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Introducing the Transcendent Media Experience Model (TMEM)

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Abstract

Eudaimonic media experiences are vast. A comprehensive theoretical model of inward- and outward-focused eudaimonic media outcomes, that can explain how they come about and how they can be discriminated, is still missing. The current manuscript introduces the Transcendent Media Experiences Model (TMEM) to categorize eudaimonic content and experiences as they pertain to healthy self-focus or outward-focused (transcendent) responses and outcomes using self-construal theory as a backbone. This model allows for a more cohesive understanding of when, how, and for whom inward- or outward focused eudaimonic media experiences develop and the mechanisms for why they do so. As such, the model provides a framework for future research directions to systematically address the challenges of predicting, describing, and measuring eudaimonic media experiences and effects.

Keywords: eudaimonic media, self-transcendent emotions, self-actualization, inspiration

Introducing the Transcendent Media Experience Model (TMEM)

Media content is very versatile in the experiences and effects it can elicit. To systematize the large array of mediated experiences and effects, scholars developed several two-factor models of entertainment (Bartsch & Schneider, 2014; Reinecke & Rieger, 2021; Vorderer, 2021) which differentiate between hedonic and eudaimonic entertainment experiences, motivations, and effects. Hedonic motivation for media consumption is related to processes of affect regulation, involves experiences of entertainment, pleasure, fun and low levels of negative affect, as well as recovery, and companionship via parasocial relationships (Bartsch & Schneider, 2014; Reinecke & Rieger, 2021). Eudaimonic motivation for media stimulates rewarding social and cognitive experiences that contribute to well-being in a more complex and sustainable way (Oliver et al., 2018; Wirth et al., 2012). It involves entertainment experiences of appreciation, feeling moved, tender, and poignant, and can result in greater meaning finding or dealing with death, among others (Oliver & Bartsch, 2011; Oliver & Hartmann, 2010; Rieger et al., 2015). At the same time, eudaimonic media experiences can also involve feeling inspired, elevated or in awe, with effects of wanting to help others or feel closer to diverse others (e.g., Janicke & Ramasubramanian, 2017; Krämer et al., 2017; Oliver et al., 2012; Ott et al., 2021). Eudaimonic media experiences emphasize the elaborative processes through which individuals grow, self-actualize, and self-transcend in ways hedonic media—which is presumed to be processed more heuristically—is not concerned with (see Lewis et al., 2014; Bartsch et al., 2014).

Because of the wide range of eudaimonic experiences, Oliver et al. (2018) suggests differentiating these diverse experiences on a continuum of those that are more self-focused, or other-focused (also referred to as inspiring or transcendent). More self-focused media experiences, according to Oliver et al. (2018), manifest in meaningful experiences of mixed

affect, contemplation and need satisfaction, as well as self-reflection, insight seeking or truth finding. Self-transcendent or inspiring media experiences, in turn, are defined as such that go beyond personal benefit but entail the understanding of a greater interconnectedness between the consumer and others or a higher nature (i.e., Dale et al., 2017a; Frischlich et al., 2021).

Although this differentiation provides a great start to conceptualize the myriad of eudaimonic media experiences on a face validity level, a comprehensive theoretical model of those inward- and outward-focused entertainment responses is still missing. Consequently, at this point we are unable to make predictions about what content could elicit said inward- or outward-focused eudaimonic experiences and when. It is also unclear what processes are underlying the elicitation of inward- and outward-focused eudaimonic experiences, and how to differentiate meaningful (inward-focused) from inspiring/self-transcendent (outward-focused) responses and outcomes (Frischlich et al., 2021) operationally. Consequently, to map the landscape of the vast eudaimonic entertainment experiences that have been described in research in the past, the current paper will propose a cartography of eudaimonic media experiences. Specifically, I will introduce the Transcendent Media Experiences Model (TMEM) to categorize eudaimonic content and experiences as they pertain to inward- or outward-focused responses and outcomes. This model allows for a more cohesive understanding of when, how, and for whom inward- or outward-focused eudaimonic media experiences develop and the mechanisms for why they do so. I will summarize the existent scholarship on eudaimonic media experiences, introduce the main propositions underlying the TMEM, future research directions, and how this model contributes to the scholarship of media psychology.

Eudaimonic Media Defined

Eudaimonic media (often also referred to as meaningful media, see Oliver et al., 2018) is based on Aristotle's (384-322 BCE) definition of eudaimonia, which refers to being true to one's inner self. Aristotle understands eudaimonic happiness to come from a deep inner work of bringing out the best in oneself to serve the greater good. This definition includes more self-focused, inner growth work, as well as other-focused motivations (e.g., serving the greater good).

Other-focused motivations go in hand with transcendence, which is defined as a trait or state that orients oneself to others, truth, or higher nature (Peterson & Seligman, 2004) and reduces self-centeredness and selfish motivations. On a trait level, transcendence has been conceptualized as one of six universal virtues which manifest in specific character strengths (Virtues in Action Framework, VIA; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). On a state level, self-transcendence has been referred to a motivational state "in which the person seeks something beyond personal benefit, for example, the furtherance of some greater cause, union with a power beyond the self, and/or service to others as an expression of identification beyond the personal ego" (p. 305, Koltko-Rivera, 2006). It also has been referred to as an experiential state defined as "transient mental states marked by decreased self-reliance and increased feelings of connectedness" (p. 143; Yaden et al., 2017). And as a specific set of positive emotions that concern others more so than the self (i.e., awe, elevation, gratitude, cf. Algoe & Haidt, 2009). For the current paper, I focus on the experiential state, and rely on Possler and Raney's definition (2022; See also Possler, 2021) who posed a media centered definition in which they refer to self-transcendence as 'transient, perceptual phenomena resulting from intense concentration on a media stimulus and resulting in reduced self-salience and increased feelings of connectedness' (p. 14, Possler & Raney, 2022). Thus, self-transcendence is a process primarily manifested in reduced self-salience and increased connectedness which can lead to responses and outcomes

associated with this process such as different emotions, motivations, or reinforcement of traits, which will be further outlined below.

Given Aristotle's definition of *eudaimonia* that refers to self-focused and other focused experiences, I will use *eudaimonic media* as an umbrella term to refer to media responses and outcomes that are either primarily inward-focused or outward-focused. I argue that based on certain message features, and elicitors, consumers are more or less likely to experience inward-focused or outward-focused (self-transcendent) media outcomes in response to stories that contain eudaimonic themes. I will outline that such inward- versus outward-focused media outcomes can be differentiated based on self-construal theory (Baumeister, 1998; Kelly, 1955), which refers to the way the self is perceived in relation to others or the world (independent self vs. interdependent and metapersonal self; DeCicco & Stroink, 2007), the sociability of the emotions that are elicited, as well as self- or other-focused contemplations.

Self-Construal Theory

Today, psychologists have differentiated three ways in which individuals define and understand themselves in relation to others and the world around them. So called self-construal's (Baumeister, 1998; Kelly, 1955), or interpretations and thoughts about the self, traditionally have been categorized into being independent or interdependent self-construals (Markus & Kityama, 1991). Independent self-construals are rigid in nature and focus on autonomy, unique personal characteristics, and abilities with a focus on personal goal achievement (me) over group goals (other). Interdependent self-construals are more flexible and defined by the social contexts. Interdependent self-referencing focuses on external features such as statuses, roles and relationships. They understand the self and others as a connected entities and interpret their worth in relation to the outside world (such as family, friends and community or roles). This

understanding of the self is concerned with fitting in and belonging. As such, they tend to prioritize group goals (other) over personal goals (me).

DeCicco and Stroink (2007) have introduced a third self-construal, the metapersonal self-construal which sees the self as independent of ego-focused needs (me goals or group goals) but in relation to values and beliefs about the larger concepts of life such as the universe, nature, spirituality, or higher power. Metapersonal self-referencing is concerned with the oneness with all things and all living beings. The metapersonal self-construal transcends the individual and others and emphasizes the self in connection to all life and creation.

Individuals can have varying degrees of all three self-construal's (DeCicco & Stroink, 2007) depending on their cultural background, personal experiences and even situational factors such as priming. Given that self-construal's can be primed (Colzato et al., 2012; Suh et al., 2008) and media is a common priming source, I assume that eudaimonic narratives, based on their level of transcendent content portrayals can also prime either a more independent or a more interdependent or even metapersonal self-construal. For the current model, interdependent and metapersonal self-construal's are assumed to overlap in their activation from transcendent content portrayals. The defining characteristic between inward and outward focused media outcomes is that the former are focused on personal goal achievement, whereas the latter focus on either group needs (i.e., connectedness to others) or/and needs beyond that (i.e., Spirituality). In short, TMEM differentiates inward from outward-focused outcomes based on the differing self-construal appraisal from eudaimonic narratives.

The Independent – Interdependent Self-Referencing Continuum

Research suggests that independent self-construals, which are construals where the self does not overlap with others (left top corner of Figure 1) are associated with self-centered

psychological functioning which has been found to be related to fluctuating hedonic well-being (Dambrun & Ricard, 2011) that is associated with hedonic entertainment experiences (Wirth et al., 2012)¹. Interdependent and metapersonal self-referencing (right top corner of Figure 1) in turn has been associated with more selflessness and long-term psychological well-being (Dambrun & Ricard, 2011, Mara et al., 2010). Along the continuum of an independent and interdependent/metapersonal self-construal is space for an independent self-construal that is more eudaimonically driven. The latter has been referred to in the literature as healthy self-focus and includes aspects such as self-reflection, need satisfaction, personal-growth, and self-affirmation (Kaufman & Jauk, 2020; Li et al., 2021). Healthy self-focus is assumed to be situated somewhat in the middle between fully independent (self-centered) self-referencing that is associated with hedonic experiences (Dambrun & Ricard, 2011) (middle top section of Figure 1), and interdependent/metapersonal self-construals associated with transcendent experiences (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Yaden et al., 2017; Stellar et al. 2017) (See Figure 1). This range of interconnectedness with others (from independent to interdependent) or the world (metapersonal) has been argued to be specific for eudaimonic experiences (Vorderer, 2021).

In line with this reasoning, the SESAM model (Knobloch-Westerwick, 2015), which explains that selective exposure to media messages is based on what part of the working-self and affect are active at the time of media selection, also explains that media messages in turn, can be great situational stimuli to activate certain aspects of the self-concept. That is, self-concept is seen as dynamic and media messages can prime self-construal's, which in turn affect the message processing, which can over time also impact behaviors beyond the media context (e.g., prosociality, stereotype reduction etc.). For example, witnessing the transition of an unhealthy

¹ See Supplemental A for a further theoretical explanation on the relationship between independent self-construal and hedonic well-being.

self-absorbed media character to become a team player over the course of the narrative can also activate a more interdependent self-construal in the viewer, one that was not active before the media exposure, and consequently impact the subsequent processing of the media message. Or, in case of a fully independent self-concept activation, as in blockbuster comedy movies such as *The Hangover*, for example, that is mostly focusing on the portrayal of the main characters seeking positive experiences in the moment, viewers enjoyment response can lead to recovery, relaxation (Reinecke & Rieger, 2021), or mood management (Knobloch-Westerwick, 2006). The explication of the fully independent self-construal activation and respective hedonic content portrayals, media responses and outcomes are beyond this paper's discussion but are hinted at in italics in Figure 1.

Thus, the assumption by TMEM that media messages can prime different self-construal's that furthermore affect the media processing and outcomes is also theoretically based in the SESAM model.

--- Figure 1 here ---

Introduction of Model Components

The goal of TMEM is to map the landscape of the vast eudaimonic media experiences reported in the past and provide a framework to categorize specifically inward- and outward-focused eudaimonic media experiences. The model is not understood as definitive but rather as a starting point for scholars to think about ways to summarize and categorize the landscape of media experiences that go beyond short-lived entertainment (see Vorderer, 2021) and provide future research directions that could systematically address some of the challenges we encounter today in predicting, describing, and measuring eudaimonic media experiences and effects.

The TMEM is based on four components: 1) message features/elicitors, 2) media responses, 3) outcomes, and 4) personality, situational and social factors (Figure 1). It outlines that all components, but the personality factors, vary on a continuum of independent to interdependent/metapersonal self-construal. Message features/elicitors refer to the narrative structure and transcendent elicitors within a story. Media responses refer to the affective and cognitive media experience in response to the message features and elicitors. Specifically, the affective media responses are assumed to vary in their levels of sociability and valence, as well as strengths of transcendent emotions to differentiate stories that prime independent or interdependent/metapersonal self-construals. Cognitive evaluations are referred to as contemplation which can also vary in their self-orientation- (i.e., thoughts about oneself) or other-orientation (i.e., thoughts about others). Outcomes refer to the more or less inward- or outward-focused affective, cognitive, and behavioral effects that occur in reaction to the initial media response. Personality factors refer to interindividuality, circumstances and social aspects which impacts selective exposure, and the varying responses audiences have toward message features and elicitors.

Next, to categorize the myriad of eudaimonic media responses and outcomes, the four model components will be used to explain how one eudaimonic narrative may more likely lead to an inward or outward focused experience. Specific propositions will be posed that can be tested based on the TMEM and are summarized in Figure 2.

---- Figure 2 approx. here----

Message Features and Elicitors

As an underlying basis for all eudaimonic stories (whether inward-or outward-focused) are story themes that deal with content that provides the audience with a better understanding for

what is fundamentally important and valuable in life, making sense of difficulties and pursuing moral goals (Rieger & Klimmt, 2019; Ott et al., 2021). Some early research that analyzed the content of films audiences recalled as meaningful (referring to eudaimonic in general) indicate themes of lessons of life value, including the importance of human connection, love, care, and enduring interpersonal ties, as well as human virtue/inner beauty, suffering, pain, sorrow, tragedy, and life as fleeting to be prominent portrayals (Oliver & Hartmann, 2010; Oliver et al., 2012).

Furthermore, within the context of memes spread on social media, Rieger and Klimmt (2019) found themes related to the arts, lyrics and thoughts about life and depth (#deep, #art, #nature, #summer, #words, #life, #photography, etc.) specifically related to memes with the hashtag meaningful.

Also, according to Landmann et al., (2019) the experience of feeling moved, as a prototypical eudaimonic experience (Oliver et al., 2012; Oliver & Bartsch, 2011), is elicited by appraisals of surpassing social and achievement standards, such as depictions of reunion, separation, success and failure, relationships and social, environmental and sports achievements.

Overall, eudaimonia eliciting content has also been described to be complex, cognitively and affectively challenging, and artistic (Wirth et al., 2012) and more likely to come from the drama, history, documentary, or art film than comedy genre (Janicke & Ramasubramanian, 2017; Oliver et al., 2012; Janicke-Bowles et al., 2021a).

Some of the mentioned themes and content portrayals can be elicitors for self-transcendent emotions (i.e., nature, lyrics, art, moral beauty) and could trigger a more outward-focused outcome. It is assumed that any eudaimonic story (priming healthy independent or more interdependent/metapersonal self-construal) will involve to some degree some of those themes.

However, the TMEM proposes that the presence of transcendent elicitors and the narrative structure is what primes more interdependent/metapersonal self-construal's, and therefore also is more likely to predict outward-focused outcomes.

Transcendent Elicitors. A small (but growing) set of laboratory experiments have begun to explore how events and situations known to elicit self-transcendent emotions in the material world elicit the same emotion in a mediated world (e.g., Dale et al., 2017a, Dale et al., 2017b; Dale et al., 2020). Dale et al. (2017a) developed a codebook to analyze media content based on their occurrence of 20 direct and modeled elicitors of self-transcendent emotions, including things like beautiful artwork or nature, extraordinary skills, kindness, thankfulness, perseverance, and religious symbols. The codebook is based on the literature of elicitors of self-transcendent emotions (i.e., Algoe & Haidt, 2009) as well as the VIA classification (Seligman & Peterson, 2004). Based on the research that relates specific transcendent elicitors to transcendent effects the TMEM states: *Proposition 1: Narratives with high quantity and quality of transcendent portrayals will elicit stronger or a greater range of transcendent & high sociable² emotions, than narratives with low quantity and quality of transcendent portrayals, keeping the general eudaimonic themes constant.*

First, the VIA framework posits that people universally are driven by six virtues that manifest in specific character strengths guiding people's actions. One of the six virtues is transcendence, which is the disposition to strive for and connect with purpose and meaning greater than ourselves. The virtue of transcendence manifests in five-character strengths which include, spirituality, appreciation for (moral) beauty and excellence, humor³, hope, and gratitude.

² The concept of high sociable emotions will be discussed in the manuscript later on.

³ Humor has not been omitted from the content analysis of inspiring media for reasons elaborated in Dale et al., (2012).

The witnessing of such character strengths within media can further increase our own transcendent character strengths via the elicitation of self-transcendent emotions and social learning processes (Dale et al., 2017a). For example, witnessing John Nash in *A Beautiful Mind* showing appreciation and thankfulness to his wife can elicit the self-transcendent emotion of gratitude (e.g., Algoe & Haidt, 2009). The display of a character showing perseverance as Chris Gardner in *The Pursuit of Happyness* for example, can elicit the self-transcendent emotion of hope (e.g., Prestin 2013). Accordingly, characters portraying transcendent strengths are referred to as *modelled elicitors* for self-transcendent emotions.

Second, research has also identified a variety of elicitors of specific self-transcendent emotions within the environment that are not directly related to a character modeling transcendence. Such elicitors are referred to as *direct elicitors* and include, for example, portrayals of nature, art or architecture, life as fleeting, or another's accomplishment (Keltner & Haidt, 2003; Peterson & Seligman, 2004; see Dale et al., 2017a for complete codebook). For example, videos with depictions of stunning nature, architecture or art have been shown to elicit awe (Keltner & Haidt, 2003). Another, new concept that is also elicitor based, that has also been referred to as a transcendent experience (Janicke-Bowles et al., 2021b) is *kama muta* which is the Sanskrit term for feeling moved by love. It is elicited from the sudden increase of communal sharing relations (CS relations) such as reunions, engagements, weddings, the birth of a child, connection with nature or the divine, or sacrificing for others.

These transcendent elicitors can vary in their quantity, quality (i.e., length of screen time, camera angle, resolution), and type, which can furthermore be relevant for a transcendent response. For example, greater number of transcendent elicitors in Youtube videos has been associated with the videos virality (i.e., emotional response over time, see Dale et al., 2017a). In

terms of media experiences, it could be that a narrative with a greater quantity of transcendent elicitors would also be more likely to elicit transcendent emotions. However, this likely depends on the type of the elicitors shown and the individual characteristic of the consumer. For example, the portrayal of nature may be more powerful to elicit self-transcendent emotions (awe) than the portrayal of gift giving (gratitude) as the latter may depend also on the level of identification with the media character.

Third, each elicitor has been associated with eliciting a specific transcendent emotion (Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Stellar et al., 2017). Such as nature and vastness eliciting awe. Certainly, we don't experience transcendent emotions in a vacuum. It could be that some elicitors may be particularly powerful in eliciting a variety of transcendent emotions with powerful effects for transcendent outcomes. For example, it may be that specifically hope elicitors, as found in previous research to be the most common in inspiring content (see Dale et al. 2017a; Dale et al., 2020), elicit not only hope in audiences but also a variety of other outward focused (arousing, positive, sociable; Zickfeld & Lange, 2021) emotions such as courage, curiosity, interest or wonder. For example, witnessing someone overcome a great obstacle (elicitor of hope) can also make us awe struck by the magnitude of their accomplishment (i.e., as displayed in the films *Unbroken*, *Leap* or *The Martian*) and give us a sense of admiration for the persons' strength and resilience.

Fourth, the quality of the portrayal can also impact the elicitation of transcendent responses. For example, nature awe responses could be elicited from either one high resolution and long-lasting scene such as where a character is admiring the Grand-Canyon, or from a reality TV show such as *Fixer Upper* or *Selling Sunset* where we are confronted with multiple, but shorter displays of nature. The quality of the portrayal can take many forms, including length of

the elicitor being on screen, the camera angle, the lighting and camera resolution, and the nature of the portrayal itself (i.e., trees in the backyard versus view of the Grand Canyon). The TMEM assumes that the greater the perceived quality of transcendent elicitors the more likely it is to elicit stronger outward-focused responses.

Some preliminary research already supports the assumption that the quantity, quality, and type of transcendent portrayals are at least one determinant for what makes a narrative more or less outward-focused. Janicke-Bowles (2020) found that inspiring movies with a great quantity of transcendent portrayals elicited less self-centeredness, more mixed affect and marginally significantly more elevation than movies with a lesser quantity. Also, Janicke-Bowles et al. (2022) investigated the relative quantity of transcendent portrayals in four different TV shows that previously have been found to be inspiring (Dale et al., 2017b) and found in a follow-up analysis that the more a TV show included specific types of elicitors, the greater was the respective transcendental emotional experience in the audience. For example, an episode of the TV show *Fixer Upper* had the most portrayals of appreciation of beauty (ABE) and consequently also elicited significantly more awe compared to the other TV shows with less ABE elicitors. Furthermore, the researchers indicate that the quality of the portrayal may also sometimes outperform the quantity of a specific type of portrayal. The data indicated that the quality of kindness and moral goodness portrayals (i.e., longer episodes of thankfulness shown by a character, larger gifts of kindness) in the episodes of the TV shows *Chicago Fire* and *One Tree Hill* were more important to elicit compassion than the higher quantity of such elicitors in the episode of the TV show *Fixer Upper*.

Mediated Self-Construal Priming. *Proposition 2: The priming of interdependent/metapersonal self-construal from media will mediate the relationship between*

narratives with transcendent elicitors and sociable emotions (including self-transcendent emotions) and outward focused outcomes. Narratives that elicit more or less self-transcendent (and sociable, see below) emotions share similar eudaimonic themes of existential life issues such as moral virtue, values of human connection, and tragedy, just to name a few (Oliver & Hartmann, 2010; Oliver et al., 2012). However, what predicts outward focused effects according to TMEM is the narrative structure (restorative narrative) and transcendent elicitors (quantity, quality, type) that surround such themes.

Consequently, one attribute of narratives with such transcendent narrative structures is that it would prime an interdependent or metapersonal self-construal compared to narratives with less of those structures. Preliminary research supports this by showcasing those narratives with more transcendent portrayals elicited less self-focused experiences than narratives with a lower number of transcendent portrayals (Janicke-Bowles et al., 2022). Not only that, but with such a self-construal primed the subsequent narrative processing is likely impacted as per the SESAM model (Knobloch-Westerwick, 2015). Thus, self-construal can be seen as a mediator between stories with transcendent elicitors and self-transcendent emotions and outward oriented effects.

Restorative Narratives. The framework on restorative narratives (Fitzgerald et al., 2020a), which describes narratives that portray hope and resilience (as opposed to more tragic stories), indicates that narratives with a more positive progression are more likely to elicit more other-oriented responses and outcomes. *Proposition 3: A restorative narrative framework will predict independent/metapersonal self-construal and self-transcendent and sociable emotions.* Research has found restorative narratives, compared to more tragic ones without a hopeful/positive progression of the character, lead to more prosocial motivations, greater attitude change, and intentions to seek resources, for example (Fitzgerald et al., 2020b; Ray et al., 2019).

The mechanism behind this is that restorative narratives provide some of the emotion regulation for the audience by showcasing the overcoming of obstacles or growth from tragedy (versus the struggles alone). Thus, the audience does not have to engage in as much emotion regulation as they would need to when they experience a more negative narrative trajectory that requires them to regulate their negative emotions themselves (that is, they experience greater affective challenge). The less emotion regulation necessary, the more likely the audience can focus on thinking about others than oneself. In contrast, the more emotion regulation is needed to cope with the negative emotion the negative portrayal elicits, the more likely is the audience to focus on themselves (to deal with the emotional experience, via self-reflection and meaning making), as less cognitive resources are available to contemplate on what to do in the future; or be ready to help others when asked (prosocial motivations). Consequently, it could be argued that restorative narratives are more likely to elicit interdependent/metapersonal self-construals and self-transcendent/sociable emotions that in turn predict outward-focused outcomes compared to narratives that are more tragic and without a positive progression for the character. The latter invite more self-referential processing of the narrative (healthy independent self-construal). Clayton et al. (2021) already showed that videos with self-transcendent elicitors also had a narrative structure that included a transformation of a personal situation from negative to positive (i.e., restorative narrative structure) and in turn, such portrayals resulted in more transcendent emotions and prosocial outcomes.

Media Responses

The exposure to a media message can result in affective, cognitive, and evaluative responses that can differ in their valence, arousal, and sociability (Pizarro et al., 2021; Zickfeld & Lange, 2021). The most defining feature between narratives that predict outward versus

inward focused outcomes is that narrative responses are more or less sociable in nature. Along with the already identified self-transcendent emotions from transcendent portrayals (Algoe & Haidt, 2009), Zickfeld and Lange's (2021) positive emotions framework, provides a list of positive emotions that are more or less sociable in nature that expand beyond self-transcendent emotions (see Proposition 1).

Emotional Media Responses. According to the positive emotions framework by Zickfeld and Lange (2021), positive emotions can be categorized into six clusters that can be best described on two dimensions namely sociality, which ranges on a spectrum of intrapersonal (self-focus) or interpersonal focus (other focus), and arousal (high vs. low). According to their framework, many self-transcendent emotions as previously identified, are clustered in the high sociability continuum (i.e., other-focus) among others. These include: elevation, attachment love, romantic love, love, nurturant love, affection, tenderness, admiration, desire, and lust (higher arousal emotions); sympathy, empathy, compassion, trust, appreciation, respect, gratitude, and humility (lower arousal emotions). On the low sociability dimensions are emotions that overlap with some emotions associated with more somber meaningful media. These include: inspiration, awe, wonder, interest, curiosity, hope, anticipation, optimism, courage (higher arousal emotions); contentment, satisfaction, nostalgia, serenity, calmness, relaxation, and relief (lower arousal emotions). Based on this framework, the TMEM assumes that narratives with transcendent portrayals that prime more interdependent/metapersonal self-construal's elicit emotions that are higher in sociability than narratives with less transcendent portrayals (more interdependent self-construal).

Of course, negative emotions are important for eudaimonic entertainment responses as well as indicated by a plethora of research that showcases how high positive *and* negative

emotions are associated with eudaimonia more so than hedonia (e.g., Oliver & Raney, 2011). However, research seems to indicate that negative emotions are less often elicited from narratives that are perceived as outward-focused and conversely, media perceived as “inspiring” (often interchangeably used with outward-focused narratives, i.e., Oliver et al., 2018) is more often associated with more positive and less negative affect than media perceived as “meaningful” (Janicke & Ramasubramanian, 2017).

Proposition 4: Affective challenge will mediate the relationship between narratives with less self-transcendent elicitors and/or restorative narratives and independent self-construal and inward-focused outcomes.

For example, within the reality TV genre, Tsay-Vogel & Krakowiak (2016) found that for life-style transformative reality TV shows, feeling moved and touched (general eudaimonic affect) and positive affect predicted altruistic motivations (which is an outward-focused outcome). Janicke and Ramasubramanian (2017) found greater recall of negative emotions in an open-ended thought listing task from meaningful compared to inspiring media whereas the inspiring film has also been perceived to include more transcendent elicitors compared to the meaningful one. Conversely, they found greater positive affective and physiological experiences after recalling the inspiring compared to the meaningful film. The experience of more distressing (i.e., negative) emotions has been associated with a greater affective challenge a narrative provides (Eden et al., 2018). Affective challenge is often operationalized as mixed affect, which is a staple of common eudaimonic experiences. However, because narratives with less transcendent elicitors and/or less restorative narrative structure, and thus, greater independent self-construal, seem to be associated with more negative emotions, in addition to (low sociable) positive emotions, such narratives also might be perceived as more affectively challenging, as

they require more emotion regulation during viewing (Eden et al., 2018). In other words, the more affectively challenging a narrative is perceived the more is the viewer focused on themselves to regulate their emotions (healthy independent self-construal activation), which in turn leads to inward-focused outcomes such as self-growth (Bartsch & Hartmann, 2017).

Thus, in TMEM it is assumed that the emotional response to eudaimonic narratives that predict more outward or inward focused outcomes is based on the degree of presence (and co-presence) of emotions that are sociable, positive, and negative. Stories which prime interdependent /metapersonal self-construal's are primarily associated with emotions that are highly sociable and positive in nature and elicit to a lesser extent negative emotions (sociability high, positive emotions high, negative emotions low). Stories which prime (healthy) independent self-construal's may elicit less sociable emotions that are still positive in nature and at the same time they may also be more likely to elicit negative emotions, such as sadness, anger, worry, fear, or madness (Janicke & Ramasubramanian, 2017; Sociability low, positive emotions high, negative emotions high) due to a lesser portrayal of transcendent elicitors.

Cognitive Media Responses. In addition to affective media responses, one of the discriminating features of eudaimonic compared to hedonic media experiences is its increased cognitive engagement throughout and after the media exposure (Bartsch et al., 2014; Lewis et al., 2014; Vorderer, 2021). Thus, audiences who recalled or were exposed to meaningful or inspiring media report enhanced levels of reflection and contemplation about the media content afterwards, specifically triggered often from their emotional experiences (e.g., Bartsch & Schneider, 2014). Oliver et al., (2018) have referred to contemplation (or heightened cognitive effort) as an inward-focused experience. However, it can be assumed that an audience's reflection and contemplation as a response to their emotional media experience (i.e., feeling

moved, elevated) can be either about oneself or others. *Proposition 5: Low sociable emotions and more negative emotions will predict self-focused contemplation whereas high sociable emotions (including self-transcendent emotions) and less negative emotions will predict other-focused contemplation.*

For example, people often reflect about the narrative after it ended and imagine how the story would have ended if the characters had behaved differently or, if they were the character, how their story experience would be different; a process known as retrospective imaginative involvement (Slater et al., 2018). Research in cognitive psychology and neuroscience outlines how different forms of affect predict self- or other-related thoughts. It has been shown that happy mood decreases self-focused attention (Green et al., 2003) whereas general negative mood has been associated with increased self-attention (i.e., Wood et al., 1990). Thus, simply based on the valence of the emotional experience, people seem more or less focused on their selves when they contemplate their past experiences. Given that narratives with transcendent portrayals are assumed to elicit more sociable and positive emotions, the research would predict less self-focused (and more other focused) thoughts and reflections. On the contrary, narratives that elicit less sociable (still positive) and more negative emotions would predict more self-focused thoughts. Janicke-Bowles et al. (2022) indeed found greater self-focused thoughts as a response to movies with lower number of transcendent portrayals compared to movies with higher number of transcendent portrayals. Therefore, whereas contemplation and reflection are common responses to eudaimonic media in general, they might differ in their self- vs. other focus, based on the valence of the emotional response that triggers the cognition.

Outcomes

In eudaimonic media in general, the list of outcomes as a reaction to the media's emotional response range from finding greater meaning and purpose in life to wanting to be a better person, prosociality, and stereotype reduction (e.g., Bartsch et al., 2018; Krämer et al., 2017; Schnall et al., 2010). To differentiate these outcomes in more concrete terms, TMEM is relying on self-construal theory (Baumeister, 1998; Markus & Kitayama, 1991) as outlined before to differentiate -inward-focused from outward-focused outcomes.

However, based on eudaimonic story themes in general, there are certainly some outcomes that are neither inward- or outward-focused and simply a response to feeling moved, touched, which are the common emotional responses that have been reported from narratives that predominantly deal with topics about the human condition, life's struggles and values (Bartsch et al., 2014; Oliver et al., 2012).

For example, mixed affect as well as feeling tender and moved have been associated with wisdom responses (i.e., willingness to accept delayed rewards; Slater et al., 2016) as well as meaning and purpose finding (i.e., Bartsch et al., 2014; Oliver & Bartsch, 2011). Feeling poignant, elevated and a wide range of emotions from eudaimonic films has also been shown to predict a viewer's acceptance of the human condition and sense making of life's difficulties (Ott et al., 2021). These findings are in line with Reinecke and Rieger's (2021) concept of Sense of Coherence (SoC) which they see as one among several other resiliency factors that can develop over time from media exposure, eudaimonic in specific. Sense of coherence refers to a person's resources and views of life to respond positively to personally stressful situations (Eriksson, 2016) and it comprises three subdimensions: comprehensibility (individual makes sense of adversity), manageability (the perception that resources are available to successfully meet challenges of life), and meaningfulness (the perception that life has meaning and that the

challenges are worthy of engagement). Reinecke and Rieger (2021) demonstrate that somber media that depicts struggles of protagonists and difficult fate can provide the basis for making sense of events in one's own life and thus increasing comprehensibility, manageability and meaning (i.e., Sense of coherence).

According to TMEM, these general eudaimonic outcomes are assumed to result independent of how many transcendent elicitors are present in a narrative. In other words, all narratives that include a predominant storyline that deals with life's struggles, the human condition, virtues ect. are intuitively felt as meaningful and can provide a sense of purpose, wisdom, and sense of coherence. The argument is based on the meaning-as-information-framework (MAIF; cf. Heintzelman & King, 2013) that argues that when our core values are reinforced and validated (i.e., value of connectedness, universalism), intuitive meaning for oneself is experienced (see also Possler & Raney, 2022). At the same time, audiences can experience other emotional and cognitive responses and outcomes that are more or less inward or outward-focused, depending on the type of storyline (more or less transcendent elicitors and restorative narrative structure) and personality/social factors. For example, an episode of the TV show *Ted Lasso* that deals with life's struggles (divorce) and human virtues (kindness) can be perceived as poignant (general eudaimonic emotional response), and at the same time elicit anticipation, love, and optimism (high sociable emotional responses). It can lead to general eudaimonic outcomes of meaning making and wisdom, as well as outward-focused outcomes of connectedness, universality and understanding of humanities purpose (i.e., putting others happiness over one's own).

Inward-focused Outcomes. Within TMEM, I refer to inward-focused outcomes (associated with a healthy independent self-construal) to include those effects that are related to

helping a person's self-fulfillment, personal growth, autonomy and competence need satisfaction, self-awareness, self-reflection, and generally focus on the self (in a healthy way; Kaufman & Jauk, 2020) more so than on others. Respecting one's own happiness, health, growth, and freedom are all attributes of someone with a healthy self-focus, which also has been found to be positively related to well-being, specifically authentic pride, self-esteem, positive relationships, and life satisfaction (Kaufman & Jauk, 2020)⁴.

Because research has only suggested specific outward-focused outcomes from experiences of self-transcendent emotions in media, but not specific inward-focused effects from media, I am applying self-construal theory and the concept of healthy self-focus (i.e., Kaufman & Jauk, 2020; Li et al., 2021) to categorize media outcomes as inward-focused effects that have been found in studies on eudaimonic media in general.

Proposition 6: Low sociable emotions and self-focused contemplation will predict inward-focused outcomes such as information seeking, issue involvement, optimism (self-focused), death acceptance, self-growth meaning and personal purpose, self-acceptance, self-worth, inner peace, personal aspirations, solace, savor, mindfulness and autonomy and competence need satisfaction.

The most observed outcomes based on previous research on eudaimonic media in general that can be categorized as healthy self-focused outcomes include self-reflection, insight, and understanding into one's own life which also has been found to trigger information seeking, issue involvement and political participation (Bartsch & Schneider, 2014) as well as increased self-worth or self-acceptance (Wirth et al., 2012). Furthermore, self growth-oriented meaning in life (see below and Li et al., 2021) as well as personal purpose (i.e., following the life goal of

⁴ A short description of egocentric driven hedonic media outcomes is provided in Supplemental B

achieving professional success) could also be subsumed under the healthy self-focused outcome category.

Death acceptance is another outcome that can fall within the healthy self-focused category as it is concerned with dealing with an individual's own mortality. That is, content that deals with tragedy, suffering and death can help viewers deal with their own mortality by providing them with an understanding of life's values and meaning overall, independent of one's individual death (Rieger, et al., 2015). Specifically, inward focused content may provide viewers with a coping mechanism to deal with the threats of mortality by providing opportunities to relate to the media characters (Rieger & Hofer, 2017) or other anxiety buffering structures within the narrative (i.e., cultural values, self-esteem buffers; Rieger et al., 2015). Managing mortality salience via eudaimonic narratives involves inner work of defending one's worldview or self-esteem which is in line with a more independent self-construal.

Solace (Rieger & Klimmt, 2019) is another outcome of coping with death, dying and difficult life circumstances that often are discussed in emotionally complex eudaimonic media. Solace is accompanied by feelings of inner peace and contentment as a viewer has found new personal insights via the characters proposition or worldview about human existence and its boundaries.

Furthermore, it is well known that discrete emotions as elicited by media can exert unique patterns of influence (Prestin & Nabi, 2020). For example, common effects to experiences of mediated nostalgia—a bittersweet emotional experiences elicited by memories from the past triggered by media (Wulf et al., 2018)—are conceptualized into three functions that are related to well-being. They include self-orientation (i.e., enhancing personal growth), existential function (i.e., providing meaning in life) and a social function (i.e., providing closeness to others). The

self-orientation and existential functions manifests in effects such as personal growth, self-acceptance, and a general exploration of one's identity (Batcho, et al., 2008), increased self-esteem and a general positive view of the self (Hepper et al., 2012; Vess et al., 2012). That is, they fall within the healthy self-focused outcome category. The social effects of nostalgia would fall within the transcendent outcome category but is expected to only predict such outcomes after first referring to one's own memories of, for example, the people who were involved in the media experience one remembers. For example, playing *Super Mario* as an adult can elicit nostalgia by remembering the time one played it as a child with one's friends. This can lead one to realizing the value of close relationships and in turn, trigger feelings of connectedness and universality.

Relaxation and calmness (two additional low sociability responses as per TMEM) in general have been associated with a lack of motivation for individuals to act upon their environment (Schachter & Singer, 1962) and as such can predict more self-absorbed behaviors. Similarly, contentment (another low sociability positive emotion as per TMEM) as a short-term experience, decreases the drive for approaching behaviors as individuals feel satisfied in their needs in the moment. It prompts individuals to savor the present moment and integrate their recent experiences into their self-concept and world view. As such, contentment directs an individual's attention inward (Griskevicius et al., 2010). Within the media context, contentment and relaxation were negatively associated with new technology adoption, (compared to interest and excitement) indicating a lower tendency from those emotions to be open for new opportunities (i.e., less outward oriented experiences; Ahn & Shin, 2015). Furthermore, contentment (compared to anger and enthusiasm) was not related to opinion change after exposure to a positively framed news story, again indicating the more inward oriented, less mobilizing (i.e., I

wanting to do something for others (service)) emotional response from contentment (Lecheler et al., 2013).

Furthermore, the fulfillment of psychological needs, previously has been associated as an inward-focused experience by Oliver et al., (2018). However, relatedness is part of an interdependent/metapersonal self-construal (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; DeCicco & Stroink, 2007) and autonomy and competence needs have been attributed more so to an independent self-construal (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Thus, the TMEM predicts that specifically narratives with low sociable emotions (more affective challenges) and self-focused contemplation may be more likely to satisfy autonomy and competence needs in specific.

Outward-focused Outcomes. Transcendence or self-transcendent experiences and actions draw our attention away from ourselves and let us temporarily forget about our daily worries and sorrows. Instead, they shift our frame of reference to something greater (i.e., universe), benefitting others, making things better for future generations, and away from self-importance (Stellar et al., 2017; Yaden et al., 2017). As such, they overlap with an interdependent self-construal that views other people, social roles, and relationships as central to the self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) as well as a meta-personal sense of self that is concerned with beyond body relations with the cosmos, nature, or higher power (DeCicco & Stroink, 2007). The outcomes of mediated self-transcendence are based specifically on the effects of self-transcendent emotions that research has reported before (e.g., Oliver et al., 2018; Schnall et al., 2010). *Proposition 7: High sociable emotions and other-focused contemplation will predict other-focused outcomes such as humanities' purpose and meaning, spirituality/religiosity, prosocial/kind behavior, connectedness, stereotype reduction, inclusiveness, universality, service, optimism (other-*

oriented), social consciousness, transcendent character strengths and relatedness need satisfaction.

Most of the research has been done on moral elevation, which has been associated with a desire to be less selfish, wanting to become a better person, and desiring to emulate acts of virtue (Schnall et al., 2010; Stellar et al., 2017), as well as greater likelihood to help others, even members of an outgroup (e.g., Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Bartsch et al., 2018; Schnall et al., 2010). Janicke & Oliver (2017) found when participants recalled a eudaimonic film, they experienced more elevation, which in turn predicted feelings of connectedness toward close others, their family, and a higher power. Oliver and colleagues (2015) found that connectedness experiences from inspiring videos can extend even to those from a diverse racial background. That is, research suggest that eudaimonic media that is morally elevating in nature has the potential to decrease stereotypes (Bartsch et al., 2018; Krämer et al., 2017).

Other self-transcendent outcomes include: greater willingness to volunteer time to help others, or give back, preferring experiences over material products, and increased perception of time (Schnall et al., 2010; Rudd et al., 2012) from the experience of awe or gratitude; increased perception of the importance of spirituality in people' life and spiritual beliefs, especially for non-religious people (Van Cappellen et al., 2013) as well as a feelings of oneness with all humans and friends (Van Cappellen & Saroglou, 2012), a fusion of identity with all humanity (Pizarro et al., 2021) after experiencing admiration, elevation or awe; optimism (which can be self or other directed) and goal achievement from the experience of hope (Prestin, 2013; Prestin & Nabi, 2020) as well as stronger commitment to a relationship, general compassionate and kind behavior, and prosociality from the experience of kama muta (Janicke-Bowles et al., 2021b; Pizarro et al., 2021).

Furthermore, how we interpret meaning in life, which is a common outcome of eudaimonic entertainment (Oliver & Bartsch, 2011) can have different reference points depending on the activation of an independent or interdependent self-construal and consequential effects for well-being. That is, meaning in life can be interpreted from a self-growth perspective or an other-oriented perspective as shown in research by Li et al. (2021). Thus, in TMEM, interpersonal meaning in life beliefs (i.e., finding meaning through the relationship with family, friends) are assumed to be associated with self-transcendent outcomes whereas self-growth meaning in life beliefs (i.e., becoming the best version of ourselves) are associated with healthy self-focused outcomes.

Personality and Social Factors Impacting Message Features

Based on the SESAM model (Knobloch-Westerwick, 2015) it is important to consider, dispositional, situational, and social factors when it comes to the prediction of media effects and selective exposure.

Proposition 8: Personality variables, situational circumstances and social contexts will moderate the relationship between narrative type (high vs. low transcendent elicitors) and media responses and outcomes.

First, various personality variables may be particularly impactful for whether a narrative activates or reinforces (healthy) independent or interdependent/metapersonal self-construal's and respective outcomes. Based on previous research on eudaimonic media responses these could include: openness to experiences, need for affect, need for cognition, empathic concern, perspective taking, spirituality, gratitude, optimism, and search for meaning, as well as demographics such as age and gender (Janicke-Bowles et al., 2021a; Mares et al., 2016; Oliver & Raney, 2011) at a minimum. For example, individuals with high trait spirituality may be more

likely to resonate with the number and quality of transcendent elicitors present and therefore experience more transcendent emotions and outward-focused outcomes (Janicke-Bowles et al., 2021a). A person with high need for affect may be more likely to enjoy the affective challenges that stories with less transcendent elicitors and/or less restorative narrative structure provide and, as a consequence, experience more low sociable positive emotions and inward-focused outcomes as a result and in turn, selective exposure to similar stories in the future. In general, it depends on the interaction between the specific personality variable and the content portrayed whether the inward or outward-focused effects are enhanced.

Consistent with the SESAM model's predictions that media can reinforce pre-existing beliefs and emotions, the Biographic Resonance Theory (Klimmt & Rieger, 2021) posits that an individual's (eudaimonic) entertainment experience is shaped by the extent to which the entertainment message aligns with their personal biography, historical context, current situation, or existential queries (Klimmt & Rieger, 2021). Whenever resonance happens the audience will be more involved in the narrative, and the content will be elaborated on more deeply, which could moderate the strength of the media response and respective inward or outward media outcomes. Resonance in general has been associated with eudaimonic emotions (feeling touched and moved) and can provide meaning for the person that experiences the resonance. For example, Ott et al., (2021) found that value congruency between participants and the (more or less) eudaimonic film they watched, strengthened the outcomes of the film including sense making, acceptance of the human condition and moral goal intentions. Because each story will relate differently to people, biographic resonance can be seen as an individual difference variable that can help explain variance in why some people experience more (or less) strong media

responses and effects, and whether for some a (healthy) independent or more interdependent/metapersonal self-construal is activated.

Second, for situational variables, as per the SESAM model, when people feel no threat to their self-concept (i.e., no self-concept depletion) and they are in a positive affective state, self-improvement motives—that is seeking out content that challenges the self to grow and self-actualize—can determine media exposure and in turn, impact self-construal activation and respective processing of the narrative. Other situational variables such as time of consumption, company during media consumption and communication technology can also impact the narrative processing and demand further research attention.

Third, for social variables, the cultural background of the audience could be an additional moderator. Individuals from collectivistic cultures might recognize transcendent message features more likely than individuals from individualistic cultures. Collectivistic cultures think of the self as more interdependent and connected to others than individualistic cultures (i.e., Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Because connectedness is part of transcendence (Yaden et al., 2017) it could be that individuals from collectivistic cultures (or with a strong interdependent self-construal) would notice transcendent elicitors more often and experience stronger transcendent emotions and effects compared to individuals from individualistic cultures (with a more independent self-construal).

As per SESAM model, predispositions, situational and social variables can all co-occur and impact the inward or outward focused effects from media in a dynamic, transactional process. For example, someone high in need for affect, who co-watches a story with many transcendent portrayals with their roommate, that resonates with their life, at a time where their self-regulation is not depleted and they are in a general positive state may be more likely to

demonstrate an activation of their interdependent self-construal, and as a consequence experience self-transcendent emotions and outward-focused effects (i.e., cooking the roommate dinner). On the other hand, in the same scenario if the person is ego-depleted from a long day at work, the responses and effects to the exposure to a self-transcendent media narrative may be lessened (i.e., roommate has to cook for themselves); or they may not select the narrative in the first place to watch (i.e. Eden et al. 2018).

TMEM Summary

The Transcendent Media Experience Model uses self-construal theory as the basis to differentiate the processing of eudaimonic content as more self or other- focused. The model assumes that eudaimonic media content, responses, and outcomes can be defined by the degree to which the self is perceived to be overlapping with (independent/metapersonal self-construal) or relatively separate ([healthy] independent self-construal) from others or the world. Media stories that prime (healthy) independent self-construal and predict inward-focused outcomes are understood to focus on healthy forms of self-interest which can manifest in personal growth, self-affirmation, self-awareness, self-reflection, an understanding of oneself in the world (i.e., meaning, purpose) and as such an overall sense of self-actualization (Kaufman & Jauk, 2020). That is, a relative weaker overlap between self and others or the environment is assumed for inward-focused media outcomes compared to outward-focused outcomes. For the latter a great overlap between self and others/universe is assumed, indicating hardly any difference between self- and others or the world, which allows for greater experiences of connectedness, prosociality, and universality, that is an overall outward-focus. Even though several personality-, situational-, and social factors are assumed to impact message processing, TMEM proposes that transcendent elicitors (quality, quantity, type) and a restorative narrative structure could be

specific components that lend themselves to differentiate the priming of different self-construals, and as a result inward or outward-focused outcomes. Furthermore, TMEM proposes to categorize the breadth of reported eudaimonic emotional media responses (ranging from feeling sympathy and compassion to elevation, curiosity, and love) based on sociability and valence which in turn predict inward or outward-focused outcomes. Additionally, it is assumed that there are certain responses such as feeling moved, appreciation of the narrative and outcomes (general meaning making, wisdom, sense of coherence) that are not inward- or outward-focused per se but general eudaimonic responses and outcomes. That is, eudaimonic storylines in general are intuitively meaning provoking, provide a sense of coherence and demand cognitive effort.

Discussion

Conceptually, differentiating the vast amount of eudaimonic experiences aids the scholarship of positive media psychology to better understand under what conditions and for whom specific effects come about, predict future responses and outcomes, and provides heuristic value. TMEM has been conceptualized from an entertainment lens with an audiovisual focus but can be applied in various contexts that include a narrative structure including advertising, health messaging, or political discourse.

Furthermore, TMEM mirrors newer conceptualizations of well-being that go beyond the dichotomy of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being but also include spiritual well-being, which is defined as “a state of being reflecting positive feelings, behaviors, and cognitions of relationships with oneself, others, the transcendent and nature” (p. 1975; Gomez & Fisher, 2003). As such TMEM provides at least at face value appropriate construct validity according to the newest conceptualizations of well-being by including transcendence as the most outward oriented human media effects. Furthermore, because self-transcendent (and sociable emotions in general)

are also elicited by non-mediated situations, TMEM can also be applied to contexts without narrative structure, such as comments or self-disclosure on social media to predict more inward or outward-focused effects for those reading the comments or posts, thus providing some external validity.

The theory could be more parsimonious in nature given that TMEM does not define the threshold at which a narrative will be transcendent enough to elicit mainly transcendent responses and outcomes. Yet, specific propositions are provided that can aid future research to make the differentiation between the distinctive types of eudaimonic media experiences more concise.

Additionally, unifying measures for eudaimonic responses, specifically those that are associated with an (healthy) independent or interdependent/metapersonal self-construal, are still lacking. TMEM provides a foundation for the creation of such measures by outlining a framework for the dimensionality of more or less sociable and positive-emotional experience.

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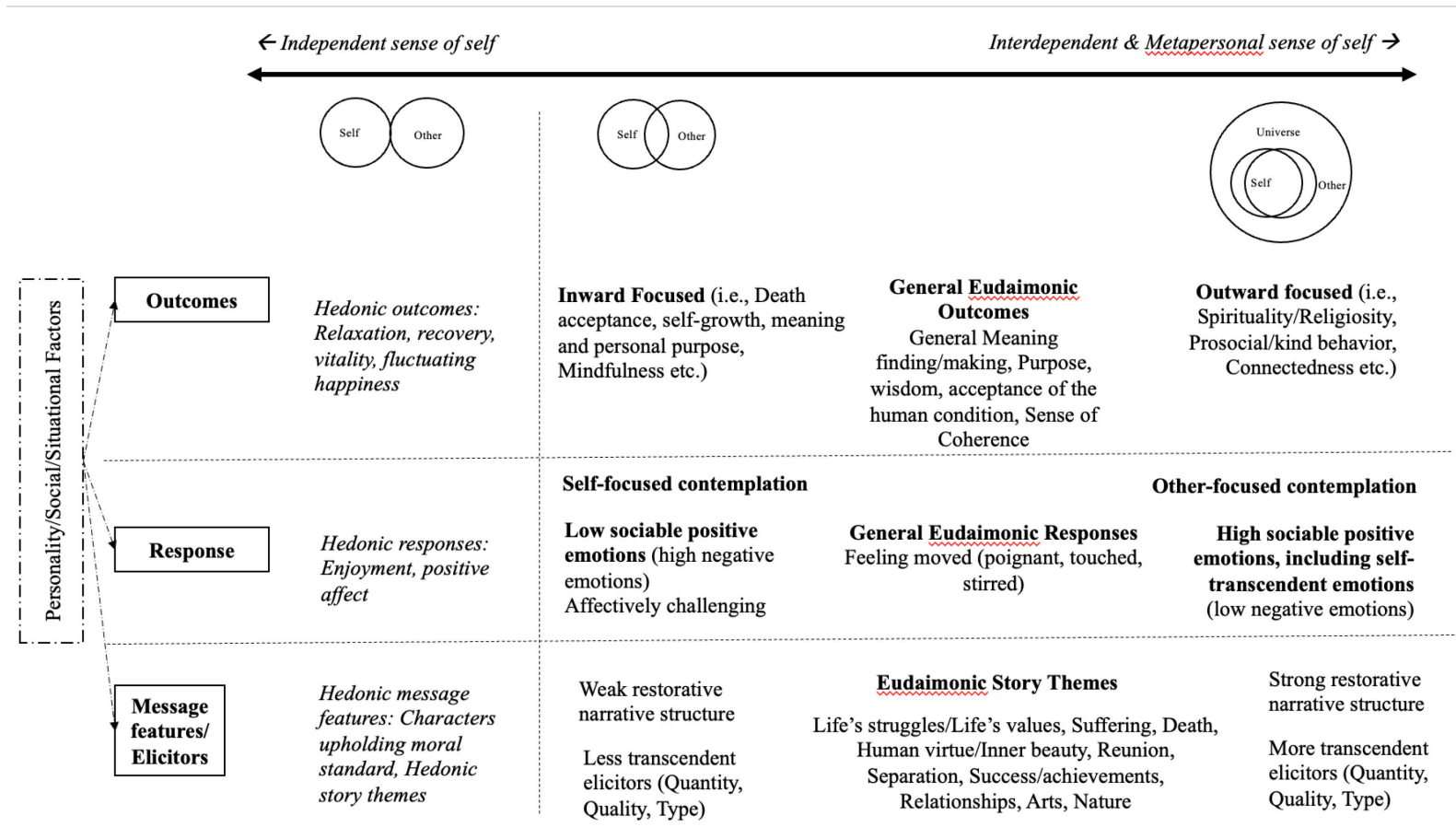


Figure 1. Conceptual Underpinnings of the Transcendent Media Experience Model.

Note. Italics represent ideas not explicitly discussed in the paper to represent the hedonic media experience to fully capture the Two-factor model of entertainment (i.e., Vorderer, 2021)

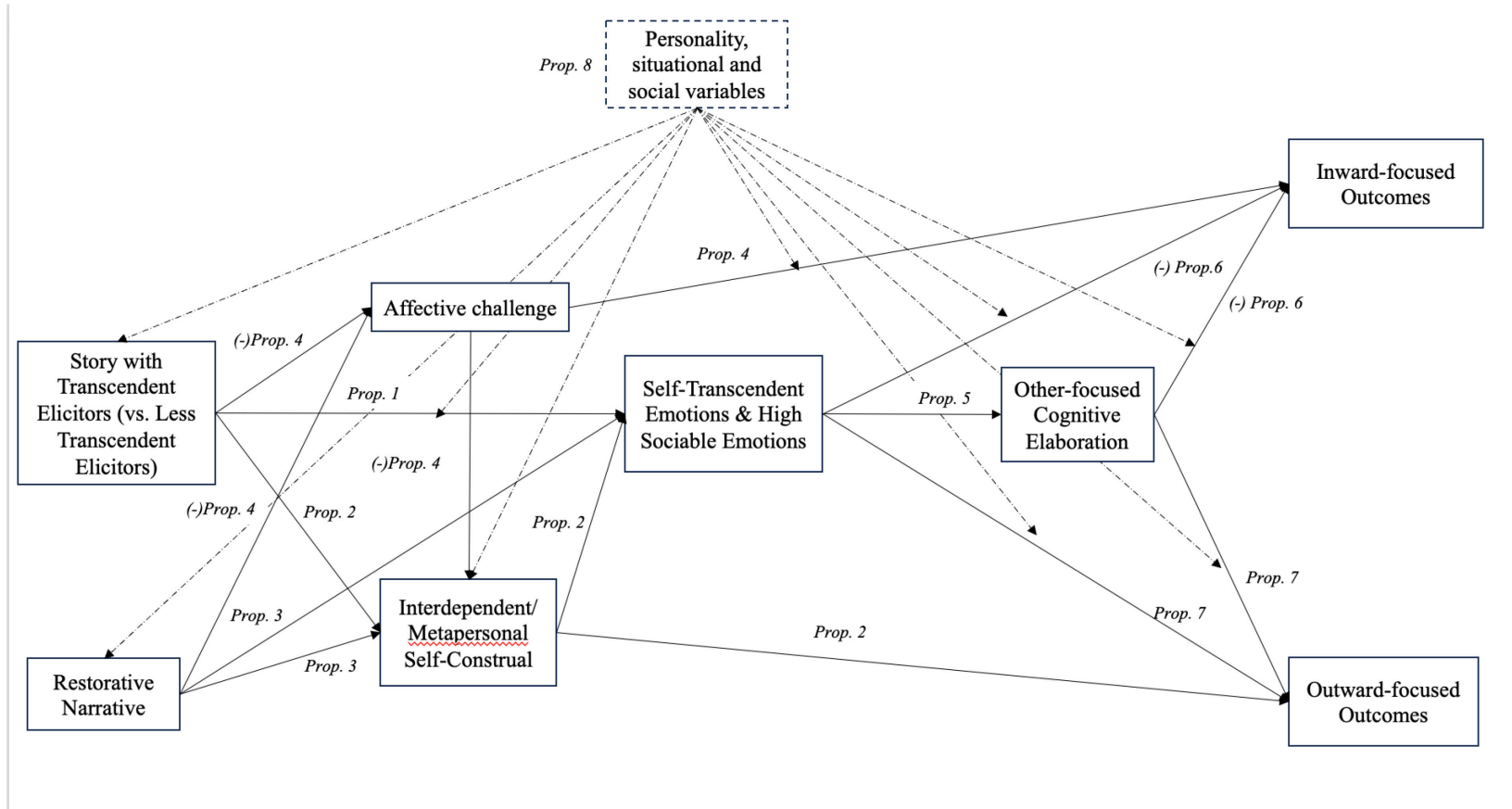


Figure 2. Summarized Propositions of the TMEM in a Testable Path Model. *Note.* These predictions are not meant to be tested necessarily all at the same time but just represent relationships between variables that can be tested iteratively.