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# “This Story Is Right On”: The Impact of Regulatory Fit on Narrative Engagement and Persuasion

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Running head: REGULATORY FIT AND NARRATIVES

“This story is right on”: The impact of regulatory fit on narrative engagement and persuasion

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## Abstract

When people read a story, feelings of rightness from regulatory fit (consistency between regulatory state and strategic means) could suggest that the story is “right on” relative to feelings of wrongness from regulatory nonfit. Under these conditions, individuals who are experiencing feelings of rightness should engage more with the narrative and be more persuaded by its implicit messages. Results from two experiments supported these hypotheses. Participants in Experiment 1 were more mentally engaged (transported) by the story when they experienced regulatory fit. We replicated this effect in Experiment 2 and extended it to endorsement of story-consistent beliefs, an indicator of persuasion via narratives. Additionally, we found that drawing participants’ attention to an earlier event as a source of feelings of rightness eliminated the regulatory fit effects on transportation and persuasion, suggesting attribution of feelings of regulatory fit/nonfit to the plausibility of the narrative world.

“This story is right on”: The impact of regulatory fit on narrative engagement and persuasion

The following experience may be common. Jake had heard about the book, *The Da Vinci Code*, so he bought a copy and began to read it. Actually, the experience wasn't so much like reading; when he was into the story *he* didn't seem to be present at all. In his imagination, he became lost in the book; he was a character with the events of the story happening to him. When he put down the book after a few chapters, he felt surprised to find himself - *as* himself - in his home. The story was so transporting that he thought about how the conspiracy in the book could be real. He also understood why so many conservative Christians seemed upset about the book and why numerous people had written books debunking the conspiracy it portrayed. Everything in the book seemed so plausible. But about two thirds of the way through, something about the story started feeling not entirely right. He became increasingly aware of himself and his surroundings as he read and found it more and more difficult to suspend disbelief. It was not completely clear what it was about the story that had started to feel wrong, but he was not as transported or persuaded as he once had been.

As third-person, omniscient narrators of this story, we can tell you that Jake's feelings of wrongness weren't caused by the story at all; they were caused by events at work. A lack of fit between Jake's preference for caution and his need to take risks for a new project at work created mild, vague feelings of wrongness, which – in part because he still had them while reading *The Da Vinci Code* - he attributed to the story.

Could feelings of wrongness when reading a story actually make story events seem less transporting and persuasive than feelings of rightness, even if the feelings didn't come from the story? If so, these feelings would be an important moderator of the social influence emanating

from narratives in books, news outlets, advertisements, and other media. As suggested by the story above, this social influence can be powerful (also see Green & Brock, 2000; 2002).

Transportation via narratives is a highly absorbing, flow-like state in which one's attention, emotions, and thoughts converge on the imagery in a story, enhancing the perceived truthfulness of story events (Green & Brock, 2000, 2002; also see Gerrig, 1993). This experience can be measured with the Transportation Scale (Green & Brock, 2000), which contains items about ease of imagining the events in the story, emotional involvement, attention to the story, feelings of suspense, unawareness of surroundings, and vividness of mental imagery. Using versions of this scale tailored to the content of specific narratives, researchers have found that the more individuals are transported by a narrative, the more persuaded they tend to be (i.e., *the more they endorse story-consistent beliefs*; e.g., Escalas, 2004, 2007; Green, 2004; Green & Brock, 2000, 2002; Green, Garst & Brock, 2004, Mazzocco, Green, & Brock, 2007; Wang & Calder, 2006). In transportation, individuals may be disconnected from their prior schemas and experiences (Green & Brock, 2000). Engagement in convergent, story-consistent thinking thus appears to be a centrally-important component of the transportation experience.

Engagement in transportation is quite different from engagement in elaboration (Green & Brock, 2000), which is the logical consideration/evaluation of explicit arguments presented in advocacy messages (e.g., Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Elaboration appears to be a divergent process (Green & Brock, 2000) in which individuals use their own schemas and experiences to assess the strengths/weaknesses of the arguments. Whereas attention to experiences in the outside world impedes transportation, it enhances elaboration through providing additional evidence to support strong arguments – and ammunition to attack weak ones. Although transportation and elaboration both can lead to belief change, existing theory and research suggest that they are

independent processes (Green & Brock, 2000, 2002; also see Escalas, 2007). For example, there is a lack of evidence that low transportation is the same as high elaboration - at least given how elaboration is normally defined. In fact, researchers (e.g., Green & Brock, 2000) have tried unsuccessfully to use measures of elaboration to assess responses to narratives; unfortunately, distinguishing between elaboration and transportation raises numerous conceptual and methodological complexities that were beyond the scope of the current manuscript.

### *Feelings of rightness and regulatory fit*

To examine whether feelings of rightness and wrongness can influence transportation and story-consistent beliefs, we needed to vary these feelings, preferably independently of narratives people read. One judgment-incidental source of these feelings is the experience of a fit (vs. lack of fit) between one's regulatory focus and one's strategies of goal pursuit. According to regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997, 1998), people in a promotion focus strive for growth and accomplishment through pursuing ideals, hopes, and aspirations, whereas people in a prevention focus strive for security and protection through pursuing "oughts," duties, and obligations. Strategies preferred in a promotion focus are eagerness-related (e.g., doing extra reading for a class), which naturally fit a concern with aspirations and accomplishment. In contrast, strategies preferred in a prevention focus are vigilance-related (e.g., avoiding distractions while studying), which naturally fit a concern with security and protection (Crowe & Higgins, 1997; for reviews, see Higgins, 2000, 2005, 2006).

People experience regulatory fit when their goal pursuit strategy sustains their regulatory focus (i.e., prevention-vigilant, promotion-eager). Regulatory fit appears to generate feelings of rightness compared to regulatory nonfit (Camacho, Higgins, & Luger, 2003; Cesario, Grant, & Higgins, 2004; Freitas & Higgins, 2002; Freitas, Liberman, & Higgins, 2002; Higgins, 2005;

Higgins, Idson, Freitas, Spiegel, & Molden, 2003; Lee & Aaker, 2004; Vaughn, Malik, et al., 2006; Vaughn, O'Rourke, et al., 2006) – feelings that may be a manifestation of processing fluency, which previous researchers (Labroo & Lee, 2006; Lee & Aaker, 2004) have found to be positively related to regulatory fit (also see Reber & Schwarz, 1999). Feelings of rightness from regulatory fit can serve as information for judgments as long as people attribute these feelings to what they are judging (e.g., Cesario et al., 2004; Vaughn, Malik, et al., 2006; Vaughn, O'Rourke, et al., 2006). These desirable feelings promote engagement when people attribute the feelings to the enjoyableness of an activity (Vaughn, Malik, et al., 2006). Furthermore, drawing attention to an initial, judgment-irrelevant event as a source of feelings of rightness eliminates regulatory fit effects on task engagement; doing so renders these feelings irrelevant to judgments about the activity at hand (Vaughn, Malik, et al., 2006; also see Clore, 1992; Schwarz & Clore, 1983, 2007).

We predicted that feelings of rightness or wrongness from regulatory fit or nonfit would transfer to people's experience of a subsequently encountered narrative world. Compared with feelings of wrongness from regulatory nonfit, feelings of rightness from regulatory fit should suggest that the story is "right on." As a result, people experiencing regulatory fit should engage more with (and persuaded by) the narrative world than those experiencing regulatory nonfit. Drawing attention to the initial regulatory fit manipulation as a source of feelings of rightness should eliminate these differences. In Study 2, we also examined whether mood accounted for these effects. We did not expect it to, because it has not accounted for regulatory fit effects in prior research (Camacho et al., 2003; Cesario et al., 2004; Forster, Higgins & Idson, 1998; Higgins et al., 2003; Shah, Higgins & Friedman, 1998; Vaughn, Malik, et al., 2006; Vaughn, O'Rourke, et al., 2006).

## Experiment 1

In this study and the next, we used a regulatory fit manipulation and analysis strategy identical to those used in previous research examining effects of incidental regulatory fit (Cesario et al., 2004, Study 3; Vaughn, Malik, et al., 2006; Vaughn, O'Rourke, et al., 2006). In that previous research – where the objective was to examine the effect of regulatory fit rather than to contrast promotion and prevention - the experiments were designed to combine regulatory fit conditions and compare them with combined regulatory nonfit conditions. After this regulatory fit manipulation, participants were randomly assigned to read one of two short stories, then completed a version of the Transportation Scale tailored to the content of the story they read. We predicted that people who experienced regulatory fit in the initial task would be more transported by either story than those who experienced regulatory nonfit.

## Method

### *Participants and Design*

Seventy-one undergraduate students participated in the study for extra credit in their psychology courses. They were randomly assigned to Regulatory Fit (fit vs. nonfit) X Narrative (“Crossing Spider Creek” vs. “Two Were Left”) conditions. We excluded data from two people for not following instructions. This resulted in a final sample of 69 students (20 male). There were no significant gender effects.

### *Procedure*

Students participated in sessions of 1-7 people in a computer lab, with at least one empty seat separating each student from the next. Participants learned they would complete several different tasks.



*Regulatory fit manipulation.* We called the first section of our questionnaire “Hopes and Aspirations” (or “Duties and Obligations”). Participants read a brief introduction stating that this part of the questionnaire was about students’ goals at this time of the semester and answered two questions about their year in college and their age. Then they completed a manipulation of incidental regulatory fit (Cesario et al., 2004; Vaughn, Malik, et al., 2006; Vaughn, O’Rourke, et al., 2006; also see Freitas & Higgins, 2002). This manipulation is designed to compare combined regulatory fit conditions with combined regulatory nonfit conditions. In promotion (vs. prevention) fit conditions, participants reported two of their current hopes or aspirations (vs. duties or obligations) and, immediately after each one, listed up to five “strategies you could use to make sure everything goes right and help you realize your hope or aspiration” – i.e., eager strategies (vs. “strategies you could use to avoid anything that could go wrong and stop you from realizing your duty or obligation” – i.e., vigilant strategies). In contrast, nonfit conditions either paired promotion goals (hopes and aspirations) with vigilant strategies or paired prevention goals (duties and obligations) with eager strategies.

*Filler task.* Between the regulatory fit manipulation and the narrative-reading task, participants completed the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). The purpose of this task was to reduce discounting of feelings of regulatory fit in the narratives task (e.g., Vaughn, Malik, et al., 2006; Vaughn, O’Rourke, et al., 2006; also see Martin, Ward, Achee, & Wyer, 1993; McFarland, White, & Newth, 2003).

*Narratives task.* In the next section of the Web-based questionnaire we asked participants to relax and read a short story; the Web-based random assignment program told them which one. We printed each short story in a two-page booklet containing a cover page and the story, and we placed both booklets next to the computer so participants could read the one they were assigned.

Participants read either “Crossing Spider Creek” (D. O’Brien, in Thomas, Thomas & Hazuka, 1992) or “Two Were Left” (H. B. Cave, in Berger, 1956).

“Crossing Spider Creek” is a 689 word, fictional narrative about a seriously injured man located high in the Rocky Mountains who can only reach safety if he can urge his frightened horse to cross a swollen creek. As he contemplates the possibility of his own death, he regrets how he has neglected his wife and resolves to shoot the horse if he cannot get it to cross. The story ends with the man about to urge his horse across the creek one last time.

“Two Were Left” is a 701 word, fictional narrative about an injured Native Alaskan boy and his dog. Stranded on an iceberg and starving for three days, the boy and dog contemplate killing each other for food but their loyalty to each other prevents them. Later that day a seaplane pilot rescues them, drawn to the ice flow by a glint of light reflecting off a knife the boy threw away so he would not kill his dog.

*Transportation scale.* After reading their assigned story, participants completed the Transportation Scale (Green & Brock, 2000), which assesses readers’ ease of imagining the events in the story, emotional involvement, attention to the story, feelings of suspense, unawareness of surroundings, and vividness of mental imagery. It contains 11 general items and 4 story-specific imagery items. Regarding “Crossing Spider Creek,” the specific items were about the creek, man, trail and horse. For “Two Were Left,” the story-specific items were about the boy, dog, ice island, and pilot. Scale items were anchored by 1 (*not at all*) and 7 (*very much*), which were averaged after appropriate reverse-scoring (Cronbach’s alphas were .83 for the two versions together, .88 for “Crossing Spider Creek, and .76 for “Two Were Left”).

At the end of the study, we collected demographic information. Then we thanked and debriefed participants.

## Results

A Regulatory Fit X Story ANOVA revealed a significant main effect for regulatory fit,  $F(1, 65) = 4.43, p = .04$ . As expected, participants who experienced regulatory fit in an earlier task reported more transportation ( $M = 4.37, SD = 0.88$ ) than those who experienced regulatory nonfit ( $M = 4.02, SD = 0.76$ ). Additionally, the ANOVA revealed a significant main effect for the story,  $F(1, 65) = 4.45, p = .04$ . Participants found “Two Were Left” more transporting ( $M = 4.36, SD = 0.66$ ) than “Crossing Spider Creek” ( $M = 3.99, SD = 0.96$ ).<sup>1</sup>

## Discussion

Although the stories significantly differed in how transporting participants found them, we also found the predicted effect of regulatory fit on transportation. Participants who experienced regulatory fit rather than nonfit in an initial task reported more transportation via the unrelated narrative they subsequently read. This pattern of results suggests that feelings of regulatory fit/nonfit influenced engagement with the narratives. We did not, however, examine specifically the role of feelings of rightness in the effect of regulatory fit on transportation – nor did we examine whether this regulatory fit enhanced endorsement story-consistent beliefs (i.e., persuasion via narratives). These were our primary goals in Experiment 2.

## Experiment 2

In this study, we sought to demonstrate the effect of feelings of rightness from regulatory fit on transportation and persuasion via the short story, “Two Were Left.” To do so, we varied regulatory fit in an initial task, as in Experiment 1. Then we varied attention to this task as a source of rightness feelings by asking some participants how “right” the task felt; this question should clarify the source of rightness feelings, rendering them irrelevant for later tasks (Cesario et al., 2004, Study 3; Vaughn, Malik, et al., 2006; Vaughn, O’Rourke, et al., 2006; also see

Schwarz & Clore, 1983). If so, it should eliminate the regulatory fit effect on transportation. Additionally, we tested the hypothesis that regulatory fit would enhance endorsement of story-consistent beliefs. Finally, we examined whether mood accounted for these effects. We expected that it would not, because mood has not accounted for regulatory fit effects in previous research (Camacho et al., 2003; Cesario et al., 2004; Forster, Higgins & Idson, 1998; Higgins et al., 2003; Shah, Higgins & Friedman, 1998; Vaughn, Malik, et al., 2006; Vaughn, O'Rourke, et al., 2006).

## Method

### *Participants and Design*

Ninety-seven students participated in the study for extra credit in their psychology courses. They were randomly assigned to Regulatory Fit (fit vs. nonfit) X Attention (attention drawn to the true source of rightness feelings vs. no attention) conditions. One student's data were excluded because a highly distracting situation occurred during the experimental session. This resulted in a final sample of 96 participants (31 male). There was one significant gender effect.<sup>2</sup>

### *Procedure*

We ran students in sessions of 1-5 people in a computer lab, with at least one computer separating each person from the next. The procedure was almost identical to that in Experiment 1, except (1) we included a mood measure, (2) all participants read "Two Were Left," (3) we drew some participants' attention to the regulatory fit task as a source of feelings of rightness, and (4) we assessed all participants' story-relevant beliefs after the Transportation Scale. In the current study, Cronbach's alpha for the Transportation Scale was .85.

*Mood measures.* After reporting each goal and its associated strategies, students read that we were interested in learning more about the duty or obligation -- or hope or aspiration -- they

had just listed (i.e., not the individual strategies, but the duty or obligation [or hope or aspiration] itself). Then they reported how happy, relaxed, and good they felt when pursuing that goal, on scales ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*). Because of the reasonably strong correlation between the items for the first goal and for the second goal ( $r = .35, p < .001$ ), and because all six items were highly related (Cronbach's alpha = .82), we averaged them to create an index of positive mood. To avoid raising suspicion, we did not ask a more direct question about mood (e.g., "What is your current mood?") after each goal and strategy list.

*Attention manipulation.* At the end of the first section of the Web questionnaire containing the regulatory fit manipulation and mood questions, we directed some people's attention to the true source of their feelings of regulatory fit by using instructions developed by Cesario et al. (2004, p. 395). These students read, "Sometimes thinking about using the right means to attain each goal can make people 'feel right' about their goal pursuit. On the following scale, indicate how much you 'feel right' about your goal pursuit." The scale ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 6 (*extremely*). People in the *no attention* condition went straight from the regulatory fit manipulation and associated mood items to the "Life Satisfaction" filler task.

*Story-consistent beliefs.* After the Transportation Scale, participants responded to the following belief items: "A person should lay down their life for their best friend" and "Life is not living without sticking to one's values" (Cronbach's alpha = .51; Green & Brock, 2000, p. 715). They indicated their agreement with the statements using a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*).

## Results

*Effects on Transportation*

A Regulatory Fit X Attention ANOVA revealed the predicted interaction effect on transportation,  $F(1, 92) = 5.54, p = .02$  (see Figure 1). Planned contrasts explored this interaction. Among *no attention* participants (whose attention we did not draw to an earlier event as a source of feelings of rightness), those who experienced regulatory fit were more transported ( $M = 4.60, SD = 0.77$ ) than those who experienced regulatory nonfit ( $M = 3.89, SD = 1.01$ ),  $t(45) = -2.70, p = .01$ . Among *attention* participants, transportation did not differ between those who experienced regulatory fit ( $M = 4.25, SD = 0.85$ ) and those who experienced regulatory nonfit ( $M = 4.35, SD = 0.71$ ),  $t(47) = 0.44, p > .66$ .<sup>3</sup>

*Effects on Story-Consistent Beliefs*

A Regulatory Fit X Attention ANOVA revealed a significant main effect for regulatory fit ( $F(1, 92) = 4.31, p = .04$ ), which was qualified by a marginally significant Regulatory Fit X Attention interaction,  $F(1, 92) = 3.29, p = .07$  (see Figure 2). Planned contrasts explored this interaction. Among *no attention* participants, those who experienced regulatory fit reported more story-consistent beliefs ( $M = 5.37, SD = 1.19$ ) than those who experienced regulatory nonfit ( $M = 4.52, SD = 1.08$ ),  $t(45) = -2.57, p = .01$ . Among *attention* participants, endorsement of these beliefs did not differ between those who experienced regulatory fit ( $M = 4.70, SD = 0.77$ ) and those who experienced regulatory nonfit ( $M = 4.77, SD = 1.39$ ),  $t(47) = -0.33, p > .74$ .<sup>4,5</sup>

Treating transportation as a covariate in the Regulatory Fit X Attention analysis of story-consistent beliefs revealed only a significant relationship with transportation,  $F(1, 91) = 18.04, p < .001$ ; no other effects were significant, including the main effect for regulatory fit ( $F(1, 91) = 2.59, p > .10$ ) and the Attention X Fit interaction ( $F(1, 91) = 0.82, p > .36$ ).

### *Mood*

The findings on transportation and story-consistent beliefs appear not to have been due to mood. A Regulatory Fit X Attention ANOVA revealed no significant impacts on the mood index, all  $ps > .42$ . Furthermore, treating mood as a covariate in the Regulatory Fit X Attention analysis of transportation revealed no significant mood effect ( $F(1, 91) = 1.22, p > .27$ ), and no change in the effects of regulatory fit, the attention manipulation, or their interaction (interaction  $F(1, 91) = 5.41, p = .02$ ). Treating mood as a covariate in the Regulatory Fit X Attention analysis of story-consistent beliefs revealed a significant mood effect ( $F(1, 91) = 5.31, p = .02$ ), but no change in the effects of regulatory fit ( $F(1, 91) = 4.31, p = .04$ ), the attention manipulation, or their interaction ( $F(1, 91) = 3.21, p = .08$ ). Overall, participants reported feeling good ( $M = 4.83, SD = 1.06$ , on the 7-point scale).

### Discussion

As expected, when we did not draw participants' attention to an initial task as a source of feelings of rightness, participants who initially had experienced regulatory fit were more transported via a later story than those who had experienced nonfit. They also reported more story-consistent beliefs, indicating that they found the story's themes more persuasive – apparently a transportation effect. Additionally, drawing participants' attention to the initial task as a source of these feelings eliminated these effects, through clarifying the narrative-irrelevant source of the feelings. Mood did not account for these results. In short, these findings provide support for the hypothesis that regulatory fit can enhance transportation and persuasion relative to regulatory nonfit through creating feelings of rightness that individuals attribute to the story.

### General Discussion

Two experiments provided evidence for the hypothesis that feelings of rightness from an earlier experience of regulatory fit can enhance transportation relative to feelings of wrongness from regulatory nonfit. These findings occurred with two narratives, an outcome that suggests that the specific story is not critical (Experiment 1). Additionally, it appears that regulatory fit, through enhancing transportation, can enhance people's endorsement of story-consistent beliefs (Experiment 2). We eliminated this effect in Experiment 2 when we drew some people's attention to the regulatory fit task as a source of feelings of rightness. Doing so apparently reduced confusion about the source of those feelings, thereby rendering them irrelevant to the narrative. As expected, mood did not account for these findings.

To our knowledge, this is the first research to examine how feelings resulting from a non-narrative source can influence transportation and story-consistent beliefs via narratives. Study 2 suggests that preexisting feelings (in this case, feelings of rightness) should be able to affect transportation as long as people cannot distinguish between the feelings and reactions to the story, the feelings seem appropriate to what one would experience when engaging with the story, and people cannot attribute the feelings to another source (see Clore, 1992; Schwarz & Clore, 2007). Other kinds of feelings should also be able to affect how strongly people engage with stories. For example, easier processing should result in more transportation (Vaughn, Petkova, Hesse, & Trudeau, 2008), as should a preexisting mood that fits the narrative. Examining effects of incidental feelings on transportation and persuasion via narratives is a fertile area for future research.

Our findings contribute not only to transportation theory; they also contribute to regulatory fit theory - especially research on how regulatory fit influences persuasion. To keep



our research maximally comparable to previous studies using the short story, “Two Were Left,” (Green & Brock, 2000), we assessed the same very general, story-consistent beliefs. However, given that transportation is also associated with more specific attitudes (e.g., Escalas, 2007), we would expect regulatory fit to affect more specific attitudes and behaviors as well. Additionally, our findings complement the numerous studies that have found that regulatory fit can enhance the strength and confidence with which people evaluate advocacy messages, which present arguments for why one should support a particular position (e.g., Cesario et al., 2004; Lee & Aaker, 2004). People tend to engage with advocacy messages rationally, through thinking critically about the quality of the arguments (e.g., Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Narratives, in contrast, present stories with characters, a clear beginning and ending, and issues that are encountered and resolved. People tend to engage with narratives experientially - through becoming mentally immersed or transported into the narrative world (e.g., Green & Brock, 2000, 2002). Transportation via narratives involves vivid imagery, strong attachments to characters, and cognitive and emotional responses that converge on the story while leaving behind facts and events in the “real world” outside the narrative. As different as critical thinking and transportation are, however, regulatory fit apparently affects them both through affecting strength of engagement with the task at hand.

One limitation of the current research is that we only examined effects of regulatory fit resulting from a task incidental to the narratives. Future research could examine integral regulatory fit as well. The better the fit between the readers’ regulatory focus and the main character’s strategies of dealing with the challenges confronting him/her (for example), the more readers should identify with the character and imagine his/her strategies as their own while reading the story – a process that should sustain readers’ regulatory focus. Identification with

characters should increase transportation (e.g., Green, 2006; Green & Brock, 2000); if identifying with a story's main character enhanced transportation by sustaining readers' own regulatory focus, this would be a regulatory fit effect (cf. message matching, e.g., Petty & Wegener, 1998; also see Cesario et al., 2004). Additionally, numerous individual differences associated with aspects of regulatory focus (e.g., Lee, Aaker, & Gardner, 2000; Vaughn, Baumann, & Klemann, 2008; Vaughn et al., 2008) could be incorporated into story characters, further enhancing the possibilities for identification-mediated regulatory fit effects on transportation and persuasion.

### *Conclusion*

As responses to stories like *The Da Vinci Code* (Brown, 2003) suggest, public narratives can be highly persuasive. The current research integrates implications of transportation theory (e.g., Green & Brock, 2002; Green, Garst, & Brock, 2004) and regulatory fit theory (e.g., Higgins, 2000, 2005) to propose how regulatory fit should affect transportation and persuasion via narratives. Feelings of rightness from regulatory fit can enhance transportation and persuasion compared to feelings of wrongness from regulatory nonfit. This happens regardless of the story (Experiment 1), but only if people attribute feelings of rightness to the story itself (Experiment 2).

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## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> A Prime X Strategy X Story ANOVA on transportation revealed a significant main effect for story,  $F(1, 61) = 5.19, p = .03$ . It also revealed a significant Prime X Strategy interaction,  $F(1, 61) = 4.18, p = .05$ . Regulatory fit participants (i.e., prevention/vigilant,  $M = 4.49, SD = 0.79$ ; or promotion/eager,  $M = 4.22, SD = 0.98$ ) reported more transportation than nonfit participants (i.e., prevention/eager,  $M = 3.97, SD = .70$ ; or promotion/vigilant,  $M = 4.07, SD = 0.83$ ).

<sup>2</sup> A Regulatory Fit X Attention X Gender ANOVA revealed that men reported more story-consistent beliefs than women ( $M = 5.44, SD = 0.94$ , vs.  $M = 4.78, SD = 1.05$ ),  $F(1, 88) = 6.68, p = .01$ .

<sup>3</sup> A Goal X Strategy X Attention ANOVA on transportation revealed a significant three-way interaction,  $F(1, 88) = 4.93, p = .03$ . *No attention* participants showed a significant Goal X Strategy simple interaction,  $F(1, 43) = 6.81, p = .01$ : those in regulatory fit conditions (prevention/vigilant,  $M = 4.69, SD = 0.77$ ; promotion/eager,  $M = 4.47, SD = 0.80$ ) reported more transportation than those in regulatory nonfit conditions (prevention/eager,  $M = 3.89, SD = 1.14$ ; promotion/vigilant,  $M = 3.89, SD = 0.95$ ). *Attention* participants showed no significant effects,  $ps > .57$ .

<sup>4</sup> A Goal X Strategy X Attention ANOVA on story-consistent beliefs revealed a Goal X Strategy interaction,  $F(1, 88) = 4.41, p = .04$ . This interaction was qualified by a marginally significant three-way interaction,  $F(1, 88) = 3.32, p = .08$ . *No attention* participants showed a significant Goal X Strategy simple interaction,  $F(1, 43) = 6.21, p = .02$ : those in regulatory fit conditions (prevention/vigilant,  $M = 5.54, SD = 1.10$ ; promotion/eager,  $M = 5.18, SD = 1.30$ ) reported more story-consistent beliefs than those in regulatory nonfit conditions

(prevention/eager,  $M = 4.50$ ,  $SD = 0.53$ ; promotion/vigilant,  $M = 4.54$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ). *Attention* participants showed no significant effects  $ps > .68$ . An Attention X Goal X Strategy ANCOVA with transportation as the covariate showed that the belief index was significantly related to transportation,  $F(1, 87) = 17.25$ ,  $p < .001$ ; no other effects were significant (all  $ps > .14$ ).

<sup>5</sup> Although the regulatory fit effect on transportation in Experiment 1 was primarily driven by differences between participants in prevention conditions, this pattern did not replicate in Experiment 2. This became especially clear when we conducted Regulatory Focus (prevention vs. promotion) X Regulatory Fit (fit vs. nonfit) ANOVAs on *no attention* participants in Experiment 2 – i.e., those who showed regulatory fit effects. The analysis on transportation showed only a significant regulatory fit effect,  $F(1, 43) = 6.81$ ,  $p = .01$ ; no other effects were significant,  $F_s = 0.15$ ,  $ps = .70$ . Additionally, the analysis on story-consistent beliefs showed only a significant regulatory fit effect,  $F(1, 43) = 6.21$ ,  $p = .02$ ; no other effects were significant,  $F_s < 0.35$ ,  $ps > .56$ . The unexpectedly weak difference between promotion conditions in Experiment 1 may have been due to chance factors rather than the stories used; if anything, the difference between promotion-focused participants in Experiment 1 was larger among those who read “Crossing Spider Creek” (with promotion-fit participants reporting more transportation) than among those who read “Two Were Left.”

Figure Captions

*Figure 1.* Transportation as a function of regulatory fit condition and attention condition, Study 2

*Figure 2.* Story-consistent beliefs as a function of regulatory fit condition and attention condition, Study 2



