The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: Inspirational Media between Meaning, Narration, and Manipulation

Editors

Lena Frischlich, Diana Rieger and Lindsay Hahn

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Table of Contents

Editorial

The Promises and Pitfalls of Inspirational Media: What do We Know, and Where do We Go from Here?

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Abstract
This editorial introduces the thematic issue on inspirational media; including its role in the elicitation of meaning and self-transcendence, audience responses to inspirational narratives, and the potential for inspirational media to be used for manipulative purposes. We first set the stage for the thematic issue by describing an organizing framework by Thrash and Elliot (2003) to study inspiration. We then situate the seven articles published in this thematic issue along the logic of different components of this framework, namely media *content* capable of invoking *transcendence* through emotions and excitatory responses, and a *motivational* impulse to act upon the ideas acquired from content. This thematic issue thereby highlights unique perspectives for understanding media's ability to serve as the source of inspiration—be it for social benefit or detriment. Finally, we consider directions for future research on inspirational media.

Keywords
eudaimonic entertainment; inspiration; inspirational media; narratives; manipulation; media; motivation

Issue
This editorial is part of the issue "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: Inspirational Media between Meaning, Narration, and Manipulation" edited by Lena Frischlich (University of Muenster, Germany), Diana Rieger (LMU Munich, Germany) and Lindsay Hahn (University at Buffalo–State University of New York, USA).

1. Introduction

Media can inspire us. Watching an elevating movie, reading a moving story, or playing the right game at the time can affect how we view our place in the world and motivate us to change our behavior accordingly. The word *inspiration* connotes positive, socially beneficial outcomes, and indeed a growing body of research in media and communication science provides evidence for inspirational media's ability to evoke normatively positive outcomes. However, media's ability to inspire can also be leveraged for manipulation, giving rise to outcomes potentially deemed socially deviant. To provide a more nuanced view of inspirational media, this thematic issue was thus designed to shed light on the role of inspirational media across a wide range of contexts including meaningfulness, narration, and manipulation.

Following Thrash and Elliot (2003), inspiration is a psychological process with three core components: (a) 'evocation' ('inspiration by'), or the capacity for an internal or external stimulus (such as an media content) to invoke (b) a response to this stimulus that is characterized by the 'transcendence' of "ordinary preoccupations and limitations" of the human existence (p. 871), and which is reflected, for instance, in self-transcending emotions such as elevation, hope or gratitude ('being inspired'), and (c) a 'motivational' impulse to act ('inspiration to') and transmit the 'newly apprehended source

of internal value' (Belzak, Thrash, Sim, & Wadsworth, 2017, p. 6). Although dissociable, all three components tend to co-occur (Thrash, 2020, p. 7) and their covariance allows for distinguishing inspiration from related constructs such as 'mere' self-transcending emotions (Belzak et al., 2017, p. 6) or more general appetitive motivational states that might accompany positive affect. Put another way, inspiration as a higher order construct differs from more general motivational states as it is uniquely characterized by lesser feelings of responsibility (indicated by evocation) and the presence of at least one of the discrete emotions listed above (indicated by transcendence).

In communication scholarship, inspirational media are often referred to synonymously with eudaimonic, or meaningful, narrative entertainment (e.g., Janicke-Bowles, Narayan, & Seng, 2018; Ji et al., 2019; Rieger & Klimmt, 2019). Eudaimonic entertainment is distinguished from *hedonic* entertainment (characterized by audience motivations and outcomes associated with pleasure) by its focus on audiences' motivations to consume content in search of meaningfulness, and by its accordant outcomes associated with uplifting feelings such as appreciation or elevation (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010; Oliver, Hartmann, & Woolley, 2012; Wirth, Hofer, & Schramm, 2012) that can be self-transcending (Oliver et al., 2018). Investigations into eudaimonic entertainment are rooted in positive psychology (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010) and typically studied in terms of their capacity to induce prosocial behavior (Bailey & Wojdynski, 2015) and other normatively positive outcomes such as well-being (Janicke-Bowles, Rieger, & Connor, 2019).

Although the bulk of research on inspirational media has examined narratives' ability to evoke a sense of meaningfulness and normatively positive outcomes in audiences, inspiration can also be used as a manipulation tactic. For instance, marketing scholars attempt to leverage inspirational processes for product persuasion (Barry & Gironda, 2018), extremist groups rely on eudaimonic entertainment cues to cover calls for violence (Bouko, Naderer, Rieger, Van Ostaeyen, & Voué, 2021; Frischlich, 2021), and terrorist organizations justify their atrocities with meaning-promising morality (Hahn, Tamborini, Novotny, Grall, & Klebig, 2019). As such, the communication field's idealizations of inspirational media as socially beneficial stands in stark contrast to the use of inspiration and related constructs in explaining outcomes that may be normatively deemed socially detrimental. At the same time, bodies of research exist on concepts that seem to fall under the umbrella of inspirational processes, yet they are not referred to as inspiration. For instance, in research on terrorism, the concept 'social motivation' is defined as the directing of collective action as a result of a communal object and is often characterized by accompanying feelings of diminished personal responsibility (Bandura, 1990; McClintock, 1972)—characteristics that share great similarity with definitions of inspiration (Thrash & Elliot, 2003).

Given the definitional ambiguity surrounding what does or does not constitute 'inspiration', and shared terms describing similar processes that might be broadly deemed inspiration, how should we as scholars understand inspirational media? The current thematic issue aims at providing an initial step in addressing this question, connecting scattered research about inspiration and overlapping constructs from different subfields using the tripartite framework of Thrash and Elliot (2003) as an organizing framework. Consequently, we focus on inspiration in the context of media and communication as a process in which (a) a communication object of any modality (b) evokes an idiosyncratic response characterized by cognitions, emotions, or excitatory responses reflecting (self-)transcendence, and (c) motivates the transmission of ideas gleaned from the communication—be it for social benefit or detriment.

2. An Overview of the Thematic Issue

The seven contributions to this thematic issue tackle the different components of the inspiration process, including: evocative content, individuals' emotional and excitatory responses to provoking content, and the motivational consequences of both.

Examining the first step of this process (media as an elicitor of inspiration), Ruotsalainen and Villi (2021) demonstrate that 'live journalism' (i.e., the presentation of news stories to a live audience) can enable self-transcendence and satisfy audiences' intrinsic needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness—thereby potentially inspiring public participation in the democratic process.

Next, this thematic issue features several articles investigating the second step of the inspiration process: emotional and excitatory responses. Echoing the operational definitional ambiguity surrounding parts of the inspiration process, Martela and Sheldon (2019) recently identified at least 45 different measures for eudaimonic well-being. In an effort to help address such ambiguity in the context of 'eudaimonic entertainment experiences,' Daneels, Bowman, Possler, and Mekler (2021) present a scoping review to delineate eudaimonia's associated concepts in research on digital games. In their article they identify four response patterns of interest: (1) Appreciation; (2) meaningful, moving, and self-reflective experiences; (3) social connectedness; and (4) other concepts (including nostalgia, well-being, and elevation). The theoretical value of the article has also been honored by a top article award from the International Communication Associations' Games Division in 2021. In a related vein, Landmann's (2021) theoretical contribution, in which she focuses more narrowly on eudaimonic emotions, offers a groundwork for conceptual distinction between 'elicitor-specific' eudaimonic emotions (such as nostalgia, hope, or gratitude) and 'feeling specific' eudaimonic emotions (such as elevation, being moved, or awe) showing that these emotions

can have general- but also value-specific effects, explaining why they might have a 'good' or 'bad' side (defined as potentially working for or against the well-being of others). Taken together, these two articles offer insight into what characterizes responses to eudaimonic content and begin to identify the conceptual bounds of eudaimonic-specific responses from other, similar responses.

These bounds are examined experimentally by Baldwin and Bente (2021), who use psychophysiological measures to differentiate the effects of hedonic and eudaimonic entertainment narratives about sports (*Rocky* and *Rocky II*). In line with the assumption that eudaimonic entertainment motivates deliberative processing (Bartsch & Schneider, 2014), the authors found that participants who viewed a eudaimonic narrative exhibited slower, more gradual increases in arousal and positive affect during exposure compared to participants who viewed a hedonic narrative. They also demonstrated the third step of the inspirational process, motivational consequences, as viewers of the eudaimonic narrative were more likely to indicate intentions to exercise following exposure.

Also investigating the third component of the inspiration process, Kryston and Fitzgerald (2021) examined the effects and interaction between inspirational media and social norms for prosocial behavior, namely the intention to adopt a dog. Their study showed that social norms were the crucial variable here, raising questions for the context and norm-sensitivity of inspirational media content.

This context sensitivity also matters when less innocuous effects of inspirational and transcending experiences are considered. Two articles in this thematic issue address the potentially 'dark' sides of inspirational media. First, Moore, Green, Fitzgerald, and Paravati (2021) highlight the unintentional side-effects of inspirational stories. In their experiment, participants watched either an inspirational narrative about a boy saving money to buy a wheelchair for his friend without accounting for the systemic failure forcing the boy to do so, an inspirational narrative accounting for this systemic failure, or a control video. Notably, participants who viewed the story denying the systemic component attributed the boy in the wheelchair more personal responsibility for his situation—making it unlikely that they would advocate for social change to improve the life conditions for disabled individuals.

Similarly, but tackling a more strategic aspect, Menke and Wulf (2021) show how inspiration can be abused by political demagogues. Focusing on the emotion of nostalgia, they demonstrate how the German right-wing populist party Alternative for Germany has strategically used nostalgia in its communication and how this type of nostalgic rhetoric can effectively persuade people to support populist claims.

3. Conclusion and Directions for Future Research

Taken together, the contributions in this thematic issue paint a rich, nuanced picture of the good, the bad, and the ugly sides of inspiration in the context of media and communication. From including inspirational stimuli beyond the entertainment realm, to the nuanced and detailed mapping of the emotional and excitatory processes triggered by inspirational media, to the side-effects, and the manipulation potential of inspirational media, each article provides meaningful insights into so-far seldom addressed facets of inspirational media. Each article additionally highlights important next steps for future work, aiming to offer a more complete understanding of inspirational processes beyond the academic idealizations of inspirational media. And when it comes to achieving a more complete understanding of inspirational media and accordant outcomes from exposure to such media, much work remains to be done.

Among other opportunities for increasing our understanding of inspirational media, we highlight four open areas we think are necessary for future researchers to contend with. First, despite its increasing popularity in scholarship from communication and other fields, inspiration as it is currently considered suffers from conceptual and operational ambiguity. Even the excellent conceptual efforts made by Thrash and Elliot (2003) seem limited by a lack of primitive terms to define the essential features of evocation and transcendence. Although we think inspiration describes a process distinct from other similar processes, questions remain regarding the precise conceptual and operational bounds of inspirational media and its effects. For instance, future researchers in this area might work to specifically distinguish inspirational media's content features and outcomes from eudaimonic media and outcomes. Open questions in this area remain regarding whether inspirational content and eudaimonic content are one in the same, or whether one might be a sub-category of the other.

Second, and relatedly, inspirational processes do not currently seem to be inherently defined by their ability to elicit normatively positive outcomes such as well-being and prosocial behavior, yet the bulk of research into inspirational media's effects have been restricted to outcomes rooted in social benefit. In line with our logic for curating this thematic issue, future work on inspirational media should continue to investigate inspirational processes as they might also govern media's ability to inspire socially detrimental outcomes. In pursuit of a solution to both of our suggestions for future research so far, we might recommend that future scholars work to further clarify inspirational media according to the content features that distinguish it, rather than the types of outcomes it is thought to elicit.

Third, the explicitly processual nature of inspiration as defined by Thrash and Elliot (2003) suggests that research embracing the different components of the inspiration process—from evocation to motivation—should provide rich insights into inspirational media's effects. Yet studies focusing on more than one component of this process in response to inspirational media exposure are rare (e.g., examining content's

ability to elicit both self-transcending emotions and user-responses together; but see Dale, Raney, Janicke, Sanders, & Oliver, 2017; Dale et al., 2020) and studies depicting the entire process are even more scarce. We hope that future work in this area will attempt to examine media's role in the entire inspiration process.

Finally, critics might wonder what scientific benefit the elucidation and adoption of inspirational media as a construct can offer communication and media psychology scholarship. What do we learn from examining inspirational processes that we might not learn if we examined each component of inspiration by itself? Although understanding in this area warrants future clarification, we cannot help but look to the present thematic issue for indication of the term's value. Indeed, the ability of media to evoke so-called (self-)transcendence and motivate action characterized by lesser feelings of responsibility seems to offer explanatory value for media effects across a wide variety of contexts and research silos. Nevertheless, demonstrating the benefit of adopting yet another term into communication science remains a task to be grappled with by future scholars. Thus, we hope that the collection of articles in this thematic issue provide valuable starting points for future research on inspirational media's good but also bad and ugly sides.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

'A Shared Reality between a Journalist and the Audience': How Live Journalism Reimagines News Stories

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Abstract
Live journalism is a new journalistic genre in which journalists present news stories to a live audience. This article investigates the journalistic manuscripts of live journalism performances. With the focus on texts, the article reaches beyond the live performance to explore the wider implications and potentials pioneered by live journalists. The data were gathered from *Musta laatikko* ('Black Box') manuscripts, a live journalism production by the Finnish newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat*. The manuscripts were analysed as *eudaimonic journalism* through four conceptual dimensions: self-transcendence, autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The results show how eudaimonic journalism can contemplate history, the future, and the meaning of finite human life. Moreover, by describing self-determinant individuals and communal social relationships, eudaimonic news stories can foster a sense of meaning and agency in audience members. By employing eudaimonia, journalists at large can reflect on the meaning and purpose of contemporary life and offer a more comprehensive understanding of the world. Such understanding includes not only facts and analysis, but also values, affects, and collective meanings mediated through the subjectivity of a journalist.

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1. Introduction

Several experiments of *live journalism* have emerged during recent years in response to the many challenges facing contemporary journalism. In live journalism, journalists present journalistic contents to a live audience in a theatre or similar venue. The embodied performance of journalistic stories is thought to enhance the audience's interest, engagement, and trust toward journalism (Adams, 2020). Live journalism can thus aid in the intense contest for audiences' attention and make them more willing to consume and pay for journalism (Adams, 2020; Tenenboim & Stroud, 2020).

Live journalism is part of an 'audience turn' in journalism, which emphasises the importance of the needs and attention of audiences in shaping how journalism develops (Kormelink & Costera Meijer, 2015). Journalists often respond to the assumed needs of the audiences by offering them affectively engaging content or, increasingly, individual and communal experiences (Vodanovic, 2020). The audience turn has made some observers fear that journalism is losing its autonomy and falling prey to commercialisation and excessive emotion (Vodanovic, 2020). Many in the industry thus feel a need to reimagine journalistic offerings and norms in an audience-friendly but journalistically sustainable way (Kormelink & Costera Meijer, 2015).

Previous research on live journalism has focused on the human presence of a journalist in live performances and the different aspects of audiences' engagement with the journalism and each other. Adams (2020) examines whether live events can be successful in re-establishing journalism's authority and role as a truth-teller through meaningful face-to-face experiences. Tenenboim and Stroud (2020) find that immersive and affectively powerful 'enacted journalism' can increase people's political knowledge, forge reciprocal communal connections, and increase intention to participate in civic and political life. Focusing on the aesthetics of live journalism events, Vodanovic (2020) observes that their informal, conversational, and subjective registers support deep reflection and making sense of news, similarly to 'slow journalism' (Andersen, 2020).

Previous studies have largely eschewed analysis of the *contents* of the journalistic presentations in live journalism events. Research also lacks reflection on how the new ideas and approaches of live journalism could be applied in journalism more broadly. This article contributes to research, first, by examining journalistic contents in the manuscripts of *Musta laatikko* ('Black Box' in Finnish), a live journalism production by the Finnish legacy newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* (an example of a *Musta laatikko* presentation, with English subtitles, can be viewed at https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QEtXhN6isow8utdnrloF_Bs0E0J9FaR2/view). The article approaches the *Musta laatikko* manuscripts as *eudaimonic journalism* which presents and analyses news events from the perspective of human virtues, meanings, and potentials (see Ryan, Huta, & Deci, 2013). Like previous studies on eudaimonic media, the article suggests eudaimonic journalism as a 'serious' alternative to conventional media entertainment or 'infotainment.' In eudaimonically entertaining journalism, enjoyment is not based on immediate pleasure but on a sense of meaningfulness and reflections on the purpose of life (Oliver et al., 2018; Pelzer & Raemy, 2020). Eudaimonic journalism is by no means restricted to live performances; however, live journalists can be seen as pioneers who apply eudaimonia in journalism and explore new journalistic ideas that can also potentially be applied in other journalistic forms. The article thus explores how live journalism and eudaimonic journalism can contribute to existing conceptualisations of contemporary journalism.

These considerations give rise to the following research questions:

RQ1: How is a sense of eudaimonia implied and produced in *Musta laatikko* manuscripts?

RQ2: How can the journalistic ideas of eudaimonic live journalism be applied in journalism outside the live setting?

Before answering the research questions in Sections 4, 5, and 6, Sections 2 and 3 review previous research and connect live journalism and eudaimonic journalism with slow journalism and journalistic reciprocity.

2. Live Journalism

The recent live journalism initiatives range from discussion and networking events by legacy media organisations such as the *Washington Post* and 'stand-up journalism' by the *Pop-Up Magazine* in the United States, to theatre plays based on journalistic reporting like *Camden People's Theatre* in the UK and the more 'serious' journalism by the Finnish *Musta laatikko* (Larson, 2015; Lyytinen, 2020; Vodanovic, 2020). Although the cases of live journalism vary, they share some core motivations, ideas, and purposes. First, presenting journalism to a live audience can tap on the affective interest of audience members through an animated, embodied delivery of news (Adams, 2020). Second, live journalism events can establish a stronger and interpersonal connection between journalists and audience members (Lyytinen, 2020). They can enhance audiences' trust towards journalists (Larson, 2015) and foster a sense of community between attendees (Adams, 2020). Third, live events bring in new income to news organisations (Larson, 2015). Fourth, such events can strengthen the brand of both news organisations and individual journalists by highlighting their journalistic mission and transparency (Vodanovic, 2020).

The embodied experience of live journalism can aid immersion in news stories and allow audience members to take "the same journey all together" (Tenenboim & Stroud, 2020, p. 15). Live journalism can bolster political knowledge and strengthen individuals' sense of connectedness to fellow citizens and the public spheres beyond their private lives (Tenenboim & Stroud, 2020). However, hopes that live journalism might re-animate public debate may, at least for now, prove overblown as often the communication in live events is one-way, from a journalist to the audience (Adams, 2020; Vodanovic, 2020). Yet despite the conventional hierarchies, live events can help newsrooms become better enmeshed in their communities (Tenenboim & Stroud, 2020). This is particularly due to the direct, immediate, and intimate connection between live journalists and the audience (Barker, 2003; Vodanovic, 2020). Moreover, although the performances usually are one-directional, live journalism events often include an opportunity for the audience to have an informal discussion with the journalists afterwards (Lyytinen, 2020; Tenenboim & Stroud, 2020).

The shared, communal experience of live journalism has important epistemological repercussions. According to Adams (2020, p. 10), audiences at live events find "truth" as they experience journalists' honesty and feel trust towards them, perceiving them as "real people." Vodanovic (2020) emphasises how live journalism is to make sense of news rather than break it. Making sense

involves representing shared beliefs and the "truth of shared experiences" alongside imparting more neutral information (Adams, 2020, p. 2). The social, physical, and subjective aspects of journalists performing their stories to a live audience can draw audience members deeper into the stories and bring them to life in the viewers' subjective experience (Tenenboim & Stroud, 2020).

Compared to prior forms of journalism, live journalism comes close particularly to slow journalism (Vodanovic, 2020). Rather than a distinct genre, slow journalism is an approach or sensibility toward the production of journalism. Slow journalism detaches from the daily and weekly news grind in favour of rigorous fact-gathering, the composing of compelling stories, and careful editing (Le Masurier, 2015). It encourages audience members to reflect the complexities of contemporary existence and democratic life (Craig, 2016). Instead of 'merely' reporting on current events, slow journalism makes sense of the world through the knowledge, interpretations, assessments, and appraisals of a particular journalist (Le Masurier, 2015). Cultivating the required insight is a slow process. In *Musta laatikko* productions, the speakers are encouraged to choose a topic which they have a longtime interest in and which sparks their personal enthusiasm (Lyytinen, 2020). In other words, the sense-making capacities of *Musta laatikko* journalists are built slowly along their professional career and involve a fair amount of tacit knowledge and even holistic wisdom that helps in projecting insight and interpretation (cf. Le Masurier, 2015).

What the live format adds to slow journalism is the embodied storytelling and the shared presence between a journalist and the audience. As with theatre plays, this *liveness* implies an immediacy that makes viewers feel that they are part of the story and invites them to engage in an active moral reflection and consideration of meanings and shared humanity (Barker, 2003). Liveness thus not only creates a shared reality between journalists and attendees but can establish a sense of a more immediate and direct connection to the issues and events journalists address—to reality 'out there.' In live performances, 'journalism literally becomes alive,' at least in the imagination of the attendees. In a survey for *Musta laatikko* attendees (N = 510), 84% agreed that the performances made them feel connected to the performing journalist (Lyytinen, 2020). In open-ended responses, one respondent elaborated this as follows: "Black Box [*Musta laatikko*] created a more intimate and deeper connection to news and the people behind it" (Lyytinen, 2020, p. 49). While the live performance of news undoubtedly is a particularly powerful experience, similar kind of intimacy and co-construction of journalistic knowledge can take place in other journalistic communities, such as shared messaging groups between journalists and citizens (Kligler-Vilenchik & Tenenboim, 2020). Thus, a potential way to replicate the power of live events in journalism broadly is by combining slow journalism with audience communities (Malmelin & Villi,

2016). The following section introduces a third potential element: eudaimonia.

3. Eudaimonic Media

As news organisations seek to re-engage with their audiences, they increasingly employ different forms of infotainment (Pelzer & Raemy, 2020). Journalistic infotainment often engages audience members through complex reflection and a re-employment of traditional news values rather than immediate pleasure (Pelzer & Raemy, 2020). Also in entertainment research, the focus is shifting from entertainment as hedonic enjoyment to more contemplative, meaningful, and affectively complex experiences (Oliver et al., 2018). These types of media experiences can be conceptualised as 'eudaimonic' (Ryan et al., 2013). Eudaimonic media refer to 'serious' but entertaining contents that transmit values, morality, and shared meaning, and reflect both the virtuous as well as the tragic aspects of human life (Frischlich, 2020). Eudaimonic contents elicit affects and reflections that users identify as 'meaningful' (Oliver et al., 2018).

Live journalism events arguably offer a particularly benign environment for eudaimonic journalism. Eudaimonia is conjured by the artistic and performative aspects of a live show, a sense of community among attendees due to physical proximity and shared reactions, and a direct, embodied connection to a journalist who mediates and makes sense of the news and the social world (cf. Dale, Raney, Janicke, Sanders, & Oliver, 2017). These characteristics of live journalism encourage audience members to 'venture beyond their private lives' and engage in 'an active reflection of shared meanings.' In other words, live journalism expresses two core dimensions of eudaimonic experiences: 'self-transcendence' and 'intrinsic motivation' (Oliver et al., 2018; Ryan et al., 2013).

Self-transcendent eudaimonic experiences involve 'truth-seeking,' an open-ended search for insight and meaning (Bartsch & Schneider, 2014). Self-transcendent experiences can arise when viewers or readers recognize elements of shared humanity in media content, such as tragedies of the human condition or an interconnectedness with causes beyond oneself (Dale et al., 2017). Self-transcendent content can increase appreciation for the natural and the human world by encouraging audiences "to look beyond [their] own concerns, to recognize moral beauty, and to feel unity with humanity and nature" (Oliver et al., 2018, p. 380).

Intrinsic motivation, in turn, concerns the core psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and (social) relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Satisfying intrinsic needs is considered eudaimonic as their fulfilment can foster self-expression, psychological well-being, and a sense of being one's true self (Ryan, Huta, & Deci, 2008). One need not necessarily carry out self-determined acts because perceiving such acts in others can be enough to arouse similar sentiments in oneself (Oliver et al.,

2018). Through self-transcendence and the fulfilment of intrinsic needs, eudaimonic experiences can make a person feel aesthetically, affectively, and morally elevated. Eudaimonic media are thus often referred to also as 'inspirational media' (Dale et al., 2017).

In the context of journalism, the study of eudaimonic media experiences is only emerging (Oliver et al., 2018). Results from previous research echo the social and information-processing dimensions of live journalism. Hard news paired with contemplative and moving eudaimonic elements can encourage individuals to reflect on political issues, heighten their interest in news topics, and motivate further information seeking (Bartsch & Schneider, 2014). Eudaimonically entertaining political communication, such as political talk shows, can enhance and deepen the audience's understanding of issues (Vorderer & Reinecke, 2015). Newsgames can encourage the passing on of information about the issues addressed (Lin & Wu, 2020), and users are more likely to share inspirational news stories within their social networks (Ji et al., 2019).

A strengthened interest toward the world and ethical reflection on it are typical of eudaimonic journalism. Grizzard et al. (2017) find that displays of graphic violence in broadcast news increases moral sensitivity and eudaimonic motivations such as willingness to help. News content about helping the homeless and fundraising for medical treatment can elicit morally elevated affects in readers and enhance a universalist sentiment of being connected to other people (Waddell & Bailey, 2017). Pjesivac, Ahn, Briscoe, and Kim (2020) observe that a sense of spatial presence in 360° video war news stories can lead to eudaimonic enjoyment evoked by promoting an understanding of the larger world of foreign affairs, reconsideration one's life values against that context, and an enhanced sense of agency and self-determinacy in the news experience. This in turn can increase intent to seek further information (Pjesivac et al., 2020).

The above examples show how eudaimonic news contents often focus on life's tragedies. Part of what makes eudaimonic narratives meaningful is that they support viewers and readers in contemplating that which is normally avoided. Eudaimonic enjoyment is induced by confronting and processing painful truths about the self, outside reality, and the fragility and preciousness of human life (Bartsch & Schneider, 2014; Slater, Oliver, & Appel, 2019). This can be seen as an opportunity for the employment of eudaimonia in journalism that equally often describes difficult events and complex issues with no easy answers.

In all, eudaimonia in journalism can foster affective and ethical contemplation of news, something which can enhance sense-making and help reflect on 'higher' meanings in news events. Eudaimonia can lead to prosocial behaviour, such as passing on information about news events and it encourages a re-focus from one's own life towards the surrounding world. What live jour-

nalism can add are the shared and communal experiences around news, as described in the previous section. Tenenboim and Stroud (2020) draw on the concept of autopoietic feedback from the literature on theatre to understand the impact of live journalism on the audience. An autopoietic feedback loop refers to the interaction between actors and spectators through which a theatre performance, or a live journalism story, comes into being (Tenenboim & Stroud, 2020). The gestures and expressions of a journalist and the attendees' reactions to them create a shared reality in which the stories become alive. This is expressed by both audience members and journalists when they compare live journalism events to a "campsite community" or "campfire stories" (Adams, 2020; p. 11; Lilja, 2020, p. 53).

Autopoietic feedback loops need not be restricted to live journalism. They are an example of broader reciprocal journalism which emphasises the direct (one-to-one), indirect (one-to-many; community benefit), and sustained (long-lasting) exchanges between journalists and audience members (Lewis, Holton, & Coddington, 2014). Practices of reciprocity are the basis of community formation: Communities are born of exchanges of mutual benefit (Tenenboim & Stroud, 2020). If journalists are to forge a communal bond with audiences beyond engagement metrics, they may have to indulge in mutual and often personal exchanges. Loosen et al. (2020) label the latest phase of audience-journalism relationships a 'reciprocity phase' which underlines a need for sensitivity and responsiveness to audience needs and reactions. Reciprocity is also an inherent part of *Musta laatikko*, whose producers conceive their stories as gifts to audiences: They offer the audience something unique and exclusive, be it novel insight or 'souvenirs' from reporting trips (Lyytinen, 2020). Reciprocity and mutual feedback loops can support eudaimonic experiences as they potentially increase a sense of autonomy and competence in audience members, and through self-transcendence, they are drawn more deeply into journalistic stories (cf. Tenenboim & Stroud, 2020). This can induce a state of 'liminality': a psychological and affective state of in-betweenness where distinctions between dichotomies, such as reality and performance, become blurred (Tenenboim & Stroud, 2020). A theatre setting can suppress the ego of the attendees (Adams, 2020), something which other practices of journalistic reciprocity and community-building might also produce.

4. Data and Method

The data consists of the 16 manuscripts of *Musta laatikko* spring and autumn 2019 productions. The manuscripts are journalistic stories written by the journalists of *Helsingin Sanomat*, and presented by them in their own voices, word-by-word, on the main stage of the Finnish National Theatre. Each manuscript is approximately 1,100 words in length and is presented live in approximately 15 minutes. The topics for each production of

eight performances are selected to reflect the topic selection in a newspaper or a news magazine issue. The specific topics in the two 2019 productions ranged from a reportage from the war-ravaged Syria and a historic analysis of the pending Finnish health and social services reform to an uplifting piece about the relationship Finns have with their hair, as well as a feature story about the artificial intelligence assisted composing of music. Of the 16 manuscripts analysed, seven can be labelled under politics. Six are human interest stories addressing difficult social relationships and hardships in life or reflect the social reality in general. Three cover arts and culture.

The *Musta laatikko* production is a specimen of 'meaningful media' (Vorderer & Reinecke, 2015). Through their stories, *Musta laatikko* journalists seek to convey their own fascination and the sense of the meaningfulness of a topic (Lyytinen, 2020). In an affectively immersive manner, they seek to create a "shared reality between a journalist and the audience," as one editor commented at *Musta laatikko* rehearsals. Because of the emphasis on shared meaning, eudaimonia was chosen as a concept to understand the live journalism of *Musta laatikko*.

The contents of the collected manuscripts were analysed by employing a conceptual typology of two eudaimonic dimensions: 'self-transcendence' and 'fulfilment of intrinsic needs' (Oliver et al., 2018; Ryan & Deci, 2000). The analysis was initiated with an open coding of the manuscripts. Using the qualitative analysis software *NVivo*, excerpts of text were given short descriptive labels summarising what was being said (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). For instance, an excerpt reading "it is 30 years to the year 2049" was labelled as 'time; future.' The labelled excerpts were then categorized according to thematical similarity. This resulted in four sub-categories of self-transcendence, as described in Section 5.1.

A similar process was conducted regarding the fulfilment of intrinsic needs (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Categories of open coding were further categorised, if applicable, under the three core intrinsic needs: 'autonomy' (descriptions of individuals or other actors who make independent choices or reflect their activities and goals), 'competence' (descriptions of individuals or other actors who perform well in particular areas), and 'relatedness' (descriptions of social relationships and mutual care; Ryan et al., 2008). A thematic category of 'independent journalist' from open coding was, for instance, placed under the category of autonomy. Finally, excerpts placed under the three categories of intrinsic needs were compared with each other, resulting in two subcategories under each intrinsic need, as elaborated in Section 5.2 (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). All in all, eudaimonic elements proved to prevail in the manuscripts: Excluding factual reporting, the manuscripts are almost entirely coded under the employed typology of eudaimonia.

5. Results

5.1. Self-Transcendence

5.1.1. Time

The manuscripts imply an extended temporal existence by presenting the present moment in continuum with the past and the future. In one manuscript, for instance, the journalist examines how Finland, a country whose industry was virtually built on forestry, was able to survive and prosper over the following 100 years to the point where now forestry is in peril in many industrial towns (Manuscript 1, hereafter M1). Eudaimonic contents can encourage a reflection on the tragic and the emotionally difficult (Bartsch & Schneider, 2014). The above journalist can be seen as gently pushing their audience to acknowledge and reflect on the 'hard truths' facing such a fundamental industry for Finland and to contemplate its uncertain but possibly positive futures. This can potentially help audience members make sense of the contemporary moment and its potential trajectories. Here especially the *Musta laatikko* stories appear as slow journalism: They detach from the daily and weekly news cycles to longer temporalities which span decades or even centuries. Making sense of the news and reflecting on their different dimensions can require a detachment from the instantaneity of daily news, which skews towards particular events and consensual viewpoints (Craig, 2016). Longer temporalities allow for a synthesizing and interpretive sense-making that can explore the broader and deeper trends, ideas, values, and issues behind news reports and analyses (Le Masurier, 2015).

Presenting the future as open, uncertain, and precarious is typical of the manuscripts. Besides the economy, contingent societal futures cover climate change (M3), Russia (M5, M15), the ageing population (M9), urban planning (M13), and the European Union (M6). The manuscripts not only probe uncertain futures but offer solutions to cope with the uncertainty. Uncertainty is alleviated by creating 'hope' through technological solutions, representative democracy, positive visions, and references to tradition (M1, M3, M5, M6). Moreover, future-oriented reflections can entail a sense of 'purpose': present events draw meaning from imagined future events (Baumeister, Vohs, Aaker, & Garbinsky, 2013). Hence, for instance, when a journalist reminded the audience how Finnish health and social services reform has to take the ageing population into account, the journalist potentially aroused a sense of national purpose in how the situation could be managed (M9).

Besides the future, the manuscripts employ extended time to make sense of the contemporary. A journalist claiming rap music as "the most important music of our times" (M12) invites the audience to think of the present as a comprehensive whole ("our times") and highlights rap music as a key to understanding it. References to history, similar to future projections,

contextualise the contemporary as part of historical processes and show how the present reality is not inevitable but could be otherwise. When a journalist, for instance, laments how the rising popularity of spirituality is being hindered by the historical processes of the "scientific revolution" and modernisation, they simultaneously imply a future in which spirituality is more socially accepted (M14). On the other hand, history can appear as path-dependence and closed futures, such as when the Russian federation was suggested to be still undergoing a disintegration process following the fall of the Soviet empire (M15). All in all, *Musta laatikko* manuscripts strive to promote a sense of meaningfulness in the attendees: Studies show that thinking about the past and imagining the future are strongly associated with a meaningful life (Baumeister et al., 2013).

5.1.2. Life and Death

The theme of transcendent time is continued in excerpts that contemplate life and death. Such content can arouse gratitude and foster moral virtue, and thereby create eudaimonic experiences (Dale et al., 2017). Regarding death, war appears as the most tragic human condition (M2, M5, M15): "I was a reporter in the Bosnian War, and I never want to see anything like that again" (M6). On the contrary, peace, joy, and "good life" are described as the most precious things in human life (M2, M4, M6). Living a good life is presented as consisting of, for instance, meaningful relationships, hobbies, openness, and broad-minded attitudes (M2, M4, M5). The manuscripts thus encourage opening up to the world as a means to pursue a good and meaningful life. A person's "realization of complete human life" is presented as a social rather than individual pursuit (Ryan et al., 2013, p. 120). Previous studies also suggest that involvement with things beyond oneself promotes a sense of meaningfulness (Baumeister et al., 2013).

Contemplating life and death can help appreciate life as fleeting, finite, and precious (Oliver & Hartmann, 2010). The manuscripts reflect life after the loss of a spouse, the communication with the dead in spiritualistic sessions, or the sudden loss of human life through accidents (M3, M11, M14, M15). Like hope offered to soften uncertainty towards the future, the singular finiteness of human life can be transcended by the cyclical nature of life and death: Death is not the end, but "a beginning for the new" (M11). The cycle of life and death concerns only individuals, but also industrial towns, generations, and entire populations (M1, M4, M5, M9). Here again, the manuscripts tilt away from the particular to reflect that which connects singular phenomena.

5.1.3. Democracy and Public Life

An individual's life can be transcended, and new meaning cultivated, through an imagined political community. When a journalist claims that rap music can "wake and

activate young people politically," they allude to a higher ethical-political plane attainable through music (M12). Caring for issues beyond one's immediate interests, such as the European integration, connects individuals to universal, transcendental values such as the peace that the European Union allegedly upholds (M6). Similarly, political participation can create hope in our ability to reverse climate change and shift an individual's focus away from oneself, from "dwelling in bad conscience" to creating shared hope of an ecologically sustainable future (M3).

The manuscripts can articulate shared political problems, suggest new issues for the political agenda, and invite audience members to reflect on topics beyond their private concerns. For instance, one journalist argues that the issues of elderly people without children are not currently conceived of as political problems although they should be (M4). Often the suggested issues address marginalized or underrepresented groups. Representing under-served groups invites audience members to step out of their political 'comfort zone' and consider issues beyond their usual concerns. It is particularly "female rap musicians" who "bring forth new social problems" and introduce listeners to new socially conscious political ideas, such as feminist thought (M12). Another manuscript approaches criminal biker gangs as a sociopolitical issue of social exclusion and deprivation (M10).

Democracy and public life pertain to 'elevation' as a particular element of self-transcendence (Dale et al., 2017). Considering and acting upon issues that transcend one's self-interest are seen as manifestations of moral beauty and humanity's 'better nature' (Dale et al., 2017). In several manuscripts, a journalist explicitly elevates public participation, stating that it should not be treated with "apathy" (M6). When a journalist, for instance, ends their piece by accentuating how "all of us are a politician's boss," they invoke a democratic ideal of the demos as the ruling body of free citizens (M3).

5.1.4. Nature

Descriptions of nature can foster self-transcendence through 'awe' and 'elevation' in the face of the beauty and vastness of nature (Dale et al., 2017). The manuscripts describe natural phenomena, such as climate change, as a superior force which human societies cannot control (M3). Evocative scenes such as one describing a Finnish wintertime tradition of ice swimming where "small humans" take a dip in a hole carved in the ice suggest nature as a both benevolent and pre-eminent force (M16). The smallness of humans is implied also in another manuscript where the journalist marvels at how we probably still are unaware of all the existing natural laws and phenomena (M14). The manuscript nods toward a transhumanist expansion: if exposed and harnessed, these unknown forces could vastly expand human capacities (M14).

Despite being appreciated, nature is mostly described as lacking an inherent value. Moreover, nature is drawn distinct from the human world. An implied ideal state is a balance between humans and nature, an expression of moral beauty despite the pragmatic approach (Dale et al., 2017). The balance can manifest for instance as carbon neutrality or removing microplastics from natural environments (M1, M3). If nature is described as valuable in itself, the value is foremost aesthetic, appreciating the beauty of community gardens, diamond mines, walrus packs, or untouched forests (M1, M3, M4, M5).

5.2. The Fulfilment of Intrinsic Needs

5.2.1. Autonomy

5.2.1.1. Critical, Independent Journalist

The manuscripts present the journalists as autonomous when they question authorities and prevailing assumptions. One journalist is sceptical as to whether the rosy futures propagated by the Finnish forest industry are "baseless hype" (M1), and another claims children are not as central to wellbeing as is often assumed (M4). Such critical independence can make journalists appear as exemplary of autonomous, self-determinant individuals. An aura of uncompromising independence is strengthened by criticisms towards the journalistic profession. A foreign reporter, for instance, laments how fixated journalists are on havoc and suffering: such bleak depictions illuminate only one aspect of the messy reality of war but "give kicks" to reporters (M2). Another journalist points to the narrowness of news criteria and gives "weird" and "unexplained" phenomena as an example of a topic journalists often dismiss (M14).

The journalists appear as autonomous also when they offer critical assessments of issues. In such passages, a journalist appraises what they think are among the most important aspects in a particular case: "What is the meaning of all of this?" (M15). The explanations range from the core problems in the Finnish health and social services reform to why some people want to become a member of criminal biker gangs (M9, M10). One journalist even cries out how an unrealised urban transportation plan "does not make any sense!" and simultaneously implicitly criticises Helsinki's urban planning (M13). Such appraisals show journalists as highly autonomous, virtuous characters who are able to make sense of the messy reality on behalf of the audience. The appraisals, such as the previously mentioned examples of a critical mindset, emphasized confronting truths that are not always pleasant—an appropriate eudaimonic role for journalists particularly (Bartsch & Schneider, 2014). In the spirit of reciprocal journalism, such reflections can be seen as sense-making "gifts" journalists give their audiences (Lewis et al., 2014).

5.2.1.2. Independent Individual

Several manuscripts describe independent individuals who think for themselves, make autonomous decisions, and have an evolved self-understanding. An independent reflection and assessment of life choices and aims is a critical prerequisite for autonomous and eudaimonic living (Ryan et al., 2013). Individuals with a capacity for volition and mindful reflection are thus implicitly portrayed as role models audience members can follow in their strive towards an independent life of self-determination. One manuscript, to give an example, depicts a woman, who in the 1960s, "had other plans" than what was expected of women at that time (M4). By the portrayal, the manuscript invites viewers to think for themselves instead of following social conventions that restrict individuals' choices. Autonomy and independence are, however, not presented as a sole responsibility of individuals but as socially produced. Another journalist asserts how schools should teach children "to think for themselves and apply what they have learned" (M5). The merging of individual and social autonomy is exemplified also by active citizenship and taking part in representational politics (M3). This is in line with research showing that a sense of autonomy and relations with other people are strongly interrelated (Reinecke, Vorderer, & Knop, 2014).

5.2.2. Competence

5.2.2.1. Competent Journalist

The manuscripts present the journalists as competent by highlighting their expertise, the risks and effort they take during reporting, and how well-versed they are in particular topics. Many bring up the amount of background reporting they have undertaken. Extensive research, often years-long, can result in a book instead of 'mere' news articles (M4, M10, M14). Acquiring expertise is not only hard work but also involves a personal involvement and nerdy interest, a *passion* towards one's work: "I am quite passionate about the European Union, and during the recent years I have become somewhat of an EU nerd" (M6). Passionate interest and a 'nerdy' focus are prime examples of competence attained through intrinsic motivation (Mills, Milyavskaya, Mettler, Heath, & Derevensky, 2018; Ryan & Deci, 2000). They also express the ideal of slow journalism for deep, personally engaged reflection of news events (Le Masurier, 2015).

5.2.2.2. Competent Individuals

Besides journalists, the manuscripts can describe other professionals or ordinary people as competent. Competent professionals range from Finnish world-class hairdressers to a pioneer in computer-assisted music composition. Although competence can be framed as an individual trait, such as exceptional creativity, it is presented as attainable by virtually everyone through

learning and growing as a person. Despite being a psychological feature, capacities for learning are socially produced (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This is illustrated in a manuscript that brings up how rap music has inspired youngsters with learning difficulties to "analyse texts like literature majors" (M12). The narrative of mastery and constant growth through learning can be broadened to an entire nation, its history, and the future: "We Finns have forests, water, and intelligence. Now we have to once again learn to make something new out of them'' (M1).

5.2.3. Relatedness

5.2.3.1. Social Relationships

References to social relationships can include the warm and communal feelings held towards others in a Siberian village (M5). Appropriate for journalistic stories, social relationships are not presented as a private but foremost as a public and political matter. This is of interest as applications of self-determination theory to politics are virtually absent (Russo & Stattin, 2017). A lack of healthy social relationships is given as one possible explanation for why some join criminal organisations (M10). One journalist suggests a new social arrangement for ageing societies: communal living and friendship of the elderly (M4). Another argues how in the eyes of officials and bureaucrats the nuclear family and marriage still often are the norm, suggesting other social arrangements should be treated equally (M11).

5.2.3.2. Relationships with and between Audience Members

The journalists seek to create a connection with the audience members by addressing them directly by using the pronouns "you," "us," and "we," often in a lighthearted chit chat mode. The connection can reach beyond the event to include both the journalist and the audience in a shared social or political whole. This can elevate what is being said to have a higher purpose such as peace and democratic participation: "If we want to live in Europe where peace prevails, we have to care about the European Union and show it" (M6). Experiencing life as meaningful entails being part of a shared culture and collective affects (Baumeister et al., 2013). A sense of shared social, cultural, and political reality can thus enhance eudaimonic meaningfulness in audience members. A shared reality and social bond are often implied by referring to "us Finns" (M1, M6, M7). This includes invitations to serious national self-reflection, such as reminding how Finland has its own blind spots regarding social equality and human rights (M9, M10, M12).

The inclusion of the journalist and the audience in a shared social entity can be seen as a means to make the topic at hand more affectively 'real.' This is reflected by Adams (2020, p. 2) who argues that live journalism

could bring "a community together to explore the truth of shared experiences." A truth of shared experiences is implied by a journalist who states that "more than half in this theatre hall have experienced something they cannot explain" (M14). A shared truthiness can also be affectively underlined by a journalist's urge to tell a particular story to the audience ("I wanted to tell you," M3). A sense of the meaningfulness of a topic is thus created not only by a journalist's personal enthusiasm but also by the potential socially shared interest and the topic's place in a shared social reality.

6. Conclusion and Discussion

This article has investigated an emerging journalistic form of live journalism in which journalists present their stories to a live audience. Analysing manuscripts of *Musta laatikko*, a Finnish live journalism production, the article asks whether and how *eudaimonia* is employed in the manuscripts (RQ1) and how the ideas of 'eudaimonic live journalism' could be applied in other forms of journalism (RQ2). Eudaimonia refers to non-hedonic, 'serious' but entertaining journalism which reflects on life's meaning and pursues personal and social growth (Vorderer & Reinecke, 2015). The manuscripts were analysed along two dimensions of eudaimonic media experiences: self-transcendence and the fulfilment of the intrinsic needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Dale et al., 2017; Oliver et al., 2018). Regarding 'self-transcendence,' stories can support audiences to comprehend the news by contextualising them as part of history and anticipated futures. Eudaimonic journalism can thus transcend the present as the temporal locus of journalism (Carlson, 2020). The stories can also transcend everyday existence by being a reminder of how finite and precious human life is. Similarly, democratic and public participation can be portrayed as a meaningful moral and universalist pursuit, rather than a citizen responsibility to be fulfilled (Pjesivac et al., 2020). The manuscripts also approach nature from an ethical perspective and appreciate its awe-inspiring immensity (Oliver et al., 2018).

Interactive news forms, such as 360° video or newsgames, have been shown to induce eudaimonic experiences by allowing users to feel that they can determine their own futures and transcend boundaries (Pjesivac et al., 2020). Lacking in interactivity, written and performed news contents can provide a sense of fulfilling one's intrinsic needs through an identification with virtuous individuals (Cohen, 2001; Wirth, Hofer, & Schramm, 2012). In *Musta laatikko* stories, 'autonomy' engages both journalists and ordinary people alike in critical and independent thinking. 'Competence' can include portrayals of high expertise, evolved skills, creativity, and a passion towards one's interests. Rather than depicting competence as a personal trait, news stories can highlight ways to collectively support individuals' competence (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Regarding social 'relatedness,'

the manuscripts describe different types of communal relationships. Imagining warm and benign relationships can be intrinsically fulfilling as such. Moreover, journalists can envelop themselves and their audience within a shared 'us' and thereby invite them to reflect on shared meanings, collective truths, and the social and ecological challenges faced by society (Adams, 2020; Bartsch & Schneider, 2014).

Eudaimonia broadens the roles and functions of news. Eudaimonic news transcends observable facts and processes to reflect on the purpose and meaning of individual and collective lives. Eudaimonic journalism can take part in retaining and renewing collective values and help make better sense of the time we are living in, including the futures we are potentially heading toward (Adams, 2020; Oliver & Raney, 2011; Rieger & Klimmt, 2019; Vodanovic, 2020). However, eudaimonic media is not only a positive phenomenon. For instance, Frischlich (2020) shows how eudaimonically inspiring contents can be exploited to bolster support for terrorist networks. The deep audience engagement eudaimonia promises can be applied also for less severe manipulative purposes. Business organisations, NGOs, communications consultancies, and other actors at the 'peripheries' of journalism could employ eudaimonia within their in-house news content to promote their interests.

Live journalism can be seen as a particularly eudaimonic form of journalism because it, first, invites participants to suppress their ego (Adams, 2020) and become part of a temporary community and shared social reality created in the live event. Like theatre, live journalism performances can entice a liminal transcendent experience where the boundaries become blurred, both between reality and performance and between the performer and spectators (Tenenboim & Stroud, 2020). Second, live performances highlight the agency and autonomy of participants as active sense-makers of news stories and, through their responses to the performing journalist such as laughter or body language, become co-creators of the event. Live journalism stories come into being in such 'autopoietic feedback loops' between a journalist and audience (Tenenboim & Stroud, 2020).

Although live journalism may provide an ideal form to incorporate eudaimonic sentiments in journalistic stories, its devices and practices can be applied to journalism broadly. This article suggests two ways. The first is to build reciprocal relationships between journalists and news users. As a practice for building mutual relationships, journalists can, for instance, offer community-oriented materials, such as photos or commentaries, that are of interest to community members (Tenenboim & Stroud, 2020). A direct and intimate relationship between journalists and audience members can be forged by using new means of news distribution and community building such as newsletters, WhatsApp, Signal, or other messaging groups (e.g., Kligler-Vilenchik & Tenenboim, 2020). Through such groups, audience members can both transcend their private life, into pub-

lic and communal life, and enhance their sense of agency and autonomy towards the news.

The second way to incorporate eudaimonic sensibility in journalism is through its content. The eudaimonic content and perspectives observed in *Musta laatikko* manuscripts could be published in a newspaper or news magazine, for instance. The article suggests slow journalism as a particularly apt form for non-live eudaimonic journalism. The slow journalism dimensions of reflection, sense-making, literary styles, and extended temporality all pertain to eudaimonia (see Le Masurier, 2015). Like slow journalism, eudaimonic journalism offers audience members new means to deal with and process the increasingly complex social reality (Craig, 2016).

Regarding professional journalism, while the collective sense-maker and truth-seeker role are not necessarily problematic as such, the role includes unexplored implications. Which values and purposes would journalists choose to promote, and which to ignore? How would outside elements such as audience metrics and business models influence the ways 'meaningfulness' is represented? Professional journalists as explorers of collective purpose and meaning also connect to the breadth of their target audiences. As eudaimonia addresses shared identities and a personal sense of meaningfulness, niche audiences with shared tastes may prove the most fitting for eudaimonic journalism (Ji et al., 2019). Applied widely, eudaimonia could thus deepen the ongoing fragmentation of news audiences and exacerbate inequalities in news consumption between socio-economic groups (Pelzer & Raemy, 2020). Journalistic content that expresses eudaimonic sentiments, especially autonomy and competence, would probably attract particularly middle-class audiences already proficient in self-reflection and self-improvement (Kreiss, 2018).

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

The 'Eudaimonic Experience': A Scoping Review of the Concept in Digital Games Research

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Abstract
Digital games have evolved into a medium that moves beyond basic toys for distraction and pleasure towards platforms capable of and effective at instigating more serious, emotional, and intrapersonal experiences. Along with this evolution, games research has also started to consider more deeply affective and cognitive reactions that resemble the broad notion of eudaimonia, with work already being done in communication studies and media psychology as well as in human–computer interaction. These studies offer a large variety of concepts to describe such eudaimonic reactions—including eudaimonia, meaningfulness, appreciation, and self-transcendence—which are frequently used as synonyms as they represent aspects not captured by the traditional hedonic focus on enjoyment. However, these concepts are potentially confusing to work with as they might represent phenomenological distinct experiences. In this scoping review, we survey 82 publications to identify different concepts used in digital gaming research to represent eudaimonia and map out how these concepts relate to each other. The results of this scoping review revealed four broad conceptual patterns: (1) appreciation as an overarching (yet imprecise) eudaimonic outcome of playing digital games; (2) covariation among meaningful, emotionally moving/challenging, and self-reflective experiences; (3) the unique potential of digital games to afford eudaimonic social connectedness; and (4) other eudaimonia-related concepts (e.g., nostalgia, well-being, elevation). This review provides a conceptual map of the current research landscape on eudaimonic game entertainment experiences and outlines recommendations for future scholarship, including how a focus on digital games contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of eudaimonic media experiences broadly.

Keywords
appreciation; digital games; emotional challenge; emotionally moved; eudaimonia; meaningfulness; media entertainment; self-reflection; social connectedness

1. Introduction

The focus on games for amusement drove much of the nascent gaming industry (Ivory, 2015) and indeed, few would debate the hedonic pleasure of digital games (e.g., Grodal, 2000; Sherry, 2004). However, like many other forms of media (Stober, 2004), digital games have evolved from their earliest days as curious technological

demonstrations into a broadly appealing and creative form of expression (Bowman, 2019). As digital gamers grow older—in 2020, the average age range of gamers in the United States lies between 35 and 44 years (Entertainment Software Association, 2020)—the content of their games has matured to "peer into the dark reaches of the very real human heart to deliver stories that are thrilling, chilling and utterly absorbing" (Benedetti, 2010, para. 6). Schell (2013) suggested that contemporary digital games focus on above-the-neck verbs more aligned with contemplation and poignancy as much as they involve below-the-neck verbs more aligned with action and exploration. For example, digital games can instill in players a sense of guilt (Grizzard, Tamborini, Lewis, Wang, & Prabhu, 2014) leading to unprompted moral deliberations (Holl, Bernard, & Melzer, 2020). Others talk about the power of digital games to inspire a sense of awe and fascination in players (Possler, Klimmt, & Raney, 2018) or even an authentic and personally meaningful sense of place with locations (Bowman, Banks, & Rittenour, 2020). Hemenover and Bowman (2018) suggest that digital games inspire a rich tapestry of emotions in their players.

In line with the evolution of the medium, scholars from different research fields increasingly view digital games not solely as 'fun machines' that offer their players rich hedonic experiences such as enjoyment, but are beginning to shed light on more complex, fundamental reactions to games (Klimmt & Possler, 2019). Echoing recent developments in entertainment research (Vorderer & Reinecke, 2015), human–computer interaction (HCI; Bopp, Mekler, & Opwis, 2016), and positive psychology (Ryan & Deci, 2001), these profound dimensions of the digital game experience have often been labelled 'eudaimonic' (e.g., Daneels, Vandebosch, & Walrave, 2020; Oliver et al., 2016; Possler, Kümpel, & Unkel, 2020). However, these and other studies across multiple fields of research on eudaimonic game experiences employ a great range of concepts, which are often used synonymously and/or are not clearly defined. For example, Oliver et al. (2016) and other studies based on that data (Bowman et al., 2016; Rogers, Woolley, Sherrick, Bowman, & Oliver, 2017) did not directly measure eudaimonia, but instead prompted players to recall recent meaningful gaming experiences and used a single-item measure of appreciation, without defining either term. Such conceptual flexibility was important to establishing baseline empirical results that digital games could be "more than stories with buttons" (Elson, Breuer, Ivory, & Quandt, 2014, p. 521), but consequently it is less clear what *more* players are actually experiencing.

In this study, we conduct a scoping review to provide an overview and common conceptual language of how a range of concepts broadly known to be non-hedonic (Kashdan, Biswas-Diener, & King, 2008) both (1) resemble and differ from each other and (2) belong or fall outside of the superordinate concept of eudaimonia (Huta & Waterman, 2014). This research is couched within a growing area of research focused on eudaimonia and digital games. That said, we do recognize that eudaimonia can be understood as an entertainment outcome applicable to media broadly (see Oliver & Bartsch, 2010; Oliver & Raney, 2011). As such, the current manuscript both (a) recognizes unique elements of digital games—such as interactivity, challenge and competition, and social interactions surrounding and shaping gameplay (Klimmt & Possler, 2019; Rogers et al., 2017)—that contribute uniquely to eudaimonia, while also (b) expanding our understanding of the full range of eudaimonic media experiences more broadly.

2. The Philosophical and Psychological Roots of Eudaimonia

The differentiation between hedonia and eudaimonia can be traced back to ancient Greek philosophers and their reasoning about what it means to live a good life (see Delle Fave, Massimini, & Bassi, 2011; Tiberius & Mason, 2009). 'Hedonism' is commonly understood as the philosophical idea that the ultimate goal of life is to maximize pleasure and minimize pain (Huta & Waterman, 2014; Vittersø, 2009). Thus, 'hedonia' refers to the "subjective experience of pleasure" (Waterman, 2008, p. 235), with hedonia originating from the ancient Greek word *hêdonê* or pleasure (Vittersø, 2009). In contrast, 'eudaimonism' is often equated with the idea that a good life is achieved by maximizing not all pleasurable, but rather only worthwhile aspects of life (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Tiberius & Mason, 2009). Most prominently, Aristotle (ca. 350 B.C.E./1994) argued that we live a good life when we exercise virtues (i.e., excellences of character that help us use the best within us) and thus, fully realize our human nature (Delle Fave et al., 2011; Huta, 2017; Tiberius & Mason, 2009; Waterman, 2008). He calls this experience eudaimonia, derived from the ancient Greek words *eu* ("good") and *daimon* ("spirit"; Tiberius & Mason, 2009, p. 352).

Psychologists adopted the distinction between hedonia and eudaimonia—or rather its current interpretation in modern philosophy (see Waterman, 2008)—to differentiate two distinct but overlapping theoretical perspectives on well-being (for overviews, see Delle Fave et al., 2011; Henderson & Knight, 2012; Huta, 2017; Huta & Waterman, 2014; Ryan & Deci, 2001; for a recent debate on the utility of such a distinction, see Kashdan et al., 2008; Waterman, 2008). Hedonic approaches theorize that well-being consists primarily of pleasure, which is often operationalized in terms of intense positive experiences and no or very few negative ones. In contrast, eudaimonic concepts view well-being as more than just pleasure and is presumed to be a multidimensional construct. However, no conceptual agreement has been reached so far about what these dimensions are. For example, Huta and Waterman (2014) and Huta (2017) identified considerable variations in definitions of eudaimonia within the field of positive

psychology. Among the most common elements are personal growth/self-realization, meaning/purpose/value to a broader context, authenticity/autonomy/expressing one's true identity, and excellence/virtues/using the best in oneself. Moreover, these authors differentiate hedonia and eudaimonia at four distinct levels: orientations/motivations (i.e., what a person seeks), behaviors (i.e., what a person does), cognitive or affective experiences (i.e., how well a person feels), and functioning (i.e., how well a person does).

3. Eudaimonia in Media Entertainment and Digital Games Research

The differentiation between hedonic and eudaimonic orientations/motivations and experiences has recently been adopted by entertainment research (Raney, Oliver, & Bartsch, 2019)—particularly in dual-mode conceptualizations of media entertainment (Lewis, Tamborini, & Weber, 2014; Vorderer & Reinecke, 2015). According to these models, people turn to media content for both hedonic (e.g., Zillmann, 1988) and eudaimonic reasons (e.g., Oliver & Raney, 2011). Moreover, using media can result in hedonic as well as eudaimonic entertainment experiences. Hedonic responses have consistently been characterized in terms of pleasure (e.g., Bosshart & Macconi, 1998) or enjoyment (e.g., Vorderer, Klimmt, & Ritterfeld, 2004). In contrast, no definitional consensus has been reached on eudaimonic entertainment experiences. Current conceptualizations include 'appreciation' (i.e., the perception of meaning, the feeling of being moved, and the motivation to elaborate on these thoughts and feelings; see Oliver & Bartsch, 2010) and the experience of 'activating central values,' 'personal growth,' 'relatedness,' 'autonomy,' and 'a purpose in life' (Wirth, Hofer, & Schramm, 2012). More recently, 'self-transcendent media experiences' (i.e., characterized by "interconnectedness, human virtue and altruistic motivations, and spirituality"; see Oliver et al., 2018, p. 384) have been highlighted as a specific type of eudaimonic media experience. Landmann (2021) further suggests that eudaimonia as an emotional response can be associated with internal feeling states or external elicitors (such as music and other forms of media).

Extending this discussion towards digital games research, recent empirical work has found digital games to elicit many of these eudaimonic reactions. One of the foundational studies within media psychology (Oliver et al., 2016) found that nearly three-fourths (71.9%) of participants in their online survey were able to recall recent gaming experiences that were personally meaningful—a term that was left purposely ambiguous so that participants could define the concept for themselves. Relatedly, studies within the field of HCI have examined several digital game experiences described as emotionally moving (Bopp et al., 2016; Bopp, Müller, Aeschbach, Opwis, & Mekler, 2019), emotionally challenging (Bopp, Opwis, & Mekler, 2018), and reflective

(Mekler, Iacovides, & Bopp, 2018; Whitby, Deterding, & Iacovides, 2019)—phenomena conceptually similar to (but not explicitly understood as) eudaimonia.

Moving on from these findings, the aim of the current scoping review is to provide an overview of how different concepts that represent eudaimonia are used or defined in digital games research within various fields (e.g., media psychology, HCI) as well as how these concepts are related to each other. A scoping review approach is especially relevant for the current study, which can be understood as an inductive approach aimed at (a) identifying key concepts in extant literature and then (b) mapping those concepts in a way that demonstrates the breadth and depth of an area of scholarship (Levac, Colquhoun, & O'Brien, 2010; Munn et al., 2018).

4. Review Method

We examined the existing literature on digital games and eudaimonia by performing a forward chaining search (i.e., searching through the records that cited a predefined anchor paper [see below] and records in further steps; see Webster & Watson, 2002). All coding files are open access and can be found at OSF (https://osf.io/q7kdv). Instead of using specific search terms, the rationale behind the 'anchor paper' approach is that (1) eudaimonia currently lacks clearly definable parameters in games research, and (2) many conceptually relevant works do not explicitly employ the term 'eudaimonia' (e.g., Bopp et al., 2016). Searching for specific terms would therefore be either too narrow (i.e., missing out on relevant concepts or studies) or too broad (i.e., including concepts that are correlates, antecedents, or outcomes of eudaimonia). Using an anchor paper and a forward chaining search leaves room for discovering unknown but relevant concepts.

The literature search started out by choosing an anchor paper for the forward chaining search. We chose Oliver et al. (2016) as our anchor paper because it is among the first to have applied the notion of eudaimonic entertainment (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010) to digital games, and the paper has been widely cited within media psychology, communication, HCI, and other fields (~140 times as of our August 2020 search, according to Google Scholar).

Figure 1 depicts our search and selection procedure, following best practices of scoping reviews with respect to rigor and search transparency (Lockwood, dos Santos, & Pap, 2019). We conducted an initial forward chaining search by using the 'cited by' feature in Google Scholar for the Oliver et al. (2016) paper, as this platform also considers conference papers (e.g., the main publication venues for HCI) missing from other databases. After collecting these records, the lead author performed an initial screening by browsing the title and abstract, including records based on four criteria: (1) records dealing with digital games or interactive game narratives (e.g., gamification and virtual reality in general are excluded),
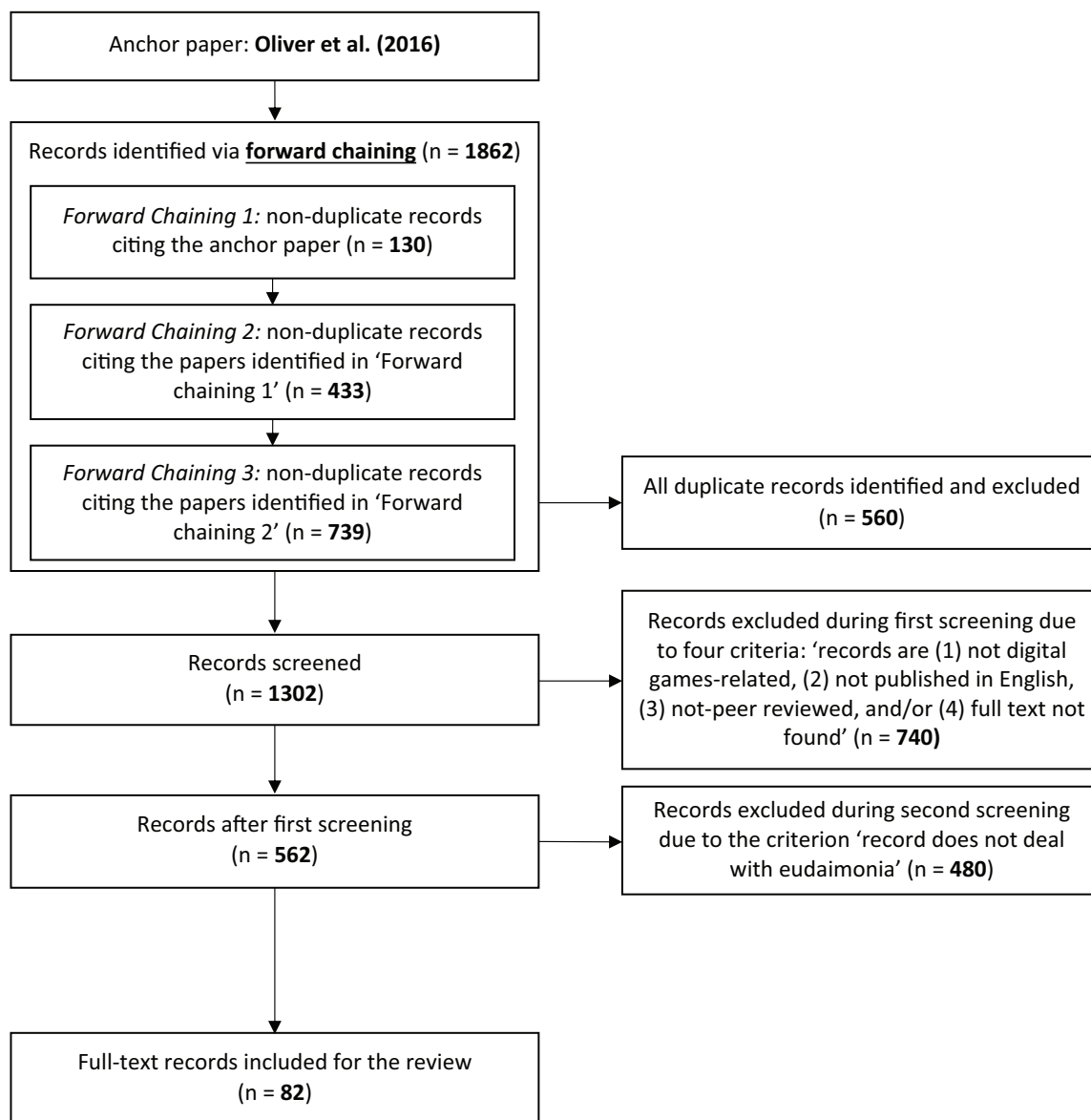
Figure 1. Flow diagram of the record search and inclusion/exclusion process.

(2) publications in English, (3) peer-reviewed publications (including peer-reviewed conference papers, book chapters, and extended abstracts, but excluding dissertations, preprints, and books; e.g., Mortensen & Jørgensen, 2020), and (4) the availability of full texts. We conducted a second forward chaining search on the included records from the first search and performed the same screening procedure. We repeated this process one more time, resulting in three forward chaining searches in total between 6th and 30th August 2020 (noting that forward chaining searches are more time dependent than backward searches; see Hornbæk & Hertzum, 2017). This resulted in 562 remaining records after the first screening using the aforementioned criteria.

Afterwards, a second screening procedure was held to determine which remaining records relate to eudaimonia. To minimize researcher biases in the inclusion and exclusion of records, we involved all four authors

in this screening process. Our 562 records were divided between two coder pairs, who then independently coded each record in terms of whether the record focused on eudaimonia in digital games. As the focus of our analysis was to both (a) synthesize a shared definition of the concepts as well as (b) analyze possible divergence in the concept of eudaimonia, we intentionally did not formalize a strict definition of eudaimonia prior to coding (note that our anchor paper, Oliver et al., 2016, did not strictly operationalize the concept either). Instead, all four authors shared a loose set of coding guidelines (see OSF) based on previous work on eudaimonia (Huta & Waterman, 2014; Oliver & Bartsch, 2010; Oliver et al., 2018; Wirth et al., 2012) as well as coded with their own working notion of eudaimonia in mind. Table 1 (see Supplementary File and OSF) contains the results of this coding, including distribution of codes and interrater reliability statistics. For completeness, we

report Krippendorff's alpha statistics with 10,000 bootstrapped samples (see Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007), noting that for Pair 2 we see a 'paradox of reliability' in that a low overall frequency of inclusion codes (~9%) represents coding invariance and thus, reliability estimates beyond percent agreement are no longer informative (see Krippendorff, 2016). Disagreements ($n = 45$ records, or 8%) were settled through asynchronous group discussion. Our overall pattern suggested robust shared agreement as to what records did and did not concern eudaimonia, and thus we proceeded with our analysis on $n = 82$ records dealing with eudaimonia and digital games (see Figure 1).

To identify broad patterns of eudaimonia-related concepts in digital games research, we first summarized the remaining 82 records broadly following the categories of eudaimonia outlined by Huta and Waterman (2014). These include (a) the name of the concept(s) that are determined as eudaimonic or related to eudaimonia in the record itself, (b) a short description of the concept(s), (c) a justification of why we consider the concept(s) to be eudaimonic, (d) the category or type the concept(s) belong(s) to (i.e., orientation or motives, behaviors, experiences, and functioning or outcomes), (e) the level of measurement of the concept(s) (i.e., trait or state), and (f) potential sub-dimensions of the concept(s). Secondly, we clustered the identified eudaimonia-related concepts with regards to their similarity in terms of the categories (a) to (f) and noted the records referring to those concepts. An overview of these clusters can be found in Table 2 (see Supplementary File and OSF). Finally, we read through our corpus, identified how the records conceptualize the respective eudaimonia-related concepts, and then discussed how these concepts might relate to each other. These patterns were collated by the first author before discussion among the authorship team, with the end goal of uncovering (a) common patterns between different papers and (b) divergence between those patterns. The resulting patterns are presented in Sections 5 and 6, where we refer to reviewed records with reference numbers (e.g., Paper 1 [hereafter P1]; see Supplementary File and OSF for the full list of reviewed records indexed with reference numbers).

5. Results

Most reviewed publications focused on the formation and constitution of eudaimonic experiences in the context of playing digital games. Consequently, studies were more likely to discuss state-based concepts than trait-based orientations or motivations (somewhat deviating from past theorizing, such as Oliver & Raney, 2011). Four broad patterns emerged from our analysis: (1) appreciation as an overarching (yet imprecise) eudaimonic outcome of playing digital games; (2) covariation among meaningful, emotionally moving/challenging, and self-reflective experiences; (3) the unique potential of digital

games to afford eudaimonic social connectedness; and (4) other eudaimonia-related concepts such as nostalgia and well-being. Each is discussed below.

5.1. Appreciation as an Overarching (Yet Imprecise) Eudaimonic Outcome of Playing Digital Games

Almost a third of the reviewed publications ($n = 26$ studies) refer to appreciation to describe eudaimonic game experiences, often engaging Oliver and Bartsch's (2010) definition of appreciation as "an audience response: an experiential state that is characterized by the perception of deeper meaning, the feeling of being moved, and the motivation to elaborate on thoughts and feelings inspired by the experience" (p. 76). This is possibly due to several studies using the appreciation questionnaire introduced by Oliver and Bartsch (2010) to quantify the eudaimonic game experience. That said, many works treat appreciation as a primarily overarching concept, with markedly different understandings between papers. For instance, some refer to 'eudaimonic appreciation' (P12, P18, P28, P73) as an outcome of gameplay. Others use the terms appreciation, eudaimonia, and eudaimonic entertainment experiences interchangeably when describing gaming outcomes (P59, P80), with a few suggesting that appreciation is an outcome of having had an (undefined) eudaimonic game experience (P13, P22, P41, P61). Moreover, the reviewed works differ in how they specify game elements eliciting appreciation, which also impacted how those papers conceptualized appreciation itself. Some denote appreciation as an audience response to serious and meaningful content, but also argue that it extends to morally challenging content as games can present players with questions on morality or ethical dilemmas they can think more deeply about (e.g., P73). Appreciation has also been understood in terms of a response to games' artistic qualities (P80) or as players' pleasing aesthetic evaluation of a game's setting, music, and character design (P3, P74). Despite these conceptual differences, most studies in our sample (e.g., P5, P12, P32, P61, P80) understand appreciation as a complementary type of game experience distinct from the hedonic experience of fun or enjoyment. In short, while our review shows that appreciation is often understood as a key component of eudaimonia in digital games research, the review also reveals a lack of precision and consensus regarding its definition.

5.2. Covariation among Meaningful, Emotionally Moving/Challenging, and Self-Reflective Experiences

As noted above, appreciation has been commonly operationalized in terms of (a) meaningful, (b) emotionally moving/challenging, and (c) reflective experiences. However, we observed that several works understand these notions as interrelated, yet conceptually distinct. Each is discussed below.

5.2.1. Meaningful Game Experiences

Notions of meaning and meaningfulness were mentioned in almost half of our sample of reviewed papers (*n* = 36 studies). Like appreciation, meaningful experiences were described simply as experiences that go beyond hedonic experiences (e.g., P25, P28, P32, P35) and some manuscripts used meaningfulness interchangeably with eudaimonia and appreciation (P3, P10, P13, P32, P42, P53, P58, P81). Some studies suggested that these meaningful/eudaimonic/appreciation game experiences co-occur with emotionally moving and reflective game moments. For instance, P25 found that adolescent players defined meaningful game experiences as also being emotionally moving and reflective, while P12 defined meaningful game experiences as experiences of poignancy (i.e., a sharp or strong feeling of sadness, sympathy, or sorrow) and reflection. However, these studies de facto confounded potentially separate concepts and experiences.

When described as a separate dimension of eudaimonic game experience, meaningful game experiences were conceptualized in two broad categories: one by which players attach idiosyncratic meaning to in-game experiences more broadly and one by which players make more direct connections between specific in-game experiences and unique out-of-game struggles. For the first category, P62 showed that meaningful experiences result from the fulfillment of eudaimonic needs such as insight into the human condition or understanding of life's truth more broadly—indeed, such an approach has been used by scholars such as P45 as a definition of meaningful games. Such meaningful experiences are filtered through a player's own world, body, and language (P24), and these experiences clarify real-life situations by providing a deeper psychological understanding of everyday situations (P1), emphasizing the connection between the game world and the real world. Alongside this, P77 described meaning as one of the psychosocial consequences of playing digital games, defining meaning as something that resonates with what is important, relevant, or valuable to players in their world broadly. Similarly, P38 and P39 describe meaningful choices in interactive narratives as being emotional, morally ambivalent, and highly personally significant. These studies found that meaningful choices positively affected appreciation of interactive narratives or games. Our anchor paper (Oliver et al., 2016) followed a similar approach in asking participants to recall a self-defined meaningful digital game experience and from this, observing increased evaluations of game narrative quality, feelings of social relatedness and personal insight, and subsequent appreciation of the overall experience.

For the second category, some studies mentioned gaming experiences as meaningful when they provide players with a sense of purpose during uniquely struggling times. For example, individuals who temporarily turn to digital games during difficult life situations mentioned that playing provided inter alia a lifeline in times of existential doubt, giving them meaning and more achievable goals both in—and outside of the game (P36). Another study found that playing games is perceived as being a meaningful and purposeful activity for so-called problem gamers, offering a sense of meaning as (a) gaming is integrated into their lifestyles, (b) they belong to a shared community of gamers, and (c) gaming fulfills a purpose in their lives (such as relaxation or challenge; P65). These examples help us understand that game experiences can be defined as meaningful when they provide insight into and connections with players' own lives or when situations in the game can be applied to real-life situations (P17, P25, P48).

5.2.2. Emotionally Moving and Emotionally Challenging Game Experiences

Another dimension of eudaimonic game experiences mentioned in *n* = 9 studies referred to emotionally moving or challenging game experiences. Both were broadly understood as situations in which a player reacts with strong emotions to a focal in-game event. Thus, while meaningfulness was mostly conceptualized in the reviewed papers as an experience in which players make primarily 'cognitive' connections between the game and 'out-of-game' elements from their own lives (see Section 5.2.1), being emotionally moved or challenged was understood first and foremost as 'affective' responses to 'in-game' elements. The feeling of being moved was mostly defined in the reviewed works as a gaming experience often characterized by intense negative or mixed affective responses, that is, players experience positive and negative emotions at the same time (e.g., P5, P6). Various elicitors of such emotional experiences have been identified (P5, P6, P25): the narration (e.g., story twists), in-game characters (e.g., personal transitions, loss), aesthetic elements of the game (e.g., soundtrack), and having to make difficult in-game decisions (this one is more associated with emotional challenges, see below). Being emotionally moved or experiencing mixed-affective responses was regarded as an important characteristic of eudaimonia in games by various authors (P6, P22, P25). Moreover, P5 found that emotionally moving game episodes score high on appreciation, and both P5 and P6 suggest a close relationship of the concept to self-reflection and the experience of meaningfulness.

The notion of emotional challenge (originally coined by Cole, Cairns, & Gillies, 2015) was presented by Denisova, Guckelsberger, and Zendle (2017) as a distinct type of gaming experience "which confronts players with emotionally salient material or the use of strong characters, and a captivating story" (p. 2513). They also mentioned that emotional challenges cannot be overcome through players' skill or dexterity, but by resolving tension built up in the narrative, by identifying with game characters, and by emotionally exploring, understanding, and resolving ambiguity (see also Cole et al.,

2015). As such, emotional challenge as defined in the extant digital games research that we reviewed resembles Bartsch and Hartmann's (2017) notion of affective and cognitive challenge in non-interactive media. Multiple studies in our review demonstrated that emotional challenges manifested among players by immersing them into the narrative and confronting them with difficult themes (e.g., death, illness, and domestic problems; social issues such as racism and torture; narratives mirroring instances of players' own lives), difficult decisions or moral dilemmas (e.g., with ambiguous consequences or undesirable options), and dealing with intense emotions (P8, P27, P30). Moreover, P8 found that emotional challenges were appreciated significantly more by players, compared to non-emotional challenges, implicitly characterizing this type of experience as eudaimonic. Similarly, P22 explicitly connected emotional challenge to eudaimonic experiences from playing digital games, and P55 and P56 found that emotionally challenging game scenarios in virtual reality scored significantly higher on appreciation.

5.2.3. Self-Reflective Game Experiences

A third type of eudaimonic experience often discussed in $n = 30$ reviewed papers can be classified as self-reflective experiences. Unlike meaningful experiences (in which players affixed personal meaning toward in-game elements) and emotionally moving or challenging experiences (in which players labored with complex emotional situations), self-reflective game experiences are those in which players contemplate and try to understand themselves. Broadly speaking, research on self-reflective game experiences does suggest that more profound, long-lasting, and out-of-game transformative reflections are less common than might be expected (P51, P79), as players tended towards reflections more proximal to gameplay. That said, two patterns of self-reflective game experiences did emerge in our analysis: (1) perspective-taking for empathy, and (2) personal growth and development.

Numerous studies focused on how players responded to being placed 'in the shoes' of a variety of experiences that aim to encourage empathy. For example, adolescent players in P25 discussed reflecting on their role as a young cancer patient in *That Dragon, Cancer*. P54 discussed the potential for games to trigger both perspective-taking and empathic concern (i.e., subconscious affective responses to another's emotional state), showing that both processes encourage players towards increased feelings of altruism and other-oriented emotions—feelings commonly linked with eudaimonia (Oliver et al., 2018). Other-oriented empathy was also a central focus of digital games dealing with victims of the Fukushima nuclear disaster in 2011 (P42) and war refugees (P70). P26 found that historic warfare games that incorporated the perspectives of many actors (including perpetrators, victims, and bystanders) promoted reflective and thought-provoking experiences among players. Broadly speaking, P30 explained that 'intentionally uncomfortable game experiences' (i.e., experiences that cause a degree of suffering to the user while also providing hedonic and eudaimonic benefits) encourage reflection on broader social issues that might be otherwise inaccessible to most players (and their personal experiences). Although not specifically attached to uncomfortable issues or content, scholarship from P19 and P53 introduced 'poetic gameplay' as a form of intentional disruptive gameplay in which players' established expectations regarding the 'form' of a digital game (e.g., gameplay mechanics, controls) are intentionally broken as a mechanism for altering players' relationships with the digital game, which can encourage more reflection on the overall game experience.

Self-reflective game experiences also encouraged personal growth among players. For example, P36 found that playing games in personally troubling times can stimulate personal change and growth by helping players develop confidence and motivation while playing and then encouraging players to transfer these new-found strengths to other areas of their daily life. Notably, personal growth was also found even in players who had self-reflective experiences absent of a focal trouble or struggle. For example, online gaming experiences can improve players' self-confidence leading to personal growth (P1) and games promoting moral decision-making skills may lead to moral growth by increasing players' moral reasoning and competence (P33, P68).

5.3. The Unique Potential of Digital Games to Afford Eudaimonic Social Connectedness

Another set of studies ($n = 17$) highlighted social connectedness as a eudaimonic experience which digital games may be uniquely suited to evoke. While the covariation of the three aforementioned concepts in Section 5.2 has been historically subsumed under appreciation (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010), studies discussed here identified social connectedness as being conceptually related to (but not covarying with) appreciation, and which seems unique to digital games. Several different concepts were used as synonyms for social connectedness, including socializing (P17), connection with others (P16, P49), social connection (P36), togetherness (P44), relatedness (P49, P75), closeness (P14), and character attachment (P7, P12, P14). However, few of these concepts have been explicitly linked to eudaimonia, which may suggest that social game experiences are not eudaimonic per se. That said, papers that did relate socially connecting game experiences to eudaimonia (e.g., P25) focused on the connection between players and either other human players or other in-game characters.

5.3.1. Connecting with Other Humans

Unsurprisingly given the rich social history of digital games (Bowman, Weber, Tamborini, & Sherry, 2013), a

prominent form of social connectedness discussed in the reviewed papers focusses on other players. In their online survey study, P45 found that having stronger eudaimonic game experiences was predicted by a higher satisfaction of relatedness needs (i.e., the need to connect with others and experience caring for them), among other variables. P25 reported that adolescent players mentioned socially connecting experiences as eudaimonic. These claims are in line with patterns reported in our anchor paper, with the need for relatedness emerging as a significant predictor of eudaimonic appreciation in Oliver et al. (2016).

Some studies in our analysis focused more specifically on individuals seeking social connectedness when dealing with difficult life situations (P16, P36). For example, P36 found that these people turn to games because they can meet individuals with a shared interest in gaming, which provides a sense of belonging through meaningful social connections. The players also mentioned that they could engage with others this way without having to discuss their difficulties, providing an additional form of support. Studies on military combat veterans (P17) and children with cystic fibrosis (P49) provided further evidence that social connectedness in digital games could improve eudaimonic well-being (also see Section 5.4).

5.3.2. Connecting with Game Characters

Moreover, some papers in our review also discussed relationships between the player and the playable character as well as with other non-playable characters (NPCs) as eudaimonic experiences (P11, P12, P72). For example, P12 showed that an increased identification with and responsibility for the playable character (two aspects of the 'character attachment' construct) were positively associated with eudaimonic appreciation. Moreover, P11 found that players who engage with their avatars as social companions (referred to as an 'Avatar as Other' orientation in Banks, 2015), tend to do so in ways that can be understood as eudaimonic. These players respond to their avatar as if it were an authentic and differentiated social agent. Players deemed these relationships as eudaimonic when they were experienced as a source of personal power or when they served as vehicles for learning about themselves. Thus, these relationships seem to be linked to eudaimonia and reflective game experiences. Socially connecting experiences can also be described as meaningful interactions with NPCs, especially when NPCs receive humanizing characteristics (e.g., moral ambivalence, emotionality, and imperfections; see P21).

5.4. Other Eudaimonia-Related Concepts

Finally, we address concepts uncovered in our analysis that may be characterized as eudaimonic, but are conceptually distinct from those presented above. First, P32

categorized 'nostalgia' as an emotional and cognitive state where individuals have fond and bittersweet recollections of both close others and events in their life, suggesting a relation to meaningful, emotionally moving, reflective, and socially connecting eudaimonic experiences (see also P81, P82). Similarly, P25 briefly mentioned nostalgia in their study as one of the emotionally moving game experiences that adolescents defined as eudaimonic. P80 provided further evidence for this relationship by showing how nostalgia, elicited by playing the game Pokémon GO, is (a) a meaningful aspect that fuels players' desire to play the game and (b) a mediating experience that leads to the eudaimonic response of appreciation after playing the game.

Several studies ($n = 8$) mentioned the notion of 'eudaimonic well-being.' Unlike the aforementioned experiential concepts in this review, well-being has often been categorized in terms of 'functioning' (see Huta & Waterman, 2014). The reviewed studies used both psychological and eudaimonic well-being as interchangeable concepts to describe "how well a person is doing" (Huta, 2017, p. 14) in terms of self-acceptance, positive relationships, purpose in life, personal growth, and improving confidence (P17, P61, P67). This concept has also been found as an outcome to nostalgic game experiences (P80, P81) and both meaningful and socially connecting experiences (P17). Finally, P66 suggested the term 'syndaimonics' (i.e., the synergy between social context and positive mental flourishing) as a similar concept for eudaimonic well-being.

Several other concepts were mentioned in one or very few studies in our review. For example, a study on the abstract and experiential representation of depression and anxiety in digital games used the concept of 'emotional resonance' to describe a form of education that builds appreciation and understanding for other's experiences (e.g., empathy), and can engage players in self-reflection (P58). Hence, the concept seems to be related to reflective game experiences (also see Section 5.2.3). 'Self-transcendence' is another concept often presented as a specific form of eudaimonia (Oliver et al., 2018). In a study of cancer survivors, P23 found that digital games could support self-transcendence by encouraging feelings of helpfulness (i.e., preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people around us) and universalism (i.e., understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature). 'Elevation,' understood as an uplifting and heartwarming emotional state as a response to often unexpected acts of kindness, (moral) virtue, altruism, and so forth (Ellithorpe, Ewoldsen, & Oliver, 2015) and commonly defined as a self-transcendent emotion (Shiota, Thrash, Danvers, & Dombrowski, 2014), is another eudaimonic concept that has received scant attention in gaming work. In this review, only P25 studied elevation, finding increased elevation among adolescent gamers both when they saw an NPC assist their own character and when making moral in-game decisions.

6. Advancing Research on Eudaimonia in Digital Games

The present review indicates that eudaimonia has mostly been considered as an experiential state in digital game research. Appreciation seems to play a central role in this regard. In line with Oliver and Bartsch's (2010) notion of the concept—which was originally developed in the context of movie reception—digital game appreciation was often and closely connected to meaningful, emotionally moving/challenging, and self-reflective experiences in the reviewed research. We note that this finding is somewhat unsurprising, given our use of Oliver et al. (2016) as anchor paper. Moreover, we acknowledge that our approach eschewed relevant works that do not originate in or even predate Oliver et al. (2016), for instance research on positive discomfort in games (Jørgensen, 2016), queer studies scholarship on 'no-fun' emotions (Ruberg, 2015), existential game design (Rusch & Phelps, 2020), and ethnographic accounts of individual and collective identity formation in online games (Nardi, 2010).

Our review also suggests that eudaimonic gaming experiences entail other facets, particularly social connections, nostalgia, elevation or self-transcendence. Of course, many of these experiences (e.g., meaningful, emotionally moving, self-reflective, nostalgic experiences) are not unique to digital games, although it is relevant to note that digital games are capable of triggering eudaimonia, especially given the historical perspective towards the medium as being restricted to hedonia (Bowman, 2019; Ivory, 2015). That said, the current study makes a critical contribution to eudaimonia research by further specifying game-specific elements that contribute to and shape the experience, thus expanding the conceptual space of eudaimonia. That is, many of our themes suggest that the interactivity afforded by digital games uniquely contributes to eudaimonia and shapes the resulting experience—for example, the role of the player as an active agent in media choice-making (P38, P39) and unique elements of entrained social interaction (P16, P25, P36) that are not possible with non-interactive media. Additionally, the notion of emotional challenge (P8, P22, P56) is presently not addressed in accounts of eudaimonic emotion (Landmann, 2021). To this end, understanding how eudaimonic constructs in digital games research are conceptualized therefore contributes to the larger body of research on eudaimonic entertainment research, as "studying video games also proved to be a promising path to extend established theories of media entertainment" (Klimmt & Possler, 2019, p. 343).

However, our findings do raise questions as to how different types of experiences found in this review are related. Are some of these concepts cognitive or emotional response states to digital game use that can be understood as mediators for other experiential eudaimonic media effects (for a distinction between mediating response states and effects, see Valkenburg & Peter, 2013)? For example, is the experience of deep social connections an outcome of gaming which can fuel the perception of meaning? Is there a minimum number of eudaimonic experiences required for players to consider a game impactful or appreciable in a eudaimonic sense? We believe that these are important empirical questions that digital game research needs to address next in order to gain an advanced understanding of the various, relevant dimensions reviewed above.

Additionally, our review revealed the need for an integrative theoretical model that structures the various strands of research and identified concepts. From our analysis, appreciation (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010) might provide a common starting point, but the construct also seems to subsume interrelated-yet-distinct concepts (i.e., meaningfulness, feeling moved, self-reflection). Moreover, it does not account for all dimensions of eudaimonia discussed to this point. Vorderer et al. (2004) model on the formation of hedonic entertainment experiences may be a helpful template in this regard. Such a model would also benefit from a strong recourse to the philosophical and psychological roots of the distinction between hedonia and eudaimonia (see Section 2) in order to make sure that 'eudaimonic experiences' are not simply an overarching category representing every non-hedonic game response (see Kashdan et al., 2008). At the same time, our review points to the need of adapting these basic conceptualizations of eudaimonia to the gaming context. For example, while growth and excellence play an important role for eudaimonia in general (Huta & Waterman, 2014; Waterman, 2008), our review suggests that not all challenges of players' skill and resulting mastery experiences in digital games are eudaimonically relevant (see Section 5.2.2).

Finally, our review revealed that some eudaimonic concepts identified in the context of other media (mostly movies) received little interest in digital games research so far: (1) 'eudaimonic motivations' and (2) 'self-transcendent experiences.' The former was only mentioned in four studies in our review (P2, P43, P59, P80). For example, P59 adapted a measure on trait-like preferences for hedonic and eudaimonic movie entertainment (Oliver & Raney, 2011) to investigate how these motivations affect players' entertainment response to a given game. The relative neglect of eudaimonic motivations in the reviewed literature is remarkable given the large amount of research on player motivations in general (for an overview, see Klimmt & Possler, 2019). One explanation may lie in the relative infancy of research on eudaimonia in the context of digital games. However, it is also plausible that players do not specifically turn to games in the search for meaning, personal growth or being moved, but are rather primarily motivated by experiencing pleasure. Hence, eudaimonic experiences may be states that players 'happen to find' while being 'on the road to fun' (Possler et al., 2020). Additionally, only two studies in our review dealt with self-transcendent experiences and related emotions such as elevation (P23, P25). This is revealing given that self-transcendent media

experiences in general (Oliver et al., 2018) and elevation in specific (Ellithorpe et al., 2015) have attracted considerable scholarly attention in the context of movies and social online media, as they are considered prime examples of eudaimonic media reactions (Janicke-Bowles, Bartsch, Oliver, & Raney, 2021). Moreover, initial theoretical and empirical work on self-transcendent emotions like awe and elevation has revealed that these experiences can be elicited by games and are strongly related to eudaimonic concepts discussed in this review such as appreciation, meaningfulness, and reflection (Daneels et al., 2020; Possler et al., 2018, 2019). We believe that empirical work on these two concepts could make an important contribution to our understanding of eudaimonia in the context of digital games. Additionally, future work should examine whether eudaimonic concepts already identified in the gaming literature and discussed in this review can be placed on a continuum "with self-related, egoic gratifications on one end, and self-transcendent experiences on the other" (Oliver et al., 2018, p. 384). An in-depth investigation of self-transcendent responses would further help untangle the meaning of altruism and prosociality, as these two concepts are almost absent from the work examined (P69, P70, P71), but have been intensely discussed in the literature on self-transcendent media experiences (e.g., Oliver et al., 2018). Further exploration of self-transcendence in the context of digital games therefore promises insights into how games cannot only evoke eudaimonic experiences, but also impact (prosocial) real-life behavior (for example, by motivating people to help others).

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the authors. All coding and data files can also be found at OSF (https://osf.io/q7kdv/).

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Review

The Bright and Dark Side of Eudaimonic Emotions: A Conceptual Framework

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Abstract
Based on a review of eudaimonic emotion concepts, definitional and empirical overlaps between the concepts are identified and a framework of eudaimonic emotions is developed. The framework proposes that feelings of elevation, awe, tenderness, and being moved can be differentiated based on their feeling components, thus constituting the feeling-specific types of eudaimonic emotions. A variety of other emotion concepts rely on reference to their elicitors, such as moral elevation (i.e., being moved by moral virtue), aesthetic awe (i.e., being moved by beauty), kama muta (i.e., being moved by communal sharing) and admiration (i.e., being moved by achievements), thus constituting elicitor-specific types of eudaimonic emotions. Structuring eudaimonic emotions along these lines allows for integrating research on these emotions. This integration leads to the proposition of general eudaimonic effects and value-specific effects of positive eudaimonic emotions on behaviour. Considering these effects can enhance understanding of how positive eudaimonic emotions affect pro-social intentions—the bright side of being moved—as well as the manipulating effects of propaganda—the dark side of being moved.

Issue
This review is part of the issue "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: Inspirational Media between Meaning, Narration, and Manipulation" edited by Lena Frischlich (University of Muenster, Germany), Diana Rieger (LMU Munich, Germany) and Lindsay Hahn (University at Buffalo–State University of New York, USA).

1. Introduction

People sometimes watch movies because they make them laugh or engage with social media because it is pleasurable. Communication research refers to these processes as hedonic motivations, which have served as a primary explanation for media use for decades (Oliver, 2008). However, hedonic motivations cannot explain why people watch movies that make them cry or search for online videos that are meaningful but not pleasurable to see. More recent research explains these phenomena via eudaimonic motivation: Striving for "greater insight, self-reflection, or contemplations of poignancy or meaningfulness (e.g., what makes life valuable)" (Oliver, 2008, p. 42). Recent research reveals that eudaimonic themes are prevalent not only in movies and

Facebook posts (Dale et al., 2020; Dale, Raney, Janicke, Sanders, & Oliver, 2017) as well as digital games (Daneels, Bowman, Possler, & Mekler, 2021), but also in extremist propaganda (Frischlich, 2020; Frischlich, Rieger, Morten, & Bente, 2018). Accordingly, responses to these eudaimonic themes are relevant for the motivation to enhance others' well-being (Freeman, Aquino, & McFerran, 2009) but also for attraction to extremist groups (Frischlich et al., 2018). Hence, eudaimonic motivations seem to have a bright side (i.e., enhancing others' well-being) but also a dark side (i.e., contributing to radicalization).

Emotional responses to eudaimonic themes are key for understanding eudaimonic motivation because affective responses to media motivate its consumption (Oliver et al., 2018). However, scholars have proposed a variety of different concepts addressing emotional reactions to

eudaimonic content such as elevation, awe, kama muta, admiration, appreciation, being moved and tenderness. The extant literature on these eudaimonic emotions is somehow dissatisfactory because it typically focuses on one of these concepts while ignoring the literature on the respective other concepts. Attempts to compare or integrate the types of eudaimonic emotions consider only a subset of the relevant concepts (e.g., Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Konečni, 2005; Shiota et al., 2017; Stellar et al., 2017; Tong & Jia, 2017; Weidman & Tracy, 2020; Yih, Kirby, & Smith, 2020). However, an integration of eudaimonic emotions is strongly needed: As outlined below, the concepts largely overlap. For instance, most of them are experienced as 'moving' suggesting that the way these emotions are experienced overlap. Ignoring this overlap is highly inefficient because it means that progress in one line of research is not transferred to the others. Furthermore, research on the consequences of the different eudaimonic emotions point in different directions: For instance, research on elevation focuses on pro-social effects whereas research on admiration focuses on achievement-related effects. Hence, an integration of these concepts potentially clarifies their consequences for behaviour. The present manuscript is an attempt to disentangle the concepts and approaches on eudaimonic emotions. Based on a review of eudaimonic emotion concepts, a general framework of eudaimonic emotions is proposed that differentiates between feeling-specific and elicitor-specific emotions. This integration provides a basis for explaining the effects of eudaimonic emotions on pro- and anti-social intentions in the context of media use.

2. Conceptualizations of Eudaimonic Emotions

Drawing upon the aforementioned distinction between eudaimonic and hedonic motivation (Oliver, 2008), eudaimonic emotions can be defined as positive affective reactions to human virtues (e.g., moral and intellectual virtues), while hedonic emotions refer to positive affective reactions to self-focused short-term goals (e.g., pleasure). In line with this distinction, experimental studies show that humorous stimuli elicit amusement, whereas eudaimonic stimuli (e.g., close relationships, helping behaviour, or exceptional achievements) elicit feelings of being moved and touched (Landmann, Cova, & Hess, 2019; Oliver et al., 2015; Schnall, Roper, & Fessler, 2010). Eudaimonic emotions have been studied in emotion research (e.g., Menninghaus et al., 2015), philosophy (e.g., Cova & Deonna, 2014) as well as in media and communication studies (e.g., Oliver & Bartsch, 2010). However, scholars do not agree on a single conceptualization of eudaimonic emotions (Oliver et al., 2018). A variety of different concepts have been proposed to explain why and when people are moved, touched, and elevated. The most influential of these concepts are moral elevation, awe, kama muta, admiration, appreciation, being moved, and tenderness.

2.1. Moral Elevation

Moral elevation is defined as "a warm, uplifting feeling that people experience when they see unexpected acts of human goodness, kindness, and compassion" (Haidt, 2000, p. 1). Hence, moral elevation is defined by its feeling component (i.e., warm and uplifting) and its eliciting situation (i.e., witnessing human goodness). Characteristic items to assess moral elevation are 'uplifted,' 'moved,' 'touched,' 'respect,' 'inspired,' and 'awe' (Thomson & Siegel, 2017). Moreover, episodes of moral elevation are associated with self-reported warm feelings in the chest, with 'tingling' feelings and with a desire to be a better person (Thomson & Siegel, 2017). Moral elevation can be induced through movies (Oliver, Hartmann, & Woolley, 2012; Waddell, Bailey, & Davis, 2017), online videos (Krämer et al., 2017), advertisements (Slater, Oliver, & Appel, 2019), narratives in texts and television (Freeman et al., 2009) and Facebook posts (Dale et al., 2020). The elevating stimuli can facilitate helping behaviour (Freeman et al., 2009; Schnall et al., 2010; Van de Vyver & Abrams, 2015), reduce prejudice (Krämer et al., 2017; Lai, Haidt, & Nosek, 2014; Oliver et al., 2015), and increase pro-environmental behaviour intentions (Moreton, Arena, Hornsey, Crimston, & Tiliopoulos, 2019).

2.2. Awe

Awe refers to "emotional experiences that involve vastness and accommodation…in response to a charismatic leader, a grand vista, or symphony" (Keltner & Haidt, 2003, p. 304). More specific forms of awe such as aesthetic awe (i.e., the emotional reaction to beauty, Konečni, 2005) and awe in nature (Anderson, Monroy, & Keltner, 2018) have been proposed as well. Hence, awe is typically defined by its feeling component (i.e., feelings of vastness), its cognitive component (i.e., building new schemas based on one's experience) and its eliciting situation (i.e., power or beauty depending on the type of awe). Characteristic items are 'wonder,' 'inspiration,' 'moved,' and 'awe' (Stellar et al., 2017). Awe can be induced through presentations of nature in videos (Piff, Dietze, Feinberg, Stancato, & Keltner, 2015) or virtual reality (Chirico et al., 2017) or through specific types of music (Pilgrim, Norris, & Hackathorn, 2017). Episodes of awe are associated with perceiving the self as small (Shiota, Keltner, & Mossman, 2007). Stimuli that elicit awe can increase modesty (Stellar et al., 2018) and pro-social behaviour (Piff et al., 2015). Hence, although the elicitors of moral elevation and awe differ (moral virtue vs. power and beauty), they are usually assessed with similar items and exhibit similar behavioural consequences.

2.3. Kama Muta

Kama Muta is "the emotion evoked by sudden intensification of communal sharing," where communal sharing

refers to relationships in which the participants feel that they are "equivalent, belong together, care for and trust each other" (Fiske, Schubert, & Seibt, 2017, p. 2). This definition focuses exclusively on the eliciting situation (i.e., communal sharing) and includes any emotional reaction to psychological closeness among individuals. Characteristic items are 'moving,' 'touching,' and 'heartwarming' (Zickfeld et al., 2019). The intensity of kama muta is associated with perceived closeness among individuals (Schubert, Zickfeld, Seibt, & Fiske, 2018). Kama muta is mainly studied in response to narratives in online videos (Schubert et al., 2018; Zickfeld et al., 2019) or in response to pictures and videos showing cute animals (Steinnes, Blomster, Seibt, Zickfeld, & Fiske, 2019). Situations that elicit kama muta can contribute to humanizing out-groups (Blomster Lyshol, Thomsen, & Seibt, 2020). These feelings and consequences of kama muta exhibit considerable overlap with the feelings and consequences of moral elevation and awe.

2.4. Admiration

Admiration is defined as the "emotional response to non-moral excellence" such as skill or effort (Algoe & Haidt, 2009, p. 107). This definition again focuses on the eliciting situation (i.e., skill and effort) and includes any emotional reaction to these situations. Characteristic items for assessing admiration are 'admiration,' 'respect,' 'moved,' 'inspired,' and 'awe' (Onu, Kessler, & Smith, 2016). Admiration can be elicited by television documentaries about star athletes (Algoe & Haidt, 2009) or autobiographical recall tasks (Schindler, Paech, & Löwenbrück, 2015). Although feelings of admiration overlap with the experience of moral elevation, awe, and kama muta, the consequences of admiration differ somewhat from the consequences of these other emotions. Situations that elicit admiration facilitate achievement motivation (Algoe & Haidt, 2009), imitation (Schindler et al., 2015) and the willingness to receive learning-related help from an outgroup member (Onu, Smith, & Kessler, 2015).

2.5. Appreciation

Appreciation is defined as "the perception of deeper meaning, the feeling of being moved, and the motivation to elaborate on thoughts and feelings inspired by the experience" (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010, p. 76). This definition includes appraisals (i.e., the perception of deeper meaning), feelings (i.e., being moved), and motivation (i.e., elaboration). As this definition is not restricted to a specific eliciting situation, the concept of appreciation covers typical episodes of moral elevation (i.e., being moved by moral virtue), episodes of kama muta (i.e., being moved by closeness), as well as episodes of admiration (i.e., being moved by skill). Characteristic items for assessing appreciation are 'being touched,' 'being moved,' 'tender,' and 'poignant' (Oliver et al., 2018). Appreciation can be induced by movies (Wirth, Hofer, &

Schramm, 2012), textual narratives (Lewis, Tamborini, & Weber, 2014), social media (Dale et al., 2020; Ji et al., 2019; Rieger & Klimmt, 2019), and by playing video games (Daneels et al., 2021). Episodes of appreciation are associated with reduced prejudice (Bartsch, Oliver, Nitsch, & Scherr, 2016; Oliver et al., 2015) and with motivation for personal growth (Bartsch, Kalch, & Oliver, 2014; Oliver & Bartsch, 2011).

2.6. Being Moved

Being moved is defined as an emotional episode that is experienced as moving, with no restrictions on the eliciting conditions (Cova & Deonna, 2014; Menninghaus et al., 2015). Characteristic items are 'being moved,' 'overwhelmed,' and 'poignant' (Landmann et al., 2019). This construct differs from the previous ones by focusing exclusively on the experiential component of the emotion. Feelings of being moved are associated with tears in one's eyes and chills (Landmann et al., 2019). Situations that are perceived as meaningful (Cova, Deonna, & Sander, 2017) and exhibiting virtuous behaviours despite unfavourable circumstances (e.g., outstanding achievement despite a difficult childhood; Strick & Van Soolingen, 2018) are particularly moving. Being moved can be induced by movies (Landmann et al., 2019), online videos (Landmann & Rohmann, 2020), and textual narratives (Strick & Van Soolingen, 2018). These moving stimuli can enhance the intention to help others, to spend more time with close others, to improve one's own achievement (Landmann et al., 2019) and to participate in collective action (Landmann & Rohmann, 2020).

2.7. Tenderness

Tenderness can be defined as an affective state associated with feelings of warmth, compassion, and sympathy (Oliver, 2008). It is often assessed with the single item 'tender' (Kalawski, 2010; Lishner, Batson, & Huss, 2011). Tenderness constitutes a prevalent reaction to movies (Schaefer, Nils, Sanchez, & Philippot, 2010) and music (Eerola & Vuoskoski, 2011). It is elicited by perceived vulnerability (Lishner et al., 2011) and associated with caring behaviour (López-Pérez, Carrera, Oceja, Ambrona, & Stocks, 2019).

2.8. Differences and Similarities between the Conceptualizations of Eudaimonic Emotions

The feelings associated with these concepts highly overlap. For instance, feelings of inspiration and awe are part of moral elevation, admiration, and awe. Similarly, being touched is covered by both kama muta and appreciation. Furthermore, feelings of being moved are prevalent in all of these concepts. Some of the concepts can be differentiated only when additionally considering their elicitors. For instance, moral elevation is the emotional reaction to virtue, whereas kama muta is the emotional reaction

to psychological closeness and admiration the emotional reaction to skill. In other words, some of the proposed emotions are elicited in different situations but are experienced similarly.

This problem is rooted in different approaches of defining emotions. Some eudaimonic emotions are defined by their feeling components (being moved, tenderness) whereas others are defined by their elicitors (kama muta, admiration) or by a combination of feelings and elicitors (moral elevation, awe, appreciation). Each of these approaches has its advantages and drawbacks. For instance, defining emotions by their feelings fits very well to the way emotions are measured. However, it also means to rely on their vernacular use (see Fiske, 2020, for a similar argument). By contrast, defining emotions by their elicitors does not rely on laypersons' use of emotion labels. However, it means that the elicitors are predetermined by definition and hence the conditions that elicit the emotion cannot be empirically investigated without engaging in circular reasoning (see Landmann & Rohmann, 2020, for a similar argument).

A closer look on definitions of emotions in general and definitions of negative emotions can help to address this problem. Emotions can be defined as episodes characterized by changes in appraisals, motor expression, autonomic physiology, action tendency, and subjective feelings (Scherer, 2005). The feeling component of an emotion is not just one component among others, but can be defined as the subjective experience of the other components (Scherer, 2005). Consistent with this view, basic emotions are usually associated with specific feelings. For instance, anger is associated with feeling angry and outraged, whereas fear is associated with feeling fearful and anxious. These basic negative emotions can then be further differentiated based on their elicitors. For instance, people can experience fear of spiders (arachnophobia) or fear of heights (acrophobia).

Furthermore, they can be angry about an injustice (moral outrage), about a negative outcome for themselves (personal anger) or about a negative outcome for someone else (empathic anger; Landmann & Hess, 2017). Hence, differentiating emotions based on their feeling components to form basic emotion categories and further differentiating these basic emotions depending on their elicitors seems to be a common-sense approach for negative emotions.

However, this principle has not yet been applied to positive emotions. Previous taxonomies of positive emotions consider only a subset of eudaimonic emotions (Shiota et al., 2017; Tong & Jia, 2017; Weidman & Tracy, 2020; Yih et al., 2020). To address this gap, I propose a taxonomy of eudaimonic emotions that differentiates between feeling-specific and elicitor-specific emotions. The integration of research based on this framework is then used to make predictions about the behavioural consequences of eudaimonic emotions.

3. A Framework of Eudaimonic Emotions

Based on the definition, measurement and empirical studies on the different positive emotions mentioned above, I propose a framework to structure the diverse existing conceptualizations of eudaimonic emotions and propose an explanation for their consequences for pro- and anti-social behaviour. This framework encompasses the following propositions, which are depicted in Table 1.

3.1. Feeling-Specific Types of Eudaimonic Emotions

Eudaimonic emotions that can be differentiated based on the involved feelings can be regarded as feeling-specific (see Table 1). Feelings of being moved (moved, overwhelmed, poignant) and tenderness (touched,

Table 1. A framework of eudaimonic (appreciative) emotions.

Feeling-Specific Eudaimonic Emotions	
Elevation (elevated, sublime, heightened) *Appraisal:* Powerful Self	**Awe** (in awe, humble, devoted) *Appraisal:* Small Self
Being Moved (moved, overwhelmed, poignant) *Appraisal:* Positive Deviation from a Standard	**Tenderness** (touched, stirred, tender) *Appraisal:* Vulnerability

Elicitor-specific Eudaimonic Emotions			
Aesthetic Awe *Elicitor*: Beauty	**Musical Chills** *Elicitor*: Music	**Hope** *Elicitor:* Positive Future	**Nostalgia** *Elicitor:* Positive Past
Religious Awe *Elicitor*: Supernatural	**Kama Muta** *Elicitor:* Closeness	**Admiration** *Elicitor:* Others' Achievements	**Adoration** *Elicitor:* Others' Character
Awe in Nature *Elicitor*: Nature	**Moral Elevation** *Elicitor:* Moral Virtue	**Pride** *Elicitor:* Own Achievements	**Gratitude** *Elicitor:* Receiving Help

stirred, tender) are typically defined by their feelings (see Section 2). This principle can be applied to feelings of elevation (elevated, sublime, and heightened) and awe (in awe, humble, and devoted) as well. First evidence suggests that these emotions can be empirically differentiated based on their feeling component (Landmann & Hutt, 2021) and their vocalizations (Cowen, Elfenbein, Laukka, & Keltner, 2019). Hence, they can be regarded as feeling-specific. Furthermore, research has revealed that awe is associated with perceiving the self as small (Shiota et al., 2007), whereas feeling elevated is associated with perceiving the self as big and strong (Landmann & Hutt, 2021), being moved is associated with appraisals of surpassing standards (Landmann et al., 2019) and tenderness with perceived vulnerability (Lishner et al., 2011). Hence, these feelings seem to be associated with different appraisals.

3.2. Elicitor-Specific Types of Eudaimonic Emotions

A large set of eudaimonic emotions cannot be differentiated based on their feeling components. As noted above, moral elevation (i.e., being moved by virtue), aesthetic awe (i.e., being moved by beauty), admiration (i.e., being moved by skill), and kama muta (i.e., being moved by communal sharing) are defined with regard to their eliciting situations. These emotions are thus referred to as elicitor-specific emotions (see Table 1). However, the set of elicitor-specific emotions is not limited to these concepts. Related emotional concepts such as gratitude (i.e., being moved by self-benefitting help; McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons, & Larson, 2001), pride (i.e., being moved by one's own behaviour; Williams & DeSteno, 2008), adoration (i.e., being moved by someone's character; Schindler et al., 2015), hope (i.e., being moved by expectations about the future; Bruininks & Malle, 2005), nostalgia (i.e., being moved by the past; Wildschut, Sedikides, Arndt, & Routledge, 2006), and musical chills (i.e., being moved by music; Konečni, 2005) can be integrated into this framework as well. Although they are less frequently studied with regard to eudaimonia than the concepts outlined in Section 2, they likewise encompass eudaimonic feelings (e.g., being moved) and they can be defined by their elicitors. Indeed, any further emotion that meets these criteria could be added to the list of elicitor-specific eudaimonic emotions.

The associations between feeling-specific and the elicitor-specific emotions depend on how a person appraises the respective situation. For instance, an episode of pride will be experienced as elevating if the self is appraised as powerful. Episodes of kama muta are likely associated with tenderness, because closeness between people often goes along with perceived vulnerability. Furthermore, the elicitor-specific emotions may be experienced simultaneously. For instance, someone may be morally elevated by another's good deed and experience admiration at the same time because the behaviour is perceived as exceptional performance.

Appreciation encompasses feelings from all these feeling-specific types with no restrictions on the eliciting situations and can thus be considered the broadest concept. It may be used interchangeably with the term eudaimonic emotions. The proposed framework can be used to standardize the measurement of appreciation. To cover the full range of feelings associated with appreciation, the complete list of feeling-specific emotion items could be used (i.e., elevated, sublime, heightened, in awe, humble, devoted, moved, overwhelmed, poignant, touched, stirred, tender). This ensures coverage of the most frequently used items for eudaimonic emotions and allows for the study of subtle differences between appreciative feelings. For instance, some episodes of appreciation may be dominated by feeling elevated, whereas others may be experienced more as tenderness or awe.

Some eudaimonic emotions may be more prevalent in the media context than others. For instance, feelings of being moved are elicited by positive deviations from standards, such as exceptional helpfulness or outstanding achievements (Landmann et al., 2019). Such exceptional behaviour is rather rare in everyday life but frequently reported in films and social media (Dale et al., 2020; Ji et al., 2019; Rieger & Klimmt, 2019). By contrast, awe in response to nature may be rare in media because these emotional episodes are facilitated by experiencing the self in nature in a way that involves all human senses (Landmann, 2020). Mimicking such situations with media is a challenging task in virtual reality studies (e.g., Chirico et al., 2017).

Moreover, the prevalence of the different eudaimonic emotions may depend on the type of media. Audio-visual media such as movies or YouTube clips can elicit musical chills, which is not possible with print media. Similarly, pride and gratitude require some sort of interaction. For instance, someone can feel proud and elevated when their contribution is published on Wikipedia, when their number of Instagram followers significantly increases, or when they win a challenging digital game. Furthermore, someone may experience deep feelings of gratitude when others step in on social media platforms to protect them from cyberbullying. Hence, pride and gratitude can be experienced in social and interactive media contexts. However, these emotions are unlikely to emerge in the context of traditional mass media such as print, radio, or film.

3.3. Value-Specific and General Effects of Eudaimonic Emotions

Based on the difference between feeling-specific and elicitor-specific eudaimonic emotions, different effects on behaviour can be proposed. First, the effects of eudaimonic emotions may depend on the eliciting context. Specifically, when a situation is moving, the value that elicited the emotion may be supported. This idea relies on a broad conceptualization of values as

"trans-situational goals…that serve as guiding principles in the life of a person" (Schwartz, 2007, p. 712). Such guiding principles (or values) can be moral values like justice but also non-moral values like achievement (Schwartz, 2007). For instance, being moved by moral virtue should enhance pro-social behaviour, whereas being moved by skill should enhance behaviour directed at self-improvement. This proposition is based on Cova and Deonna's (2014) claim that feelings of being moved reorganize the emoter's values, strengthening the value that elicited the emotion. Consequently, strengthening a specific value should facilitate behaviour that is congruent with that value.

Empirical evidence concerning this question is so far mixed. In line with the value-specific effect of eudaimonic emotions, being moved by virtue can enhance pro-social motivation and behaviour (Freeman et al., 2009; Krämer et al., 2017; Schnall et al., 2010; Van de Vyver, & Abrams, 2015) and being moved by achievements and effort can enhance achievement motivation (Baldwin & Bente, 2021; Landmann et al., 2019). However, in opposition to the value-specific effect of eudaimonic emotions, being moved by nature and architecture can enhance pro-social behaviour (Piff et al., 2015) and being moved by moral virtue can enhance pro-environmental behavioural intentions (Moreton et al., 2019). In sum, although being moved by a specific value facilitates value-congruent behaviour, behaviours that represent different values are sometimes also positively affected.

Hence, eudaimonic emotions may generally facilitate action directed at eudaimonic goals. The consequences of being moved may be a combination of these general and value-specific effects. Specifically, moving situations may reveal strong effects on value-congruent behaviour (e.g., being moved by moral virtue facilitates helping behaviour and being moved by skill increases achievement motivation) as well as weaker effects on behaviour directed at other eudaimonic goals (e.g., being moved by moral virtue increases achievement motivation and being moved by skill increases pro-social intentions).

These processes presumably interact with individual differences as well as developmental and social influences. Media effects in general are susceptible to individual, developmental, and social factors (Valkenburg & Peter, 2013) and individuals differ in their susceptibility to eudaimonic emotions (e.g., Hofer, Allemand, & Martin, 2014; Oliver & Raney, 2011; Pohling, Diessner, Stacy, Woodward, & Strobel, 2019). However, evidence for individual differences in the effects of eudaimonic emotions is so far mixed. For instance, in three studies using audio-visual and text-based stimuli, the extent to which a person was moved by outstanding positive behaviour depended on the person's values (Landmann et al., 2019). By contrast, in a study by Pohling et al. (2019), participants' values did not influence their proneness to elevation but moderated the effect of an elevating video on cooperation in an economic game. Furthermore, experiences of eudaimonic emotions do not always affect attitudes and behaviour (Ellithorpe, Ewoldsen, & Oliver, 2015; Landmann et al., 2019). Hence, the interactions between eudaimonic emotions and individual differences, developmental and social factors is not yet clear.

4. Implications for the Bright and Dark Sides of Eudaimonic Emotions

The proposed framework of eudaimonic emotions enhances our understanding of the bright side of these emotions, such as beneficial effects for pro-social behaviour, but also their dark side, such as their potential to be used to manipulate people—where "bright" refers to the moral value of enhancing others' well-being and "dark" refers to violating this value (Haidt & Joseph, 2004). As outlined in Section 2 and Section 3, some types of eudaimonic emotions, such as moral elevation, awe, and kama muta, enhance the tendency to help others and reduce negative attitudes towards outgroups. This can be regarded as the bright side of being moved. However, feelings of being moved may also be used to manipulate people. The following considerations provide explanations for the relevance of eudaimonic emotions for the manipulative effect of propaganda.

Eudaimonic emotions may generally enhance behaviour directed at eudaimonic goals, but exert value-specific effects in addition (see Section 3). Hence, the consequences of these emotions depend on the value that elicited the emotion. When people are moved by pro-social acts, their own pro-social behaviour is likely to be enhanced. However, when people are moved by achievement or power, behavioural consequences likely concern achievement and powerful behaviour. These effects may contribute to the relevance of being moved for radicalization. Propaganda presents a variety of different values, such as human connection, overcoming obstacles, and beauty (Frischlich, 2020). The presentation of these values in an exceptionally positive way can elicit feelings of being moved and thus strengthen behaviour that supports the respective value. Action appeals communicated by extremists arguably match their respective values. For instance, the duty to take care of supposedly vulnerable group members like women and children is a prominent theme in Islamist and right-wing extremist propaganda (Frischlich et al., 2018). The presentation of these values of duty and care can be moving, and hence motivate people follow the call for action that is often associated with the moving material. This may explain why moving propaganda material is so effective.

Furthermore, eudaimonic emotions are associated with the experience of meaningfulness (see Section 2). This may enhance the impression that the ideals behind the eliciting situation must be true and valuable. In line with this claim, Cova et al. (2017) found that being moved by pseudo-profound statements predicts to what extent someone agrees with these statements and nostalgic

themes in right-wing propaganda can increase its persuasiveness (Menke & Wulf, 2021). Furthermore, moving media can buffer against death anxiety (Rieger et al., 2015), presumably because feeling moved goes along with the perception of meaningfulness, which is usually threatened when people think about their own death. Thus, a specific value in propaganda material may be moving and induce an impression of meaningfulness, which in turn spreads to the propaganda message and eventually even to the source of this message.

5. Limitations and Future Research

The framework proposes differentiating between feeling-specific and elicitor-specific eudaimonic emotions thus allowing for an integration of previous research on specific eudaimonic emotions such as moral elevation, awe and admiration. Some emotions like aesthetic awe, religious awe, awe in nature, moral elevation, kama muta, and musical chills are defined by their elicitors and cannot be differentiated by their feeling components. Hence, considering them as elicitor-specific rather than feeling-specific is indisputable. However, the classification of hope, nostalgia, admiration, adoration, gratitude, and pride as elicitor-specific is not that clear. Future research can reveal whether they should rather be considered as feeling-specific. Furthermore, associations within the feeling-specific emotions as well as within the elicitor-specific emotions are still unclear. It is possible that some feeling-specific eudaimonic emotions (e.g., tenderness and being moved) occur together more frequently than others (e.g., elevation and awe) thus indicating a structure within the feeling-specific emotions. The same holds for associations between elicitor-specific emotions. Future research should investigate the associations between these emotions to further advance the framework.

Although the proposed framework is consistent with previous findings, it has not yet been systematically tested. For instance, the claim that eudaimonic emotions have a general effect on behaviour directed at eudaimonic goals as well as a value-specific effect on value-congruent behaviour is consistent with previous findings on eudaimonic responses to moral virtue and achievement (see Section 3.3). Future research should test the claim for other values such as courage or duty.

The extant evidence shows that eudaimonic emotions can be elicited by extremist propaganda and that the intensity of these feelings are associated with the persuasiveness of the material (Frischlich, 2020; Frischlich et al., 2018). The proposed framework suggests causal processes that explain these findings. Investigating these causal links in the context of radicalization is a challenging task for future research.

Furthermore, interventions should be developed to reduce the manipulative power of eudaimonic emotions. The theoretical considerations outlined above as well as existing empirical findings suggest that eudaimonic emotions increase the persuasiveness of messages and ultimately even agreement with the ideology behind the message. Hence, informing the public about the processes that can be elicited by eudaimonic feelings may decrease the manipulating effect of propaganda.

6. Conclusions

The proposed framework suggests a differentiation between feeling-specific and elicitor-specific eudaimonic emotions as well as their general and value-specific effects on behaviour. Structuring eudaimonic emotions along these lines helps to explain their bright side (e.g., facilitating effects on pro-social behaviour) as well as their dark side (e.g., their manipulative role in propaganda). The framework provides a foundation for combining different lines of research from psychology, philosophy, as well as media and communication studies, thus facilitating transfer of knowledge among these disciplines. The framework can help to select items for assessing appreciation, being moved, tenderness, awe, and elevation. Furthermore, it provides a basis for more rigorously testing causal effects of eudaimonic emotions in response to media in the context of radicalization as well as for developing interventions to reduce the manipulative power of these feelings.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

The Winner Doesn't Take It All: Analyzing Audience Responses to an Inspirational Sports Narrative

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Abstract

Applying a dual-process rationale, this study explored the cognitive and affective mechanisms involved in the processing of hedonic versus eudaimonic film clips and their putatively distinct inspirational effects. The two types of narratives were operationalized in terms of complete and incomplete goal satisfaction in the film endings. Participants either watched the final boxing match from *Rocky*, where the protagonist loses the fight, but achieves self-mastery and finds love (eudaimonic narrative) or from *Rocky II*, where he wins against his opponent (hedonic narrative). A combination of continuous measures of how pleasant participants felt (slider ratings) and psychophysiological measures (heart rate, galvanic skin response [GSR], pulse volume amplitude [PVA]) indicating cognitive load and arousal was used to track the audience responses while watching a compilation of the same intro and the different fight versions. Results revealed that arousal was more strongly associated with participants' affective scores during the hedonic (winning) version than during the eudaimonic (losing) one. Furthermore, participants experience more positive affect and arousal after watching the protagonist win the match compared to those that watched him lose. Lastly, participants in the eudaimonic condition were more likely to be inspired to exercise afterward. Implications of our results are discussed.

Issue

This article is part of the issue "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: Inspirational Media between Meaning, Narration, and Manipulation" edited by Lena Frischlich (University of Muenster, Germany), Diana Rieger (LMU Munich, Germany) and Lindsay Hahn (University at Buffalo–State University of New York, USA).

1. Introduction

It has long been known that the effects of media entertainment can go beyond mere enjoyment and delight, for instance with content designed to "enlighten through the exhibition of the fortunes or misfortunes of others" (Zillmann & Bryant, 1986, p. 303). Such inspiring offerings can exceed the mere delight we experience when we watch a character's accomplishments, be it in love, sports, or an intellectual challenge, which may cause deeper reflection and stimulate the audience to strive for self-mastery (Oliver et al., 2018). Accordingly, media scholars have suggested a conceptual divide between

entertainment content created to be enjoyed (i.e., hedonic content) or to be appreciated (i.e., eudaimonic content; Oliver & Bartsch, 2010; Oliver & Raney, 2011). Hedonic offerings, such as comedies or action films, allow audiences to reduce stress and negative emotions through pleasure, thrill, or humor (Oliver & Raney, 2011). In contrast, eudaimonic offerings, such as tragedies or high dramas, entice audiences to deliberate on the meaning behind complex ideas such as death, moral ambiguity, or aesthetic value (see Oliver, Bailey, Ferchaud, & Yang, 2017, for review). While in general terms eudaimonic entertainment is defined by its capacity to elicit more complex cognitive responses or affective experiences

(Oliver & Bartsch, 2010), a subset of eudaimonic content, called *inspirational or self-transcendent* media content, is specifically meant to "provide awareness of and insight into the beauty and tragedy of the human condition; elevate receivers from their mundane concerns; and increase interconnectedness with others, with their surroundings, and with causes beyond themselves" (Oliver et al., 2018, p. 384). While there is a growing consensus about the narrative features that characterize inspirational content, the psychological mechanisms underlying its processing from the audience side are not yet well understood.

The current study addresses this knowledge gap. Building upon previous research (Clayton et al., 2019), we combine continuous response and psychophysiological measures with the outcome measures of enjoyment and appreciation to disentangle the cognitive and emotional processes pertinent to the reception of inspirational content as compared to simple hedonic entertainment. The physiological measures used in this study include standard parameters, such as GSR and heart rate as indicators of physiological arousal and cognitive load (Lang, 2000; Ravaja, 2004) as well as PVA, a parameter that has rarely been used in media research so far, but that has recently proved a reliable indicator of narrative suspense (Bente, Kryston, Aley, & Rheu, 2019). Applying a dual-processing framework, we operationalize the distinction between non-inspiring (hedonic, delighting) and inspiring (eudaimonic, thought-provoking) entertainment offerings through one critical content feature explicated in the literature (i.e., the occurrence of a completely satisfying vs. partially satisfying ending; Lewis, Tamborini, & Weber, 2014; Oliver & Hartmann, 2010). To keep most other features of the stimulus material widely consistent, we use clips from two movies in the same franchise (i.e., the *Rocky* series) but have been described as distinctly promoting either a more inspirational (*Rocky*, for clarity reason called *Rocky I* in the following) or a more non-inspirational (*Rocky II*) processing pathway (Dale et al., 2017). In fact, both movies differ exactly with regard to the type of endings presented with *Rocky I* having a partially satisfying ending and *Rocky II* having a completely satisfying ending. Furthermore, since *Rocky I* is a sports movie, containing exercise and aspects of self-mastery, it is also ideal to measure its inspirational effects beyond deliberation. In this line, we additionally measured appeal and physical exercise motivation as a potential outcome of watching crucial sections of both versions.

1.1. Applying Dual-Process Rationale to Entertainment

While dual-process models have mainly been used within media research to understand how messages can persuade audiences (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), some scholars suggest applying its rationale to explain the appeal of hedonic versus eudaimonic entertainment (Bartsch, Kalch, & Oliver, 2014; Lewis et al., 2014; Roth

et al., 2018). Rooted within the vast literature in social and cognitive psychology, dual-process models typically postulate two distinct processing routes that individuals use to comprehend and evaluate the world around them. The first route, called the *intuitive route*, uses preconscious heuristics to make quick and automatic judgments. The second route, called the *deliberative route*, employs post-conscious elaborations to make slow and controlled judgments (Gawronski & Creighton, 2013).

When applied to entertainment, a dual-processing rationale aligns with previous scholars' description of how audiences process, enjoy, and appreciate hedonic and eudaimonic content (Bartsch et al., 2014; Lewis et al., 2014). In line with theories tying mood states with elaboration (e.g., Schwarz, 2012), media scholars have argued that while watching hedonic content, audience members may employ the intuitive route to respond quickly and reflexively with little thought. This, in turn, may lead to greater enjoyment. On the other hand, when watching eudaimonic content, audiences may employ the deliberative route to respond more slowly and thoughtfully. This, in turn, may lead to greater appreciation (cf. Tamborini, Grady, Baldwin, McClaran, & Lewis, 2021).

Media scholars have long argued that cues in entertainment content can motivate audiences to attend to particular elements within a narrative (Lang, 2000) and will invest cognitive effort to comprehend and evaluate the offerings (e.g., Knop-Huelss, Rieger, & Schneider, 2020; Lang, Kurita, Gao, & Rubenking, 2013). However, little is known about the narrative features that lead audiences to engage in one processing route or the other (Tamborini et al., 2021). Some research points to the critical role of the narrative endings to distinguish between hedonic and eudaimonic entertainment (Lewis et al., 2014; Oliver & Hartmann, 2010). For instance, Lewis, Grizzard, Choi, and Wang (2017) observed that movies with mixed or tragic endings such as *Schindler's List*, *Forrest Gump*, and *Titanic* are generally more appreciated whereas movies with happier endings such as *The Avengers*, *Shrek 2*, and *Transformers 3* are generally more enjoyed. From this literature, the authors stress the importance of a protagonist's complete versus incomplete goal attainment as a formal story feature that might explain enjoyment and appreciation. Hence, here we focus on this well operationalizable formal feature: a story's fully/partially satisfying resolution.

In line with dual-process logic, a partially satisfying resolution is assumed to prompt deliberative processing elicited by an unresolved conflict in the mind of audiences (Pennycook, Fugelsang, & Koehler, 2015). This would not be the case for a fully satisfying resolution, where no cognitive conflict is expected. Therefore, we expect that a partially satisfying resolution elicits greater appreciation while a completely satisfying resolution elicits greater enjoyment. Lewis et al. (2014) demonstrated support for this rationale in two studies. In their first study, the researchers presented a series of short stories with either a happy, sad, or mixed ending and found

that participants took longer to rate their liking of the stories with mixed and sad endings compared to the stories with happy endings. In a follow-up study, the researchers found that participants appreciated stories with mixed endings, while they enjoyed stories with happy endings the most. However, a major limitation of these studies lies in the use of short written stimuli that make it difficult to generalize to other media, such as film. Furthermore, most studies exploring the effects of inspirational entertainment have used short online video as stimuli (e.g., Clayton et al., 2019) that differed in many respects from a film. Against this background, the current study aims to replicate Lewis et al.'s (2014) findings using a pair of very similar film stimuli (in genre, main story, protagonists) to analyze the putatively distinct effects of hedonic versus eudaimonic offerings. In accordance with Lewis et al. (2014) we formulated the major research hypotheses:

> H1: Participants will experience higher enjoyment for the hedonic movie (with a fully satisfying ending) compared to the eudaimonic movie (with a partially satisfying ending);

> H2: Participants will experience a lower appreciation for the hedonic movie (with a fully satisfying ending) compared to the eudaimonic movie (with a partially satisfying ending).

1.2. Physiological Response to Hedonic versus Eudaimonic Entertainment

While it may be easy to identify different film genres as more hedonic or eudaimonic in terms of audiences' enjoyment and appreciation, it may be short-sighted to set this distinction solely on post-viewing evaluations. Post-hoc audience judgments do not reflect more subtle variations during the processing of the narrative, and they can be influenced by general genre knowledge (e.g., action movies are typically hedonic). Importantly, we can expect that for any movie, different scenes may activate distinct processing routes. For instance, within a eudaimonic narrative such as *Rocky I*, there will be scenes wherein the intuitive route is used. For example, the dynamics during the boxing matches would prompt the audiences to focus on low-level, intuitive events (e.g., the hits taken or given, who is winning/losing, etc.). In contrast, the ending of the fight scene may leave room for contemplation if the outcome does not match the audiences' expectations or desires (e.g., Rocky loses the fight). To understand these dynamic changes in cognitive and affective audience responses it has been suggested to use continuous psychophysiological measures of arousal and cognitive load (Lang et al., 2013; Lang, Potter, & Bolls, 2009; Ravaja, 2004). Bartsch et al. (2014) argued that eudaimonic entertainment elicits physiological markers related to an increase of mixed affect, an increased level of cognitive effort, and a moderate (but

not high) increase in physiological arousal. They also reasoned that while the deliberative processing route can be triggered by the aversive motivational system when physiological arousal is moderate (Lang, 2000), very high arousal levels during an aversive event can trigger fight/flight preparations instead. Consequently, they predict that audiences will experience a medium level of physiological arousal when watching eudaimonic entertainment. However, empirical evidence for this claim is widely missing.

In fact, there have only been a few studies that have specifically investigated the physiological responses to eudaimonic entertainment. Clayton et al. (2019) observed that transcendent (i.e., elevating and uplifting) videos elicited higher physiological arousal (through increased skin conductance), higher cognitive effort (through decreased heart rate), higher negative affect (through corrugator activation), and lower positive affect (through orbicularis oculi activation) compared to a series of humorous videos. Additionally, during the climax of the transcendent videos, they found an increase in negative affect and an increase in cognitive effort, but also a decrease in arousal. Similarly, Wassiliwizky, Jacobsen, Heinrich, Schneiderbauer, and Menninghaus (2017) found that negative affect increased (through corrugator activation) during emotional peaks in moving movies. However, contrary to Clayton et al. (2019), they also found an increase in positive affect (through zygomaticus activation) and arousal (through increased skin conductance, heart rate, and respiration) during these scenes. Overall, psychophysiological evidence for distinct processing modes elicited by hedonic versus eudaimonic content is scarce, and the few results are equivocal.

Against this background, hypotheses have to be formulated with caution. Based on the logic that a partially satisfying resolution will produce more unresolved conflict compared to a fully satisfying resolution (Pennycook et al., 2015), we should see audiences using a higher amount of cognitive effort while watching a partially satisfying ending compared to a fully satisfying ending (indicated with heart rate). Furthermore, we should expect that an audience would experience more positive affect (indicated with a real-time response) while watching a fully satisfying ending due to the lack of any cognitive conflict and less positive affect when watching a partially satisfying ending due to the presence of cognitive conflict (Bartsch et al., 2014). We expect these differences to be apparent in psychophysiological measures (details in the method section). To cross-validate these measures on the process level against subjective audience evaluations we also include continuous audience ratings (see Bente, Aelker, & Fürtjes, 2009). From this, we formulate the following working hypotheses:

> H3: Participants will experience higher positive affect after watching the climactic peak of the hedonic movie (with a fully satisfying ending) compared to the eudaimonic movie (with a partially satisfying ending);

H4: Participants will experience lower cognitive effort after watching the climactic peak of the hedonic movie (with a fully satisfying ending) compared to the eudaimonic movie (with a partially satisfying ending);

H5: Participants will experience higher physiological arousal after watching the climactic peak of the hedonic movie (with a fully satisfying ending) than after the climactic peak of a eudaimonic movie (with a partially satisfying ending).

We further asked how far the different reception modes are facilitated by the experience of suspense, which constitutes a crucial variable in the enjoyment of media narratives. As postulated in earlier work, subjective experience of suspense is correlated with physiological arousal (Bente et al., 2019; Vorderer, 1996). While suspense has typically been associated with hedonic entertainment (Oliver & Raney, 2011; Tsay-Vogel & Krakowiak, 2016), there is evidence that it might be independent of audiences' enjoyment and appreciation of a narrative (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010). To further explore this possibility, we formulated the following research question:

RQ1: Will participants experience higher suspense after watching the hedonic (with a fully satisfying ending) movie or the eudaimonic movie (with a partially satisfying ending)?

1.3. Inspirational Media Effects Beyond Contemplation

As Oliver et al. (2018) have pointed out, media content can not only induce deep-thinking and intense feelings but also *inspire* audiences to model the goals and behaviors performed by the protagonist. So-called self-transcendent entertainment may be one way to motivate and inspire audiences by presenting "something that is better or more important than one's usual concern" (Thrash & Elliot, 2004, p. 957). Recently, media scholars have suggested that transcendent content found in some eudaimonic entertainment offerings can motivate proactive—particularly self-enhancing—behaviors (Rieger, Frischlich, & Oliver, 2018). However, empirical evidence for this claim has been mixed. Some studies demonstrate a relationship (e.g., Rieger et al., 2018), while others do not (e.g., Das, Nobbe, & Oliver, 2017). The reason for this discrepancy might lie in the complex nature of the inspiration phenomenon. In fact, multiple processes may be involved when it comes to a movie's ability to inspire audiences. For instance, inspiration may involve both vicarious learning and deliberation simultaneously.

 According to social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), audiences are more motivated to vicariously learn and model behaviors portrayed in entertainment that are ultimately rewarded, such as those in simple hedonic narratives. However, it could also be the case that behaviors that are only partially rewarded are even more inspiring

since the potential cognitive conflict could prompt deliberative processing. In line with the elaboration likelihood model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), one can expect that audience's positive attitudes towards a behavior would be stronger if initially processed through the deliberative route. Therefore, it might be the case that eudaimonic movies with partially satisfying endings can be highly inspirational, since they contain both a rewarded behavior that fosters vicariously learning as well as cognitive conflict that prompts deliberation. In our case, we could expect that *Rocky I*, where the protagonist's efforts (i.e., intensive training) are only partially rewarded (obtaining love and self-mastery but losing the fight), would be more inspirational than *Rocky II.* This should lead to a higher motivation to adopt the modeled behaviors portrayed in the movie. We begin exploring this idea with the following research question:

RQ2: Will participants more likely report a motive to exercise after watching the hedonic movie (with a fully satisfying ending) or the eudaimonic movie (with a partially satisfying ending)?

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

To compare the two types of narratives (a hedonic movie with a fully satisfying ending and a eudaimonic movie with a partially satisfying ending) a between-subject experiment was conducted. Student participants ($N = 89$) were recruited for the study. Three participants were dropped due to technical error or unresponsiveness, leaving a total sample of 86 participants ($M_{age} = 20.41$, $SD_{age} = 2.33$, 52.33% female, 68.60% white). Physiological and real-time measurements were successfully recorded for 80 participants, and 82 participants fully completed the questionnaire portion of the study.

2.2. Stimuli

Edited excerpts from the movies *Rocky I* and *Rocky II* were used as stimuli for the two conditions combining identical sections showing the preparation for the fight and distinct sections showing the decisive fight itself. This material was chosen for several reasons. First, previous research has reported that audiences consider the original *Rocky I* to be an inspiring movie (Dale et al., 2017). Second, both movies conclude with a boxing match between the main character and the same opponent (Apollo Creed) in the same arena but with different outcomes. In *Rocky I*, the protagonist loses the match, while in *Rocky II*, the protagonist wins the match. Lastly, *Rocky I* provides scenes in which the protagonist does an exercise routine that requires a great effort that audiences could potentially be inspired by. Therefore, the *Rocky II* winning fight was presented to participants in

the hedonic condition, and the *Rocky I* losing fight was presented to participants in the eudaimonic condition.

Both stimulus movies began with a three-minute nature clip with relaxation music to set participants at a baseline state of low arousal (see Figure 1). Afterward, the movie clips in both conditions showed several scenes from the original *Rocky I* including an exercise montage scene (4 minutes, 20 seconds) followed by a scene where Rocky interacts with the love interest (3 minutes). Afterward, the two movie clips diverged; one showing the final fight scene from the first movie where Rocky comes close to winning the fight but loses (17 minutes 51 seconds) and the sequel where Rocky wins the fight against Apollo (19 minutes 40 seconds). The total lengths of movie clips were 30 minutes for the hedonic condition and 28 minutes, 11 seconds for the eudaimonic condition.

2.3. Measures

Before watching the movie, participants first reported their gender and whether they had seen any of the movies from the *Rocky* series before (yes/no) and if so which ones.

Continuous measures of the audience responses during viewing included physiological data, collected via finger sensors, and real-time response data (RTR) collected via an on-screen slider rating. Physiological data consisted of photoplethysmographic (PPG) recordings of the peripheral blood flow and GSR. From the PPG recordings, we extracted the inter-beat interval (IBI; equivalent to heart rate) to serve as a measure of cognitive load, as reflected in heart rate deceleration (Lang et al., 2009) as well as the PVA (i.e., the amplitude of the pulse curve) as an additional arousal measure, complementing GSR that has classically been used for to indicate arousal in media research. Bente et al. (2009, 2019) recently demonstrated that variations in PVA (vasodilation and vasoconstriction) are particularly sensitive to

suspense, indicating arousal patterns akin to tension and relief. We, therefore, included this measure here. We used a commercial device with easy-to-apply finger clips for physio measurements (IOM1, Lightstone, see Figure 2a). Continuous subjective audience ratings of the film were input using the arrow keys on the keyboard (from −4 = very unpleasant, to +4 = very pleasant) and displayed on the right side of the screen (see Figure 2b).

After finishing the movie clip, participants first answered a manipulation check item, "Who won the fight?" with the choice of Rocky or his opponent, Apollo, as options. Following this, enjoyment and appreciation were measured with six items on a 7-point Likert scale ($M_{enjoyment}$ = 5.80, $SD_{enjoyment}$ = 1.21, Cronbach's $\alpha_{enjoyment}$ = .94; $M_{appreciation}$ = 5.09, $SD_{appreciation}$ = 1.30, Cronbach's $\alpha_{appreciation}$ = .86; Oliver & Bartsch, 2010). Afterward, perceived suspense was measured with one item, "How much suspense did you feel during the movie?" on a 1 ("Not suspenseful") to 7 ("Very suspenseful") scale (M = 5.09, SD = 1.28).

Finally, participants' willingness to exercise was measured by asking two yes/no items, "I intend to engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate aerobic activity tomorrow" and "at least 15 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity tomorrow" (Conroy, Elavsky, Doerksen, & Maher, 2013, p. 4). These items are based on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Service's recommendation to either engage in 150 minutes of moderate or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise over five days (Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee, 2008). A confirmatory factor analysis examined whether the two exercise motivation items loaded together. To avoid under-identification, the model included the two items of exercise motivation, the three items for enjoyment, and the three items for appreciation as separate factors, χ^2 (17) = 33.90, CFI = .97, TLI = .94, $RMSEA$ = .11. Inspection of the individual factor loadings revealed that the second exercise motivation item was insignificant
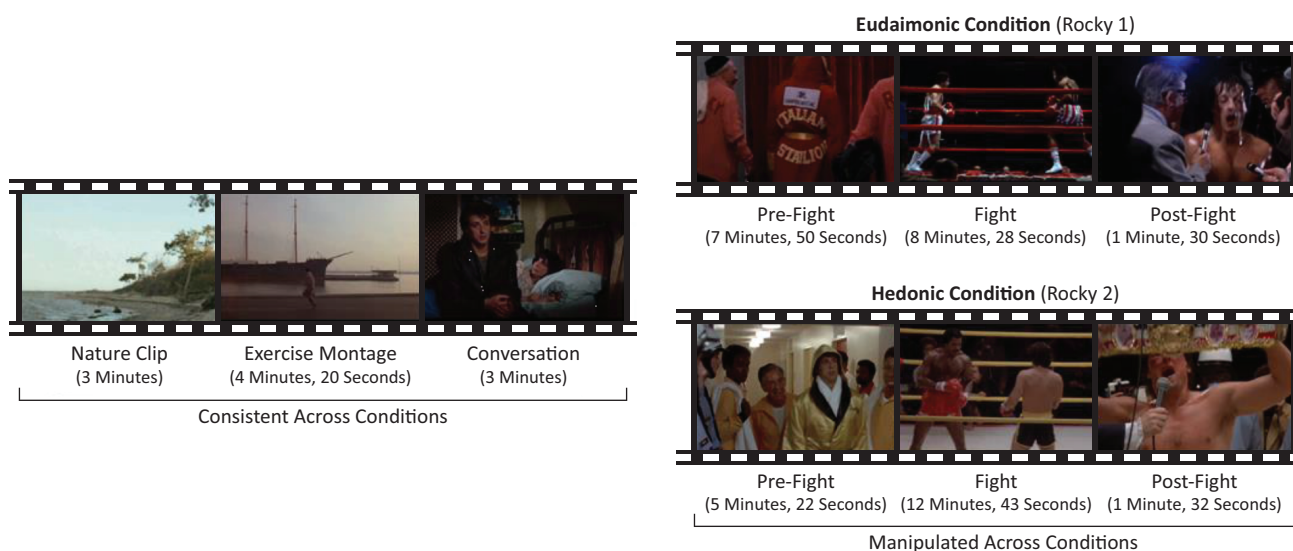

Eudaimonic Condition (Rocky 1)

Pre-Fight (7 Minutes, 50 Seconds)   Fight (8 Minutes, 28 Seconds)   Post-Fight (1 Minute, 30 Seconds)

Hedonic Condition (Rocky 2)

Pre-Fight (5 Minutes, 22 Seconds)   Fight (12 Minutes, 43 Seconds)   Post-Fight (1 Minute, 32 Seconds)

Manipulated Across Conditions

Nature Clip (3 Minutes)   Exercise Montage (4 Minutes, 20 Seconds)   Conversation (3 Minutes)

Consistent Across Conditions

Figure 1. Timeline of stimuli between conditions.

(a)

(b)

Figure 2. Methods to capture participants' continuous responses: **(a)** Commercial sensor; **(b)** onscreen RTR scale.

($\lambda = .55$, $p = .36$). Since both exercise items were dichotomous and measured the recommend daily amount of exercise by experts, we decided to collapse the two items into an index in which either items reported as "yes" = 1 and both items reported as "no" = 0. Applying this collapsed index to a revised model produced similar fit, $\chi^2(12) = 27.28$, $CFI = .97$, $TLI = .94$, $RMSEA = .13$. Overall, 72.09% of participants displayed a motivation to exercise.

2.4. Procedures

On arrival, participants were placed at a desk in front of a 21-inch computer screen and were first asked to answer a few questionnaire items. Then they read a synopsis about the movie they were about to watch (the synopsis was the same across conditions). Afterward, physio sensors were applied to the non-dominant hand asking the participants to keep this hand still and relaxed while watching the stimulus video. The researchers then explained to participants how to handle the RTR slider using the keyboard. Participants were asked to continuously indicate how they felt throughout the movie on the 9-point scale ("very pleasant" to "very unpleasant"). They were then instructed to use the first three minutes, in which a nature video was shown, to relax. Participants were told that they could quit the experiment at any time if they felt uncomfortable, without any negative consequences. Then the video was started, and the experimenter left the room. Sensors began recording simultaneously with the start of the video stimuli and data was recorded at the video's frame rate. After watching the movie, the participants completed a questionnaire that included measures for suspense, enjoyment, appreciation, and exercise motivations. An Internal Review Board approved all procedures.

3. Results

A detailed output of all results can be found in the OSF repository for this study: https://osf.io/pn3tj/?view_only=2bd8163491fd4d7c8306af1c59ae916c

3.1. Pre-Processing of Physiological Data

IBI, as well as PVA, were extracted from the PPG data. The PPG raw pulse curves were submitted to HeartPy's automated peak detection and the resulting peak data were manually inspected to correct peak detection errors using an author-created Visual Basic 6.0 program. Based on the cleaned peak data we then calculated IBI as an indicator for cognitive load (i.e., heart rate deceleration = increased IBI) and PVA as an arousal indicator. All three physio parameters—IBI, PVA, and GSR—were further preprocessed using individual baseline correction (differences from the average during the relaxation phase). Using the 'scipy.filter' library, we applied lowpass filters to all three physio measures—IBI, PVA, and GSR. For the overall time graphs (30 minutes) and the time-based correlations, we applied a filter constant of .05 to suppress higher frequency variations putatively unrelated to scenic changes in the narrative. For the event-related ANOVAs (15 seconds before and after the end of the fight), we applied a filter constant of .5 to be more sensitive to short-term changes during this critical part of the film. Using the 'LinearRegression' module from 'sklearn.linear_model' PVA and GSR data were detrended (i.e., apparent linear trends over time were eliminated). Finally, physio data streams were z-transformed for each individual time series to level out scale differences before averaging.

3.2. Manipulation Check and Preliminary Results

As a manipulation check, a 2 (conditions) X 2 (who won: Rocky or Apollo) chi-square test was conducted to see if participants correctly identified who won the fight in each condition. Participants were more likely to answer that Rocky won in the winning condition (100%) and to answer that his opponent, Apollo, won in the losing condition (84.44%), $\chi^2(1) = 58.23$, $p < .001$, $\phi = .843$.

We then checked to see whether the participants overall enjoyed, appreciated, and felt suspense by conducting a series of one-sample t-tests. These tests

revealed that, overall, participants reported experiencing enjoyment ($t(81) = 13.50$, $p < .001$), appreciation ($t(81) = 7.64$, $p < .001$), and suspense ($t(80) = 7.66$, $p < .001$) significantly above the mid-point of their respective scales.

We then inspected the correlations of the real-time and physiological measurements within and between conditions (see Figure 3). As a test of reliability, we compute the between-group correlations for PVA, GSR, IBI, and RTR during the time participants watched the
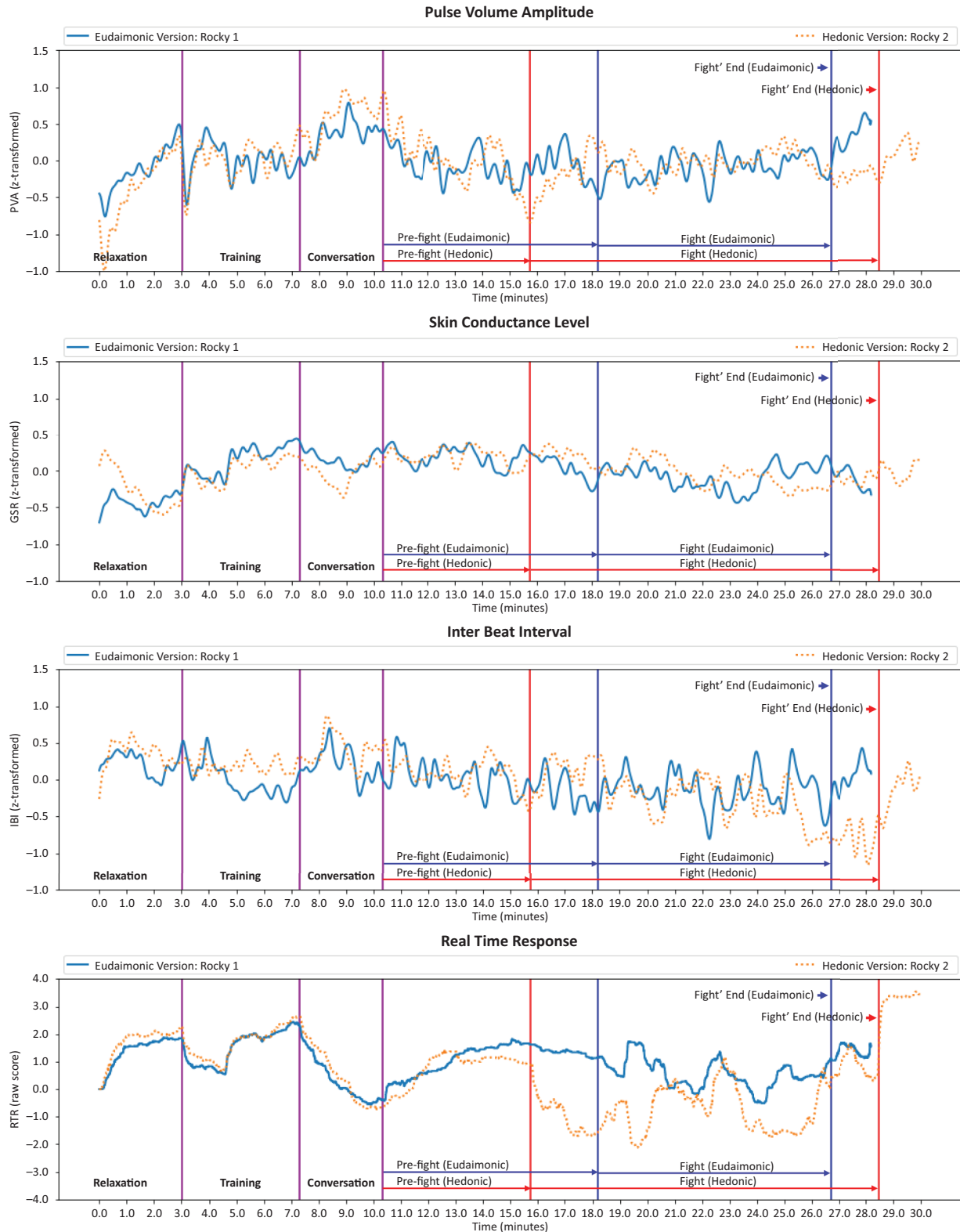
Figure 3. Psychophysiological responses (IBI, PVA, GSR) and audience ratings of pleasure (RTR) during hedonic and eudaimonic stimulus presentation. Note: Lower PVA values indicate arousal (vasoconstriction).

same clips (see Table 1). During the relaxation nature clip, PVA, IBI, and RTR were moderately or highly correlated between the two conditions ($rs \geq .33$). This was not the case for GSR ($r = .05$), casting some doubt on the robustness of this measure. During the period where participants watched the same *Rocky* clips (i.e., the exercise montage and conversation scenes), all measures were either moderately correlated or highly correlated ($rs \geq .51$). As expected, all correlations (except for the GSR during the relaxing video) were significantly higher during the relaxation nature clip and the exercise montage (consistent across conditions) than during the fight clips (manipulated between conditions).

Because PVA showed the most robust pattern across the two conditions, we further asked how this arousal indicator correlates with the subjective RTR ratings (see Table 2). For the identical sequence in both conditions (i.e., exercise montage) we found equally high negative correlations. The lower the PVA (vasoconstriction indicating arousal), the higher were the RTR valence ratings. Interestingly, while PVA was negatively correlated with RTR during the fight in both conditions, once the fight ended, while PVA was still negatively correlated with RTR in the eudaimonic condition, both these measures were positively correlated in the hedonic condition.

3.3. Results of Primary Analyses

To test H1 and H2, two t-tests were conducted to observe whether enjoyment and appreciation differed between conditions. No significant differences were observed for enjoyment or appreciation, $ts < 1$. Thus, our results were not consistent with H1 or H2.

To investigate H3, H4, and H5, we created collapsed measures of RTR, IBI, GSR, and PVA to examine 15 seconds before the final fight (which we called 'pre-climatic scores') and 15 seconds after the end of the fight (which we called 'climatic scores'). At this point, the protagonist is shown to have won the fight in *Rocky II* while in *Rocky I* there is not an immediate clear winner, but it is apparent the protagonist has lost the match. Each hypothesis was tested with a series of 2 (pre/post) X 2 (conditions) mixed factor ANOVAs. Changes for these measures within the 30 second time window can be seen in Figure 4.

A significant main effect on time was observed for our RTR measure, $F(1, 78) = 61.94$ $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .443$, in which participants rated feeling more pleasant after the end of either fight ($MD = 1.26$, $SE = .16$). Furthermore, we observed a significant interaction effect between time and condition, $F(1, 78) = 42.99$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .355$, which showed that participants in the hedonic condition had a greater increase in pleasure ($MD = 2.30$) compared to those in the eudaimonic condition ($MD = .21$). Thus, our findings in regard to affect were consistent with H3.

A significant time effect was also observed for IBI, $F(1, 78) = 9.38$, $p = .003$, $\eta_p^2 = .107$. Inspection of the means indicated that participants' IBI increased right after the end of the fight in both conditions ($MD = .19$, $SE = .06$). However, the interaction effect between time and condition on IBI was insignificant, $F(1, 78) = 2.65$, $p = .11$, $\eta_p^2 = .033$, indicating that the rate of increase did not significantly differ between groups. Therefore, our findings concerning cognitive effort were not consistent with H4.

A significant time effect was also observed for our PVA measure, $F(1, 78) = 20.32$ $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .207$.

Table 1. Pearson correlations between the two conditions for the different process measures across the three stimulus sequences.

Sequence	Frames (seconds)	PVA	GSR	IBI	RTR
Relaxation Video (Nature Clip)	1–4,514 (181)	.93	.05	.33	.98
Consistent Clips (Exercise Montage)	4,515–15,507 (440)	.76	.73	.51	.98
Manipulated Clips (Fight *Rocky I* vs. *Rocky II*)	15,508–42,227 (1069)	.04	.44	.10	.32
Fisher z-scores: Nature vs. Fight		100.54	−26.23	15.06	122.13
Fisher z-scores: Exercise vs. Fight		84.37	40.28	44.80	173.47

Note: All correlations were significant at $p < .05$.

Table 2. Correlations for RTR with PVA for the identical exercise sequence and the distinct fight sequences between conditions.

Movie Sequence	Frames	Seconds	Stimulus version	
			Eudaimonic	Hedonic
Relaxation Video (Nature Clip)	1–4,514	181	.85	.87
Consistent Clips (Exercise Montage)	4,515–15,507	440	−.74	−.64
Manipulated Clips (Pre-Fight)	15,508–27,299/ 15,508–23,580	472/323	−.32	−.56
Manipulated Clips (Fight)	27,300–40,033/23,581–42,696	509/765	−.40	−.52
Manipulated Clips (Post-Fight)	40,034–42,285/42,697–44,976	90/91	−.29	.64
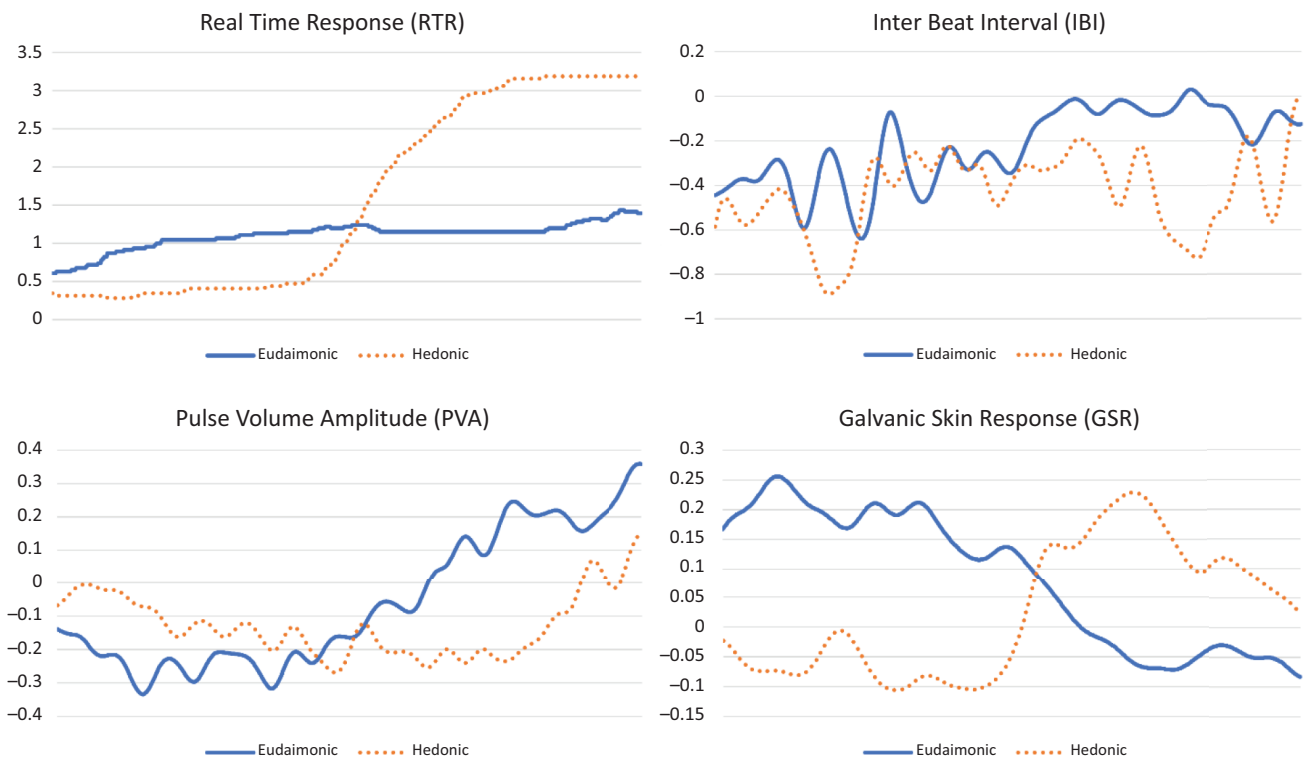
Figure 4. Time series means for the four process measures during the 15 seconds before and after the end of the fight between conditions.

Inspection of the means indicated that participants' PVA increased right after the end of the fight in both conditions ($MD = .18$, $SE = .04$). Furthermore, we observed a significant interaction effect between time and condition, $F(1, 78) = 16.20$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .172$. Inspection of the means revealed that PVA increased for participants in the eudaimonic condition ($MD = .33$; indicating a decrease in arousal) while PVA remained stable for participants in the hedonic condition ($MD = .02$).

We then inspected the participants' GSR scores which indicated a consistent pattern with our PVA results. While the time effects were insignificant, $F < 1$, a significant interaction effect between time and condition was again observed, $F(1, 78) = 16.19$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .172$. For participants in the eudaimonic condition, GSR decreased after the fight ended ($MD = -.20$) while it increased in the hedonic condition ($MD = .20$). These results were consistent with H5.

RQ1 was explored using a t-test to see if perceived suspense differed between conditions. Results showed that participants felt more suspense when watching the hedonic movie ($M = 5.53$, $SD = 1.30$) compared to the eudaimonic movie ($M = 4.73$, $SD = 1.16$), $t(79) = -2.91$, $p = .005$, Cohen's $d = .649$).

Lastly, RQ2 was investigated with 2 (hedonic vs. eudaimonic) X 2 (exercise motivation: yes, no) chi-square test. The chi-square test revealed that the participants who watched the eudaimonic movie were more motivated to exercise afterward (86.67%) compared to the

participants who watched the hedonic movie (63.89%), $\chi^2 (1) = 5.78$, $p = .016$, $\phi = .267$.

4. Discussion

The study aimed to gain insights into how inspirational entertainment is processed and appraised by audiences using a dual-process approach. Based on previous literature (Lewis et al., 2017; Oliver & Hartmann, 2010), we expected that hedonic and eudaimonic narratives as operationalized through complete versus incomplete goal obtainment of the main protagonist would elicit different processing routes (Lewis et al., 2014). We compared audience's responses to two rich film stimuli: *Rocky I*, which has previously been reported to be inspirational and has an ending where the protagonist does not complete all his goals (i.e., loses the fight, but gains love and admiration); and *Rocky II*, a more hedonically-toned sequel where the same protagonist does complete all of his goals (i.e., wins the fights). Our results are mixed and point to both differences as well as commonalities in the processing of the two film endings.

In line with Bartsch et al. (2014), we observed differences in audiences' affective states during the emotional climax based on whether the protagonist won or lost the fight. Specifically, participants in the fully satisfying condition quickly and drastically felt more positive after observing the protagonist win. While positive affect also increased after witnessing the partially satisfying

ending, this shift was not as dramatic. This pattern is in line with dual-processing logic and the notion that eudaimonic entertainment is more likely to elicit mixed affect (Bartsch et al., 2014). Specifically, it may be the case that a partially satisfying resolution will create unresolved cognitive conflict in the minds of audiences which may, in turn, cause them to hesitate on their evaluations of pleasure (Lewis et al., 2014).

Further support for this dual-processing framework comes from our findings related to physiological arousal. Notably, we found that PVA was more strongly tied to participants' affective scores during the overall fight in the hedonically-tone condition compared to those in the eudaimonically-tone condition. Furthermore, physiological arousal (as indicated by both PVA and GSR) significantly increased right after watching the end of the fully satisfying ending when compared to the particularly satisfying ending. This trend was also found in self-reported suspense ratings where participants rated the hedonic version as more suspenseful overall. Together, these findings demonstrate that pleasure may be inherently tied to suspense and thrills when audiences watch hedonic entertainment, but this may not be the case when consuming eudaimonic entertainment (Oliver & Raney, 2011). These findings may also suggest that the appeal of hedonic entertainment may be derived from watching intuitively designed content that elicits arousal over time. However, in line with work by Clayton et al. (2019), intuitively designed content seems to play a lesser role in the appeal of inspirational eudaimonic entertainment. We should also note that while the curve patterns between PVA and GSR were consistent with our rationale, their subtle differences still leave room for further exploration in future research.

Lastly, we observed, in line with the claim that *Rocky I* is inspirational for some viewers (Dale et al., 2017), those who watched its partially satisfying resolution were more likely to be inspired to exercise. Not only does this replicate previous research demonstrating that eudaimonic entertainment can inspire audiences to engage in self-enhancing behaviors (e.g., Rieger et al., 2018), but it also demonstrates that a partially satisfying ending may heighten these motivations. This finding further supports the use of a dual-processing perspective within entertainment research. Specifically, our finding fits well with the logic underlying the elaboration likelihood model, which suggests that while media can motivate audiences through both the intuitive and deliberative processing routes, engaging in the deliberative route can produce stronger attitudes towards a behavior (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). In our case, the partially satisfying ending may have prompted our participants to deliberate on the importance of bettering oneself which, in turn, increased their motivation to exercise.

In light of our findings, not all of our predictions were observed. Noticeably, there was no difference in our measures of cognitive effort (measured through heart rate) between those who watched the protagonist win or lose the fight. Recently, some scholars have questioned whether the decrease in heart rate as an isolated measure is enough of a valid operationalization for cognitive effort (e.g., Keene, Clayton, Berke, Loof, & Bolls, 2017) and suggested that a triangulation of various indicators is needed to properly detect cognitive effort. Future research may want to consider using additional measures for cognitive effort such as a secondary task reaction time prompt as alternative indicators.

Furthermore, we did not see differences in enjoyment or appreciation between conditions as predicted. This may be due to our *Rocky* stimuli. Since both endings were portrayed positively (i.e., shots of a cheering crowd and appreciation from loved ones), it is not unreasonable to argue that audiences may feel a similar amount of pleasure in both conditions due to these similarities. Indeed, in a related manipulation, Zillmann (1980) found similar levels of enjoyment between audiences who watched a "very satisfying" versus a "minimally satisfying resolution" (p. 151). Since the means for both the enjoyment and appreciation scales in our study were significantly above the midpoints, it seems that our participants were able to find something in both conditions to enjoy and appreciate. While the lack of difference in these measures may raise questions as to whether our stimuli adequately represent hedonic and eudaimonic entertainment, the experimental control between the two conditions allowed us to observe whether narrative endings could be a key determinant in how audiences process and evaluate entertainment content.

Despite this, our findings show that the different types of narrative endings commonly found in (non-inspiring) hedonic and (inspiring) eudaimonic entertainment offerings could explain why we may process them differently in some cases (Clayton et al., 2019). As said before, many hedonic movies have fully satisfying endings while many eudaimonic movies have only partially satisfying endings (Lewis et al., 2017; Oliver & Hartmann, 2010). Our specific operationalization of complete versus incomplete goal attainment (i.e., winning or losing the decisive boxing fight), however, leaves room for alternative explanations of the effect found. For instance, videogame research has demonstrated a player's winning/losing can affect media enjoyment (Rieger, Wulf, Kneer, Frischlich, & Bente, 2014). Future research may want to more specifically address how the findings of videogame research could also apply to how audiences respond to a protagonist winning/losing in a narrative and thus might explain the effects found in this study.

5. Limitations and Conclusion

A major limitation of the current study can be seen in the relatively small sample sizes. In contrast to most studies of this kind using a within-subject design, we here used a between-subject design because parts of the stimuli were identical. However, a sensitivity power analysis (for

80 participants; with $\alpha = .05$ and $1-\beta = .80$) revealed that we would be able to detect effects greater than $f = .13$. This gives us greater confidence in our ability to observe changes in the continuous response measures between the two conditions.

Furthermore, even though our manipulation of fully and partially satisfying endings produced differential effects in the process variables (RTR and psychophysiology) indicating different processing routes, we did not find differences in the post-exposure measures of enjoyment and appreciation. While previous research has reported *Rocky I* to be inspirational in contrast to *Rocky II* (Dale et al., 2017), the expected difference in the audience's overall ratings might be overridden by the prominent similarities in genre, actors, and scenery. While this stimulus similarity is desirable for experimental control of the independent variable, it might be a problem if the differential aspect is comparatively subtle. Moreover, we only used one pair of stimuli from a genre that might inhibit the appreciation of a putatively eudaimonic component for some participants. As pointed out by Oliver et al. (2018), appreciative responses to eudaimonic media offerings are highly idiosyncratic and personal. In consequence, it is hard to say whether our findings would replicate with other inspirational stimuli. Future research should therefore use multiple (and diverse) stimuli to see if our findings generalize across various content types.

Finally, the use of the RTR measure required participants to consciously monitor their current feelings might have altered the physio measures. One might object that we found systematic differences in the physiological measures in both conditions, but we also found systematic differences in the RTR that might have caused these. The fact that the different physio measures were differentially correlated in different phases of the stimulus, however, speaks against such a direct influence. Nevertheless, this question should be addressed in further research comparing psychophysiological measures across groups who use or do not use RTR simultaneously. The high intergroup correlations for the physio measures obtained for the identical scenes in this study indicate robust physiological responses that can be used to infer potential influences of RTR ratings.

Our study builds upon previous literature investigating how audiences process and evaluate inspirational entertainment. Specifically, we incorporated a dual-processing rationale by manipulating the narrative ending of an inspirational movie in a psychophysiological experiment and found that audiences processed these endings differently. This suggests that different narrative endings may play a key role in distinguishing the effects of some inspirational entertainment on audience appraisal and other outcomes. Future research should explore how other narrative features such as the presence of moral ambiguity or story complexity could alter audiences' processing and evaluation of inspirational movies.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

Inspired to Adopt: The Role of Social Norms in Media Inspiration

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Abstract
We consider the potential for inspirational media content (inspiring videos about dogs) and injunctive norms (social media comments on the videos) to motivate dog adoption behaviors and intentions. In an online experiment, participants were exposed to pretested inspiring (or non-inspiring) videos and social norms cues and were given an opportunity to browse among a series of dogs on a mock adoption website. Participants also indicated their intention to adopt a dog and completed a series of socio-demographic measures. Results indicated that, although both the inspiring videos and the norm cues successfully induced inspiration and perceived injunctive norms, only injunctive norms significantly affected intention to adopt. The effect of norms remained significant when controlling for barriers to adoption such as financial, time, and space considerations. Discussion focuses on implications for inspiring entertainment and social norms theories, and implications for adoptions and other prosocial behaviors.

Issue
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1. Introduction

Heart-warming videos that depict and promote dog adoption are often shared on social media platforms. For instance, videos from "Pittie Nation"—a web series from American media brand, *The Dodo*—depict pit bulls as kind, lovable dogs to overcome stigma that the breed is dangerous and oftentimes high-needs, and instead, encourage their adoption (see thedodo.com/series/pittie-nation). Such videos garner considerable attention from social media users in the form of comments, likes, and shares. Naturally, inspirational media content and the social sanctioning of that content on online platforms appear to go hand-in-hand. Thus, there is an increasing need for media effects theories to account for the role of other media users in the effects of inspiring media content.

Some research has begun to examine inspiring media within an online environment (Dale et al., 2020; Janicke, Narayan, & Seng, 2018; Krämer et al., 2016, 2019; Rieger & Klimmt, 2019a, 2019b). However, few studies have examined how inspiring media content might influence user attitudes and behaviors, specifically within a social media context (Dale et al., 2020). Even fewer studies have examined the relationship between inspiring content and social norms within a highly controlled, experimental setting (Waddell & Bailey, 2017). Thus, the current study experimentally tests the effects of inspiring media content when the opinions of others are also present. In particular, we used the context of dog adoption to propose that socially-shared, inspiring dog videos motivate adoption behaviors for three reasons: a) they induce moral elevation, b) they tap into social norms, and c) inspiration and social norms

may interact such that inspiring media has a greater influence on adoption behaviors when it is considered socially-normative.

First, inspiring media content motivates altruistic behavior by eliciting elevation (Janicke & Oliver, 2017; Oliver et al., 2018), or the experience of feeling warm and uplifted after viewing acts of moral goodness (Oliver, Hartmann, & Woolley, 2012). Elevation has been linked to increased prosocial motivation (Ellithorpe, Ewoldsen, & Oliver, 2015). Dog adoption stories often emphasize the benefits of animal ownership, the altruistic nature of rescuing a dog, and the general kind demeanor of dogs. As such, these videos are emotionally evocative and may induce psychological and physiological elevation that inspires altruistic (i.e., adoption) behaviors (Oliver et al., 2012).

Second, real or perceived social norms moderate the effect of inspiring content. The popularity of these videos on social media makes their consumption a social event. The viewer can see how many people watched the video, and whether reactions to the video were positive or negative. These social signifiers may amplify the effect of inspiration on adoption behaviors such that real or perceived social opinion moderates the motivational effects of inspiration (Krämer et al., 2019; Waddell & Bailey, 2017). Since inspirational media often facilitates other-focused behaviors (Ellithorpe et al., 2015), normative effects should increase when the viewer is inspired. Research highlighting the sharing of inspiring content via social media (Janicke et al., 2018; Raney et al., 2018) suggests a role of injunctive norms, or a groups' collective approval and sanction of a given behavior (Lapinski & Rimal, 2005), in moderating inspirational media effects. Dog adoption is generally considered a good deed and something others ought to do (Bir, Widmar, & Croney, 2018). Thus, injunctive norms likely play a role in motivating viewers' adoption intentions following exposure to the video.

In the current study, we examine the effects of inspiring media content and social norms on dog adoption intentions. Specifically, we examine whether the influences of elevation (induced by an inspiring video about dogs) and norms (communicated as social media comments on the video) motivate dog adoption intentions. We expect that inspiration and injunctive norms will lead to increased adoption intentions, even among those with barriers to dog ownership (including their current financial/living situations and time constraints) and those who previously owned a dog.

We begin with a brief review of the literature on inspirational media and social norms. We then introduce our study and propose study hypotheses grounded in inspirational media and social norms research. We end with a discussion of our findings, specifically highlighting implications for understanding the shared role of inspiring media and social norms in affecting prosocial behaviors like pet adoption.

1.1. Inspirational Media

Media researchers have focused recent attention on examining audience interaction with and response to inspirational media content, or content that evokes self-transcendent emotions (Oliver et al., 2018). These experiences evoke emotional responses such as awe, admiration, and elevation. Research on meaningful media experiences initially emerged in contrast to those that are more hedonic or used purely for entertainment and "fun" (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010). More recently, inspiring media is best understood by the types of content it describes and the simultaneous emotional and motivational responses it evokes in audiences, which we refer to as 'inspired motivation.' Inspired motivation includes positive emotional responses, psychological and physiological well-being, and prosocial motivations (Janicke & Oliver, 2017).

In particular, we assess the potential for inspiring content to motivate adoption behaviors within a social context. Inspiring media is particularly prevalent on social media platforms such as YouTube and Facebook. In fact, 53% of American adults report having been inspired by something they saw on social media (Raney et al., 2018; see also Dale et al., 2020). Examining the effects of inspiring media within a social context where social cues are co-present with content cues is therefore a worthwhile endeavor.

Since the effect of social cues can be understood as normative influence (Cialdini, Reno, & Kallgren, 1990), we apply a social norms framework to make concrete predictions about (1) the direct effects of group influence on adoption behaviors and (2) the way group influence can moderate inspiring media effects.

1.2. Social Norms

Social norms refer to a collective code of conduct shared by a referent group (Lapinski & Rimal, 2005). Individual members of a group gain an understanding of which behaviors are acceptable by observing and interpreting normative information.

There are two types of norms, each with different functions in persuading individuals to adopt normative behavior: 'Descriptive norms' refer to a group's prevalent behaviors (i.e., what most people do) that act as a mental shortcut to quickly make a "correct" decision (Cialdini et al., 1990). 'Injunctive norms' refer to a group's dis/approval or sanction of a given behavior (i.e., permissible behavior for group members). Social rewards and punishments motivate adherence to injunctive norms since failure to adhere to injunctive norms can lead to ostracization (Lapinski & Rimal, 2005).

As suggested by the Focus Theory of Normative Conduct (Cialdini et al., 1990), individuals formulate normative perceptions (i.e., the perception that others do or think a certain way) by observing social cues in their environment. In this way, people can learn others' norms via the comments, likes, and other social cues associated

with social entertainment such as YouTube and Facebook videos. In turn, these normative perceptions motivate behavior and behavioral intention, which have potential costs or benefits to other people or society on the whole (Cialdini et al., 1990; Lapinski & Rimal, 2005). For example, Liu (2017) found that comments indicating approval of water conservation and potential sanctions against water-wasters communicated injunctive norms, and these perceived injunctive norms, in turn, made individuals more likely to adopt pro-water conservation behaviors. Subsequent studies replicated Liu's work in an entertainment context; norms communicated via online social cues (likes, ratings, comments) can lead people to watch "low-quality" films (Kryston & Eden, 2020) or avoid critically-acclaimed films (Kryston, Park, & Eden, 2020).

In the context of the current study, we expect that comments indicating approval and sanction of dog adoption, a behavior that can benefit society and the animals themselves, should increase adoption behaviors and intentions, and the effect should be mediated by perceived injunctive norms. Moreover, this effect should persist even among those with barriers to adoption.

Since motivation elicited by inspiring media is associated with socially-oriented cognition (Oliver et al., 2012) that elicits universal orientation (Krämer et al., 2019) and the adoption of prosocial ideals and intentions (Bartsch, Oliver, Nitsch, & Scherr, 2018, Study 2), we propose that social norms might amplify the effect of inspiration on subsequent prosociality.

Past work found that comments and ratings (i.e., cues indicating social norms) posted on inspiring videos can amplify emotional reactions to inspirational content, including elevation and universal orientation (Krämer et al., 2019). These inspired affective states elicit prosocial motivation, and thus, we expect an additive effect of inspiring content and social norms on adoption behaviors.

1.3. Current Study

The current study employs a 2 (Video: inspiring, non-inspiring) × 3 (Comments: norm and sanction, comments with no norms, no comment control) between-subjects design. Data were collected in two parts. In part one, we collected socio-demographic data relevant to dog adoption. In part two, participants were randomly assigned to see pretested stimuli and completed measures of adoption behavior and intention to adopt.

1.3.1. Hypotheses

Drawing on the aforementioned research on inspiring media and prosocial motivations, we first propose the following hypotheses related to our inspirational video manipulation:

H1: Viewing an inspiring video will be associated with greater inspired motivation compared to viewing a non-inspiring video;

H2: Inspired motivation will be positively associated with adoption behavior (H2a) and intention to adopt (H2b);

H3: There will be an indirect effect of videos on adoption behaviors and intentions through inspired motivation in which those who view an inspiring video will experience greater elevation, and elevation will positively predict adoption behavior (H3a) and intention to adopt (H3b).

Second, drawing on social norms research, we propose the following hypotheses related to our social norm comments manipulation:

H4: Reading approving comments that sanction dog adoption will be associated with higher perceived injunctive norms to adopt a dog compared to (a) reading comments without approval or sanction and (b) videos without comments;

H5: Perceived injunctive norms to adopt a dog will positively influence adoption behavior (H5a) and intention to adopt (H5b);

H6: The effect of comments which sanction dog adoption on adoption behaviors (H6a) and intention to adopt (H6b) will be mediated by perceived injunctive norms to adopt a dog.

Third, integrating our inspiring video and social norm comments manipulations, we propose the following hypothesis:

H7: There will be a positive interaction between inspired motivation and perceived social injunctive norms on adoption behaviors (H7a) and intentions (H7b).

Finally, we propose the following hypothesis related to real or perceived barriers to adopt:

H8: The effects of (a) inspired motivation and (b) injunctive norms will remain even when controlling for barriers to adoption.

Since past behavior can be a strong predictor of future behavior (Ouellette & Wood, 1998), we also wondered if the effects of inspiring media and norms explain adoption behaviors and intention among those who previously owned a dog, leading to the following research question:

RQ1: Will the effects of (a) inspired motivation and (b) injunctive norms remain when controlling for past pet ownership?

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Participants ($N = 207$) from a large Midwestern university in the United States were recruited from the communication department participant pool. Data were collected in two parts. Only the data of participants who completed both parts of the study and passed a simple attention check in Part 2 were included in analyses ($n = 164$). Participants received course credit after completing each part. All procedures and stimuli were approved by the host institution's institutional review board.

2.2. Procedure

All procedures were completed online using Qualtrics. In Part 1, participants provided informed consent and then completed demographic information, including details about their time commitments, space affordances, and finances. After completing Part 1, participants were invited to participate in Part 2. During this part, participants were randomly assigned to watch one of the four videos, followed by a norms condition. Participants completed a series of measures that assessed their responses to the video and their perceptions of social norms. Then, participants completed the selection task, measures of intention to adopt, and additional demographic information (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity/race).

2.3. Stimuli

We conducted a pretest to select videos and comments for our manipulations, as well as photos and descriptions for our selection task. Participants who completed the pretest ($n = 107$; $M_{age} = 20.05$, $SD_{age} = 1.80$) were recruited from the same participant pool as the main test and were excluded from the main study.

Participants ranked eight dog descriptions, including eight dog names (four male, four female), ages, and reason for adoption. All dogs were described as being between two- and six-years-old. The results of the pretest indicated minimal variance in dog description ranks ($3.16 \leq M \leq 5.16$, $1.94 \leq SD \leq 2.39$); therefore, we selected the middle four descriptions (two male, two female).

Next, participants rated a random set of 10 (out of a possible 16) photos of adult dogs. Examples of each breed identified by Posage, Bartlett, and Thomas (1998) were represented, all the dogs were brown, and the camera angle was held constant for each photo. Photos were rated for dog appeal ($M = 5.69$, $SD = 0.97$; $\alpha = 0.90$); the average of nine bipolar scales (e.g., calm—excited, sad—happy), scored from 1 (left word; low appeal) to 7 (right word; high appeal) and how adoptable it was (1 = Not adoptable at all, 7 = Very adoptable; $M = 5.92$, $SD = 1.22$). Given the left skew and to ensure that our

stimuli drove adoption behaviors and intentions rather than the adoptability of the animal itself, we selected dogs lower in appeal and adoptability: chihuahua, pit bull mix, dachshund, and shepherd. These photos were randomly paired to the four selected descriptions.

Three types of videos were pretested: inspiring videos with dogs, informational videos about dogs, and informational videos not about/excluding dogs. Participants were randomly assigned to rate one of the videos ($K = 226$). None of the videos directly advocated for or provided information about dog adoption or ownership.

Participants rated each video using Oliver et al.'s (2012) 15-item emotional elevation ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 1.17$; $\alpha = 0.98$; e.g., "How much did you feel touched, uplifted?") and 12-item physiological elevation scales ($M = 1.90$, $SD = 0.78$; $\alpha = 0.89$; e.g., "How often did you feel a lump in throat while watching the video?") were measured on five-point scales. Enjoyment ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 1.77$; $\alpha = 0.95$) and appreciation ($M = 4.70$, $SD = 1.77$; $\alpha = 0.89$) were measured on seven-point scales using Oliver and Bartsch's (2010) three-item measures. Affect ($M = 6.47$, $SD = 1.90$; one item where 1 = sad and 9 = happy) and arousal ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 2.34$; one item where 1 = bored and 9 = excited) were measured using the self-assessment mannequin (Bradley & Lang, 1994). Results indicated that inspiring videos were rated highest in elevation, affect, and appreciation, followed by informational dog videos, and then informational videos not featuring dogs. All pairwise differences were significant.

Thus, we selected exemplar videos from each category: two 'inspiring' videos (one about a labrador, one about a pit bull mix) and two 'non-inspiring' informational videos (one about dogs, one about a baby crib). In the main study, participants were told that a local shelter had posted their assigned video to the shelter's social media feed. A full write-up of pretest results, along with more detailed justification for our decisions, are provided on Open Science Framework (OSF): http://bit.do/InspiredtoAdopt.

Lastly, to manipulate injunctive norms, we adapted Liu's (2017) stimuli. There were three norms conditions: 'norms,' 'no norms' comments, and a no comment 'control.' In the comment conditions, participants were told that they would see comments posted on the video. The 'norms' comments show approval of dog adoption and potential negative sanctions against those unwilling to adopt. The 'no norms' comments talk about the video content but do not mention adoption. In the 'control' condition, participants were not told they will look at comments and proceeded to complete measures of perceived norms.

2.4. Measures

2.4.1. Mediating Variables

'Inspired motivation' was measured using a nine-item motivational outcome scale (Oliver et al., 2012; $M = 5.66$,

$SD = 0.86$; $\alpha = 0.90$; e.g., "I want to be a better person," "I want to do good things for other people"). The scale highly correlates with the physiological and psychological indicators of elevation used in the pretest. Each item was measured on a 7-point scale (1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree). The scale was composed by averaging all of the items.

Perceived injunctive norms were measured using 11 adapted items from Liu's (2017) scale. The scale is usually comprised of three factors—perceived societal approval (e.g., "A majority of people in the United States do not oppose that people adopt a dog"), perceived social approval (e.g., "I feel like most people who are important to me would endorse me adopting a dog"), and perceived social sanction (e.g., "I think people who are important to me would think less of me if I don't adopt a dog")—which are averaged together to create a composite score for perceived injunctive norms. The scale was valid and reliable in past studies (e.g., Kryston et al., 2020). We used the composite score of the 11-item social approval and sanction scales ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 0.78$; $\alpha = 0.83$), referred to as 'perceived social injunctive norms,' since the comments did not manipulate societal approval.

2.4.2. Dependent Measures

'Adoption behavior' was measured using a selection task adapted from Knobloch (2003). After exposure to stimuli and completing measures of inspiration and perceived injunctive norms, participants were told that they would be able to look at a webpage featuring dogs listed for adoption at a local shelter.

The screen featured four pretested pictures of dogs presented in random order, along with the option to bypass the selection screen. After clicking a picture, participants were redirected to the dog's profile, which contained pretested descriptions and a short blurb modeled from adoption sites. Participants were allowed to read descriptions for as long as they liked and could stop at any selection screen by clicking the bypass button. After five iterations of dog selections, the selection task automatically ended.

Qualtrics unobtrusively collected whether each participant participated in the dog task ($M = 0.92$, $SD = 0.27$, range: 0–1), how many dog profiles selected ($M = 2.29$, $SD = 1.48$, range: 0–5), and time spent on dog profiles (in seconds; $M = 16.06$, $SD = 14.80$, range: 0–88.71) These three metrics indicated adoption behavior (see Knobloch-Westerwick, 2014).

After the selection task, participants completed an adapted version of the behavioral intent scale found in Park and Smith (2007; $M = 4.14$, $SD = 1.84$; $\alpha = 0.98$) to indicate their 'intention to adopt.' The scale contains four items (e.g., "I have it in my mind to adopt a dog in the near future"). The average of all items was taken to create a scale score for intention to adopt.

2.4.3. Covariates

We used barriers to adoption measured in Part 1 as covariates to test H8 and RQ1: Plans to move ("When do you plan to move from your current residence"; $M = 1.36$, $SD = 1.79$; range: 1–7 where high scores indicate longer stay); weekly free time (in hours; $M = 63.53$, $SD = 38.94$); financial ability to support a dog ("In your opinion, can you currently financially support a dog?"; $M = 3.37$, $SD = 2.11$; range: 1–7 where high scores indicate greater ability to support); independent income ($M = 1.45$, $SD = 0.50$; 1 = Makes independent income, 2 = No independent income); and past dog ownership (1 = Yes, 2 = No; $M = 1.32$, $SD = 0.47$).

All measures and stimuli from the pretest and both parts of the current study can be found on OSF: http://bit.do/InspiredtoAdopt.

3. Results

Only 11 participants skipped the selection screen entirely, so effects to profile selection (Yes/No) were not analyzed.

H1–H3 regarded the effect of inspiring videos on adoption behaviors and intention through inspired motivation. To test these hypotheses, we conducted simple mediation (Model 4) with 10,000 bootstrap samples in PROCESS v3.2 (Hayes, 2017). The inspiring video condition was the independent variable (IV) and inspiring motivation was the mediator. The analysis was repeated with number of dog profiles selected, time spent on the selection screen, and intention to adopt as the dependent variables (DV).

At step 1, inspiring video condition significantly predicted inspired motivation ($b = 0.43$, SE = 0.13, $p = 0.001$), indicating that those who saw inspiring videos experienced greater inspired motivation ($n = 88$; $M = 5.87$, $SD = 0.72$) than those who saw non-inspiring videos ($n = 76$, $M = 5.42$, $SD = 0.94$). Thus, H1 was supported. At step 2, inspiring affect did not predict number of profiles selected ($b = 0.14$, SE = 0.14, $p = 0.31$), time spent on selection screens ($b = 1.64$, SE = 1.40, $p = 0.24$), or intention to adopt ($b = 0.05$, SE = 0.18, $p = 0.77$). The indirect effect was not significant for adoption behaviors or intention (see Figure 1). Thus, H2 and H3 were not supported.

H4–H6 regarded the effect of comments on adoption behaviors and intention through perceived norms. We again tested these hypotheses using simple mediation (Model 4) with 10,000 bootstrap samples. Comment condition (multicategorical indicator with control as the comparison group) was the IV and perceived social injunctive norms were the mediator. The test was repeated three times, once for each DV.

At step 1, comment condition significantly predicted perceived social injunctive norms when comparing the norms comment condition to the control ($b = 0.38$, SE = 0.15, $p = 0.01$) but not when comparing the no
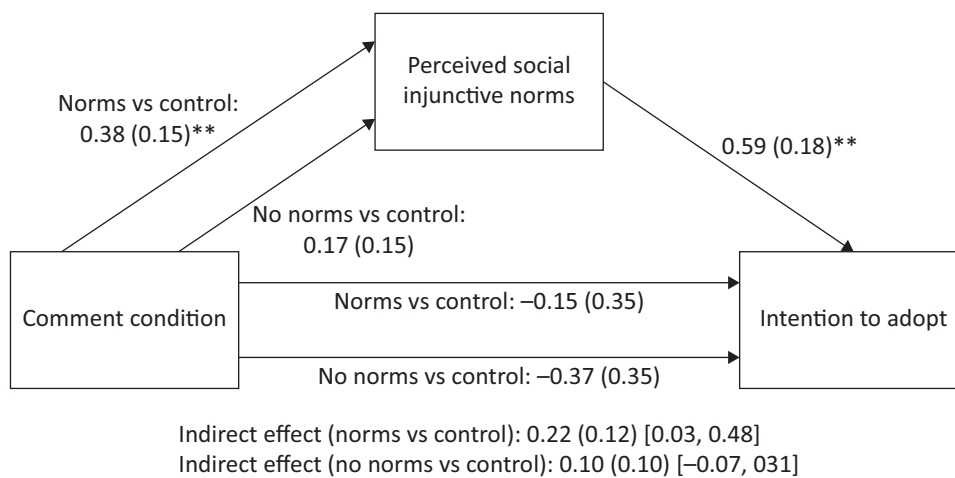
Indirect effect: 0.02 (0.08) [−0.15, 019]
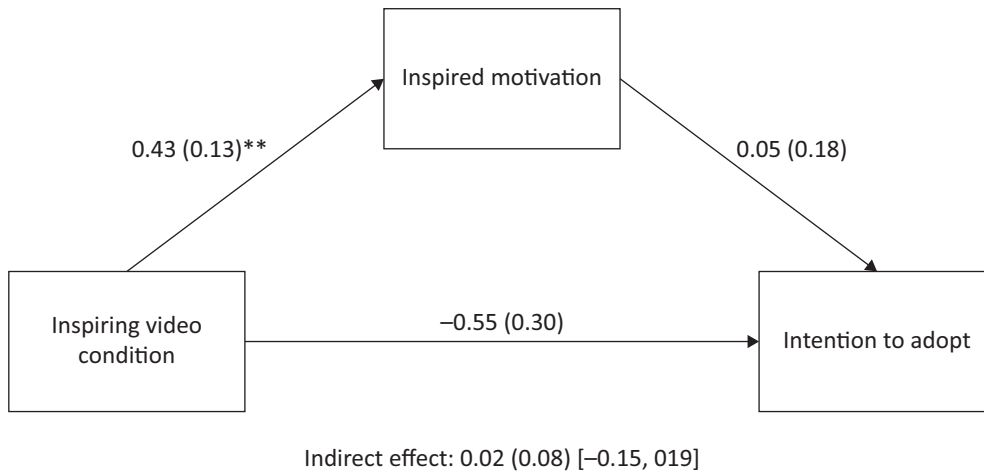
Figure 1. Mediated effect of inspiring videos on intention to adopt through inspired motivation. Notes: * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$. Coefficients associated with each path presented as b(SE). Model statistics: Step 1—$F(1, 161) = 11.14$, $p = 0.001$, adj. $R^2 = 0.06$; Step 2—$F(2,160) = 1.73$, $p = 0.18$, adj. $R^2 = 0.01$.

norms comment condition to the control ($b = 00.17$, SE = .15, $p = 0.26$). A follow-up analysis of variance (ANOVA) with a post-hoc Bonferroni revealed that perceived social injunctive norms were significantly higher in the norms comment condition ($n = 60$, $M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.82$) than the control ($n = 51$, $M = 3.39$, $SD = 0.82$), but did not differ from the no norms comment condition ($n = 52$, $M = 3.57$, $SD = 0.65$; $F[2,163] = 3.38$, $p = 0.04$, $\eta_2 = 0.04$). Thus, H4b was supported but H4a was not.

At step 2, perceived sanctions did not significantly predict number of profile selections ($b = 0.20$, SE = 0.15, $p = 0.19$) or time spent ($b = −1.26$, SE = 1.48, $p = 0.40$). However, perceived social injunctive norms were a significant predictor of intention to adopt ($b = 0.59$, SE = 0.18, $p = 0.002$), indicating that perceptions of others' approval and sanction of adoption elicited stronger intentions to adopt a dog (see Figure 2). Thus, H5b was supported and H5a was not supported. The indirect effect was significant when comparing the norms com-

ment condition to the control ($b = 0.22$, SE = 0.12, CI 95 = [0.09, 0.48]), but not when comparing the no norms comment condition to the control ($b = 0.10$, SE = 0.10, CI 95 = [-0.07, 0.31]). Thus, H6b was partially supported.

H7 predicted a positive interaction between inspired motivation and perceived social injunctive norms on adoption behaviors and intentions. H7 was tested using moderated-mediation (PROCESS Model 14; see Figure 3). Given the results of H1–H6, we repeated the tests of H4–H6 regarding the effect of norms, adding inspired motivation to moderate the effect of norms on intention to adopt. At step 1, the effects were the same as reported for H4. At step 2, main effects of inspired motivation ($b = 0.23$, SE = 0.79, $p = 0.77$), social injunctive norms ($b = 0.94$, SE = 1.14, $p = 0.41$), and their interaction ($b = −0.06$, SE = 0.21, $p = 0.76$) were not significant. Inspired motivation did not moderate the indirect effect of comments on intention through norms. Thus, H7 was not supported.

Indirect effect (norms vs control): 0.22 (0.12) [0.03, 0.48]
Indirect effect (no norms vs control): 0.10 (0.10) [−0.07, 031]

Figure 2. Mediated effect of comments on intention to adopt through perceived injunctive norms. Notes: * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$. Coefficients associated with each path presented as b(SE). Model statistics: Step 1—$F(2,160) = 3.38$, $p = 0.04$, adj. $R^2 = 0.03$; Step 2—$F(3,159) = 3.24$, $p = 0.02$, adj. $R^2 = 0.05$.
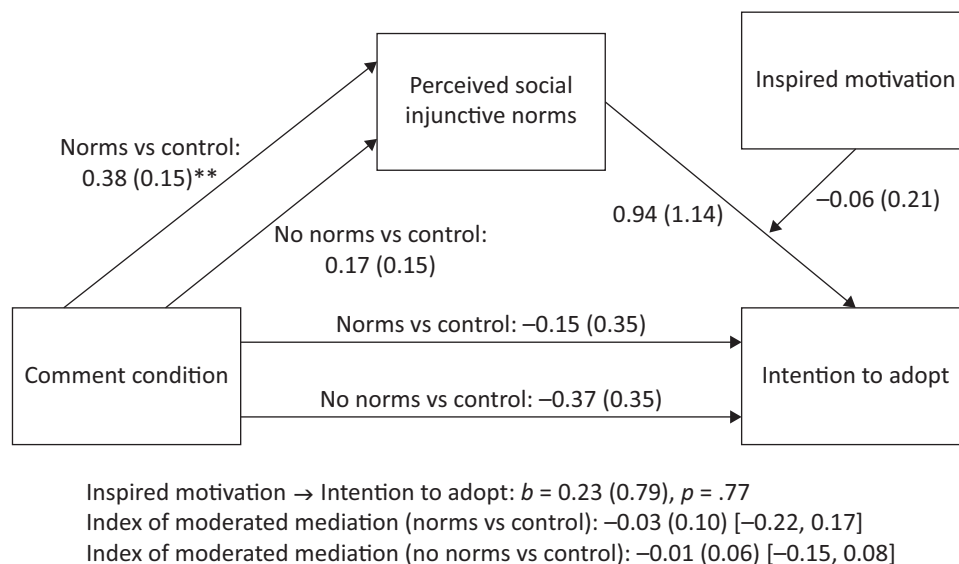
Figure 3. Moderated-mediation effect of comments on intention to adopt through perceived injunctive norms. Notes: * $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$. Coefficients associated with each path presented as b(SE). Model statistics: Step 1—$F(2,160) = 3.38$, $p = 0.04$, adj. $R^2 = 0.03$; Step 2—$F(5,157) = 3.27$, $p = 0.05$, adj. $R^2 = 0.04$.

Finally, to test H8 and answer RQ1, which predicted that the effects of (a) inspired motivation and (b) injunctive norms would remain when controlling for barriers to adoption and past dog ownership, respectively, we conducted hierarchical multiple regression among those who completed all measures across both parts of the study ($n = 147$). Plans to move, weekly free time, financial ability to support a dog, and independent income were entered at step 1; inspired motivation and social injunctive norms were entered at step 2; the interaction of inspiration and injunctive norms was entered at step 3. RQ1 was answered by adding past ownership at step 4. We only conducted an analysis predicting intention to adopt.

At step 1, independent income was the only significant predictor of intention to adopt ($\beta = -0.18$, $p = 0.03$), indicating that those who made independent income had a stronger intention to adopt a dog. At step 2, social injunctive norms ($\beta = 0.20$, $p = 0.02$) and independent income ($\beta = -0.17$, $p = 0.04$) were the only significant predictors of intention. The interaction term was not significant at step 3. Thus, H8b was partially supported; the effect of perceived social injunctive norms on intention was still significant when controlling for barriers to adoption. H8a was not supported.

Answering RQ1, at step 4, when past ownership was added to the model, not only did past ownership significantly predict intention to adopt ($\beta = -0.19$, $p = 0.03$), the variable's addition rendered the effect of inspiration, injunctive norms and their interaction not significant. Answering RQ1, those who previously owned dogs showed a greater intention to adopt a dog, and past ownership nullified the effect of inspired motivation and perceived injunctive norms (for additional analyses of barriers to adoption and past ownership, see http://bit.do/InspiredtoAdopt).

3.1. Post-Hoc Analysis

Similar to inspired motivation, inspiration (Krämer et al., 2019) and egoistic motivation (Oliver et al., 2012) can mediate the effect of inspiring media on behavioral outcomes. Thus, the analysis of H1–H3 was repeated four times, once with Oliver et al.'s (2012) 15-item emotional elevation scale ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.92$; $\alpha = 0.97$) and 12-item physiological elevation scale ($M = 1.82$, $SD = 0.67$; $\alpha = 0.86$), and a five- ($M = 6.13$, $SD = 0.94$; $\alpha = 0.94$) and four-item (item "I would like to do good things for other people" removed; $M = 6.08$, $SD = 0.97$; $\alpha = 0.93$) scales featuring the egoistic (self-focused) items listed in Oliver et al.'s (2012) inspired motivation scale as the mediator.

The results follow a similar pattern to those observed in tests of H1–H3. Although inspiring video condition successfully manipulated emotional and psychological elevation and both versions of the egoistic motivation scale, none of these four variables significantly influenced the number of profiles selected, time spent on selection screens, or intention to adopt, nor did they mediate inspiring media's effect on adoption behavior or intention. Likewise, we tested whether each of these scales significantly interacted with perceived social injunctive norms to predict outcomes of interest (PROCESS Model 1), but all moderation analyses were not significant (see http://bit.do/InspiredtoAdopt for full results).

4. Discussion

This study examined the influence of inspiring media and social norms on intentions to adopt a dog. Participants watched a video that was either inspiring or informational (non-inspiring), then read other viewers'

comments that either sanctioned adoption or did not reference social norms. Those in the control condition did not read comments.

We found that, although both inspiring videos and norm cues successfully induced inspiration and perceived injunctive norms, only norms were significantly associated with adoption intentions. Our study contributes to inspiring media and norms research in a few ways. In particular, we integrate theories from media effects and social psychology to examine how audiences respond to inspiring media content when the opinions of others are present. Our results, including those that were not significant, provide an important addition to the inspiring media and social norms literature which has primarily assessed the effect of online comments on elevation within the context of news media (Waddell & Bailey, 2017). We discuss this contribution to the literature as well as propose next steps for this research in the following sections.

4.1. Inspiring Media in a Social Context

Considerable research has examined the effects of inspiring media when it is experienced alone or in non-social contexts (e.g., Janicke & Oliver, 2017; Oliver et al., 2018). Far fewer studies have examined the effects of inspiring media while accounting for both the influence of the content and the influence of others' shared opinions about that content. In the current study, we conducted a highly controlled test of inspiring media effects when followed by the shared opinions of others to examine the role of social norms in viewers' response to inspiring media and subsequent prosocial intentions. By including comments that either expressed others' reactions to the inspiring media content or did not reference social norms, we found that others' approval of inspiring media content plays an important role—in this case, the only significant role—in the effects of that content. How the opinions of others influence the effects of inspiring media is an increasingly important question to consider, especially given that inspiring media experiences are so often reported in social contexts (Dale et al., 2020; Raney et al., 2018). Our study contributes to this area of investigation, and we encourage researchers interested in studying inspirational media effects to continue to consider the potential influence of social norms when comments and other social cues are co-present.

Moreover, we examined behavioral intention in two ways: a behavioral proxy (browsing profiles of adoptable dogs; Knobloch-Westerwick, 2014) and self-reported intention to adopt. By including behavioral measures specifically related to content (dog adoption intentions and attitudes), we expand on past research (e.g., Waddell & Bailey, 2017). Specifically, we found that norms about adoption increased adoption intentions whereas inspirational media about dogs did not. We are careful not to conclude that norms are more powerful motivators than inspiring media. That said, we offer

some potential explanations for why only our norms manipulation was influential despite our inspiring content successfully inducing elevation.

First, the fact that we found neither direct nor moderated effects of inspirational media on behavior could raise questions regarding the ability of inspiring media to persuade viewers. Although many studies have observed the effects of inspirational media, these studies tend to examine exposure to inspiring media in a vacuum. For instance, participants view either inspiring or non-inspiring media content (e.g., comedy) and indicate whether these media elicit either broad-scale prosocial motivations (e.g., Oliver et al., 2012), or attitude and behavioral changes towards objects that are featured in the inspiring content but not in non-inspiring content (e.g., Krämer et al., 2019). Likewise, outside influences such as social norms or interpersonal interaction are often omitted in related studies (cf. Krämer et al., 2019; Waddell & Bailey, 2017).

Therefore, other explanations regarding the particular psychological and contextual mechanisms of inspiring media effects should be considered. For example, the Focus Theory of Normative Conduct (Cialdini et al., 1990) and theories of entertainment media effects (e.g., see Tamborini, 2013) suggest that highly-salient media or social cues (that is, cues that are active and accessible in working memory) have a greater influence on behaviors and evaluations than less-salient cues. In the current study, the norm cues: (a) were presented after video exposure (compared to past work which exposed viewers to social cues and inspiring content in tandem; Krämer et al., 2019; Waddell & Bailey, 2017); (b) explicitly referenced adoption (whereas the videos featured dogs but did not explicitly reference adoption); and (c) advocated a behavior with prosocial implications, which is argued to increase norm salience (Cialdini et al., 1990). Taken together, norm cues may have been more salient than inspiring motivation during the selection task and subsequent measures of intention to adopt, and thus, were more influential for behaviors.

Although our design decisions were purposeful and based on existing literature to test our research questions, these potential explanations for the nonsignificant effect of inspiring media on behavioral outcomes should continue to be examined in future studies. If the norm cues were indeed more salient during the selection task and intention measures, our results could suggest the possibility that the influence of inspiring motivation diminishes when other factors are introduced, or when content is less relevant to the target behavior.

Future work could tackle questions regarding the role of salience in inspiring media effects by: (1) examining the effects of inspiring media over longer periods of time; (2) exploring the psychological processes of inspiring media effects, especially in contexts where social cues are co-present; and (3) examining the extent to which media content, both in terms of the featured topics and moral themes, must match outcomes of interests

(e.g., would an inspiring film about a family who cannot afford food elicit more donations to a food bank as compared to an inspiring film about an underdog team coming together to win the big game?).

Beyond our contributions to the literature on inspiring media and social norms, our results may also have practical and methodological value. Practically, animal shelters and advocacy organizations may consider using social media content and their followers' approval to improve adoption rates. Methodologically, our study replicated the utility of using a norms scale that captures perceived sanction (Liu, 2017) and a multi-dimensional selection behavior task (Knobloch-Westerwick, 2014). It is also worth noting that the effect of norms on adoption intentions remained significant even when controlling for barriers to adoption, including financial and time considerations. In fact, past dog ownership was the only factor to nullify normative influence on intention to adopt, suggesting that chronically accessible beliefs (Ajzen, 2001) and attitudes (Ewoldsen, Rhodes, & Fazio, 2015) might have a more powerful influence than contextual norm cues. Still, finding that norms affect adoption intentions despite the presence of financial or time barriers could have implications for instances when pet adoption is not sustainable, such as when an individual lacks the necessary time to care for an adopted dog. In the following section, we consider the potential for negative effects of inspiring media and norms on pet adoption and propose future research to examine this particular circumstance.

4.2. The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly Effects of Inspiring Media on Pet Adoption

Dog adoption is typically thought of as a positive behavior, particularly as compared to breeding or purchasing dogs from pet stores. Adoption can reduce euthanasia rates and increase the quality of life for animals in and out of shelters. However, adoption behaviors can also be unsustainable and ultimately destructive for adopters who lack the time and resources to raise an animal, cannot cope with behavioral issues, or are otherwise ill-prepared for pet ownership (Mondelli et al., 2004). In fact, although 1,6 million dogs are adopted each year, approximately 10% of adopted dogs are rescinded after only six months (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, 2014).

Recent research has considered the seemingly paradoxical potential for inspiring media to motivate behaviors that are ultimately negative or antisocial (i.e., actions that detriment personal or others' well-being; Frischlich, Rieger, Morten, & Bente, 2019). Indeed, although norms often promote prosocial behaviors (see Shulman et al., 2017, for a review), normative influence can also lead people to perform negative or antisocial behaviors (Reno, Cialdini, & Kallgren, 1993). For example, terrorist groups use inspirational themes to recruit new members (Frischlich et al., 2019), and individuals are more likely

to litter when environmental cues (i.e., litter surrounding a trash can) indicate that most people litter (Cialdini et al., 1990). With relation to the current study, individuals with barriers that reduce the likelihood of successful adoption might be inspired or influenced by norms to adopt pets, even though these individuals may be unable to provide adopted dogs their "forever homes."

Thus, an important follow-up to the current research would be to examine instances when adoption may be problematic: that is, when inspiring media content motivates a behavior that could be positive or negative depending on the individual. To test this, researchers could utilize the methodology of the current study to include an antagonistic injunctive norm condition. In this case, participants would view the inspirational video content (which should motivate pro-adoption intentions), and then read comments which would disapprove of adoption behaviors for individuals without the means to adopt (e.g., "people who don't have time to raise a dog should not adopt"). Additional research might directly compare groups of participants who would be considered as high risk of relinquishing a recently adopted pet based on identified characteristics (e.g., see Mondelli et al., 2004) to those considered low risk of relinquishment.

A similar and interesting direction for future research would be to consider instances when comments communicate disapproval of the inspirational content itself. We assessed norms that were congruent with content (i.e., pro-dog videos and norms). Testing what happens when the content and norms are incongruent warrants investigation. Furthermore, our behavioral outcome (dog adoption) was non-specific; perhaps more powerful effects would be observed if the video and norms advocated specific breeds (e.g., *The Dodo*'s Pittie Nation videos).

Taken together, there are multiple directions for future research to continue to examine the effects of inspiring media on prosocial behaviors and cognitions in social contexts where norms are co-present and salient (e.g., public or online settings). On a final note, we discuss some limitations of the current study.

4.3. Limitations

First, we found no effects on dog selection behaviors measured via interaction with our quasi-adoption site. Although we pretested the photos and descriptions, participant engagement may have been low given the limited number of options.

Second, similar to past work by Kryston et al. (2020), perceived sanction was below the scale midpoint, pointing to the difficulty of manipulating the construct. Future studies should consider testing this scale in a survey or develop more powerful sanction manipulations.

Lastly, informational dog videos elicited significantly more inspired motivation than non-dog informational videos. Although combining these videos into a single

condition still resulted in a successful manipulation of inspired motivation, we caution that content about some subjects (e.g., dogs) may inspire audiences by nature.

5. Conclusion

Inspiration and social norms can be powerful motivators, even towards ultimately destructive behaviors. We help to bridge areas of research on the effects of inspiring media when shared on social media platforms where norm cues are present through our methodology and findings. The ways we are influenced by what inspires us—as well as what inspires those around us—continues to be an interesting and important area of communication research.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary materials are available at http://bit.do/InspiredtoAdopt.

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Article

Framing Inspirational Content: Narrative Effects on Attributions and Helping

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Abstract

Media coverage often construes stories of misfortune as inspirational accounts of individuals overcoming challenges. These reports fail to address the systemic issues that have predisposed these individuals to their current situation, and may have unintended consequences when it comes to the ability to collectively address these failings as a society. The current research examines how audiences are affected by inspirational narrative framings by comparing responses to a narrative that has inspirational coverage of a social challenge to one that includes direct acknowledgement of the larger systemic failings. Participants ($N = 495$) were randomly assigned to 1) read an inspirational story about a boy saving up to buy a wheelchair for his friend, 2) read a version of the story that emphasized the need for increased disability funding/services, or 3) a no-story control group. Both story conditions raised readers' willingness to help people with disabilities. Importantly, emphasizing social responsibility shifted readers' perceptions: readers of the social responsibility story were less likely to believe an individual with a disability was responsible for paying for their medical devices, believed that some collective measures would have higher efficacy, and viewed the situation as less fair. Even though individuals in the social responsibility condition found the story less enjoyable, they were equally transported into it compared to the inspirational version, and were equally likely to want to share the story with others. Our results offer clear guidelines for media practitioners covering individual struggles and systemic issues within society.

1. Introduction

People often enjoy reading and sharing inspiring stories in which a deserving person receives help. For example, a young boy who sells pumpkins to raise money for a service dog may be considered an inspirational story (Hein, 2018), a girl selling lemonade for her cancer treatments may warm readers' hearts (WNDU, 2018), and a sense of community may be evoked when hardware employees build and donate a walker for a child with a rare muscular condition (Sanchez, 2019). However, these stories do not necessarily address the larger societal issues that these individuals are struggling with, such as a lack of affordable healthcare in the United States or problems with insurance coverage. Such inspirational narratives may prompt prosocial action such as giving to a GoFundMe campaign, but they may also shift attributions of responsibility toward individuals or communities and away from policy-related changes.

1.1. Narratives, Emotion, and Prosocial Behaviors

Narratives can be an effective tool for motivating prosocial attitudes and behavior change, especially when they evoke strong emotions such as awe, elevation, and gratitude (Lai, Haidt, & Nosek, 2014; Oliver, Hartmann, & Woolley, 2012; Schnall, Roper, & Fessler, 2010). Dale, Raney, Janicke, Sanders, and Oliver (2017) described media encounters that evoked these emotions as "self-transcendent media experiences" (p. 898) and linked them to content described as "inspirational," "meaningful," or "eudaimonic." Notably, 'eudaimonic' media experiences (as compared to 'hedonic' media experiences that are purely positive or pleasing) may elicit mixed-emotional responses such as feeling poignant or bittersweet, as well as a search for meaning or purpose in life (Oliver et al., 2012; Oliver & Raney, 2011). Although eudaimonic experiences often invoke negative emotions in addition to positive emotions (see Landmann, 2021, for in-depth discussion), these experiences can lead to a state of moral elevation, which is a feeling of warmth and inspiration experienced upon witnessing altruistic behavior (Aquino, McFerran, & Laven, 2011; Haidt, 2000, 2003; Oliver et al., 2012). Moral elevation is associated with prosocial motivations and believing in the good within humanity (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Ellithorpe, Ewoldsen, & Oliver, 2015; Haidt, 2003; Schnall et al., 2010).

A challenge for stories that attempt to raise awareness of broader societal problems is that they may be more likely to evoke negative emotions from readers. Readers may feel sad or angry if they are reminded that the challenges faced by the story characters are widespread (e.g., that many people are not getting the assistive devices that they need). Narratives that are overwhelmingly unpleasant, such as stories of large numbers of people in need, can lead readers to engage in emotion regulation to buffer against negative feelings. However, regulating emotions can lead to a reduction in empathy, and thus a reduced willingness to help (Cameron & Payne, 2011; Shaw, Batson, & Todd, 1994; Small, Loewenstein, & Slovic, 2007). This effect has been termed the 'collapse of compassion' (Slovic, 2007). Therefore, if the goal is to encourage prosocial behavior in a reader, it is important to provide positive, hopeful content within a narrative in order to reduce the likelihood of the reader engaging in mood management processes.

Yet, some research suggests that stories do not need to remain purely focused on the positive in order to be effective. As noted above, eudaimonic media can create positive effects through mixed affect. Additionally, research on restorative narratives suggests that stories of suffering that also focus on recovery can have positive prosocial effects. Restorative narratives are stories of recovery from trauma which share negative experiences while highlighting the strength and meaningful progression of the individual (Tenore, 2015). Fitzgerald, Paravati, Green, Moore, and Qian (2020) found that a restorative narrative about a woman suffering from a rare disease, compared to a negative version of the same story, led to more positive and prosocial outcomes. In particular, the restorative narrative evoked more positive emotions and a greater desire to read and share the story with others as compared to the negative version. The restorative narrative also increased the willingness to help through these emotions.

Given that emotional experiences are an important component of what makes narratives persuasive, and more emotionally evocative narratives are often more transporting (e.g., Appel & Richter, 2010; Nabi & Green, 2015), one would expect that a story with a heartfelt message might persuade readers to change their attitudes in favor of helping others. However, the way in which these stories are framed may be valuable in some situations, but may not be motivating readers toward the most effective ways of creating widespread or lasting change. These emotional and empathic approaches tend to focus reader attention on an individual character. Thus, they may lead readers to wanting to directly help the individual identified by the narrative, rather than change the larger, systemic issues that led to the problem initially. Therefore, it is important to consider the framing of the issue within the narrative.

1.2. Framing

News stories can take a variety of approaches in covering current events. Framing is the process by which the mass media define and construct issues by emphasizing certain dimensions to the exclusions of others (Gamson, 1992). For instance, previous research on attributions of responsibility for societal problems has examined episodic versus thematic framing (e.g., Iyengar, 1990, 1991). 'Episodic' framing focuses on the experience of an individual, such as a story of a person who experienced unemployment or lived through a natural disaster (Shen, Ahern, & Baker, 2014). In contrast, 'thematic' news frames are those that focus on more abstract information, with wide coverage of issues or trends over time, such as the causes of unemployment or the scope of the devastation caused by a natural disaster.

Previous studies on framing effects have further found that different frames may influence how people view a given problem (e.g., see Iyengar, 1990, 1991; Matthes, 2009). Iyengar (1990) found that when evaluating the issue of poverty, episodic frames engendered a stronger sense of individual responsibility (e.g., readers focused on the choices that a person made that led them into poverty or actions they could take to get out of poverty), while thematic frames engendered a stronger sense of governmental or social responsibility (e.g., readers believed that government or social programs should address poverty).

Our research extends this work by focusing on two different types of episodic frames: frames that maintain a focus on the individual, and frames that highlight the potential responsibility of other organizations (e.g.,

insurance companies or government). This is different from most previous approaches because it makes simple framing changes within a story, rather than comparing two completely different types of coverage on an issue as a whole. Where other work in framing might compare an individual-focused story to coverage of the wider issue that omits or minimizes individual experiences, we maintain an individual focus while manipulating whether attention is called to the wider issues at play. This approach also fits well with journalism practice, because in the current reporting environment, purely thematically framed stories (e.g., an in-depth report on different approaches to healthcare policy) that focus on a social issue may be relatively rare. Both individual or systemic frames might be incorporated through contextualization; that is, because news reporting is typically driven by current events, individually-focused or systemically-focused information may be included as part of the context of a story about a specific event.

It is thus possible that news organizations could retain the human interest element of episodic framing, but nonetheless explicitly draw attention to the broader societal issues that are implicated by the story. Our research examines whether adding these elements changes the type of helping that individuals are willing to provide (individual-focused versus community action), as well as the psychological processes that occur when individuals read the story. Therefore, we explore whether minor changes in focus can change readers' perceptions, with important theoretical and practical implications.

1.3. Narrative Engagement

Narratives are also particularly influential when individuals are transported into the narrative, experiencing a state of cognitive and emotional immersion (Green & Brock, 2000; van Laer, Ruyter, Visconti, & Wetzels, 2014). Higher levels of experienced transportation have been associated with greater attitude, belief, and behavior changes, as readers are more likely to like and identify with characters and have stronger emotional experiences (Green & Clark, 2013). Because the main storyline remains the same across the different framings, we expect that transportation will be equivalent across the two conditions. However, directly highlighting broader social issues is somewhat uncommon in 'inspirational' or 'good news' stories, so we examine whether this violation of expectations affects reader engagement.

Similarly, recent research has drawn distinctions between enjoyment and appreciation of stories, where enjoyment is a more purely pleasurable response (i.e., resulting from hedonic media experiences) and appreciation involves more thoughtful feelings of meaningfulness or being moved by the story (i.e., resulting from eudaimonic media experience; Oliver & Bartsch, 2010). We test whether the stories differ on these dimensions. It is plausible that inspirational stories are more enjoy-able due to their focus on the good outcome for the individual, whereas social-focused stories may prompt greater thoughtfulness or appreciation.

Media outlets are also often interested in the reach of their stories: how willing readers are to share those stories or return to the outlet (e.g., the media website). We examine whether the different framings affect these types of future engagement.

Finally, research on helping suggests that individuals are most willing to help when they perceive a person as being in need of help, and when they care about the person's welfare (Batson, 1987, 1991). These perceptions prompt empathic concern, which can lead to helping. We test whether the two versions of the story differ in the perceptions of the main character.

1.4. Types of Help

We differentiate between individual-focused ways of helping, which provide assistance to a single individual, and collective or social ways of helping, which attempt to change broader systems or policies. For example, donating to a fundraiser or volunteering to help individuals with disabilities would be an individual-focused way of helping, whereas advocating for social change by signing a petition, contributing to a group working to change policies, or contacting government officials to advocate for a particular policy would be collective or social way of helping. In the current study, we focused on the United States healthcare context, where affordable healthcare is less readily available than in some other countries. We suggest that the emphasis of the story may affect the type of helping that individuals are willing to give. Furthermore, the stories might also change individuals' perceptions of the efficacy of that helping (how likely the help is to make a difference). That is, if readers see that individual-focused behaviors (such as donating a wheelchair) are successful, they may perceive these acts as more effective than collective acts that might not reach individuals. Conversely, if readers understand that individual acts are not enough to help everyone in need or even to completely fill one individual's needs, they may be more likely to seek collective action.

1.5. Hypotheses

We draw on framing and narrative persuasion research described above to propose the following hypotheses and research questions:

H1: Participants in the inspirational condition will attribute more responsibility for helping individuals with disabilities to the individual and less to insurance companies or government programs, compared to participants in the systemic issue condition.

H2: Participants in the inspirational condition will be more likely to help in individual-focused ways

such as donating to a particular individual, whereas participants in the systemic issue condition will be more likely to help through civic action such as contacting their representatives or donating to organizations that promote policies helping individuals with disabilities.

H3: Participants in the inspirational condition will view individual-focused methods of helping as being more effective (e.g., will have higher response efficacy), whereas individuals in the systemic issue condition will view civic/social actions as having higher response efficacy.

RQ1: Does either story condition increase helping intentions compared to a no-story control condition?

RQ2: Will the inspirational or systemic issue frame lead to a) greater perceptions of the importance of the issue of helping individuals with disabilities or b) influence perceptions of spending on disability services (is the amount spent on disability services too much, too little, or about the right amount)?

RQ3: Will individuals in either condition experience a) greater transportation, b) more enjoyment/appreciation, c) more positive and meaningful emotions, or d) greater moral elevation outcomes?

RQ4: Will individuals in either condition be more likely to have future engagement with the story (sharing with others, reading similar stories)?

RQ5: Does either story condition affect the perceptions of the fairness of the wheelchair recipient's situation, his likability, concern for his welfare, or his need for help?

2. Method

We randomly assigned participants to read one of two stories (inspirational [$n = 175$] or systemic issue [$n = 173$]) or to a no-story control condition ($n = 147$). Participants in the control condition completed only measures related to helping, efficacy, and issue importance in addition to demographic and exposure control items.

2.1. Participants

We recruited participants living in the United States through Amazon's Mechanical Turk in two rounds of data collection, approximately one week apart. A total of 555 participants completed the study, 290 in the first round and 265 in the second. However, 34 participants failed a set of attention checks, and 26 participants provided blank responses, leaving a final sample of 495 participants ($n_{male} = 258$, 52.1%, $n_{female} = 231$, 46.8% $n_{Transgender/Other/Omitted} = 5$, 1%; $n_{Caucasian} = 372$, 75.2%,

$n_{Asian/Pacific Islander} = 55$, 11.1%, $n_{Black/African American} = 46$, 9.3%, $n_{Hispanic/Latino} = 31$, 6.3%, all other races < 1.6%; $M_{Age} = 40.4$, $SD_{Age} = 12.5$). Due to a survey programming error, the responsibility, support for funding, and ways of helping items were only included in the second round of data collection.

2.2. Narratives

Participants in both conditions read a story about a high school student, Theo, who saved money for two years to buy an electric wheelchair for his friend, Matt. The story was adapted from actual news coverage of the occasion (Klausner, 2019; Patterson, 2019). In the inspirational version (609 words), the story focused on the boys' friendship and the selflessness of the gift. In the systemic issue version (655 words), the story highlighted the broader need for insurance coverage or disability programs to provide essential equipment such as wheelchairs, and for greater change in terms of governmental policy. The primary change between the conditions is whether during the course of the story, the individual heroism of the friend is highlighted by writer and the people interviewed, or whether these quotes and observations focus on the need for stronger social services. These points were made in six places in the story. For example, in the inspirational version, the story began: "A high school senior showed how far he was willing to go for his disabled best friend," whereas in the systemic issue version, the sentence read: "A high school senior showed he was willing to step up when insurance companies and government programs fell short for his disabled best friend." Full versions of the stories and questionnaires are available through the Open Science Framework (http://bit.ly/DarkNarrOSF).

2.3. Measures

Table 1 reports the means and standard deviations for all variables by condition.

Willingness to Help was assessed by asking participants to rate how much they would like to participate in a series of eight items with two individual-focused helping examples, including "Donate to a fundraiser for an electric wheelchair for a specific person" ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 1.67$) and six social helping examples, including "Contribute my time and energy to help people with disabilities" ($M = 4.71$, $SD = 1.64$, $\alpha = .89$) on a scale from 1 (very unlikely) to 7 (very likely).

Response Efficacy was assessed in a separate series of questions, wherein participants were also asked to rate how likely each of the helping options above would be to make a difference in the life of a person with a disability (1 very unlikely to 7 very likely; $M = 4.38$, $SD = 1.33$, $\alpha = .93$).

Attribution of Responsibility utilized three questions adapted from Springer and Harwood (2015). These items asked: "How much responsibility should individuals

with disabilities/insurance companies/government programs have for paying for essential equipment such as wheelchairs?" Responses were given on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (none) to 5 (a lot).

Support for Disability Funding asked: "Are we spending too much, too little, or about the right amount on programs to help people with disabilities in the United States?" Responses were given on a three-point scale ($M = 2.75$, $SD = .47$).

Ways of Helping asked participants to consider the differences between aid that focuses on an individual in need and aid that creates changes in policy. Participants indicated which type of helping they prefer on a scale ranging from 1 (definitely prefer individual helping) to 5 (definitely prefer working for policy change). They then indicated how effective they perceive each approach to be on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much).

Issue Importance had participants indicate their perceived importance of 10 issues related to healthcare and employment, including "Guaranteed paid sick time" and "Universal health insurance" on a scale from 1 (not at all important) to 10 (very important). They also indicated which three of these 10 items they considered to be most important.

Perceptions of Wheelchair Recipient utilized four items asking participants to rate their perception of Matt's need (how great his need was prior to receiving the wheelchair), his welfare, the fairness of his situation, and his likability. Responses were given on scales ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much). Due to a Qualtrics error, the question about Matt's welfare was answered on a 1–6 scale during the first round of data collection. Therefore, results for this item are reported using a standardized score (Z-score) rather than the 1–7 scale.

Continued Engagement included five items about how much participants would like to read more stories like the one they just read and how likely they would be to share, recommend, and tell others about the story with others on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much).

Transportation was measured with Appel, Gnambs, Richter, and Green's (2015) transportation scale short-form. Participants responded to six items on a 7-point scale (1 not at all to 7 very much). An example item is: "I was mentally involved in the narrative while reading it" ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 1.50$, $\alpha = .91$).

Enjoyment and Appreciation were assessed using Oliver and Bartsch's (2010) scales, where enjoyment items included, "fun," "a good time," and "entertaining" ($\alpha = .89$) and appreciation items included "meaningful," "moving," and "thought-provoking" ($\alpha = .86$). All items were rated on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Emotional Response had participants rate the extent to which 28 adjectives described their feelings after reading, adopted from previous research (Dillard & Shen, 2007; Myrick & Oliver, 2015) on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much). From the emotion adjectives, we created five emotional response composite scales based

on prior research: Meaningful (hopeful, touched, moved, emotional, meaningful, compassion, inspired, tender, awe, admiration; $\alpha = .96$); Happy (happy, cheerful, joyful, upbeat, humorous, amused; $\alpha = .87$); Sad (tearful, sad, gloomy, depressed, melancholy; $\alpha = .75$); Fear (fearful, anxious, afraid, confused; $\alpha = .80$); and Anger (angry, frustrated, annoyed; $\alpha = .87$).

Moral Elevation Outcomes were assessed by combining two subscales from previous research (Aquino et al., 2011). This measure is frequently used to assess moral elevation by asking about the cognitive outcomes that result from moral elevation. The views of humanity subscale consisted of six items, such as "The actions of most people are admirable." Participants responded on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree; $M = 4.11$, $SD = .67$, $\alpha = .87$). The desire to be a better person subscale consisted of five items, including "Be a better person." Participants were asked how often they were having those thoughts on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much; $M = 3.94$, $SD = 1.04$, $\alpha = .94$; total combined $\alpha = .91$).

Recall and Attention checks asked participants to select the main idea of the story they read from four choices (including "I did not read a story" for the control condition).

Demographics and Issue Exposure control items had participants report basic demographic information. Additionally, a set of three items asked about participants' previous exposure to the disability issues discussed throughout the study. These items asked whether participants or someone close to them uses a wheelchair ($n_{yes} = 45$, 9.1%) or has a disability ($n_{yes} = 153$, 30.9%). The third item asked participants how much attention they typically pay to issues affecting individuals with disabilities, on a scale of 1 (none) to 7 (a lot; $M = 4.35$, $SD = 1.67$).

3. Results

Participants who failed the narrative attention check (i.e., those in the story conditions who did not respond with "a high school student getting a new wheelchair," those in the control condition who did not respond with "I did not read a story," and those with mainly blank survey responses including the narrative attentive check) were excluded from analyses. We conducted a series of ANOVAs to test our hypotheses, followed by Tukey post-hoc tests to compare between conditions.

3.1. Attribution of Responsibility

H1 predicted that participants in the inspirational condition would attribute more responsibility to the individual for helping people with disabilities, and less responsibility to insurance companies or government programs. In line with this prediction, those who read the inspirational story rated individuals with disabilities as being significantly more responsible for paying for essential

equipment such as wheelchairs compared to those who read the systemic issue story (post hoc $p = .016$), and marginally more than those in the no-story control condition (post hoc $p = .072$), overall $F(2, 246) = 3.20$, $p = .042$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. However, we found no significant differences between conditions for how much responsibility should be attributed to insurance companies or government programs (see Table 1 for all means and standard deviations). Thus, H1 was partially supported.

3.2. Ways of Helping

H2 predicted that participants in the inspirational condition would be more likely to help in individual-focused ways, whereas participants in the systemic issue condition would be more likely to help through civic engage-

ment such as contacting representatives or donating to disability organizations. There were no significant differences between story conditions for either way of helping. Therefore, H2 was not supported. However, reading either story led to a greater likelihood to help in general compared to the no-story control condition, both in individual-focused ways, $F(2, 492) = 4.16$, $p = .016$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$, and civic ways, $F(2, 492) = 3.39$, $p = .035$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$. A Tukey post hoc analysis revealed that, specifically, those who read the systemic issue story were significantly more likely to help in both individual-focused and civic ways compared to the control (post hoc $p = .02$ individual; $p = .03$ civic). Those who read the inspirational story were also marginally more likely to help than those in the control, but only in individual-focused ways (post hoc $p = .05$).

Table 1. Variable means and standard deviations by condition.

Condition	Systemic Issue M(SD)	Inspirational M(SD)	Control M(SD)
Helping			
Individual	4.59 (1.55)	4.51 (1.73)	4.07 (1.72)
Social	4.93 (1.56)	4.69 (1.73)	4.44 (1.58)
Efficacy			
Individual	3.73 (0.94)	3.74 (0.95)	3.47 (0.90)
Social	3.83 (1.02)	3.70 (1.01)	3.59 (1.00)
Responsibility*			
Individual*	2.78 (1.66)	3.34 (1.50)	2.91 (1.42)
Insurance Companies*	6.17 (1.14)	5.95 (1.32)	5.99 (1.17)
Government Programs*	5.79 (1.48)	5.63 (1.49)	5.41 (1.33)
Spending*	2.81 (0.42)	2.72 (0.48)	2.75 (0.47)
Policy*			
Individual vs. Group*	3.50 (1.31)	3.39 (1.24)	3.09 (1.29)
Effectiveness—Indiv.*	3.73 (0.94)	3.74 (0.95)	3.47 (0.91)
Effectiveness—Group*	3.83 (1.02)	3.70 (1.01)	3.59 (1.00)
Issue Importance			
Insurance for Equipment	8.82 (1.97)	8.71 (2.14)	8.71 (1.83)
Universal Health Insurance	8.11 (2.81)	8.21 (2.80)	8.03 (2.70)
Wheelchair Recipient Attributes			
Need	5.79 (1.22)	5.38 (1.28)	—
Welfare (Z-score)	0.09 (1.00)	−0.08 (0.99)	—
Fairness	2.56 (1.29)	3.29 (1.64)	—
Likability	6.07 (1.00)	5.99 (1.05)	—
Sharing	4.92 (1.69)	4.79 (1.64)	—
Transportation	5.42 (1.31)	5.39 (1.22)	—
Enjoyment	4.26 (1.51)	4.72 (1.30)	—
Appreciation	6.08 (1.16)	6.00 (0.98)	—
Emotions			
Meaningful	5.20 (1.56)	5.20 (1.52)	—
Happy	3.52 (1.50)	3.93 (1.42)	—
Sad	2.52 (1.31)	1.85 (0.89)	
Fear	1.56 (1.01)	1.28 (0.64)	
Anger	2.56 (1.63)	1.46 (1.01)	
Moral Elevation Outcomes	4.04 (0.79)	4.01 (0.71)	—

Notes: $N = 495$ ($n_{Systemic} = 173$, $n_{Inspirational} = 175$, $n_{Control} = 147$). * Only included in the second round of data collection ($n_{Systemic} = 86$, $n_{Inspirational} = 88$, $n_{Control} = 75$).

3.3. Response Efficacy

H3 predicted differences between conditions in perceived response efficacy, where participants in the inspirational condition would view individual-focused methods of helping as being more effective and those in the systemic issue condition would view civic actions as being more effective. There were no significant differences between conditions for ratings of the overall effectiveness of the two approaches: individual solutions were rated similarly effective regardless of the three conditions, $F(2, 246) = 2.17$, $p = .116$. Similarly, policy advocacy was rated as being similarly effective across all three conditions, $F(2, 246) = 1.12$, $p = .327$.

However, we also examined efficacy ratings for specific ways of helping and found that, compared to the no-story control, those in the systemic issue condition perceived greater efficacy for signing a petition for insurance companies to cover the cost of electric wheelchairs, $F(2, 492) = 3.31$, $p = .037$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$ ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.83$ systemic issue; $M = 3.55$, $SD = 1.70$ inspirational; $M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.53$ control). Similarly, those in the systemic issue condition perceived greater efficacy for signing a petition to better fund government programs for people with disabilities compared to the no-story control $F(2, 492) = 4.43$, $p = .012$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$ ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 1.87$ systemic issue; $M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.64$ inspirational; $M = 3.32$, $SD = 1.56$ control).

3.4. Issue Importance

RQ1 asked whether the inspirational or systemic issue frame would influence perceptions of the importance of health policies which helped individuals with disabilities. However, results revealed no significant differences between any of the three conditions on how important participants rated the requirement for health insurance policies to cover essential medical equipment, $F(2, 490) = .17$, $p = .844$, or importance for universal health insurance, $F(2, 490) = .16$, $p = .848$.

RQ1 also asked whether the story frame would influence perceptions of spending on disability services. However, results revealed no significant differences between conditions on perceptions of spending, $F(2, 245) = .91$, $p = .40$.

We examined additional variables related to the story conditions specifically.

3.5. Story Variables

RQ3 asked whether story conditions would differ on a series of narrative engagement and outcome variables, including transportation (RQ3a), enjoyment/appreciation (RQ3b), emotional responses (RQ3c), and moral elevation outcomes (RQ3d).

First, there were no significant differences for transportation, $F(1, 346) = .03$, $p = .855$ (see Table 1). Second, in comparison to the systemic issue story, the inspirational story evoked significantly more happy emotional responses, $F(1, 346) = 6.63$, $p = .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$, and significantly less sad emotions, $F(1, 346) = 31.65$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .08$, fear emotions, $F(1, 346) = 9.69$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$, and anger emotions, $F(1, 346) = 57.57$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .14$. However, the story conditions appeared to evoke similar levels of meaningful emotions, $F(1, 346) = .00$, $p = .958$ and moral elevation, $F(1, 346) = .12$, $p = .726$.

Aquino et al. (2011) also measured moral elevation with the emotion terms 'compassion,' 'inspired,' 'awe,' and 'admiration,' which were part of our larger meaningful emotion composite. We analyzed these four emotions as an elevation emotion scale; however, consistent with the moral elevation outcomes measure, there were no significant differences between conditions on this scale, $F(1, 346) = .02$, $p = .900$ ($M = 5.25$, $SD = 1.63$ systemic issue; $M = 5.23$, $SD = 1.53$ inspirational). Thus, the inspirational story in general seemed to elicit more positive emotions and less negative emotions overall than the systemic issue story. However, the story versions did not differ on meaningful emotions or elevation.

Third, results revealed a significant difference for how enjoyable participants rated their stories, $F(1, 346) = 9.61$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$, but not for how much participants appreciated them, $F(1, 346) = .49$, $p = .483$. Thus, those who read the inspirational story rated their story as being more enjoyable compared to those who read and rated the systemic issues story (see Table 1).

3.6. Continued Engagement

RQ4 asked whether story conditions would differ on intentions to share the story with others or read similar stories. However, there were no significant differences in the future story engagement activities including reading similar stories or sharing the story with others, $F(1, 346) = .51$, $p = .478$.

3.7. Perception of Wheelchair Recipient

RQ5 asked whether the stories would affect perceptions of the wheelchair recipient. There were no significant differences in perceptions of Matt's likability, $F(1, 346) = .54$, $p = .464$, or concern for his welfare, $F(1, 346) = 2.52$, $p = .113$. However, participants in the systemic issue condition perceived Matt's need to be significantly greater, $F(1, 346) = 9.29$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$, and his situation to be less fair, $F(1, 346) = 16.54$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$.

3.8. Supplementary Analyses of Political Orientation

Because conservatives and liberals in the United States may have different views on healthcare issues, we conducted supplementary analyses in which we tested our hypotheses and research questions while control-

ling for political orientation (measured by the question: "How would you describe your political orientation?" with the response options of 1 = Very conservative, 2 = Conservative, 3 = Moderate, 4 = Liberal, and 5 = Very liberal). The results did not change when controlling for this variable and we therefore do not detail them here. A table comparing these two sets of analyses is available in our repository on the Open Science Framework (http://bit.ly/DarkNarrOSF).

4. Discussion

Reading stories about an individual being helped raised readers' willingness to help. Importantly, emphasizing information about social responsibility shifted readers' perceptions: Compared to the inspirational condition, readers of the social responsibility story were less likely to believe an individual with a disability was responsible for paying for their medical devices, believed that some collective actions would have higher efficacy, and viewed the situation as less fair. Compared to the no-story control, the inspirational story increased individual attributions of responsibility and only marginally increased willingness to help, while the social responsibility version significantly increased willingness to help and also increased the perceived efficacy of some specific helping items (signing petitions to advocate for better insurance coverage and government funding). Thus, both types of stories appear to provide some motivation for prosocial action compared to control, but the inspirational story also carried the potential downside of increasing the perception that individuals with disabilities should be responsible for paying for their essential medical devices themselves. This speaks to Landmann's (2021) discussion that there is a light and a dark side to eudaimonic emotions; such complex emotional experiences can motivate audiences toward prosocial behavior, but they can also manipulate perceptions of responsibility around the issues discussed. Although our study focused only on immediate effects, this heightened perception of individual responsibility may lead to decreased support for systemic action in the long term, a potential unintended negative consequence of reading 'feel good' or inspirational stories, compared to not reading this type of material.

These findings have theoretical importance because they suggest ways to shift reader focus toward collective action even in the context of an episodic news report or story; telling the story of an individual does not necessarily have to promote individual responsibility attributions. Additionally, the focus on collective or systemic action has been relatively neglected in studies of prosocial media effects, which tend to focus on individual action. We hope that our approach can serve as a springboard to broader consideration of these issues within the field.

Even though individuals in the social responsibility condition found the story less enjoyable, they were equally transported into it compared to the inspirational version, and were equally likely to want to share the story with others. Therefore, focusing on social responsibility information in stories of individual helping appears to have benefits for encouraging collectively-oriented prosocial behavior, and does not have significant costs in terms of story engagement or promotion of individual-focused helping.

However, the difference in enjoyment may explain why such 'inspirational' coverage of these situations are so prevalent, as journalists may wish to invoke more positive emotions in their readers. There were otherwise no differences in reader response. Journalists might consider alternative ways to evoke positive emotions in stories that focus on systemic issues, perhaps by mentioning organizations that are making progress in addressing these issues on a larger scale.

One challenge with creating socially-focused helping is that it is often less clear what behaviors individuals should take. An individually-focused story may have a clear path to helping: donate to that individual. However, the steps that individuals would take to change insurance company policies, support government programs, and so on are often much less obvious. A direction for future research may be to test ways to provide effective 'calls to action' for broader social change.

4.1. Limitations

The current study used only one set of stories; future studies should test whether these effects hold with other stories and topics. Additionally, some of the differences between the conditions came from characters themselves stating the need for broader social change; in real interviews or news stories, individuals may not spontaneously raise these issues.

5. Conclusion

These results offer clear guidelines for media practitioners who are balancing audience engagement while covering societal issues. It is our hope that this work can encourage reporting that highlights the larger systemic failures within our society and in coverage of individual struggles when appropriate. By focusing on isolated instances of 'heartwarming' assistance from friends and neighbors, we fail to ask questions about why these individuals are suffering in the first place. While it may provide hope to see a good friend save up to gift an electric wheelchair, these stories ignore the greater issues in society and do little to motivate a response toward greater change for the many other, anonymous individuals who are suffering. Our results show that it is possible to engage with the larger systemic issues in a way that still highlights individual perseverance while offering readers an outlet to engage in helping behaviors (collectively and individually) and also increasing their perceived efficacy of those behaviors. In the words of Pope

Francis (2020): "It is an act of charity to assist someone suffering, but it is also an act of charity, even if we do not know that person, to work to change the social conditions that caused his or her suffering."

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the author (unedited). Additional information about the study, including sample demographic information and political orientation is also available at http://bit.ly/DarkNarrOSF.

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Article

The Dark Side of Inspirational Pasts: An Investigation of Nostalgia in Right-Wing Populist Communication

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Abstract

In recent years, research found that populism employed a new strategy by using nostalgia, a sentimental longing for the past, as a communication tool to persuade citizens to support their political agendas. In populist campaigns, nostalgia is used to affectively link (alleged) crises with longing for a cherished past. In this article, we applied a mixed-methods approach to understand how populists exploit nostalgia in their communication and how nostalgic rhetoric has the potential to persuade people to support their claims. In Study 1, we conducted a case study based on a qualitative content analysis of Alternative for Germany's (AfD) online election campaign in the 2019 Thuringia election in East Germany. The analysis revealed that the campaign was built around the nostalgic narrative of the 1989 peaceful revolution as a proud historical moment for former German Democratic Republic citizens while at the same time creating a sense of crisis supposedly caused by false post-reunification politics. To further investigate the persuasiveness of nostalgia, Study 2 used a statement from the campaign and found that participants tended to agree more with populist statements if they contained nostalgic rhetoric (compared to non-nostalgic populist and control rhetoric). These findings suggest that right-wing populists can effectively exploit nostalgia and that it may 'sugarcoat' populist messages.

Issue

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1. Introduction

Nostalgia, a sentimental longing for the past, has become an omnipresent phenomenon in popular culture. For many, it is entertaining and inspiring to nostalgically engage in fond memories evoked by media (Daneels, Bowman, Possler, & Mekler, 2021; Kay, Mahoney, & Shaw, 2017). However, nostalgia is not an exclusive asset in the entertainment business but also attracts notice in politics. Since the 1990s, the use of nostalgia as a political tool has become a widespread in Eastern Europe

after the transition to democracy and market economy resulted in many unfulfilled promises and a longing for a better future (Velikonja, 2009). Realizing the potential of this frustration, politicians made use of the fact that post-Soviet nostalgia "[f]ueled by dissatisfaction with the present, creates and feeds the image of the perfect past" (Velikonja, 2009, p. 538). This is a rather recent example in a long history of political uses of the past across the political spectrum. Nostalgia has also proven itself to be compatible with the conservative politics of the right, defending traditions and values against change (Bourke,

2018, p. 453; Tannock, 1995, p. 455). The continuum between constructive and 'dark' uses of nostalgia varies depending on the political stance of those who employ it (Bonnett, 2010). As we will show, those with radical or extreme agendas tend to exploit nostalgia for emotional manipulation to either stabilize or mobilize against the status quo (Karakaya, 2020).

Subsequently, we focus on the 'dark' end of the continuum. In recent years, nostalgia's persuasive potential as an affective communication tool was also discovered by modern right-wing populists across the globe (Betz & Johnson, 2004). The most prominent examples date back to 2016, culminating in the slogans "Make America great again" (Trump, US presidential campaign) and "Take back control" (Independence Party, UK Brexit campaign; Campanella & Dassù, 2019). These campaigns are representative of a trend that illustrates the strategic use of nostalgia as a means of persuasion in populist politics (Lammers & Baldwin, 2020). Hence, nostalgia paved at least some of the way towards the success of contemporary populism in modern democracies.

While there has been some case-based work on the relationship between populism and nostalgia in several countries, such as the US, the UK, and Turkey (Browning, 2019; Karakaya, 2020; Kenny, 2017), research on how nostalgia is used in mediated populist communication and nostalgia's persuasive potential in populist messages is rather scarce. To contribute to these questions, we conducted a qualitative content analysis (Study 1) investigating the use of nostalgia in the online campaign of the right-wing populist party Alternative for Germany (AfD) during the Thuringia federal state election in 2019. Building on an example from the online campaign material, we then followed with an experiment (Study 2) examining the persuasive potential of nostalgia in statements about safety in public places. Our findings show how nostalgia is used in the campaign to create a nostalgically informed vision of the future combined with rigid in- and out-group thinking in times of crisis. By creating positive emotions that are evoked when individuals fondly remember the past, nostalgia may work to 'sugarcoat' populist messages that would—otherwise—be rejected more easily.

2. 'Dark' Uses of Nostalgia in Right-Wing Populism

Nostalgia is neither political nor 'dark' per se: it can be pleasurable, fun, social, and entertaining. There has been extensive research in recent years that underscores the cultural, social, and psychological benefits of nostalgia as a productive engagement with the past (Menke, 2017; Wildschut, Sedikides, Routledge, & Arndt, 2006; Wulf, Bonus, & Rieger, 2019). Research in social psychology shows that whenever people feel nostalgic by remembering meaningful events from their life, they usually feel connected to their peers (Wildschut, Sedikides, Routledge, Arndt, & Cordaro, 2010), develop a sense of meaning in life (Van Tilburg, Igou, & Sedikides,

2013), and find continuity in their biography (Sedikides et al., 2016).

At the same time, it is positive elements such as these that make nostalgia's exploitation for political purposes so dangerous. Svetlana Boym (2001) exposed this ambivalence of nostalgia in her well-established differentiation between "restorative nostalgia" that aims at reinstating a lost past as an absolute, dead serious truth and "reflective nostalgia" that allows one to long for the past as an inspirational resource to engage with the progress of time and the changes that come with it. Regarding the former, Boym observed that "[restorative] nostalgia characterizes national and nationalist revivals all over the world" (2001, p. 41) and warned that "[t]he mix of nostalgia and politics can be explosive" (2007, p. 10). To further investigate their relationship, it is important to outline which features of nostalgia are compatible with core elements of right-wing populism.

2.1. Nostalgia as an Affective Tool in Right-Wing Populist Communication

The extensive literature on populism shows that there is a long-lasting debate about what populism is and what its features are. We will not go further into the many conceptual differences between populism as a zeitgeist, thin-ideology, political style, pathology, form of discourse, or strategy (Moffitt & Tormey, 2014; Mudde, 2004; Stanley, 2008), nor into the literature of all elements of populism, such as the refusal of established political practices and norms, a tendency to authority, and a fascination with charismatic leaders (Taggart, 2004, pp. 275–276). Instead, we will focus on those elements constituting the affective dimensions of right-wing populism which we consider particularly relevant to understand why nostalgia is such a powerful affective communication tool.

First, right-wing populism promotes a narrative of a world in crisis to create a sense of loss of control. Typical scenarios include economic decline, moral decay, and threatening cultural shifts (Inglehart & Norris, 2016; Taggart, 2004, p. 275). This materializes in a "loss frame" which suggests a loss of status, purpose, and wealth due to the devastating impact of a crisis to create "ontological insecurity," i.e., a loss of trust in the world and one's place in it (Steele & Homolar, 2019, p. 219). When right-wing populists actively promote such a perception, this fosters feelings of anxiety, fear, and discomfort with the present.

In nostalgia research, this emotional state, rooted in a (perceived) crisis and experiences of disruption and loss, has long been identified as an important trigger of nostalgia (Davis, 1977; Pickering & Keightley, 2006). Nostalgia can be a way of coping with change and thereby can be addressed in the right-wing populist vision that capitalizes on the previously fostered 'ontological insecurity' to restore a sense of identity, self-continuity, and security (Smeekes, Wildschut, &

Sedikides, in press). The solution presented by populists pictures a nostalgically informed vision for the future that overcomes the criticized status quo and promises to reinstate past certainties (Wohl, Stefaniak, & Smeekes, 2020, p. 484). A series of three experimental studies by Lammers and Baldwin (2020) indicates that, indeed, nostalgia supports right-wing populist rhetoric if the depicted past suggests that things used to be easier. The authors conclude that "[i]t is easy to see why right-wing populism may be linked to collective nostalgia. Many of the slogans used by right-wing populist parties appeal to this collective emotion by calling for a return to the past" (Lammers & Baldwin, 2020, p. 944). The 'darkness' of this lies in the exploiting of the powerful affective link between the asserted state of crisis, the induced ontological insecurity, and the promise to retrieve a romanticized past which, however, never existed in the first place (Kenny, 2017).

Recent case studies show how nostalgia works in right-wing populist campaigns: For the Brexit campaign, Browning (2019, p. 235) describes that populists targeted the so-called 'left behind' who already felt "economically, socially and ontologically insecure" and attributed their situation to "globalization, economic transformation, multiculturalism and immigration" as well as unbearable EU regulation. The Brexit campaign then promised a "returning to a national homeland associated with community cohesion, job security and belonging" and a renewed recognition of the British nation (Browning, 2019, p. 235). Kenny (2017, p. 527) observed the same affective tropes of crisis and former glory within Trump's campaign, indicating that the outlined scheme is based on a shared discursive pattern. Drawing from her research on Ottoman nostalgia in Turkish populism, Karakaya (2020, p. 153) also points out that populist campaigns share rhetoric that connects sufficiently to restorative nostalgia by dividing the world into a binary of a cherished past and a despised present. In all three examples, populists intentionally communicated this superior past rather vaguely to allow individuals to fill the gaps with their own imagined version of the collective past. In these campaigns, right-wing populists capitalized on the "mobilizing emotional force" of nostalgia that evokes a bonding passion and encourages support of the common agenda (Karakaya, 2020, p. 152). The research shows many commonalities, yet each populist campaign is adjusted to the "local nostalgias" anchored in different national and historical contexts (Karakaya, 2020, p. 153).

2.2. Drawing on Nostalgia for In- and Out-Group Construction

Nostalgia can turn even 'darker' when the vision for society only caters to the needs of a specific in-group and disregards or threatens those declared members of out-groups. That the construction of the in-group entails a strong affective dimension has been stressed by Taggart

in the notion of the 'heartland.' Even though Taggart did not explicitly label the 'heartland' nostalgic, core features are present in his description:

> The heartland is a construction of an ideal world but unlike utopian conceptions, it is constructed retrospectively from the past—it is, in essence, a past-derived vision projected onto the present as that which has been lost....It is a diffuse vision, blurred around the edges but no less powerful for that. It is no doubt romanticised and a profoundly ahistorical conception but, again, no less powerful for that. (Taggart, 2004, p. 274)

In right-wing populism, the 'heartland' only comprises citizens who are considered members of the country's native ethnic group. The 'us vs. them' mentality is baked into the nostalgic vision of a nation for the natives as it was before the out-groups supposedly corrupted it (Smeekes, 2015). The in-group is constructed around the notion of the 'common man' who is portrayed as the unjust victim of change caused by non-native out-groups, such as foreigners and refugees, and powerful elites, such as politicians and progressive intellectuals (Mudde, 2004, p. 543). It is only the idealized past of this targeted in-group that right-wing populists promise to restore, explicitly excluding minorities and elites who are considered dissidents (Hameleers, 2018). Hence, the danger of exploiting nostalgia for the 'heartland' lies in relating the nostalgic sentiments of the in-group to the suggested question of why things have changed for the worse for them and who is responsible for it (Smeekes, 2015).

In their communication, populists orchestrate what Smeekes et al. (in press) call an emotion-based 'master-frame' of national nostalgia: Praising the national past creates a sanctuary of positive emotions among receptive members of this in-group. Coincidentally, they arouse the perception that this sanctuary has been taken which results in longing and anger about the loss that is eventually channelled towards xenophobia and anti-elitism. Various experiments in social psychology support the claim that nostalgia for the own in-group's past leads to in-group identification and out-group prejudice (Smeekes, 2015; Wohl et al., 2020). In a study with participants from 27 countries, Smeekes et al. (2018) also demonstrated that when the in-group was under threat, collective nostalgia increased which in turn led to opposition towards immigrant out-groups. Finally, being receptive of stories relating to the nation's past as a glorious time is linked to xenophobic and nationalistic attitudes (Smeekes, 2015; Smeekes et al., in press). In line with these results, it is plausible that populist attitudes also make individuals more prone to nostalgic populist statements. From here, we expect that nostalgic rhetoric increases people's agreement with populist statements (H1) and that such agreement should depend on individual populist attitudes (H2).

Following the literature review, we will now introduce the German case we investigated in two empirical studies on the uses of nostalgia in populism, starting by briefly outlining the political and historical context.

3. The Thuringia Federal State Election of 2019 and Alternative for Germany

The AfD was founded in 2013 as a right-liberal EU-sceptic populist party which has since then increasingly moved to the right. In the 2019 election in the East German federal state Thuringia, AfD and their head runner Björn Höcke successfully mobilized 23.4% of the votes. The party secured second place and was able to double the result from 2014 (10.6%).

The success of AfD Thuringia is attributed to numerous historical roots: After reunification, the promised prosperity did not materialize. Furthermore, historians showed that West Germany cultivated a pedagogical approach to history that condemned the German Democratic Republic (GDR) as a regime without acknowledging that many former GDR citizens felt that their biographies were delegitimized and their voices were excluded from the discourse (Saunders & Pinfold, 2013). Even after 30 years, many old and young East Germans report "[feelings of] social disintegration and a lack of recognition" by West Germans (Weisskircher, 2020, p. 620). This underpins a foundation of mistrust in the political system and its capability to represent East Germans' needs. Finally, there is a comparably high level of anti-immigrant attitudes that researchers trace back to a lack of intercultural experiences in the GDR and today's East Germany, which has contributed to the success of right-wing politics since the 1990s (Weisskircher, 2020, p. 619).

Against this backdrop, we chose to analyse the online campaign of AfD, which carried the main slogan "Wende_2.0" (Turnaround_2.0, authors' translation). It refers to the 1989 turning point of the peaceful revolution and taps into the subsequent inner-German struggle of reunification. With this reference, AfD set up the campaign around the trope of the peaceful revolution of former GDR citizens being their glorious moment in history that led to the overthrow of the socialist regime. To gain insight into the populist uses of nostalgia in this campaign, we combined a qualitative content analysis to explore the actual nostalgic populist communication (Study 1) with a follow-up experiment, using a message from the campaign, to test the assumptions regarding people's agreement with nostalgic rhetoric (Study 2).

For the case in Study 1, we explore four research questions:

RQ1: How was the narrative of the 'Turnaround_2.0' established in the campaign material?

RQ2: How was nostalgia for the 'heartland' used to foster a xenophobic in- and out-group mentality?

RQ3: How did AfD Thuringia make use of the nostalgic sentiments for the peaceful turnaround of 1989 and the 'heartland' to mobilize voters with their online campaign?

RQ4: How was nostalgia tied to right-wing populist elements in AfD's online communication?

For the experiment in Study 2, we pose the two hypotheses as derived in the theory above:

H1: Participants more strongly agree with nostalgic right-wing populist rhetoric compared to non-nostalgic right-wing populist rhetoric.

H2: Populist attitudes moderate the impact of nostalgic rhetoric on agreement with those messages.

The studies were developed and executed together with students in a seminar, while the final analyses of the data were performed by the authors. Data and supplementary material are available online (https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/ZNPGT).

4. Study 1: Case Study of the AfD Online Election Campaign

Study 1 explores the 'dark' uses of nostalgia in AfD's communication aiming at answering the first four RQs posed above. All quotes are English translations by the authors.

4.1. Method

4.1.1. Sample and Selection Criteria

In the first phase, we chose to gather official AfD campaign material from AfD Thuringia's website and Facebook accounts from the four weeks before the election on the 27th of October 2019. We expected to find the most unfiltered communication online because it is there that right-wing populists are able to directly address their followers and circumvent traditional media (Krämer, 2017, p. 11). We only selected material that either directly promoted the 'Turnaround 2.0' campaign or included content related to the 'heartland' covering topics such as family values, education, the homeland, German identity, and immigration, because the literature indicated a clustering of nostalgic statements with these topics. In the second phase, we only selected paragraphs or sections for the analysis if they included (1) (nostalgic) references to the past *and* at least one populist element, such as (2) loss/crisis in the present *and/or* (3) the 'heartland' *and/or* (4) anti-elitism *and/or* (5) out-groups. The final sample comprised posts from AfD Thuringia's Facebook account (n = 24; 1,054 words), and the Facebook account of Björn Höcke (n = 13; 2,012 words); campaign videos from AfD Thuringia's website

(n = 2; 3:00 min); paragraphs on migration, family values, education, culture, and security from the election manifesto (n = 1; 3,236 words); online pamphlets on the homeland, family values, immigration, and East-German identity (n = 5; 6,761 words); and election campaign posters with one-line slogans (n = 10).

4.2. Coding

The coding process followed three consecutive stages. First, the authors created a basic coding scheme that included the main categories deductively derived from the theory on nostalgia and populism. This comprised for nostalgia:

(1) Restorative nostalgia: Statements that present the past as an ideal time that should be restored (Boym, 2001). This can refer to either a national past and/or a vague bygone 'heartland' that is often contrasted to an inferior present (Lammers & Baldwin, 2020; Smeekes et al., in press; Taggart, 2004).

(2) Nostalgic sentiment: Statements that address an emotional state related to the past or the contrast between the present and the past. The 'bittersweetness' of nostalgia manifests in the expression or reflection of positive (sweet: comfort, joy, solidarity) and negative (bitter: anger, sadness, disappointment) emotions (Wildschut et al., 2006).

(3) References to the past: Statements that refer to the historical era and events related to the GDR and the 1989 Turnaround as well as East German's personal and collective memories of their everyday life in the GDR (Saunders & Pinfold, 2013).

For populism, these were:

(1) In-group construction: Statements that emphasize the origin of East Germans based on nativism/ nationalism and/or shared values and (nostalgic) emotions (Smeekes, 2015).

(2) 'Heartland': Statements that refer to the past as a time with specific ideals that constitute the collective identity of East Germans based on family values, shared convictions, in-group solidarity, and native exclusivity (Taggart, 2004).

(3) Anti-elitism: Statements in which West German politicians are made responsible for the supposed crisis within East Germany and Thuringia. Criticism claiming the failure of democracy due to the corruption of democratic institutions by elites (Mudde, 2004).

(4) Out-groups: Statements that are othering non-native or non-East German people, such as immigrants, refugees (especially Muslims), or West Germans by condemning their values, motives, and behaviour (Smeekes, 2015; Smeekes et al., in press).

(5) Change/crisis: Statements that discuss social, cultural, and political change in a sensational tone as harmful for the native in-group. Usually, crises are attributed to elites and out-groups (Inglehart & Norris, 2016; Steele & Homolar, 2019).

(6) Loss frame: Statements that frame social, cultural, and political change in terms of what the in-group has lost or what has been taken away from its members by elites or the out-group (Steele & Homolar, 2019).

In the second stage, the coding scheme was used by the students (n = 14; in 4 groups) to code all material based on the principles of directed content analysis to discover patterns and themes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Mayring, 2014) using the qualitative data analysis software *f4analyse* (Dresing & Pehl, 2020). Each group used the same initial coding scheme and inductively added codes to the main categories that covered the different sub-dimensions found within the empirical material, such as a differentiation of in-group and out-groups regarding the sub-dimensions of culture, nationality, ethnicity, religion, and political tradition or the 'heartland' as a shared culture, a geographical location, or the nature of the homeland. In the third stage, the four coding schemes of the groups were fused into one final comprehensive version by the authors. This version was then employed by one of the authors to code the material. This coding was finally reviewed by both authors and compared to the students' coding for reference. Only minor adjustments followed this step. We subsequently present our results based on this coding and the patterns and themes that were identified in AfD's communication across the material of the sample.

4.3. The 'Dark' in Technicolor Communication

In this section, we will demonstrate how AfD established the narrative of the 'Turnaround_2.0' in the campaign material (RQ1) that became the major reoccurring theme. Besides the digital aesthetic of the '2.0,' this is a reference to the German peaceful revolution of 1989 overthrowing the GDR regime. Thus, the slogan addresses an achievement of courageous former GDR-citizens and nostalgically celebrates their role in this historical event. We will subsequently show how nostalgia for this glorious moment was used by AfD to mobilize East Germans for yet another turnaround at the ballot boxes.

As Figure 1 shows, the outlined common nostalgic theme is present in technicolour campaign videos available on AfD Thuringia's website and on Facebook. In this video (AfD Thuringia, 2019a), the "1989" reference with protesting people in the background is followed by the lettering "peaceful revolution." It is then pointed out that "30 years after" the former GDR citizens fought in the revolution they have been "disappointed." Title stories of West German newspapers about East Germany are
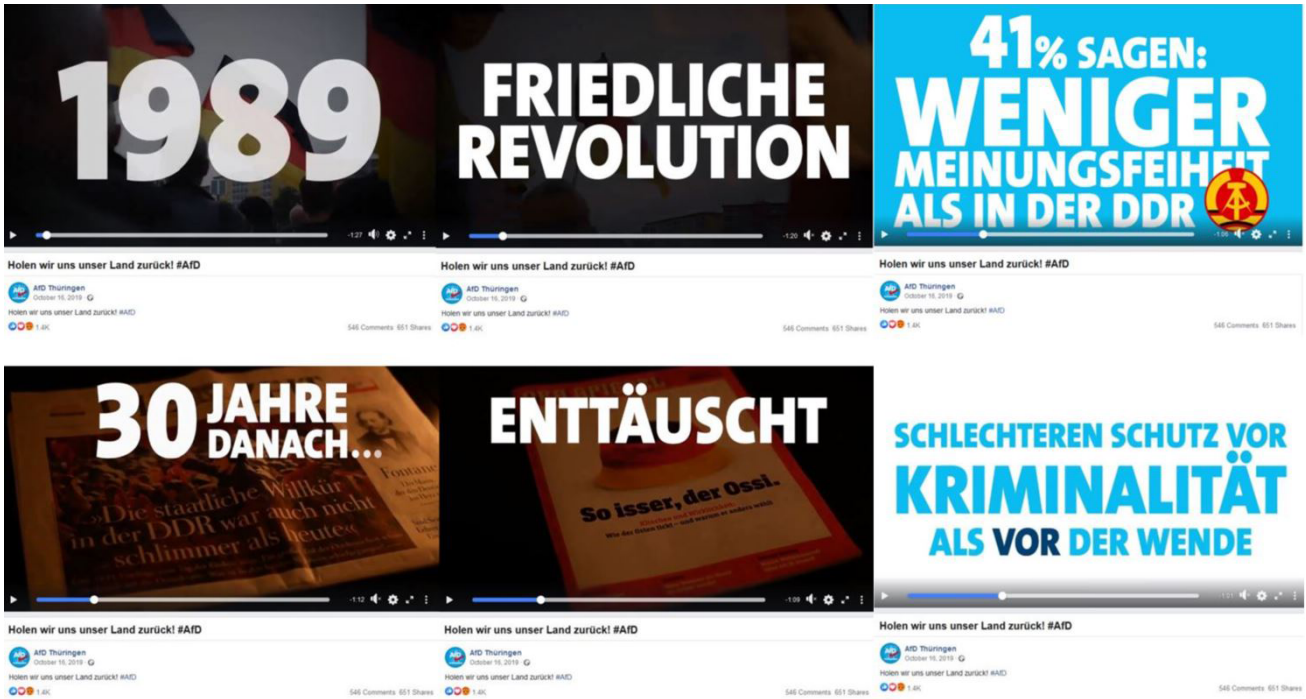
Figure 1. Six screenshots taken by the authors from the AfD Facebook video "Let us take our country back! #AfD." Source: AfD Thuringia (2019a).

used as a symbol for the arrogance of West Germans and 'their' media. The blue screenshots on the right show two statements from the video arguing that the present is even worse than the GDR regime: "41% say: Less freedom of speech than in the GDR" and "Worse protection from crime than before the turnaround."

The combination of nostalgia and populist elements also becomes explicit in AfD's election manifesto titled "My home, my Thuringia," which was available on the website (AfD Thuringia, 2019b). It includes statements such as: "It is with great concern that we observe that in recent years the liberal democracy for which the people fought during the peaceful revolution has increasingly been transformed into a spectator democracy with features of an ideological regime" (AfD Thuringia, 2019b, p. 7). This sentence prototypically represents most elements of the populist scheme: crisis, anti-elitism, and nostalgia. Other equal examples in the online campaign are a comic and a radio commercial visualized in a video. As Figure 2 demonstrates, the cartoonish style resembles harmless children's media with an entertaining appeal. However, beyond the playful aesthetic, there are layers of nostalgic narratives combined with 'dark' elements, such as the scenario of the crisis and the blaming of West German elites, the government, and left progressives. In the cartoon, Björn Höcke (top left) praises the former GDR citizens for their bravery in the peaceful revolution while the situation in Germany is compared to the oppression during the GDR.

In the party's campaign newspaper and on Facebook, we also found similar techniques to create a sense of crisis and evoke nostalgic sentiments. The hashtag #VollendeDieWende (#AccomplishTheTurnaround) was used for most Facebook posts and an encouraging tone
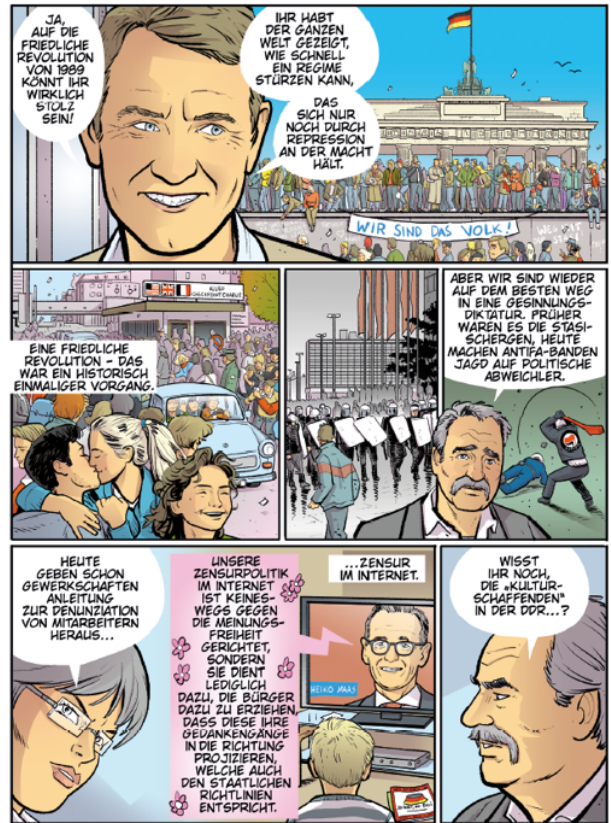

Figure 2. Screenshot of AfD comic "Fed up with bloc parties." Source: AfD Thuringia (2019c).

was often employed to mobilize voters: "30 years after the peaceful revolution, it is time for a revolution at the ballot box" (AfD Thuringia, 2019d).

Finally, on the campaign posters, there were many motivational slogans related to the same nostalgic trope combined with attacks towards West German elites: "Turnaround_2.0: Write history! 1989–2019 Complete the turnaround," "Turnaround_2.0: They had 30 years!," and "We wanted freedom and got an eco-dictatorship!" (AfD Thuringia, 2019e).

4.4. When the In-Group Nostalgia Turns into Out-Group Xenophobia

Additional to the 'Turnaround_2.0' narrative, we will subsequently demonstrate how the campaign also fostered an in- and out-group mentality (RQ2). Xenophobia is present in communication across different media employed in the campaign. In the video screenshots provided in Figure 3, there is an explicit focus on the 'heartland' that evokes nostalgia for the nuclear family living in the countryside. The countryside is portrayed as the place to return to nature, get a good education, and live a secure life based on traditional values. Living in the multicultural city is contrasted by a Muslim family comprised of a man with two wives in burkas, accompanied by the word "Sharia." The video concludes with the claim that Thuringia has changed and needs to be restored: "Together we accomplish the turnaround" (AfD Thuringia, 2019f). The German flag, omnipresent in all campaign material, is additionally used as a demarcation

between the natives and those regarded as cultural and ethnic out-groups.

In the party's election manifesto and thematic online pamphlets, nostalgic narratives were embedded in their argumentation for future 'heartland' policies. The party claimed their central concern is "to preserve, protect, educate, and promote the rich culture of our homeland" because "[f]or Thuringian AfD, cultural life is both the basis and expression of our identity" (AfD Thuringia, 2019b, p. 80). This particularly concerns the claim that the nuclear family is under threat because "[v]arious forces in politics, the economy, and society are working against parenthood and thus against the family" (AfD Thuringia, 2019g, p. 15). This is mixed with xenophobic positions when the party argues that immigrants exploit the welfare system, are criminals, and are used by the government to tackle the superannuation of the German population. AfD claims that this results in "considerable disadvantages for the ancestral population" (AfD Thuringia, 2019b, p. 50) while the party "pursues a family policy that aims to enable the German people to reproduce themselves in the long term from within themselves" (AfD Thuringia, 2019g, p. 33).

Höcke painted a particularly dark picture of Germany when he wrote on Facebook:

> Mass migration from the Far East and Africa, Islamic extremism, the decay of domestic security, rise in crime, rule by Arab clans, general brutalization and neglect; the Euro crisis, expropriation of savers by a zero-interest policy of the ECB, the destruction

Figure 3. Four screenshots taken by the authors from AfD video "Radio commercial of AfD for the Thuringia federal state election on 27.10." Source: AfD Thuringia (2019f).

of the German automobile industry, destruction of jobs; the disfigurement of the landscape by wind turbines, increases in electricity prices, poverty in old age—these are the consequences of a misguided policy that is no longer guided by benevolence. (Höcke, 2019)

This quote demonstrates how the claimed crises are tied to specific out-groups and elites while at the same time suggesting concern for the needs of the 'common man' and evoking nostalgia for the loss of the traditional norm of benevolence.

4.5. Nostalgia as an Affective Tool for Mobilization

Based on the examples that illustrated how nostalgia manifested in the campaign (RQ1 and RQ2), we will now elaborate further on how AfD Thuringia made use of the nostalgic sentiment for the peaceful turnaround of 1989 and the 'heartland' in their online campaign (RQ3). At first appearance, the previous analysis showed that AfD employed the typical nostalgic populist scheme that has already been described in the literature by Smeekes et al. (in press), Karakaya (2020), and Kenny (2017), yet there were also insightful deviations.

The claimed crises of democracy and German national identity fit the known conventional populist strategy. Here, however, nostalgia was used for two very different purposes. Nostalgia for the 1989 turnaround was particularly exploited to mobilize East Germans for a second peaceful revolution aka the 'Turnaround_2.0' at the ballot box. By comparing the oppressive GDR regime to the present political circumstances, the urgent need for a 'Turnaround_2.0' was suggested. This nostalgia was not about a superior historical era but about the proud collective memory of one outstanding moment in time. The 'Turnaround_2.0' was portrayed as the only solution to once more change the course of history and return to a state in which there is potential for a better future.

The second type of nostalgia in the material concerned the German 'heartland.' This nostalgia was used to design a long-term right-wing political vision based on an agenda catering to the native East German in-group longing for ontological security. AfD constructed the idea of a 'heartland' around traditional values and the native descent of the in-group rather than around a specific historical past. This allowed them to disregard the GDR and to instead create a vision based on German nationalism and identity that potentially captures a broader audience. The examples from the material show that immigrants and refugees, i.e., particularly Muslims, as well as left progressives were portrayed as those threatening the 'heartland.'

The examples presented in our analysis also show how nostalgia was tied to right-wing populist elements in AfD's communication (RQ4): Most importantly, it was the fear of crisis and loss, anti-elitism, and xenophobia that were present in combination with nostalgia. The nos-

talgia for the peaceful revolution mostly made use of the crisis trope and the anti-elitism regarding the state of democracy. The nostalgia for the 'heartland' focused more on German identity based on values, ethnicity, and xenophobia. In sum, these populist and nostalgic elements were strategically combined for two different purposes: the first to affectively mobilize against the political system in the election and the second to mobilize for a right-wing political agenda based on nationalism and xenophobia.

5. Study 2: Experiment on Nostalgic Populist Statement's Persuasiveness

Based on the findings of Study 1, we decided to conduct an experiment with material from the AfD campaign to investigate how nostalgia makes populist messages more persuasive.

5.1. Method

5.1.1. Participants

We recruited 235 participants via social media postings and student mailing lists at a large university in Germany. We excluded 62 participants who did not finish the questionnaire leaving a final sample of $N = 173$. The dropout rate did not differ between experimental groups. The average age of our sample was $M = 28.39$ ($SD = 13.20$) with 64.5% identifying as female (1 participant as non-binary). The sample showed an overall high level of education: 46.5% had a high school diploma, 23.5% a university degree, 13.5% had finished training in a skilled trade (*abgeschlossene Lehre*), only 16.5% had a lower-school degree (or had not yet finished school). Participants were randomly assigned to conditions. Analyses suggested that randomization was successful as neither age [$F(2,165) = 0.43$, n.s.] nor gender distribution [$\chi^2(2) = 0.74$, n.s.] differed between groups.

5.1.2. Procedure

After providing informed consent, participants first answered general questions about their political interests. Afterwards, participants answered a questionnaire on their populist attitudes before reading one of three statements (control, populist, and populist nostalgic) on safety in public places. After reading, participants were asked for their agreement with the statement, about the topic of the statement, and whether they thought the statement was objective or sensational. After providing demographic variables, participants were debriefed.

5.1.3. Measures

If not stated differently, all scales were measured on a 5-point scale (1 = do not agree at all; 5 = strongly agree). We measured populist attitudes using 12 items,

part of which were taken from Akkerman, Mudde, and Zaslove's (2014) populist attitude scale. The scale contains different facets subsumed under the umbrella of populism (populism, [anti-]elitism, and [anti-]diversity), we decided to use an overall index of all three dimensions ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 0.65$, $\alpha = 0.84$). For the full translated scale, see Table S1 in the Supplementary File (https://osf.io/fm5rg). Participants did not differ regarding overall populist attitudes between conditions, $F(2,170) = 1.28$, n.s.

We assessed the objectivity of the shown statement with two items ("The statement was objective" and "The statement was sensational"). These two items correlated adequately with each other ($M = 2.21$, $SD = 1.01$, Spearman-Brown $= 0.61$). We further measured agreement with the statement with a single item ("Please indicate your agreement to this statement"; $M = 2.38$, $SD = 1.15$).

5.1.4. Stimulus Selection

Drawing from Study 1, we selected one statement from AfD's campaign newspaper claiming that safety in public spaces has decreased dramatically compared to the past. As it is typical populist rhetoric, this original statement also contained colloquial and sensational speech (e.g., "*Kriminalitätskloake*," literally a "cesspool of criminality"). For the statements and adaptations used in Study 2, see Appendix A in the Supplementary File. Participants in the non-nostalgic populist group read the original populist statement but we cut the part that referred to the past. The nostalgic populist group was shown the same statement, but it comprised passages that emphasized a dramatic change compared to the past. To enhance the nostalgic sentiment, a sentence was added by the authors stating that in the past, children could be carefree when playing outside and one did not have to drive them to the kindergarten. The control group was shown a statement that presented the statement more objectively. For this purpose, we cut sensational language (e.g., "cesspool of criminality"), the reference to change compared to the past, and the nostalgic sentence about carefree children. The manipulation check shows that participants in the neutral statement condition ($M = 2.72$, $SD = 0.97$) perceived the statement as more objective than in the populist nostalgic ($M = 2.08$,

$SD = 1.03$) and populist ($M = 1.89$, $SD = 0.86$) conditions, $F(2,170) = 11.33$, $p < 0.001$.

5.2. Results

Zero-Order correlations of the measured variables for the total sample as well as for all conditions can be found in Table S2 in the Supplementary File (https://osf.io/fm5rg). To assess whether participants differed in their agreement with the statements (H1), we conducted an ANOVA with statement condition as independent and agreement as dependent variable. Results show that participants differed between conditions in agreement to the statement, $F(2,170) = 12.21$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.13$. In particular, the control statement achieved highest agreement ($M = 2.91$, $SE = 0.15$), the populist statement lowest agreement ($M = 1.90$, $SE = 0.14$), and the nostalgic populist statement fell in between ($M = 2.38$, $SE = 0.14$). All means differed significantly from each other (control—nostalgic populist: $\Delta M = 0.52$, $SE = 0.20$, $p = 0.033$; nostalgic populist—populist: $\Delta M = 0.48$, $SE = 0.20$, $p = 0.045$). These findings illustrate that while the pure populist rhetoric scored low on agreement, nostalgic rhetoric was able to partly 'bolster' rejection of populist speech, supporting H1.

To further investigate the role of trait populist attitudes in these differences (RQ5), we conducted a moderation analysis using the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2018, Model 1). We compared the agreement of participants in the nostalgic populist condition with the agreement of participants in both other conditions using condition as a multi-categorical predictor and included trait populist attitude as moderator. Means were centred for the construction of products using the respective function in the PROCESS macro. Results displayed in Table 1 show a significant interaction term. People scoring high (compared to those scoring low) on populist attitudes agreed more strongly with the nostalgic compared to both the control and the non-nostalgic populist statements. These findings support H2, which assumed that populist attitudes moderate the effect of nostalgic rhetoric on acceptance.

5.3. Discussion

Study 2 used one particular statement about public safety from the election campaign and compared how

Table 1. Linear moderation model predicting agreement with the statement.

	b [CI]	SE B	t	p
Constant	2.33 [2.09, 2.57]	0.12	19.00	< 0.001
Condition 1 (nostalgic populist versus control)	0.55 [0.19, 0.90]	0.18	3.05	0.003
Condition 2 (nostalgic populist versus non-nostalgic populist)	−0.39 [−0.74, −0.05]	0.17	−2.26	0.025
Populist attitudes	1.29 [0.91, 1.66]	0.19	6.84	< 0.001
Condition 1 × Populist attitudes	−0.91 [−1.47, −0.36]	0.28	−3.24	0.002
Condition 2 × Populist attitudes	−0.95 [−1.47, −0.43]	0.26	−3.60	< 0.001

Notes: Condition was entered as a multi-categorical predictor with the nostalgic populist condition serving as the reference group. $R^2 = 0.33$.

statements with either nostalgic or non-nostalgic populist rhetoric performed in terms of agreement. The results show two important findings: First, the non-nostalgic populist rhetoric performed weaker in acceptance than the nostalgic populist rhetoric. Second, populist attitudes were a significant moderator such that people with strong populist attitudes (people sovereignty, anti-elitism) rated the nostalgic populist statement as more acceptable than those with lower populist attitudes compared to both other conditions.

These findings illustrate that nostalgia can function as a rhetorical tool to 'sugarcoat' populist messages. While the political message and the tone of both populist statements were similar, people agreed more strongly with the nostalgic statement which contained aspects such as change, and being carefree back in childhood. Moreover, nostalgia might particularly impact those who share populist (anti-elitism, anti-diversity) attitudes anyway. Thus, nostalgia in populist rhetoric might work particularly well on individuals who are already prone to such political messages and thus works by maintaining followers rather than addressing new voters. It has to be kept in mind though that we only manipulated and tested one particular (short) message. Also, there was no nostalgic version of the control statement to attest the main effect of nostalgic (but non-populist) rhetoric. Our findings should therefore be taken as a complementary proof of concept within a case study that may induce further research. Nonetheless, these findings are noteworthy because the major part of the sample was higher educated and did disagree with the non-nostalgic populist statement. Our study further aligns with previous findings on the impact of nostalgia in the context of right-wing populist rhetoric. As shown by Lammers and Baldwin (2020), populist nostalgic rhetoric that focused on a challenge that was easier in the past increased people's agreement with the statement. While Lammers and Baldwin showed this in the case of political correctness in generic statements, we replicated their findings for an actual statement of AfD Thuringia's campaign in Germany on the topic of people's personal safety.

6. Conclusion

The rise of populism has revealed the vulnerability of conventions in modern democracies which have been taken for granted. In recent campaigns, right-wing populists employed complex affective strategies to undermine trust in democracy and non-native citizens. Nostalgia has become a prominent feature in most of them. Our studies examined the 'dark' potential of nostalgia and showed that it is used to mobilize supporters not only against the status quo and out-groups but also for a vision grounded in their longing for recognition, safety, stability, and the 'heartland.'

Study 1 examined AfD Thuringia's online election campaign and discovered that the precondition of presenting a nostalgically informed vision for the future is its contrast to a present in crisis. However, this crisis is not just depicted in its effects on the 'common man' but is additionally tied to the claimed wrongdoings of elites and out-groups. In this specific case, AfD also channelled frustration about the fallout following reunification, economic inequalities, and the perceived lack of recognition for East Germans. The results also show that nostalgia does not have to be anchored in a historical period. Instead, it is enough to offer a moment in time that had the potential for a better future to be realized but which has, as yet, not materialized. One could say that it is a nostalgia for the bygone potential that has led to the idea of the 'heartland.' Finally, results also stress that right-wing populism does not promote a bright 'return to the future' for everybody as the xenophobic dimension excludes those who are not considered members of the 'heartland.'

Study 2 built on these findings by focusing on a statement about safety in public spaces from the campaign material. The results indicate that the persuasive effects of nostalgia exist and that they partly depend on the populist attitudes of individuals. The populist statement with nostalgia led to more agreement than the one without nostalgic rhetoric. Moderation analyses showed that this applies especially to those participants with stronger populist attitudes. This suggests that nostalgia might perform especially well as a communicative tool to mobilize those who are already receptive to populist messages. However, this interpretation is preliminary and has to be replicated in other studies.

Concerning the limitations of our framework, it is important to emphasize that we followed an interdisciplinary attempt to nostalgia by integrating political communication and psychological perspectives. While both studies inform each other, the integration respected the theoretical and methodological conditions of each field and the subsequent shortcomings. For Study 1, the interpretative, qualitative approach is limited to the online material and therefore is neither a holistic analysis of the whole campaign nor its mediated dissemination during the Thuringia election. For Study 2, we only used one particular statement that is hardly applicable to the overall rhetoric of AfD regarding external validity. We hope that with our work we offer researchers on this intersection a meaningful contribution that will help broaden the scope of research.

We would like to conclude by highlighting that the material of the AfD online campaign was distributed and controlled by the party. This direct communication between the party and its supporters potentially removes the layer of controversy we usually find in mass media coverage of populist parties and their messages. It is important to further investigate if there is controversy about nostalgically informed visions in social media or journalistic media that counter false promises and manipulated emotions. Both studies show that creating a sense of crisis usually precedes nostalgic narratives. Therefore, disarming populism might mean first and

foremost countering the exaggerated crisis rhetoric and becoming aware of widespread sentiments. The potential of nostalgia might even turn 'lucid' when it is used to understand what people are longing for in times of crisis. This knowledge can contribute to solutions facilitating cohesion in liberal democracies instead of in- and out-group thinking such as that promoted by right-wing populism.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the author (unedited). Further material (data, syntax, coded material) can be assessed on the open science framework (https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/ZNPGT)

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