the fictional narrative measure is entered in the third step, $\Delta R^2 = .00$ for Step 3, $F_{change}(1, 105) < 1$, $p = .74$, $\beta = -.04$. Also, neither scary-world views and distrust, nor fear-related behavior is predicted by the use of fiction (see details in Table 2). These supplementary analyses bolster the assumption that the use of fiction is specifically related to the general belief in a just world but not related to other beliefs, for example, the belief that the world treats you right (personal belief in a just world). In order to strengthen discriminant validity, viewing infotainment news and serious nonfiction was integrated in the third step to show its influence as an alternative predictor. Both alternative regressions reveal no significant relationship between viewing this kind of programming and the BJW.

Media use and fear-related beliefs

Hypothesis 2 assumed that the classical cultivation relationship is found in the same sample, that is, the amount of television consumption as positively related

Table 2 Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis With Weekly Television Use and Infotainment Television Use as Predictors Plus Fiction and News/Nonfiction Use as Alternative Predictors (German Sample)

	Criterion								
	Distrust			Scary World			Fear-Related Behavior		
Predictor	*B*	*SE B*	β	*B*	*SE B*	β	*B*	*SE B*	β
Step 1									
Age	−.02	.00	−.04	−.00	.00	−.04	.01	.05	.23*
Sex	−.02	.10	−.02	−.35	.08	−.39***	−.64	.13	−.42***
C1 (education)	.05	.09	.05	−.00	.07	−.01	−.16	.11	−.12
C2 (education)	.06	.07	.08	.15	.06	.22*	.19	.09	.16*
C3 (education)	.07	.03	.19*	.03	.03	.10	.10	.04	.21*
C4 (education)	.10	.05	.17	.12	.04	.26**	.03	.07	.03
C5 (education)	−.12	.07	−.19	−.01	.05	−.01	−.09	.08	−.10
Step 2									
Weekly television	.01	.01	.19*	.01	.04	.21*	.02	.01	.20*
Step 3[a]									
Infotainment	.11	.05	.21*	.13	.04	.30**	.14	.06	.19*
Step 3—alternatives									
Fiction	.03	.08	.04	.02	.06	.04	.02	.10	.02
News/nonfiction	−.01	.07	−.01	.01	.05	.02	−.08	.08	−.09

Note: C1–C5: contrast codes for education.
[a]Distrust as criterion: $R^2 = .14$ for Step 1, $F(7, 115) = 2.7$, $p = .01$; $\Delta R^2 = .03$ for Step 2, $F_{change}(1, 114) = 3.7$, $p = .03$ (one-sided test); $\Delta R^2 = .03$ for Step 3, $F_{change}(1, 113) = 4.5$, $p = .02$ (one-sided test); $\Delta R^2 = .00$ for alternative Step 3 fiction, $F_{change}(1, 113) < 1$, $p = .70$; $\Delta R^2 = .00$ for alternative Step 3 news/nonfiction, $F_{change}(1, 113) < 1$, $p = .91$. Scary-world beliefs as criterion: $R^2 = .22$ for Step 1, $F(7, 115) = 2.7$, $p < .001$; $\Delta R^2 = .03$ for Step 2, $F_{change}(1, 114) = 5.1$, $p = .01$ (one-sided test); $\Delta R^2 = .06$ for Step 3, $F_{change}(1, 113) = 10.6$, $p < .001$ (one-sided test); $\Delta R^2 = .00$ for alternative Step 3 fiction, $F_{change}(1, 113) < 1$, $p = .73$; $\Delta R^2 = .00$ for alternative Step 3 news/nonfiction, $F_{change}(1, 113) < 1$, $p = .88$. Fear-related behavior as criterion: $R^2 = .32$ for Step 1, $F(7, 115) = 7.7$, $p < .001$; $\Delta R^2 = .03$ for Step 2, $F_{change}(1, 114) = 5.1$, $p = .01$ (one-sided test); $\Delta R^2 = .03$ for Step 3, $F_{change}(1, 114) = 4.5$, $p = .02$ (one-sided test); $\Delta R^2 = .00$ for alternative Step 3 fiction, $F_{change}(1, 113) < 1$, $p = .85$; $\Delta R^2 = .00$ for alternative Step 3 news/nonfiction, $F_{change}(1, 113) < 1$, $p = .35$.
$^*p < .05$. $^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$.

to mean-world beliefs. Table 2 shows the results of regression analyses, with the three fear-related measures employed as criterion variables. Of the demographic measures in the first step, most notably women (as opposed to men) have a stronger impression that they live in a scary world and they act accordingly. Consistent with our second prediction, weekly television use is connected with all three fear-related measures. People who often watch television see the world as a dangerous place, where distrust and safety behaviors are highly adaptive. This result is in line with a small number of studies that have taken place in Germany, and many

more worldwide. They indicate that the amount of watching television is associated with fear-related beliefs and that the effect size of this correlation is rather small.

Hypothesis 3 assumed that beyond the general cultivation effect of television use, watching tabloid news on television is related to the fear measures. In line with this hypothesis, feelings of distrust, scary-world beliefs, and fear-related behavior are predicted by the use of tabloid news when the general amount of watching television is controlled. Those who frequently expose themselves to exemplified information with crime as a dominant topic perceive the world as mean and scary. As reported above, watching fictional narratives does not predict any of the three mean-world indicators. Likewise, serious nonfiction as an alternative does not predict the belief in a mean world.

In summary, Study 1 confirmed our hypotheses. Most importantly, we found the assumed relationship between watching fiction on television and the belief in a just world. The frequent viewing of narratives, containing a just world that often includes the triumph of good over evil, goes hand in hand with the feeling of living in a just world. For the same sample, however, we found that the general amount of watching television is related to a fearful worldview. Over and above this effect, the exposure to infotainment programming (*Boulevardmagazine*) is related to a mean-world view. In contrast to earlier ideas on this matter, which seemed to conceive a substantial negative correlation between just- and scary-world beliefs, empirically those concepts are virtually unrelated. As posited, excessive media use on the one hand reinforces people's BJW and on the other perpetuates a mean- and scary-world view. Fictional narratives support the adaptive feeling of a foreseeable world, whereas infotainment (*Boulevardmagazine*) is associated with a mean-world view. Results within the framework of cultivation research have often been criticized for not being consistent across studies. As Study 1 is the first empirical investigation that relates the BJW systematically with media use, a replication of the findings seems warranted. In order to reinforce the results of Study 1, a replica study was conceived in a slightly different context.

Study 2

Whereas the first study was located in the metropolitan area of Cologne, Germany, the second study took place in rural Austria. The media options in Austria and Germany have a certain overlap, that is, German television channels and magazines are received or bought in Austria as well. However, there are three Austria-only television channels, and in the news sector, Austrians generally prefer their own Austria-focused newscasts and newspapers (Melischek, Seethaler, & Skodacsek, 2005). As there are no Austrian infotainment news (*Boulevardmagazine*) broadcasted, H3 cannot be tested. With this limitation, still, the slightly altered setting is a good background to investigate the robustness of the findings reported above.

Method

Participants

Three hundred and eighty-seven people were tested by students who served as research assistants for partial course credit. They recruited a mixed group of respondents based on a quota sample procedure. This quota aimed at an equal proportion of male and female participants, of higher and lower school education, and an equal proportion of younger and middle-aged (18–34 years) to older (35+ years) persons. One hundred and ninety-four females and 192 males who participated (plus 1 person with unidentified sex) had a mean age of 25.96 years (SD = 13.00), and 205 (53%) had obtained a higher school education degree.

Media use measures

The media use measures were the same as in Study 1, with two exceptions. First, a few specifically Austrian television programs (e.g., the Austrian news or a famous Austria-only talk show) served as examples, substituting their German counterparts. Second, the list of genres was extended by two genres that were irrelevant back in 2002 (when Study 1 was conducted) but were part of the media fare in 2006 (Study 2), namely, *reality-based murder mysteries* and *police documentaries* (similar to *Cops*). However, watching those programs was very rare; therefore, an analysis of relationships with these genres was suspended.

Belief measures

The same *just world* and *fear* measures as in Study 1 were used. Reliability scores for the just-world scales were satisfactory, with a Cronbach's alpha of .77 (*General Belief in a Just World*) and a Cronbach's alpha of .92 (*Personal Belief in a Just World*). The measurement of the fear components was reliable for *Interpersonal Distrust* (Cronbach's α = .83), *Scary-World Beliefs* (Cronbach's α = .74), and *Fear-Related Behavior* (Cronbach's α = .74).[3]

Procedure

A booklet was prepared that contained (in the following order) the just-world scales, the fear-related scales, the media use measures, and a brief demographic section. The participants filled out the survey individually or in small groups of two to five people. The research assistant was mostly present or within easy reach. The whole study took on average no more than 15 minutes.

Results and discussion

Interrelation of the belief measures

The relationships between just- and mean-world beliefs (Research Question 1) are expressed by zero-order correlations, which indicate that the BJW is independent from scary-world views (r = .01) and fear-related behavior (r = .10, all ps $>$ .05). There is, however, a small but significant relationship with distrust ($r = -.17$, $p < .01$). We found positive correlations among the fear measures, that is, for distrust/mean

world ($r = .40$, $p < .001$), distrust/fear behavior ($r = .15$, $p < .01$), and mean-world/fear behavior ($r = .35$, $p < .001$).

Use of fiction and the BJW

Hypothesis 1 assumed that the amount of watching fiction on television predicts the BJW. Again, this key hypothesis of the present study was tested by means of a hierarchical regression analysis. Like in Study 1, the demographic measures and television use were entered first in the equation with the composite fiction measure entered in the final step of the regression analysis.

As shown in Table 3, none of the demographic control measures had an impact on the BJW. Again, the amount of weekly television use did not predict just-world beliefs. The analysis of the last step in the regression analysis reveals that the BJW is significantly predicted by the use of fictional genres. These findings corroborate our assumptions and the results of Study 1, that is, watching fiction goes hand in hand with the general just-world belief. Neither the personal BJW, $\Delta R^2 = .00$ for Step 3 fiction, $F_{change}(1, 370) = 1.3$, $p = .26$, $\beta = .06$, nor distrust, $\Delta R^2 = .00$ for Step 3 fiction, $F_{change}(1, 371) = 1.3$, $p = .25$, $\beta = -.06$, scary-world views, $\Delta R^2 = .00$ for Step 3 fiction, $F_{change}(1, 371) < 1$, $p = .34$, $\beta = .05$, or fear-related behavior, $\Delta R^2 = .00$ for Step 3 fiction, $F_{change}(1, 371) < 1$, $p = .86$, $\beta = .01$, as alternative criteria is predicted

Table 3 Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis With Use of Fiction as the Predictor of the Just-World Belief Plus Infotainment and News/Nonfiction Use as Alternative Predictors (Austrian Sample)

Predictor	*B*	*SE B*	β
Step 1			
Age	.00	.00	.04
Sex	−.13	.09	−.07
C1 (education)	.04	.03	.09
C2 (education)	.03	.04	.04
C3 (education)	−.06	.08	−.04
Step 2			
Weekly television	.00	.01	−.01
Step 3[a]			
Fiction	.11	.06	.10*
Step 3—alternatives			
Infotainment	.02	.04	.03
News/nonfiction	−.03	.06	−.03

Note: C1–C3: contrast codes for education.

[a]Belief in a just world as criterion: $R^2 = .02$ for Step 1, $F(5, 373) = 1.5$, $p = .18$; $\Delta R^2 = .00$ for Step 2, $F_{change}(1, 372) < 1$, $p = .85$; $\Delta R^2 = .01$ for Step 3 fiction, $F_{change}(1, 372) = 3.8$, $p = .03$ (one-sided test); $\Delta R^2 = .00$ for alternative Step 3 infotainment $F_{change}(1, 369) < 1$, $p = .84$; $\Delta R^2 = .00$ for alternative Step 3 news/nonfiction, $F_{change}(1, 371) < 1$, $p = .64$.

*$p < .05$.

Table 4 Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis With Weekly Television Use as Predictor (Austrian Sample)

	Criterion								
	Distrust			Scary World			Fear-Related Behavior		
Predictor	*B*	*SE B*	β	*B*	*SE B*	β	*B*	*SE B*	β
Step 1									
Age	.00	.00	.09	.00	.00	.05	.02	.00	.26***
Sex	.01	.05	.02	−.19	.04	−.22***	−.58	.07	−.38***
C1 (education)	.03	.01	.13*	.05	.01	.21***	.02	.02	.05
C2 (education)	.02	.02	.05	.01	.02	.03	.07	.03	.11*
C3 (education)	.10	.04	.15*	.04	.04	.05	−.01	.06	−.01
Step 2									
Weekly television[a]	.01	.00	.19***	.01	.00	.11*	.00	.00	.03

Note: C1–C3: contrast codes for education.
[a]Distrust as criterion: $R^2 = .04$ for Step 1, $F(5, 374) = 3.2$, $p = .01$; $\Delta R^2 = .04$ for Step 2, $F_{change}(1, 373) = 14.7$, $p < .001$. Scary world as criterion: $R^2 = .10$ for Step 1, $F(5, 374) = 7.9$, $p < .001$; $\Delta R^2 = .01$ for Step 2, $F_{change}(1, 373) = 4.6$, $p = .02$ (one-sided test). Fear-related behavior as criterion: $R^2 = .22$ for Step 1, $F(5, 374) = 20.9$, $p < .001$; $\Delta R^2 = .00$ for Step 2, $F_{change}(1, 373) < 1$, $p = .56$.
$^*p < .05$. $^{**}p < .01$. $^{***}p < .001$.

by viewing fictional narratives. Again, neither viewing infotainment (*Boulevardmagazine*) nor serious nonfiction serves as a similarly powerful predictor. Both alternative regressions reveal no significant relationship between viewing those kinds of programming and the BJW.

Media use and fear-related beliefs

The second hypothesis assumed that the amount of television consumption is positively connected with fear-related beliefs. Table 4 shows the results of the regression analysis for the Austrian data. Consistent with our second prediction, weekly television use is related to distrust and scary-world beliefs (albeit the latter having only a very small effect). No such association can be found for fear-related behavior as the criterion. As reported above, again, watching fictional narratives does not predict any of the three mean-world indicators.

In summary, Study 2 corroborates the key findings of Study 1. Most importantly, the assumed relationship between the watching fiction on television and the BJW was replicated, albeit with a smaller effect size. For the Austrian sample, the amount of watching television is related to distrust and, to a smaller extent, to scary-world beliefs.

General discussion

The aim of the present study was to investigate the relationship between media use and beliefs about the real world, most notably the BJW. In line with expectations,

two studies in Germany and Austria showed that those who watch a lot of fictional stories on television tend to perceive the world as a just place, a place where people get what they deserve. Supplementary analyses bolster the assumption that the use of fiction is specifically related to the general belief in a just world but not related to other beliefs, like the belief that the world treats you justly (personal belief in a just world) or that you live in a mean and scary world. Likewise, neither an infotainment (*Boulevardmagazine*) nor a composite measure of serious news/nonfiction predicts the belief in a just world, thus emphasizing the discriminant validity of the fiction–just world beliefs relationship. Distrust, scary-world beliefs, and fear-related behavior correlate positively and are virtually all independent of the just-world motive. As many cultivation studies have shown before, the amount of television use predicts a mean-world view. Over and above this effect, the use of infotainment on television (*Boulevardmagazine*) is related to fear of crime (German sample only, as no Austrian programming of this kind exists).

With the BJW as a new cultivation indicator, the studies provide an extension of cultivation research. Unlike previous assumptions (Gunter & Wober, 1983; Zillmann, 1980; Zillmann & Wakshlag, 1985), we hypothesized that the cultivation of just-world beliefs is compatible with the well-known mean-world cultivation, which was confirmed by our research. In theorizing and testing different relationships for different programming, we are part of a line of research that focuses on content-specific cultivation (e.g., Hawkins & Pingree, 1982; Segrin & Nabi, 2002). In the United States, Germany, Austria, and many other countries, audiences are distributed to a greater number of channels than 15 years ago (audience fragmentation). Audience members seem to polarize around different classes of content (Webster, 2005). As Webster further notes, this steady diet may lead to an increase in cultivation effects. Based on these developments, however, interindividual differences in viewing content seem to be more important than before in order to explain relationships between television viewing and real-world beliefs.

Due to the fact that the cultivation process may vary for different cultural backgrounds, generalizability is especially important for the results presented here. Previous research in Germany and Austria indicates that cultivation processes in both countries tend to be similar to those reported for the United States and other (but not all) countries (cf. Gerbner et al., 2002): Content analyses of German language television illustrate that crime is overrepresented (Groebel & Gleich, 1993; Lukesch, Bauer, Eisenhauer, & Schneider, 2004) compared to police statistics. The few studies that previously examined the television–mean world relationship in Germany or Austria confirmed the U.S. cultivation findings (Barth, 1988; Taschler-Pollacek & Lukesch, 1990; for fear of victimization, see Bilandzic, 2002). Furthermore, there is no indication that the tendency of fictional narratives to portray the world as predictable and just is particular to programming in Germany and Austria. Thus, we suppose that our findings are not limited to the countries in which the studies took place.

The empirical results that were presented as well as its (potential) limitations implicate further areas that could be addressed by future studies. A first limitation of

the present study is the size of the effects. Correlations hardly exceeded $r = .30$. In previous cultivation studies, the effect sizes were even smaller on average (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999). Most likely, small-sized effects reflect the true nature of the relationship under consideration. However, media effects may operate indirectly and are mediated by others (parents, peers). Those indirect effects have been beyond the scope of this article.

Second, the studies do not provide any results that shed light on the direction of the covariations. Do media indeed change people's beliefs or do people choose media accordingly? For us, the relationship between the beliefs and the time spent with media of differing content is necessarily conceived as a reciprocal interaction (cf. Bandura, 1999; Pervin, 1968). Experimental and longitudinal studies have shown both ways of causal influence (e.g., Morgan, 1982; Moskalenko & Heine, 2003; Shrum, 2001). In a similar vein, Gerbner et al. (2002) do not see cultivation as a one-direction "push" by the media but rather as an interactive gravitational process (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999). However, as our argumentation (in line with cultivation theory) has a stronger focus on the "effects side" of the equation, it seems worthwhile to further test the impact of fictional narratives on the BJW by experimental means. This could also connect the present research more to the persuasion literature, which has identified the state of *transportation* as a mediating factor for fictional belief change (Gerrig, 1993; Green & Brock, 2000, 2002).

Third, the present studies are limited with regard to individual differences among the audience. Methodically, sex, age, and education were treated as potential confounds and we tried to control their impact. A complementary research strategy with individual differences in focus seems reasonable. Regarding age, children and adolescents (who we excluded from our sample quota) are among those who enjoy fictional stories most. In many cultures around the world, the youngest listen to fairy tales even before they are able to read or choose themselves what to listen to, to read, or to watch. Especially in fairy tales, we find all the ingredients that make a story full of suspense. *Cinderella* or *Snow White*, *Little Red Riding Hood, Hansel and Gretel*, and *Sleeping Beauty* by the Brothers Grimm include a prototypical struggle of moral counterparts and the defeat of an evil figure, usually along with an ugly revenge (see also studies on Russian folk tales by Propp, 1928/1958). For a long time, people have argued for and against telling such stories to children—mostly without putting their predictions to an empirical test. Our research implies that children's BJW is encouraged by those fairy tales.

Fourth and last, from a normative standpoint, the question arises of whether a "moral education" (Schmitt & Maes, 2006) through fictional narratives, leading to an increased BJW, is a desirable process for youngsters and adults. It is far beyond the scope of our article to provide an answer to this question. On the one hand, the BJW connects with authoritarianism and the disregard of the unfortunate (like poor people, sick people), stemming from an inappropriate illusion of justice. On the other hand, newer research has emphasized the adaptive qualities of just-world beliefs, including positive relationships with life satisfaction and

emotional resources (e.g., Dalbert, 2001). In both instances, the BJW relates to significant (societal) phenomena. This underlines its status as an important and rather unexplored variable in cultivation theory, and communication research in general.

Acknowledgments

I thank Norbert Groeben and Margrit Schreier for their insightful suggestions regarding this research, as well as Margrit Schreier for her support in conducting Study 1.

Notes

1 Serial narratives, like soap operas, are fictional narratives that by convention do not provide a resolution at the end of each episode. However, "cliffhangers" are narrative intermissions, with the story unfolding in the subsequent episode, that is, the plot is continued the next day or week. In many serials (e.g., Latin American telenovelas), after 200 episodes or so, the story leads to a final ending where the main plotlines are resolved (Allen, 1995). We posit that even open serials (those that do not lead to an end) need to relate events to make them plausible (in terms of the genre's extended standard of plausibility), thus portraying the world as more just than it is in real life.

2 Originally, Study 1 included three more mean-world measures. Results for these scales are not reported as there were severe floor effects and related low reliability scores. The media literacy variables had no impact on the results presented. The scales reported here comprised the following items, *Distrust*: (1) Most people only care about themselves; (2) In these competitive times you have to watch out or someone will take advantage of you; (3) You can never be careful enough when you deal with other people; (4) You can advance in life by trusting other people first; (5) In most cases, it is true when they say that it is better to be safe than sorry; (6) Most people would take advantage of me if they had the chance to do so; (7) It is easier to deal with strangers when you are careful until they prove themselves to be trustworthy; (8) I trust new people; (9) It is safer to think that, contrary to what they say, people only think about their own wellbeing; (10) There are only a few people you can depend on; (11) The people at work usually only wait for you to mess up so they can get on themselves. Items 2, 7, 9, 10, and 11 are adapted from Amelang et al. (1984) and Items 4 and 8 reverse scored. *Scary World*: (1) It is dangerous to walk alone in the dark; (2) Crime protection right now is a pressing political challenge; (3) Using public transportation endangers your personal safety; (4) It is prudential to always secure the doors to your house or your apartment as good as possible; (5) It is easy to become the victim of a crime when you are in a strange neighborhood; (6) Some parts of German cities are almost life threatening; (7) Back alleys can be dangerous; (8) Cities in Germany are safe during daytime; (9) There are plenty of issues that are more important in our society than crime and "homeland security"; (10) Big crowds often invite theft (in Study 2, Items 6 and 8 "European" instead of "German" and Items 8 and 9 reverse scored).

Fear-Related Behavior (items as translated by Bilsky, Pfeiffer, & Wetzels, 1993 [reprinted with permission]): (1) I only leave the house after nightfall when it is absolutely necessary; (2) I avoid certain streets, squares or parks; (3) I try to avoid contact with strangers whom I meet after nightfall where possible; (4) I try to avoid using public transport during the evening; (5) I refrain from carrying a lot of money on me; (6) I carry something on me with which I can defend myself; (7) I ask my neighbors to make sure everything is alright in my home when I am away; (8) I take care to ensure that my home is never unoccupied, or never appears to be unoccupied, when I am away.

3 Originally, Study 2 included two scales aimed at measuring two facets of critical media literacy. Moderated regression analyses indicate that these literacy aspects have no impact on the results presented.

References

Allen, R. C. (1995). Introduction. In R. C. Allen (Ed.), *To be continued… soap operas around the world* (pp. 1–26). London: Routledge.

Amelang, M., Gold, A., & Külbel, E. (1984). Über einige Erfahrungen mit einer deutschsprachigen Skala zur Erfassung zwischenmenschlichen Vertrauens (Interpersonal Trust) [Experience with a German scale for interpersonal trust]. *Diagnostica*, **30**, 198–215.

Appel, M., & Richter, T. (2007). Persuasive effects of fictional narratives increase over time. *Media Psychology*, **10**, 113–134.

Bandura, A. (1999). A social cognitive theory of personality. In L. Pervin & O. John (Eds.), *Handbook of personality* (pp. 154–196). New York: Guilford.

Barth, B. (1988). Fernsehnutzung und Realitätswahrnehmung: Zur Überprüfung der Kultivierungshypothese [Television use and perceptions of reality: Testing the cultivation hypothesis]. *Rundfunk und Fernsehen*, **36**, 67–79.

Beecher Stowe, H. (1981). *Uncle Tom's cabin; or, life among the lowly*. New York: Penguin Books. (Original work published 1853)

Bilandzic, H. (2002). Genrespezifische Kultivierung durch Krimirezeption [Genre-specific cultivation through the reception of crime]. *Zeitschrift für Medienpsychologie*, **14**, 60–68.

Bilsky, W., Pfeiffer, C., & Wetzels, P. (1992). *Persönliches Sicherheitsgefühl, Angst vor Kriminalität und Gewalt, Opfererfahrung älterer Menschen: Erhebungsinstrument der KFN-Opferbefragung [Feeling of personal safety, fear of crime and violence and the experience of victimization amongst elderly people. Research instrument of the KFN Victim Survey]*. Hanover, Germany: KFN-Forschungsberichte (Nr. 5).

Bilsky, W., Pfeiffer, C., & Wetzels, P. (1993). *Feeling of personal safety, fear of crime and violence and the experience of victimization amongst elderly people. Research Instrument of the KFN Victim Survey 1992—Translation*. Hanover, Germany: KFN-Forschungsberichte (Nr. 8).

Brewer, W. F., & Lichtenstein, E. H. (1981). Event schemas, story schemas, and story grammars. In J. Long & A. Baddeley (Eds.), *Attention and performance 9* (pp. 363–379). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Bryant, J., & Miron, D. (2004). Theory and research in mass communication. *Journal of Communication*, **54**, 662–704.

Chatman, S. (1978). *Story and discourse. Narrative structure in fiction and film*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Dalbert, C. (1999). The world is more just for me than generally: About the personal belief in a just world scale's validity. *Social Justice Research*, **12**, 79–98.

Dalbert, C. (2001). *The justice motive as a personal resource: Dealing with challenges and critical life events*. New York: Plenum.

Dalbert, C., Montada, L., & Schmitt, M. (1987). Glaube an eine gerechte Welt als Motiv: Validierungskorrelate zweier Skalen [Belief in a just world: Validation of two scales]. *Psychologische Beiträge*, **29**, 596–615.

Dalbert, C., & Radant, M. (2004). Parenting and young adolescents' belief in a just world. In C. Dalbert & H. Sallay (Eds.), *The justice motive in adolescence and young adulthood: Origins and consequences* (pp. 11–25). London: Routledge.

Dowler, K. (2003). Media consumption and public attitudes toward crime and justice: The relationship between fear of crime, punitive attitudes, and perceived police effectiveness. *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture*, **10**, 109–126.

Eggert, S. (2001). Fernsehen als Informationsmedium Jugendlicher: Präferenzen und Barrieren [Television as a source of information for adolescents: Preferences and barriers]. *Media Perspektiven, no number*, 75–83.

Field, S. (2005). *Screenplay. The foundations of screenwriting*. New York: Bantam.

Furnham, A. (1995). The just world, charitable giving, and attitudes to disability. *Personality and Individual Differences*, **19**, 577–583.

Furnham, A. (2003). Belief in a just world: Research progress over the past decade. *Personality and Individual Differences*, **34**, 795–817.

Gerbner, G. (1969). Toward "cultural indicators": The analysis of mass mediated message systems. *AV Communication Review*, **17**, 137–148.

Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Morgan, M., Signorielli, N., & Shanahan, J. (2002). Growing up with television: Cultivation processes. In J. Bryant & D. Zillmann (Eds.), *Media effects, Advances in theory and research* (pp. 43–67). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Gerrig, R. J. (1993). *Experiencing narrative worlds: On the psychological activities of reading*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Gerrig, R. J., & Prentice, D. A. (1991). The representation of fictional information. *Psychological Science*, **2**, 336–340.

Green, M. C., & Brock, T. C. (2000). The role of transportation in the persuasiveness of public narratives. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **79**, 701–721.

Green, M. C., & Brock, T. C. (2002). In the mind's eye: Transportation-imagery model of narrative persuasion. In M. C. Green, J. J. Strange, & T. C. Brock (Eds.), *Narrative impact: Social and cognitive foundations* (pp. 315–342). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Groebel, J., & Gleich, U. (1993). *Gewaltprofil des deutschen Fernsehprogramms. Eine Analyse des Angebots privater und öffentlich-rechtlicher Sender [Violence profile of German television programming. An analysis of public broadcasters and private channels]*. Opladen, Germany: Leske & Budrich.

Gunter, B., & Wober, J. M. (1983). Television viewing and public trust. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, **22**, 174–176.

Halliwell, S. (1987). *The poetics of Aristotle: Translation and commentary*. London: Duckworth.

Hawkins, R., & Pingree, S. (1982). Television's influence on social reality. In National Institute of Mental Health (Ed.), *Television and behavior: Ten years of scientific progress and implications for the 80s* (pp. 224–247). Rockville, MD: NIMH.

Jose, P. E., & Brewer, W. F. (1984). The development of story liking: Character identification, suspense, and outcome resolution. *Developmental Psychology*, **20**, 911–924.

Langer, E. J. (1975). The illusion of control. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **32**, 311–328.

Lerner, M. J. (1965). Evaluation of performance as a function of performer's reward and attractiveness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **1**, 355–360.

Lerner, M. J. (1980). *Belief in a just world—A fundamental delusion*. New York: Plenum.

Lipkus, I. M., Dalbert, C., & Siegler, I. C. (1996). The importance of distinguishing the belief in a just world for self versus for others: Implications for psychological well-being. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, **22**, 666–677.

Lukesch, H., Bauer, C., Eisenhauer, R., & Schneider, I. (2004). *Das Weltbild des Fernsehens. Synopse. [The world of television. Synopsis]*. Regensburg, Germany: Roderer.

Melischek, G., Seethaler, J., & Skodacsek, K. (2005). Der österreichische Zeitungsmarkt 2004: Hoch konzentriert [The Austrian newspaper market: Highly concentrated]. *Media Perspektiven*, **5**, 243–252.

Montada, L. (1998). Belief in a just world: A hybrid of justice motive and self-interest? In L. Montada & M. J. Lerner (Eds.), *Responses to victimizations and belief in a just world* (pp. 217–246). New York: Plenum.

Morgan, M. (1982). Television and adolescent's sex-role stereotypes: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, **43**, 947–955.

Moskalenko, S., & Heine, S. J. (2003). Watching your troubles away: Television viewing as a stimulus for subjective self-awareness. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, **29**, 76–85.

Oliver, M. B., & Armstrong, G. B. (1995). Predictors of viewing and enjoyment of reality-based and fictional crime shows. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, **72**, 559–570.

Pervin, L. A. (1968). Performance and satisfaction as a function of individual employment fit. *Psychological Bulletin*, **69**, 56–68.

Potter, W. J., Warren, R., Vaughan, M. W., Howley, K., Land, A., & Hagemeyer, J. C. (1997). Antisocial acts in reality programming on television. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, **41**, 69–89.

Prentice, D. A., Gerrig, R. J., & Bailis, D. S. (1997). What readers bring to the processing of fictional texts. *Psychonomic Bulletin and Review*, **4**, 416–420.

Propp, V. (1958). *Morphology of the folktale*. Austin, TX: Texas University Press. (Original work published 1928)

Raney, A. A. (2005). Punishing media criminals and moral judgment: The impact on enjoyment. *Media Psychology*, **7**, 145–163.

Raney, A. A., & Bryant, J. (2002). Moral judgment and crime drama: An integrated theory of enjoyment. *Journal of Communication*, **52**, 402–415.

Rotter, J. B. (1967). A new scale for the measurement of interpersonal trust. *Journal of Personality*, **35**, 651–665.

Rubin, Z., & Peplau, L. A. (1975). Who believes in a just world? *Journal of Social Issues*, **31**, 65–89.

Rumelhart, D. E. (1975). Notes on a schema for stories. In D. G. Bobrow & A. Collins (Eds.), *Representation and understanding: Studies in cognitive science* (pp. 211–236). New York: Academic Press.

Sallay, H., & Dalbert, C. (2004). The development of the belief in a just world: The impact of being raised in a one-parent or an intact family. In C. Dalbert & H. Sallay (Eds.), *The justice motive in adolescence and young adulthood: Origins and consequences* (pp. 26–42). London: Routledge.

Schmitt, M., & Maes, J. (2006). Equity and justice. In J. Bryant & P. Vorderer (Eds.), *Psychology of entertainment* (pp. 273–289). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Segrin, C., & Nabi, R. L. (2002). Does television viewing cultivate unrealistic expectations about marriage? *Journal of Communication*, **52**, 247–263.

Schönpflug, U., & Bilz, L. (2004). Transmission of the belief in a just world in the family. In C. Dalbert & H. Sallay (Eds.), *The justice motive in adolescence and young adulthood: Origins and consequences* (pp. 43–63). London: Routledge.

Shanahan, J. (1995). Television viewing and adolescent authoritarianism. *Journal of Adolescence*, **18**, 271–288.

Shanahan, J., & Morgan, M. (1999). *Television and its viewers. Cultivation theory and research*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Shrum, L. J. (2001). Processing strategy moderates the cultivation effect. *Human Communication Research*, **27**, 94–120.

Shrum, L. J., Burroughs J. E, & Rindfleisch, A. (2005). Television's cultivation of material values. *Journal of Consumer Research*, **32**, 473–479.

Sparks, G. G., & Ogles, R. M. (1990). The difference between fear of victimization and the probability of being victimized: Implications for cultivation. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, **34**, 351–358.

Stone, G. C., Hartung, B., & Jensen, D. (1987). Local TV news and the good-bad dyad. *Journalism Quarterly*, **61**, 37–44.

Strange, J. J. (2002). How fictional tales wag real-world beliefs. In M. C. Green, J. J. Strange, & T. C. Brock (Eds.), *Narrative impact. Social and cognitive foundations* (pp. 263–286). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Strange, J. J., & Leung, C. C. (1999). How anecdotal accounts in news and in fiction can influence judgments of a social problem's urgency, causes, and cures. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, **25**, 436–449.

Taschler-Pollacek, H., & Lukesch, H. (1990). Viktimisierungsangst als Folge des Fernsehkonsums. Eine Studie an älteren Frauen [Fear of victimization as a result of television viewing? A study of older women]. *Publizistik*, **35**, 443–453.

Webster, J. G. (2005). Beneath the veneer of fragmentation: Television audience polarization in a multichannel world. *Journal of Communication*, **55**, 366–382.

Wheeler, S. C., Green, M. C., & Brock, T. C. (1999). Fictional narratives change beliefs: Replications of Prentice, Gerrig & Bailis (1997) with mixed corroboration. *Psychonomic Bulletin and Review*, **6**, 136–141.

Zillmann, D. (1980). Anatomy of suspense. In P. H. Tannenbaum (Ed.), *Entertainment functions of television* (pp. 133–163). Hillsdale, MI: Erlbaum.

Zillmann, D. (1991). Empathy: Affect from bearing witness to the emotions of others. In J. Bryant & D. Zillmann (Eds.), *Responding to the screen: Reception and reaction processes* (pp. 135–168). Hillsdale, MI: Erlbaum.

Zillmann, D., & Cantor, J. R. (1976). Effect of timing of information about mitigating circumstances on emotional responses to provocation and retaliatory behavior. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, **12**, 38–55.

Zillmann, D., Taylor, K., & Lewis, K. (1998). News as nonfiction theater: How dispositions toward the public cast of characters affect reactions. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, **42**, 153–169.

Zillmann, D., & Wakshlag, J. (1985). Fear of victimization and the appeal of crime drama. In D. Zillmann & J. Bryant (Eds.), *Selective exposure to communication* (pp. 141–156). Hillsdale, MI: Erlbaum.

Les narratifs fictifs cultivent la croyance en un monde juste

Markus Appel

University of Linz, Austria

Résumé

La recherche sur l'incubation culturelle (*cultivation theory*) a identifié plusieurs représentations trompeuses à la télévision et a démontré que plus les gens regardent la télévision, plus leurs croyances correspondent au monde télévisuel. Au cours des dernières années, la recherche expérimentale a démontré que les narratifs fictifs sont de puissants outils de transformation des croyances de l'auditoire. Les théories sur la structure narrative des narratifs fictifs et les théories de l'appréciation des médias basées sur le caractère suggèrent que les narratifs fictifs télévisés ont tendance à représenter le monde comme étant juste. Nous suggérons que la quantité de fiction regardée à la télévision prédit la croyance en un monde juste (CMJ). De plus, nous supposons que cet effet est compatible avec la relation « usage de la télévision/monde mauvais » exprimée par la théorie de l'incubation culturelle. Deux enquêtes transversales avec N = 128 participants (échantillon allemand) et N = 387 participants (échantillon autrichien) corroborent nos suppositions. La fréquence d'écoute de fiction à la télévision, telle que déclarée par les participants, fut directement proportionnelle à la CMJ, alors que la quantité générale d'écoute de télévision fut directement proportionnelle à des croyances en un monde mauvais et effrayant. Dans l'échantillon allemand, l'écoute de bulletins d'information de style journal à sensation (actualité-spectacle ou *infotainment*) a aussi eu un impact sur les croyances en un monde mauvais.

Mots clés : incubation culturelle, fiction, croyances, monde juste, usage des médias

Fiktionale Erzählungen kultivieren unsere Vorstellungen von der Welt

Die Kultivierungsforschung hat mehrere Fehlinterpretationen des Fernsehens identifiziert und gezeigt, dass sich die Vorstellungen der Menschen mit zunehmendem Fernsehkonsum mit denen der Fernsehwelt decken. In den letzten Jahren hat die experimentelle Forschung gezeigt, dass fiktionale Erzählungen ein leistungsfähiges Mittel sind, die Ansichten von Zuschauern zu verändern. Theorien zur narrativen Struktur von fiktionalen Erzählungen und dispositionsbasierte Theorien der Medienunterhaltung argumentieren, dass fiktionale Fernseherzählungen die Welt als einen gerechten Ort darstellen. Wir nehmen deshalb an, dass der Umfang der Rezeption fiktionaler Fernsehinhalte mit dem Glauben an eine gerechte Welt zusammenhängt. Außerdem, nehmen wir an, dass dieser Effekt kompatibel ist mit dem Zusammenhang von Fernsehnutzung und der Vorstellung von einer bösen, beängstigenden Welt, wie sie in der Kultivierungstheorie formuliert ist. Zwei Querschnittstudien mit N=128 Teilnehmern (deutsche Stichprobe) und N= 387 Teilnehmern (Österreichische Stichprobe) untermauern unsere Annahmen. Die auf Eigenaussagen basierende Häufigkeit der Nutzung fiktionaler Fernsehinhalte korreliert positiv mit dem Glauben an eine gerechte Welt, während die Gesamtdauer der Fernsehnutzung positiv mit Vorstellungen von einer bösen und beängstigenden Welt korreliert war. In der deutschen Stichprobe wurden diese Böse-Welt-Vorstellungen auch durch boulevardähnliche (Infotainment) Fernsehnachrichten beeinflusst.

Las Narrativas de Ficción Cultivan las Creencias en un Mundo Justo

Markus Appel

University of Linz, Austria

Resumen

Las investigaciones sobre cultivación han identificado varias distorsiones en televisión, y han mostrado que cuanto más consume la gente televisión, más y más sus creencias se corresponden con las del mundo de la televisión. En años recientes, la investigación experimental ha demostrado que las narrativas de ficción son formas poderosas de cambiar las creencias de la audiencia. Las teorías sobre la estructura de narración de las narrativas de ficción y las teorías de disposición basadas en el placer de los medios sugieren que las narrativas de ficción televisadas tienden a retratar el mundo como un lugar justo. Proponemos que la cantidad de ficción vista en televisión predice la creencia en un mundo justo (BJW). Además, suponemos que este efecto es compatible con la relación entre el uso de la televisión / el mundo es malo expresada por la *teoría de cultivación*. Dos estudios transversales con N = 128 participantes (muestra de alemanes) y N = 387 participantes (muestra de austríacos) corrobora nuestras suposiciones. El reporte propio de la frecuencia de exposición a la ficción en televisión fue asociada positivamente con BJW, mientras que la cantidad general de exposición a la televisión fue asociada positivamente con las creencias de que el mundo es malo y que da miedo. En la muestra de alemanes, las creencias de que el mundo es malo fueron también afectadas por la exposición a noticias de televisión de formato tabloide (infotainment).

Palabras claves: cultivación, ficción, creencias, mundo justo, uso mediático

虚构性叙述对公平世界之信仰的涵化

Markus Appel

奥地利 Linz 大学

涵化研究已界定了有关电视的几个误解；它显示人们电视看得越多，其信仰会越发与电视世界一致。最近几年，实验研究已证明了虚构性叙述是改变受众信仰的强有力手段。有关虚构性叙述之叙述结构的理论以及媒介享受的基于立场理论认为，电视化的虚构性叙述倾向描述一个公平的世界。我们认为，在电视上观看虚构性叙述的数量可用来预测公平世界之信仰这个变量。另外，我们假设这种效果和涵化理论所表达的电视使用/苛刻世界之关联是一致的。两个交叉研究（一个在德国采用了 128 参与者；一个在奥地利采用了 387 个参与者）验证了我们的假设。在电视上收看虚构性叙述的自我报告的频率和公平世界之信仰正相关；另一方面，收看电视的总体时间和苛刻和恐怖世界之信仰正相关。在德国样本中，苛刻世界之信仰也受到观看小报体（信息娱乐化）电视新闻的影响。

가공의 이야기가 ‘단지 세계 믿음’을배양하는지에 관한 연구

Markus Appel
University of Linz, Austria

요약

경작연구는 텔레비젼에서의 여러 잘못된 대표성을 동일시하며, 사람들이 TV를 보면 볼수록 그들의 반응은TV세계에 더욱 몰입된다는 것을 보여주고 있다. 최근 몇년사이에 실험적 연구에서 가공의 이야기들은 시청자들의 믿음을 변화시키기위한 강력한 수단이라는 것을 증명하고 있다. 가공적 이야기들의 허구적 구조에 대한 이론들과 미디어 오락의 기질에 근거한 이론들은 텔레비젼으로 중계된 가공적 이야기들은 세계를 그저 단순한 장소로 묘사하려는 경향이 있다는 것을 보여주고 있다. 우리는 텔레비젼을 통해 본 가공된 이야기들의 정도가 ‘단지 세계’ (BJW)라는 대한 믿음을 예측한다는 것을 제안하고 있다. 더우기, 우리는 이러한 효과가 경작이론에 의해 표현된 텔레비젼 사용/수단 세계관계에 비교할만하다는 것을 추론하고 있다. 두개의 단면적 연구들이 단행되었는데, 하나는 128명이 (독일 표본) 참가한 실험이며, 또 다른 실험은 387명 (오스트리아 표본)이 참여한 실험으로, 이들 실험들이 우리들의 전제를 증명하였다. 텔레비젼을 통해 픽션을 시청하는 자기보고의 빈도는 BJW에 긍적적으로 연계되어있었다. 반면 텔레비젼시청의 일반적 정도는 비열한, 그리고 공포 세계 믿음에 긍적적으로 연계되어 있었다.
독일표본에서 비열한 세계에 대한 믿음들은 또한 타블로이드 스타일(정보오락) 텔레비젼 뉴스를 시청하는 것에 의해 영향을 받은 것으로 나타났다.

Copyright of Journal of Communication is the property of Blackwell Publishing Limited and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.