

Effects of Television Clips with Hedonic and Eudaimonic Tone on Viewers' Affective States  
and Subsequent Program Selection

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**Abstract**

Motivations for entertainment consumption are complex, involving moods, wants, anticipations, and several other factors. Typically, attempts at a theoretical understanding of motivations for media selection have centered on enjoyment, or hedonic, pleasure-seeking motivations. Recently eudaimonic, or truth-seeking, motivations have also been given much attention. Most investigations into hedonic and eudaimonic motivations for media consumption have conceptualized these motivations as traits, rather than as states. Recent research has used survey methods to determine that those with hedonic motivations tend to seek out entertainment that is hedonic in nature and feel more fun affect while watching, while those with eudaimonic motivations for consuming entertainment tend to seek out media that is eudaimonic in nature and experience more meaningful affect during viewing. This experiment successfully manipulated hedonic and eudaimonic states using clips with either hedonic or eudaimonic tone from three different television shows, with hedonic or eudaimonic tone in clips significantly affecting participants' reports of hedonic and eudaimonic states as well as meaningful and fun affect. The effects of clips with hedonic or eudaimonic tone on these responses were not moderated by typical hedonic and eudaimonic trait preferences. The experiment also examined the effect that clips with hedonic or eudaimonic tone might have on subsequent program selection by allowing participants to rank hedonic or eudaimonic clips for

subsequent viewing. The hedonic or eudaimonic tone of the clips only predicted participants' subsequent preference for eudaimonic or hedonic clips in the case of one of the three shows in the study; this effect on subsequent clip preference was found with the show that generally elicited the strongest responses from viewers in other study measures. Implications for our understanding of television consumption motivations are discussed.

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## **Introduction**

Watching television is a dominant pastime in the United States. A consumer research report by Nielsen (2011) reveals that the average American spends 32 hours and 47 minutes a week watching television. There are countless types of programs from which media consumers can choose. How do they land on a particular show on any given day? Research regarding motivations for consumption of particular types of media largely focuses on motivations relating to mood. Mood management theory broadly states that people use entertainment as means to improve their moods (Zillmann, 1988). Other research focuses on personality traits that lead to entertainment preferences (Weaver, 2000). Uses-and-gratifications theories have sought to identify motivations for entertainment consumption such as escapism, information, personal identity, etc. (Rubin, 2008). While research regarding motivations for entertainment consumption is ever-developing, all approaches agree on the basic tenet that media exposure helps to meet psychological needs.

Typically, enjoyment is thought to be the main motivation for entertainment consumption (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010; Oliver & Raney, 2011; Vorderer, Klimmt, & Ritterfeld, 2004). However, with this thinking, there is a paradox at play when someone watches a movie or television show he or she knows will make them sad. Surely there is some other sort of motivation for watching something that elicits negative emotions. Oliver and Bartsch (2010) suggest that “appreciation” might be a better term for motivation to seek entertainment that is more thought provoking. To further that claim, Oliver and Raney (2011) argue that in addition to seeking media entertainment for pleasure and amusement (hedonic motivations), people use media entertainment as a way

to “ponder life’s meaning, truths, and purposes” (p. 985). These types of responses have been termed “eudaimonic motivations” (p. 987) by Oliver and Raney (2011). Recent research has begun to investigate the relationship and differences between hedonic and eudaimonic motivations and media consumption (e.g. Kim & Oliver, 2011; Oliver & Raney, 2011; Tamborini, Grizzard, Bowman, Reinecke, Lewis, & Eden, 2011).

As eudaimonic motivations are a relatively new area of study in entertainment media research, several conceptualizations of eudaimonia and eudaimonic entertainment have been put forth. Wirth, Hofer, and Schramm (2012) posited that that a eudaimonic experience is two-dimensional, including autonomy and activation of central values. Ryan, Huta, and Deci (2008) presented a model of eudaimonia based in self-determination theory, which identified needs such as autonomy, competency, and relatedness. Tamborini, Bowman, Eden, and Grizzard (2010) used this model to argue that media enjoyment can be studied in those same terms. However, while Tamborini and colleagues’ (2010) research focused on eudaimonic motivations as self-gratifying, Oliver and Raney’s (2011) “conceptualization of eudaimonic motivations is more transcendent, focused more broadly on meaning-of-life questions” (p. 989). Oliver and Raney (2011) investigated the relationship between hedonic and eudaimonic motivations, preferred movies, and the affective responses associated with those movies. Using surveys, they found that those with eudaimonic motivations reported higher meaningful affect in response to their favorite film, while those with hedonic motivations reported higher fun affect in response to their favorite film.

Media researchers agree that entertainment consumption is motivated by a variety of factors. The focus on enjoyment as the main motivation for seeking entertainment has

been empirically supported and thus been the basis of a plethora of research in the media psychology field (Vorderer, Klimmt, & Ritterfeld, 2004). However, there are more complex factors at play when selecting entertainment. Mood management theory, mood adjustment theory, and most recently, eudaimonic considerations, have sought to understand motivations for pursuing entertainment.

Recent research has considered both hedonic and eudaimonic motivations for media consumption, but there is limited work on whether these motivations function as states the same way they function as traits. This study is an attempt to answer a call from Oliver and Raney (2011) for research examining the function of hedonic and eudaimonic states to complement existing research on hedonic and eudaimonic motivations as traits influencing individuals' media use. Specifically, an experiment was conducted in which participants were exposed to television clips with hedonic and eudaimonic tone in order to examine effects on eudaimonic and hedonic states, meaningful and fun affect, and subsequent program preference. After reviewing literature on approaches to understanding entertainment consumption, this thesis presents a series of hypotheses and research questions investigated, describes a pilot study and main experiment designed to test those questions by manipulating eudaimonic and hedonic tone in clips from three different television programs and measuring effects on a series of paper-and-pencil measures and rankings of subsequent program preference, and discusses implications of the research. .



## Literature Review

### Enjoyment

Numerous psychological factors contribute to the enjoyment of media. Though enjoyment has not been clearly conceptualized, Vorderer, Klimmt, and Ritterfeld (2004) propose that physiological, affective, and cognitive involvement contribute to media enjoyment. This is echoed by Nabi and Krucmar (2004), who describe enjoyment as an attitude involving emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions. Oliver and Bartsch (2010) propose three concepts necessary to encompass the different types of “experiential qualities that contribute to entertainment gratification” (p.75). The first concept they propose is one that corresponds to our typical use of the term “enjoyment” in that it is associated with “light” genres which elicit positively valenced emotions. A second concept encompasses action and horror-like dramas, typically “characterized by emotional arousal and negative valence” (p.75). The third concept deals with experiences that are best described as “appreciation,” and are engendered in serious genres like dramas and documentaries (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010). So, while on the surface enjoyment seems to be the primary reason for the use of media entertainment, there are more complex reasons. To that end, Tamborini and colleagues (2010) proposed that enjoyment be conceptualized as including the satisfaction of both hedonic and non-hedonic needs. The mechanisms by which these needs are satisfied are often explained using two conceptual frameworks: mood management theory and mood adjustment theory.

### Mood Management Theory

Mood management theory posits that individuals choose media messages in order to alter negative moods or states and to create or maintain a more positive one.

Individuals are not always cognizant of these goals (Zillmann, 1988; Zillmann & Bryant,

1985). Zillmann (1988) points to four message features that could potentially impact the choice of message chosen based on a viewer's mood. These features include excitatory potential, absorption potential, semantic affinity, and hedonic valence. Excitatory potential "refers to the tendency of individuals to choose entertainment to achieve an optimal level of arousal" (Bryant & Davies, 2006, p. 26). This was observed in Mastro, Eastin, and Tamborini's (2002) study exploring how participants' level of excitation affected their web browsing behavior. They found that boredom and stress did dictate selectivity such that stressed participants sought low interactive web experiences while bored participants engaged in highly interactive internet experiences. However, excitation levels were not associated with hedonic valence of the websites visited. Absorption potential refers to the degree to which a message arouses a viewer's attention. Messages that are highly engaging prevent a viewer from focusing on their present affective state, therefore alleviating its intensity. Evidence of absorption effects were found in Davies' (2004) study in which highly engaging television programs inhibited viewers' memory of experiences occurring prior to viewing.

Semantic affinity plays a role in media selection in that the greater the similarity between an individual's mood and the message, the less likely that message is to alter the individual's current affective state (Bryant & Davies, 2006). Wakshlag, Vial, and Tamborini's (1983) study demonstrated this phenomenon using a crime documentary. They found that those exposed to a clip designed to make them more apprehensive about crime tended to avoid a subsequent clip featuring victimization and tended to choose a clip in which justice was restored. So, in line with mood management theory, participants chose to watch a clip that would help to alleviate negative feelings.

The last message feature Zillmann (1988) identified that aids in determining message selection is that of hedonic valence. Zillmann and Bryant (1994) demonstrated that bored subjects demonstrated a stronger interest in comedy than subjects who were excited. Each of these four features of messages rest on the underlying principle that if a message contains one or more features that may exacerbate a negative state, that message will be avoided in favor of a message more likely to contradict that negative state (Nabi, Finnerty, Domschke, & Hull, 2006).

Mood management theory largely rests on the assumption that hedonic motivations, or the pursuit of pleasure and amusement, dictate the selection of media entertainment. Specifically, it is assumed that individuals in a negative affective state will seek programs expected to improve their mood, and individuals in a positive affective state will seek programs likely to maintain their good mood. Because of these assumptions, mood management theory has been criticized for its inability to explain counter-hedonic entertainment choices (e.g. Nabi et al., 2006; Oliver, 2008). In light of said criticism, researchers have offered explanations for media choices that are negatively valenced. Individuals may gain a sense of self-esteem by comparing themselves with less fortunate characters (Mares & Cantor, 1992), they may view their emotional experience as rewarding (Mills, 1993; Oliver, 1993), or they may know that there are good outcomes in the future, and therefore tolerate negative affective states (Zillmann, 2000). Zillmann also proposes that entertainment programs dealing with topics more serious in nature may serve as a source of information for viewers, aiding them in coping with their trials. So, positively regulating emotional states may come from seeking information about how others deal with similar issues. Even so, mood management theory suggests that hedonic

motivations guide entertaining media selections while information needs guide informational media selections (Nabi et al., 2006).

A recent extension of mood management theory suggests “mood management can result from mood repair through need satisfaction” (Reinecke, Tamborini, Grizzard, Lewis, Eden, & Bowman, 2012 p. 437). Reinecke and colleagues (2012) found that people can engage in mood repair by choosing media that directly addresses the source of negative affect. While that research dealt with video games as the form of media used to repair mood, their findings serves to demonstrate the expansion of research on motivations for media consumption.

### **Mood Adjustment Theory**

Mood Adjustment Theory is another approach to understanding motivations for entertainment consumption that has been used as a possible explanation for counter-hedonic media choices. While mood management theory suggests we choose entertainment to enhance a negative or neutral mood, or maintain a positive mood, mood adjustment theory posits that individuals may *adjust* their moods (as opposed to optimizing their mood) in anticipation of a future situation. In other words, some attempts at mood manipulation are aimed at altering our mood to an appropriate one for a given situation. For instance, Knobloch (2003) found that when individuals were anticipating having to work on a cognitively demanding task, they chose to listen to calm music rather than joyful music. Other studies have found that when anticipating a confrontation in the future, subjects prefer activities or media selections that maintain or increase their level of anger as opposed to when they are not anticipating a confrontation (e.g. Tamir, Mitchell, & Gross, 2008; O’Neal & Taylor, 1989).

Kim and Oliver (2011) expanded on hedonic and counter-hedonic entertainment research as well as Mood Adjustment Theory by exploring the differences in entertainment selection when individuals expected an optimistic or pessimistic romantic future. Specifically, they explored how media selections varied as a function of different dating statuses and anticipations about the future of those dating statuses. They did this by examining the interplay between valence (happy or sad) and semantic affinity (romance related or romance unrelated) movie characteristics on entertainment preferences. Dating status and anticipation about a future romantic relationship were manipulated by giving participants a hypothetical scenario task. Participants were assigned conditions of either being in love, breaking up, or not being in a relationship, as well as the future having either a positive or negative end. Individuals watched eight trailers for movies that were happy and romance-related, sad and romance-related, happy and romance-unrelated, or sad and romance-unrelated. Participants were then given a hypothetical dating scenario task in which they described feelings and thoughts about the situation and the effects of the situation on their own life. They found that those in the breaking up condition reported preference for the happy and romance-related story significantly less than any other film type. When asked which movie they would like to watch, they found that participants in the condition with an optimistic future reported significantly greater preference for the film with a happy and romance-related storyline. In contrast, participants in the pessimistic future condition reported significantly higher preference for the sad and romance-unrelated film. That study's findings contribute to entertainment media selection research in a few ways. First, they serve to validate mood management theory in that those in the unhappy romantic condition were less likely to

select a happy, romance-related trailer in order to minimize pain (Kim & Oliver, 2011). It also serves to validate mood adjustment theory, as even hypothetical future scenarios affected media choice.

Gender may also serve as a moderating factor in media selection, particularly in the use of media to adjust moods in anticipation of future situations. Knobloch-Westerwick and Alter (2006) found a difference in men and women's news media preference when they anticipated an opportunity to retaliate against a supervisor that aggravated them. When expecting a confrontation in the future, women chose to view positively-valenced news in an attempt to alleviate their negative feelings, while men more often chose negative news to sustain their anger. Plant et al. (2000) posit that genders typically pursue different mood states, likely due to gender specific stereotyping of emotional expression. These varying mood states being pursued by different genders result in different media choices. So, attempts at adjusting moods can be a combination of anticipation of future experiences and perceived social norms for any given individual.

### **Existing Media Preferences**

Previous research has also examined effects of moods and media preferences on television program choice. To explore possible confounding mood effects with personal preference influences, Kim and Raney (2009) examined the interaction effects of moods, media preferences, and media choice in relation to television shows. They found that media preference, or popularity, was the factor most predictive of media selection. However, any mood enhancements were positively correlated with hedonic valence of the show. Regardless of what participants chose to watch, enjoyment of the show did not differ, regardless of hedonic valence. That study's findings underscore the role of existing

media preferences in media choice, suggesting that long-standing media preferences may even supersede temporary moods in effects on media choice and responses to selected media.

### **Extending Prior Research on Eudaimonic and Hedonic Motivations**

While mood management theory posits that individuals choose media messages to alter their negative states, the paradox of people choosing to engage in negatively valenced (sad) entertainment must be addressed. One explanation for individuals choosing counter-hedonic entertainment is that people may relate to the negative situations in the message, thereby having the opportunity to gain insight or make sense of their own situations (Nabi et al., 2006; Oliver, 2008; Vorderer & Knobloch, 2000).

Oliver and Raney (2011) developed scales that reflect hedonic and eudaimonic motivations for entertainment consumption. To do so, they asked participants to describe characteristics of films as well as reactions they had to films they both did and did not like. They used participants' responses to generate a list of 40 items that reflected either cognitive or affective motivations related to film preferences. Those same participants then rated those items on a 7-point scale, indicating the degree to which each statement reflected their movie preferences. They found that "eudaimonia was associated with greater preference for more serious entertainment, including nonfiction, dramas, and science fiction, and lesser preference for comedies and action adventure" (p. 991-992). Hedonic motivations were associated higher with comedies and adventures, while less associated with nonfiction films.

In regard to personal attributes, Oliver and Raney (2011) found that eudaimonic motivations were positively associated with individual tendencies including

“reflectiveness, need for cognition, intellectualism, need for affect, search for meaning in life, and, to a lesser extent, presence of meaning in life and humor” (Oliver & Raney, 2011, p. 994). Hedonic preferences were positively associated with “optimism, spontaneity, humor, playfulness, and (as with eudaimonia) need for affect, and (to a lesser extent) presence of meaning in life” (p.994).

### **Manipulation of States**

While the existence of hedonic and eudaimonic motivations and retrospective self-reported relationships between these motivations and program choice have been examined, there is comparatively little research on whether temporary hedonic and eudaimonic states can be elicited by media. However, much of the literature on eudaimonic and hedonic motivations traits suggests that media experiences may have the power to elicit short-term eudaimonic and hedonic states.

Thought-provoking films are said to elicit contemplation of what is important in life. Oliver and Hartmann (2010) noted that values most frequently mentioned in meaningful films were those relating to human connections. Specifically, themes relating to helping others, enduring interpersonal relations, caring, and love were said to be most meaningful. Oliver (2009) found that eudaimonic motivations were associated with entertainment preferences that elicited meaningful affective states (e.g. warmth, feelings of sympathy, and introspection). Therefore, in developing eudaimonic manipulations as a temporary state, media involving themes having to do with human connections that elicit affective states will likely be significant. This is seen in Wirth, Hofer, and Schramm’s (2012) study in which they successfully induced eudaimonic experiences using shortened versions of the movies *Hotel Rwanda* and *Life is Beautiful*. While Wirth et al. (2012) found



evidence that eudaimonic states can be elicited by sad films, we predict that both eudaimonic and hedonic states can also be manipulated by varying meaningfulness of content in a pleasant media program. Therefore, the following is predicted:

H1a: Participants who view a television clip that is eudaimonic in nature will experience a more eudaimonic state than participants who view a hedonic television clip.

H1b: Participants who view a television clip that is hedonic in nature will experience a more hedonic state than participants who view a eudaimonic television clip.

In order to match eudaimonic and hedonic motivations with affective responses to eudaimonic and hedonic entertainment, Oliver and Raney (2011) surveyed participants, first measuring their eudaimonic and hedonic motivations for viewing entertainment. Then, they were asked to what extent they experienced 12 affective reactions the first time they saw their favorite film (e.g., *compassionate, introspective, humored, excited*). As expected, eudaimonic motivations were correlated with meaningful affect to their favorite film, while hedonic motivations were correlated with higher levels of fun affect. So, eudaimonic and hedonic motivational traits encompass various cognitive and emotional needs, which are associated with motivations for entertainment eliciting more meaningful affect and fun affect, respectively. While affective responses have not been measured as effects of short-term states, the same pattern of findings is expected as with the existing research on reported relationships between long-term traits and affective responses. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H2a: Participants who view a television clip that is eudaimonic in nature will report higher meaningful affect than participants who view a hedonic television clip.

H2b: Participants who view a television clip that is hedonic in nature will report higher levels of fun affect than participants who view a eudaimonic television clip.

While previous research has examined retrospective self-reports of program selection as predicted by reported hedonic and eudaimonic motivations as long-term traits, the effects of inducing temporary hedonic and eudaimonic states on program selection are not known. Other areas of research like aggression have shown that traits and states can tend to induce similar responses despite their differing levels of temporal endurance (Anderson et al., 1998). I predict that short-term eudaimonic and hedonic states can be elicited by media exposure, and that those states will operate in similar ways as long-term eudaimonic and hedonic traits. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Participants who are exposed to a television clip that is eudaimonic in nature will subsequently prefer to view a eudaimonic clip rather than a hedonic clip, while people who are exposed to a television clip that is hedonic in nature will subsequently prefer to view a hedonic clip rather than a eudaimonic clip.

In addition to these hypothesized effects of a randomly-assigned clip, it is also useful to examine whether a subsequently viewed user-selected clip has similar effects on eudaimonic and hedonic states as well as meaningful and fun affect. Therefore, the following research questions are posed:

RQ1: How will participants' choice of a eudaimonic or hedonic clip influence their states of eudaimonia and hedonicism?

RQ2: How will participants' choice of a eudaimonic or hedonic clip influence their meaningful and fun affect?

### **Pilot Study**

#### **Method**

**Design.** Before the main study was conducted, a one-factor experimental pilot study was conducted to test the efficacy of the eudaimonic and hedonic clip tone manipulation. Pilot study participants each viewed three different television clips, with all three clips randomly assigned to be either hedonic or eudaimonic in nature in a single between-subjects manipulation carried out for three separate television programs, and rated their eudaimonic and hedonic responses to each clip to allow comparisons between the eudaimonic and hedonic clips to be carried out for each of the three programs.

**Participants.** Participants ( $N = 85$ ) were recruited for this study in exchange for course credit. Among participants that reported demographic information, the average age was 19.86 ( $SD = 1.10$ ), and 62% were female.

**Stimulus materials.** Participants watched one clip from each of three different television shows. The shows used were *Freaks and Geeks*, *Rescue Me*, and *The Wire*. These shows were chosen because they included adequate amounts of hedonic and eudaimonic content for the study manipulation and because they provided variety in terms of genre, setting, and actor demographics. Because previous research has tended to note that eudaimonic media tend to be sad, all clips had positive endings to hold constant the possible confound of clip valence. By holding the valence of the clips constant across conditions, the design eliminated the possible alternative explanation that a positive or

negative ending of a clip may be responsible for effects of the eudaimonic or hedonic clip tone manipulation.

***Freaks and Geeks.*** *Freaks and Geeks* is a comedy/drama about high school life in the 1980s. It aired on NBC 1999-2000 and was cancelled after 12 episodes. The hedonic *Freaks and Geeks* clip was about Sam, a nerdy high school freshman, being convinced by his friends to pursue his crush on a popular cheerleader and asking her to the school dance. The eudaimonic *Freaks and Geeks* clip was about Sam being bullied at school and Sam's sister Lindsey struggling to fit in at school and cope with the loss of their grandmother. The two clips were within 2 minutes in length of each other.

***Rescue Me.*** *Rescue Me* is a comedy/drama that follows a veteran New York City firefighter. It aired for seven seasons from 2004-2011 on FX Network. The hedonic *Rescue Me* clip was about Tommy, a New York City firefighter, playing a prank on the new guy at the fire station. The eudaimonic clip was about Tommy struggling through a divorce and being haunted by the memory of a cousin who died in the September 11, 2001 attacks. The two clips are within seconds of each other in length.

***The Wire.*** *The Wire* is a drama that focuses on various areas of life in Baltimore including the police department and local gangs. It aired on HBO from 2002-2008 for five seasons. The hedonic *The Wire* clip was about some of the humorous antics and pranks pulled by the Baltimore Police Department and some of the kids growing up in the Baltimore area. The eudaimonic clip was about Namond, a troubled Baltimore teen, being pressured by his mother and his imprisoned father to "step up" and sell drugs to

contribute to the family income. A former police officer asks Namond's father for permission to adopt him in order to save him from gang life.

**Dependent measures.**

***Eudaimonia/hedonicism.*** Eudaimonia and hedonicism were measured using a 12-item questionnaire (Appendix A) adapted from Oliver and Raney (2011), rating the extent to which the clip exhibited hedonic and eudaimonic characteristics (6 measures for each characteristic) on a 7-point Likert-type scale (e.g., *this clip was "silly" or lacked depth; this clip made me think*). While the original questionnaire was worded in a way that addressed typical trait-like preferences, the questionnaire was adapted to get at state-like feelings associated with the viewing of that particular clip. (hedonicism: Cronbach's  $\alpha = .76$ ; eudaimonia: Cronbach's  $\alpha = .87$ ).

***Enjoyment.*** Enjoyment was measured using 4 items (Appendix A) adapted from Krcmar and Renfro's (2005) media enjoyment scale (e.g., *I would hate to be distracted while watching this clip, I did not enjoy the subject matter of this clip*) (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .70$ )

**Other measures.**

The mean age of participants was 19.86 ( $SD = 1.10$ ), and 62% were female. 19% of participants reported having previously seen *Freaks and Geeks*, while 7% reported having previously seen *Rescue Me*, and 4% had seen *The Wire*.

**Procedures.** After filling out a consent form, participants watched three clips, filling out the same questionnaire after each clip.

**Results**

**Eudaimonia and hedonicism.**

***Freaks and Geeks.*** An independent samples t-test with clip tone as the

independent variable and participants' perceptions of eudaimonic content as the dependent variable revealed a significant effect of clip tone,  $t(71) = 3.94, p < .001$ , with participants perceiving the clip to be more eudaimonic in the eudaimonic condition ( $M = 4.78, SD = 1.04$ ) than in the hedonic condition ( $M = 3.68, SD = 1.47$ ). An independent samples t-test with clip tone as the independent variable and participants' perceptions of hedonic content as the dependent variable revealed a significant effect of clip tone,  $t(80) = 4.66, p < .001$ , with participants perceiving the clip to be more hedonic in the hedonic condition ( $M = 5.41, SD = .81$ ) than in the eudaimonic condition ( $M = 4.63, SD = .72$ ).

***Rescue Me.*** An independent samples t-test with clip tone as the independent variable and participants' perceptions of eudaimonic content as the dependent variable revealed a significant effect of clip tone,  $t(76) = 8.11, p < .001$ , with participants perceiving the clip to be more eudaimonic in the eudaimonic condition ( $M = 5.30, SD = .98$ ) than in the hedonic condition ( $M = 3.28, SD = 1.26$ ). An independent samples t-test with clip tone as the independent variable and participants' perceptions of hedonic content as the dependent variable revealed a significant effect of clip tone,  $t(78) = 7.58, p < .001$ , with participants perceiving the clip to be more hedonic in the hedonic condition ( $M = 4.97, SD = 1.03$ ) than in the eudaimonic condition ( $M = 3.38, SD = .87$ ).

***The Wire.*** An independent samples t-test with clip tone as the independent variable and participants' perceptions of eudaimonic content as the dependent variable revealed a significant effect of clip tone,  $t(83) = 2.54, p < .05$ , with participants perceiving the clip to be more eudaimonic in the eudaimonic condition ( $M = 4.48, SD = 1.23$ ) than in the hedonic condition ( $M = 3.68, SD = 1.47$ ). An independent samples t-test

with clip tone as the independent variable and participants' perceptions of hedonic content as the dependent variable revealed a significant effect of clip tone,  $t(71) = 6.84, p < .001$ , with participants perceiving the clip to be more hedonic in the hedonic condition ( $M = 4.21, SD = 1.09$ ) than in the eudaimonic condition ( $M = 2.80, SD = .78$ ).

### **Enjoyment.**

***Freaks and Geeks.*** An independent samples t-test with clip tone as the independent variable and enjoyment as the dependent variable revealed no significant effects of clip tone on enjoyment  $t(85) = -.18, p = .86$ .

***Rescue Me.*** An independent samples t-test with clip tone as the independent variable and enjoyment as the dependent variable revealed no significant effects of clip tone on enjoyment  $t(85) = -.18, p = .86$ .

***The Wire.*** An independent samples t-test with clip tone as the independent variable and enjoyment as the dependent variable revealed a significant effect of clip tone,  $t(83) = -2.57, p < .05$ , with participants perceiving the clip to be more enjoyable in the hedonic condition ( $M = 4.56, SD = 1.32$ ) than in the eudaimonic condition ( $M = 3.77, SD = 1.31$ ).

### **Discussion**

The manipulation of hedonic and eudaimonic tone had the appropriate effects on measures of hedonic and eudaimonic states for all three shows, demonstrating the efficacy of the manipulated clips from all three shows as appropriate stimuli to test the hypotheses in the main study experiment across a variety of television genres and settings.

## Main Experiment

### Method

**Design.** The main experiment used a 2 (clip tone: eudaimonic vs. hedonic) X 3 (show: *Freaks and Geeks* vs. *Rescue Me* vs. *The Wire*) between-subjects factorial design to test for the hypothesized effects of the eudaimonic and hedonic clip tone manipulation on the study's dependent measures and to examine the consistency of such effects across the range of shows used in the study. Measures of participants' hedonic and eudaimonic states, fun and meaningful affect, enjoyment, and program preference were collected using an online Qualtrics questionnaire administered during the study session. Participants also viewed a second clip, one of four from the Australian crime drama *Underbelly*, based on their responses to the program preference measure, as described in the dependent measures section below.

**Participants.** All participants ( $N = 169$ ) were recruited for this study in exchange for course credit. Five participants filled out the questionnaire incorrectly by filling out measures corresponding to the wrong video clip and therefore their data were dropped from analyses, leaving a total of 164 participants for the final analyses. Among participants included in analyses, the mean age was 19.77 ( $SD = 1.31$ ), and 74.23% were female. Only 11% of participants reported having seen the show they watched in the assigned television clip before, and none of the participants reported having seen the show from which they ranked their preferences for which clip they'd like to watch second.

**Stimulus materials.** Six different clips were created to effect the study's two-factor manipulation; specifically, a hedonic and eudaimonic clip from each of the three shows (*Freaks and Geeks*, *Rescue Me*, and *The Wire*). Based on the efficacy of the clip tone



manipulation for each of the three shows used in the pilot study, all six clips from the pilot study were used in the main study. Participants were randomly assigned to watch one of the six clips depending on their randomly assigned condition (eudaimonic or hedonic clip for each of the three shows).

**Dependent measures.**

***Hedonicism and eudaimonia.*** The same questionnaire measures of hedonicism and eudaimonia used in the pilot study were used again in the main experiment to measure hedonic and eudaimonic states elicited by the clips (hedonicism: Cronbach's  $\alpha = .83$ ; eudaimonia: Cronbach's  $\alpha = .87$ ).

***Meaningful and fun affect.*** Meaningful and fun affect elicited by the clips were measured using 8 items adapted from Oliver and Raney (2011) (e.g., *humored, excited, inspired, contemplative*). (meaningful Cronbach's  $\alpha = .87$ , fun Cronbach's  $\alpha = .89$ )

***Program preference.*** To measure program preference after viewing the assigned clips, participants were presented with short summaries of the plot lines of four clips of a second television program and asked to rank which of the four clips they would like to view next. Two of these clip choices were eudaimonic in nature and two were hedonic in nature. Given Kim and Raney's (2009) findings that previous media preference predicted media selection, the clip choices for this second clip viewing were all from an unfamiliar show to most U.S. television viewers: *Underbelly*, an Australian-based crime drama. This minimized the influence of previous exposure to program titles and actors on rankings of preference for the second clip choice. The brief description of each of the four clips

emphasized either the hedonic or the eudaimonic nature of each clip. The descriptions given were as follows:

*(Hedonic #1) In this entertaining clip, police raid the house hapless petty criminal Richard, and Richard responds with sarcasm and mocks threats with a toy light saber. Later, he is kidnapped by other petty criminals in an ill-conceived attempt to earn a ransom from rival criminals, but no one is interested in paying a bounty to free the bumbling hostage Richard. Even the police, who are listening to the farce on a wiretap, enjoy the spectacle and are in no hurry to intervene.*

*(Hedonic #2) In this entertaining clip, Carl, a minor flunkie in a criminal gang, meets and pursues Roberta, the trashy, witty, outcast among the gang wives. While at first Carl doesn't succeed, Roberta falls for him once she learns of his lucrative business. In the mean time, gang member, Jason Moran, evades criminal charges and gets great enjoyment from taunting the cops.*

*(Eudaimonic #1) In this meaningful clip, Tracey's ex-husband Sidney has committed a murder and pressures Tracey to help him cover his tracks. Tracey is pressured by police to testify against Sidney in order to set a good example for their young son. Tracey makes the tough decision to cooperate with police and testify against Sidney. She explains to her son the importance of doing the right thing, even if it's hard.*

*(Eudaimonic #2) In this meaningful clip, years of pursuing drug kingpin and serial murderer Carl Williams takes its toll when crime task force head Gary Butterworth dies of a heart attack. The task force members work to make a case against Williams by trying to convince two witnesses in custody to turn Williams in. Finally, the task*

*force's years of hard work pays off, as they are able to honor Butterworth's memory by arresting Williams on murder charges.*

Hedonic or eudaimonic program preference was measured by the participants ranking the four clips, ranking the clip they most wanted to watch as number one, the clip they second-most wanted to watch as number two, and so on. From these rankings, a continuous measure of eudaimonic or hedonic program preference was created (with a higher score indicated more eudaimonic preferences and a lower score indicated more hedonic preferences) by adding four points for a ranking a eudaimonic clip first, adding three points for ranking a eudaimonic clip second, adding two points for ranking a eudaimonic clip third, and adding one point for ranking a eudaimonic clip fourth, and subtracting the same number of points for rankings of hedonic clips. Therefore, the most eudaimonic preference score on the scale was 4 (the eudaimonic clips ranked first and second and the hedonic clips ranked third and fourth), while the most hedonic preference score on the scale was -4 (the hedonic clips ranked first and second and the eudaimonic clips ranked third and fourth), with scores of 2, 0, and -2 also possible scores depending on preference combinations. The clip choices were presented in a randomized order.

### **Other measures.**

**Enjoyment.** Enjoyment of the assigned clip was measured to examine whether it was influenced by the independent variables and to explore any possible moderation effects. Enjoyment was measured using 16 items (Appendix A) adapted from Krmar and Renfro's (2005) media enjoyment scale (e.g., *I would hate to be distracted while watching this clip, I did not enjoy the subject matter of this clip*) (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .93$ ).

**Responses to second clip.** Though there was not a predicted pattern of effects of the second clip (the *Underbelly* clip ranked first by participants via the program preference measure) on eudaimonia, hedonicism, meaningful affect, and enjoyment, data were collected on those variables again after participants viewed the second clip (using the same measures used in the first post-exposure questionnaire) to explore whether patterns of effects of the tone of a selected clip mirrored the effects of the tone of an assigned clip.

**Television viewing trait preference.** Participants answered questions pertaining to their typical television viewing habits using an adapted version of Oliver and Raney's (2011) scale assessing hedonic and eudaimonic television preferences.

**Prior exposure to stimulus materials.** Participants also answered "yes" or "no" to whether they had seen either of the two shows they watched.

**Procedure.** Participants took part in the study in groups of 8-11. Participants were brought into the room and told to sit at any seat available, all of which had a laptop at them. The laptops were loaded with video clips that were randomly assigned to one of the six experimental conditions. After reading and signing an informed consent form, participants were given instructions about watching the assigned clip and filling out the questionnaire. They were told that after viewing a clip and completing some questionnaire measures, they would be asked to read and rank descriptions of four clips to determine which clip they most wanted to watch next. They were told that they would only watch their top choice, but to rank all four of the clips. Participants then viewed the first clip on their assigned laptop using headphones. After viewing the clip, participants filled out a

questionnaire measuring hedonicism, eudaimonia, fun affect, and meaningful affect. Participants then read descriptions of four clips and ranked them according to which they would most like to watch next. Then, they completed a questionnaire measuring their enjoyment of the first clip. The researcher then loaded the clip that corresponded to each participant's highest-ranked clip description on the laptops. After watching the second chosen clip, participants filled out a second questionnaire measuring their responses to the second clip in terms of hedonicism, eudaimonia, fun affect, meaningful affect, and enjoyment. Lastly, participants answered questions about their trait preferences for eudaimonic and hedonic television programs, whether or not they had seen the programs featured in the clips before, and some demographic measures. Participants were then thanked, debriefed, and dismissed.

## Results

**Eudaimonia and hedonicism.** H1a predicted that participants who viewed a eudaimonic television clip would experience a more eudaimonic state than participants who viewed a hedonic television clip. A two-factor ANOVA with clip tone and show as the independent variables and eudaimonic state as the dependent variable revealed a significant main effect of clip tone on eudaimonia  $F(1, 158) = 101.05, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .39$ , with higher scores in the eudaimonic condition ( $M = 5.31, SD = .93$ ) than in the hedonic condition ( $M = 3.77, SD = 1.08$ ). Therefore, H1a is supported. There was also a significant main effect of show on eudaimonia  $F(1, 158) = 5.27, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .06$ . Post-hoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD method found that *Freaks and Geeks* ( $M = 4.77, SD = 1.15$ ) and *Rescue Me* ( $M = 4.64, SD = 1.31$ ) scored higher in eudaimonia than *The Wire* ( $M = 4.18, SD = 1.29$ ), but *Freaks and Geeks* and *Rescue Me* were not significantly different from each

other. There was no significant interaction effect between clip tone and show  $F(1, 158) = 1.23, p = .30, \eta_p^2 = .02$ . See Table 1 for a list of means across all six conditions for all measures collected after exposure to the first clip.

**Table 1. Means and standard deviations across conditions for all outcome measures after exposure to assigned television clip condition**

	<i>Freaks and Geeks, Eudaimonic</i>	<i>Freaks and Geeks, Hedonic</i>	<i>Rescue Me, Eudaimonic</i>	<i>Rescue Me, Hedonic</i>	<i>The Wire, Eudaimonic</i>	<i>The Wire, Hedonic</i>
Eudaimonia	$M = 5.41$ ( $SD = .87$ ) <sup>a</sup>	$M = 4.13$ ( $SD = 1.03$ ) <sup>b</sup>	$M = 5.60$ ( $SD = .64$ ) <sup>a</sup>	$M = 3.73$ ( $SD = 1.12$ ) <sup>b</sup>	$M = 4.93$ ( $SD = 1.12$ ) <sup>a</sup>	$M = 3.50$ ( $SD = 1.00$ ) <sup>b</sup>
Hedonicism	$M = 4.00$ ( $SD = .92$ ) <sup>c</sup>	$M = 5.25$ ( $SD = .71$ ) <sup>a</sup>	$M = 2.91$ ( $SD = .99$ ) <sup>d</sup>	$M = 4.80$ ( $SD = 1.13$ ) <sup>ab</sup>	$M = 2.80$ ( $SD = .88$ ) <sup>d</sup>	$M = 4.11$ ( $SD = .93$ ) <sup>bc</sup>
Meaningful Affect	$M = 5.00$ ( $SD = .96$ ) <sup>a</sup>	$M = 3.74$ ( $SD = 1.07$ ) <sup>b</sup>	$M = 4.90$ ( $SD = 1.06$ ) <sup>a</sup>	$M = 2.73$ ( $SD = 1.28$ ) <sup>c</sup>	$M = 3.92$ ( $SD = 1.44$ ) <sup>b</sup>	$M = 2.69$ ( $SD = 1.19$ ) <sup>c</sup>
Fun Affect	$M = 4.29$ ( $SD = 1.26$ ) <sup>ab</sup>	$M = 4.84$ ( $SD = 1.27$ ) <sup>a</sup>	$M = 3.32$ ( $SD = 1.28$ ) <sup>bc</sup>	$M = 5.00$ ( $SD = 1.55$ ) <sup>a</sup>	$M = 2.88$ ( $SD = 1.36$ ) <sup>c</sup>	$M = 4.18$ ( $SD = 1.37$ ) <sup>ab</sup>
Enjoyment	$M = 5.01$ ( $SD = .74$ ) <sup>a</sup>	$M = 4.75$ ( $SD = .96$ ) <sup>abc</sup>	$M = 4.88$ ( $SD = .66$ ) <sup>ab</sup>	$M = 4.45$ ( $SD = 1.23$ ) <sup>abc</sup>	$M = 4.07$ ( $SD = 1.47$ ) <sup>bc</sup>	$M = 4.00$ ( $SD = 1.09$ ) <sup>c</sup>
Clip Preference	$M = .14$ ( $SD = 2.50$ ) <sup>a</sup>	$M = -2.21$ ( $SD = 2.27$ ) <sup>b</sup>	$M = -.62$ ( $SD = 2.64$ ) <sup>ab</sup>	$M = -.07$ ( $SD = 3.06$ ) <sup>a</sup>	$M = -.74$ ( $SD = 2.23$ ) <sup>ab</sup>	$M = .14$ ( $SD = 2.72$ ) <sup>a</sup>

Note: Means in the same row that do not share the same superscript differ significantly ( $p < .05$ ) in Tukey's HSD post-hoc comparisons.

H1b predicted that participants who viewed a hedonic television clip would experience a more hedonic state than participants who view a eudaimonic television clip. A two-factor ANOVA with clip tone and show as the independent variables and hedonic state as the dependent variable revealed a significant main effect of clip tone on hedonicism  $F(1, 158) = 104.35, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .40$ , with higher scores in the hedonic condition ( $M = 4.72, SD = 1.04$ ) than in the eudaimonic condition ( $M = 3.25, SD = 1.06$ ). Therefore, H1b is supported. There was also a significant main effect of show on hedonicism  $F(1, 158) = 22.77, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .22$ . Post-hoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD

method found that *Freaks and Geeks* ( $M = 4.63, SD = 1.03$ ) was higher in hedonicism than *Rescue Me* ( $M = 3.87, SD = 1.41$ ) and *The Wire* ( $M = 3.47, SD = 1.12$ ), but *Rescue Me* and *The Wire* were not significantly different from each other. There was no significant interaction effect between clip tone and show  $F(1, 158) = 1.91, p = .15, \eta_p^2 = .02$ .

**Meaningful and fun affect.** H2a predicted that participants who viewed a eudaimonic television clip would experience more meaningful affect than participants who viewed a hedonic television clip. A two-factor ANOVA with clip tone and show as the independent variables and meaningful affect as the dependent variable revealed a significant main effect of clip tone on meaningful affect  $F(1, 158) = 70.62, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .31$ , with higher scores in the eudaimonic condition ( $M = 4.60, SD = 1.25$ ) than in the hedonic condition ( $M = 3.06, SD = 1.26$ ). Therefore, H2a is supported. There was also a main effect of show on meaningful affect  $F(1, 158) = 11.11, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .12$ . Post-hoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD method found that *Freaks and Geeks* ( $M = 4.36, SD = 1.18$ ) was higher in meaningful affect than *Rescue Me* ( $M = 3.80, SD = 1.60$ ) and *The Wire* ( $M = 3.30, SD = 1.45$ ), but *Rescue Me* and *The Wire* were not significantly different from each other. There was no significant interaction effect between clip tone and show  $F(1, 158) = 2.80, p = .06, \eta_p^2 = .03$ .

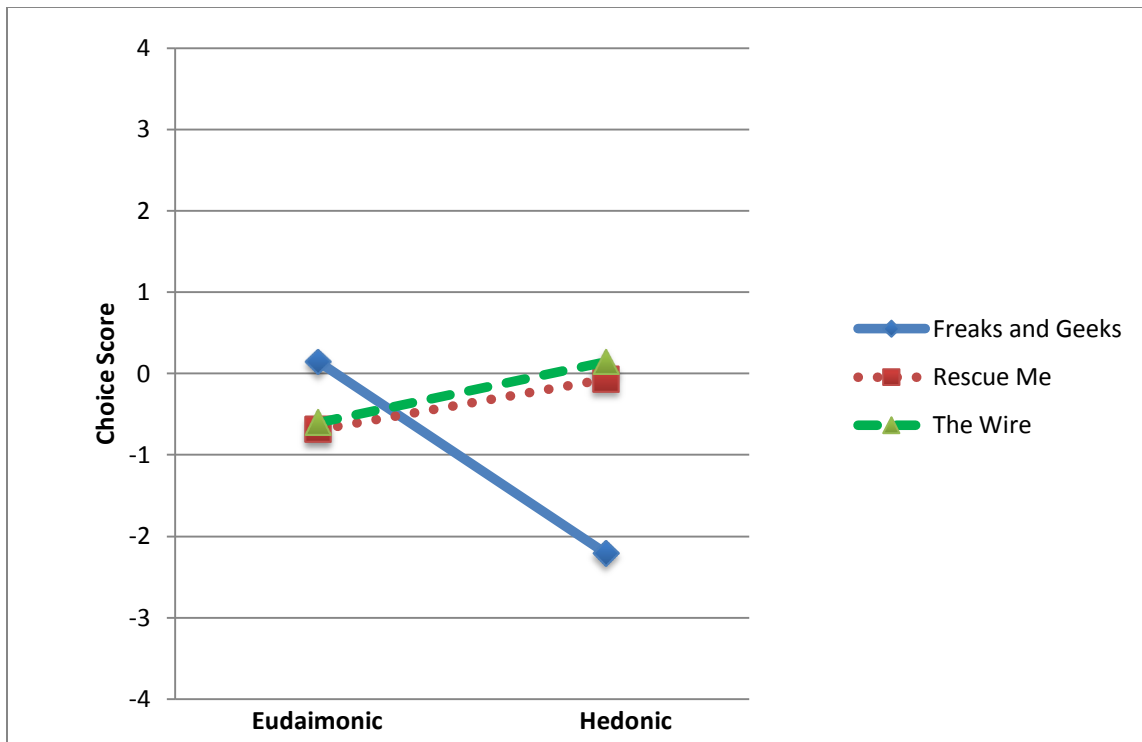
H2b predicted that participants who viewed a hedonic television clip would experience more fun affect than participants who viewed a eudaimonic television clip. A two-factor ANOVA with clip tone and show as the independent variables and fun affect as the dependent variable revealed a significant main effect of clip tone on fun affect  $F(1, 158) = 31.00, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .16$ , with higher scores in the hedonic condition ( $M = 4.67, SD$

= 1.43) than in the eudaimonic condition ( $M = 3.51, SD = 1.42$ ). Therefore, H2b is supported. There was also a significant main effect of show on fun affect  $F(1, 158) = 8.30, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .10$ . Post-hoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD method found that *Freaks and Geeks* ( $M = 4.57, SD = 1.30$ ) and *Rescue Me* ( $M = 4.17, SD = 1.65$ ) were higher in fun affect than *The Wire* ( $M = 3.54, SD = 1.50$ ), but *Freaks and Geeks* and *Rescue Me* were not significantly different from each other. There was no significant interaction effect between clip tone and show  $F(1, 158) = 2.51, p = .08, \eta_p^2 = .03$ .

**Program preference.** H3 predicted that participants who were exposed to a eudaimonic clip would subsequently prefer to view a eudaimonic clip, while people who were exposed to a hedonic clip would subsequently prefer to view a hedonic clip. A two-factor ANOVA with clip tone and show as the independent variables and program preference as the dependent variable found no significant main effect of clip tone on clip selection  $F(1, 158) = .59, p = .44, \eta_p^2 < .01$ . There was no significant main effect of show on clip selection  $F(1, 158) = 1.42, p = .25, \eta_p^2 = .02$ . The ANOVA revealed a significant two-way interaction effect between clip tone and show on clip selection  $F(1, 158) = 6.60, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .08$ . As Figure 1 shows, the general pattern of effects was that clip tone tended to influence preferences for subsequent clips for those participants assigned to view *Freaks and Geeks*, but did not tend to influence subsequent program preference for participants assigned to view *Rescue Me* or *The Wire*. H3 is partially supported, only in the case of the *Freaks and Geeks* program.

**Figure 1. Clip tone X show interaction effect on program preference.**

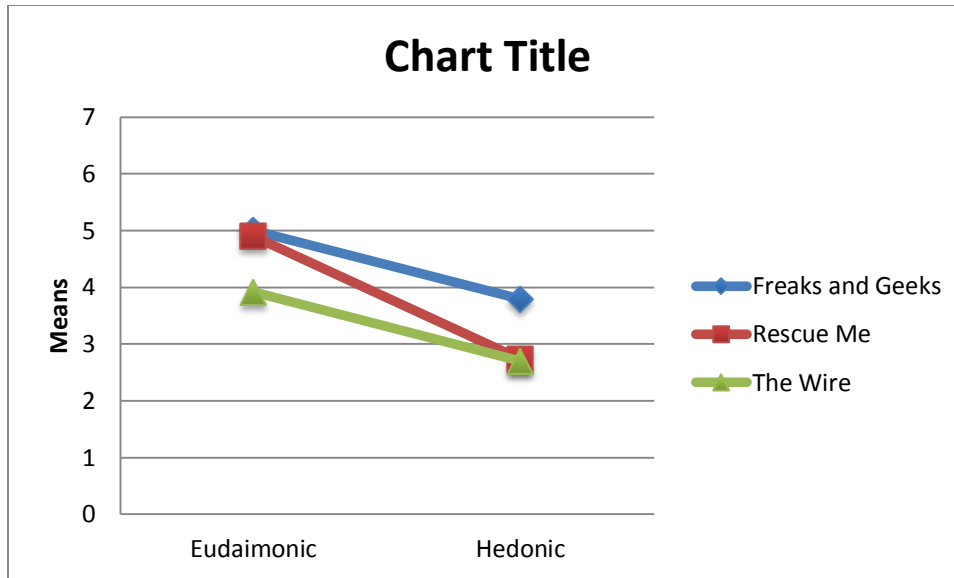




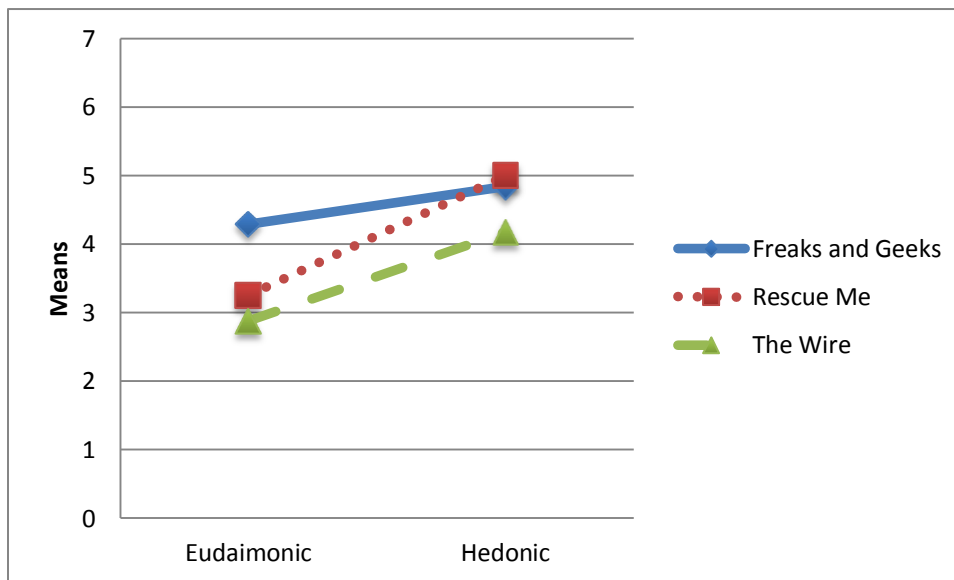
**Enjoyment.** While there were no hypotheses about enjoyment, supplementary analyses examined the possible moderating role of enjoyment on effects of clip tone. A two-factor ANOVA with clip tone and show as the independent variables and enjoyment as the dependent variable determined there was not a significant main effect of clip tone on enjoyment  $F(1, 156) = 2.19, p = .14, \eta_p^2 = .01$ . There was a significant main effect of show on enjoyment  $F(1, 156) = 9.35, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .12$ . Post-hoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD method found that *Freaks and Geeks* ( $M = 4.88, SD = .86$ ) and *Rescue Me* ( $M = 4.66, SD = 1.01$ ) was significantly more enjoyable than *The Wire* ( $M = 4.03, SD = 1.30$ ) but *Freaks and Geeks* and *Rescue Me* did not significantly differ from each other. There was no significant interaction effect between clip tone and show  $F(1, 156) = .37, p = .69, \eta_p^2 < .01$ .

**Controlling for television viewing trait preference.** To assess whether the observed effects of clip tone and show on the outcome measures were consistent after controlled for participants' hedonic and eudaimonic television viewing preferences as traits, a series of analyses of covariance (ANCOVAs) were conducted with clip tone and show as independent variables and with the trait hedonic and eudaimonic media preferences measures as covariates. Repeating analyses for effects on eudaimonia, hedonicism, meaningful affect, fun affect, and enjoyment with typical preferences for hedonic and eudaimonic media as covariates yielded no change in the significance for any main effects compared to the above ANOVA results. The ANCOVA with meaningful affect as the dependent variable yielded a significant interaction effect,  $F(1, 155) = 3.13, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .04$ , that had not been significant in the corresponding ANOVA (Figure 2), and the ANCOVA with fun affect as the dependent variable revealed a significant interaction effect,  $F(1, 155) = 3.21, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .04$ , that had not been significant in the corresponding ANOVA (Figure 3). As Figure 2 and Figure 3 indicate, the interactions of clip tone and show on meaningful and fun affect indicate that while tone affected all clip selections in the predicted direction, the magnitude of those effects varied sporadically by program and effects were weakest with the program that elicited the highest general levels of meaningful and fun affect (*Freaks and Geeks*).

**Figure 2. Clip tone X show interaction effect on meaningful affect.**



**Figure 3. Clip tone X show interaction effect on fun affect.**



### Responses to Second Clip

***Eudaimonia and hedonicism.*** RQ1 asked how participants' choice of a eudaimonic or hedonic second clip would influence their states of eudaimonia and hedonicism. To examine the relationship between clip selection and eudaimonia, a one-

factor ANOVA was run with the tone of participants' selected second clip (either hedonic or eudaimonic) as the independent variable and eudaimonia as the dependent variable. A significant effect of clip selection was found on eudaimonia,  $F(1, 158) = 129.25, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .45$ , with eudaimonic choices ( $M = 4.48, SD = 1.20$ ) yielding significantly more feelings of eudaimonia than hedonic choices ( $M = 2.50, SD = 1.00$ ). To examine the relationship between clip selection and hedonicism, a one-factor ANOVA was run with the tone of the selected second clip (either hedonic or eudaimonic) as the independent variable and hedonicism as the dependent variable. A significant effect of clip selection was found on hedonicism,  $F(1, 158) = 56.80, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .26$ , with hedonic choices ( $M = 4.14, SD = 1.24$ ) yielding significantly more feelings of hedonicism than eudaimonic choices ( $M = 2.81, SD = .84$ ).

***Meaningful and fun affect.*** RQ2 asked how participants' choice of a eudaimonic or hedonic second clip would influence meaningful and fun affect. To examine the relationship between clip selection and meaningful affect, a one-factor ANOVA was run with the tone of participants' selected second clip (either hedonic or eudaimonic) as the independent variable and meaningful affect as the dependent variable. A significant effect of clip selection was found on meaningful affect,  $F(1, 159) = 86.38, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .35$ , with eudaimonic choices ( $M = 3.74, SD = 1.42$ ) yielding significantly more meaningful affect than hedonic choices ( $M = 2.04, SD = .90$ ). To examine the relationship between clip selection and fun affect, a one-factor ANOVA was run with the tone of the selected second clip (either hedonic or eudaimonic) as the independent variable and fun affect as the dependent variable. A significant effect of clip selection was found on fun affect,  $F(1, 159)$

= 29.50,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .16$ , with hedonic choices ( $M = 3.80$ ,  $SD = 1.60$ ) yielding significantly more feelings of fun affect than eudaimonic choices ( $M = 2.60$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ).

**Enjoyment.** To examine the relationship between clip selection and enjoyment, a one-factor ANOVA was run with the tone of the selected second clip (either hedonic or eudaimonic) as the independent variable and enjoyment as the dependent variable. A significant effect of clip selection was found on enjoyment,  $F(1, 160) = 6.80$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .04$ , with eudaimonic choices ( $M = 3.92$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ) yielding significantly more enjoyment than hedonic choices ( $M = 3.44$ ,  $SD = 1.17$ ).

### Discussion

This study sought to contribute to media selection research by manipulating both hedonic and eudaimonic states. While it has been observed that eudaimonic experiences can be induced (Wirth, Hofer, & Schramm, 2012), this study confirmed that both hedonic and eudaimonic states can be induced by varying the meaningfulness in the content of a media clip. Further, the study examined effects of hedonic and eudaimonic states on subsequent program selection from the behavioral perspective with a controlled experiment rather than the reflective self-report surveys used in previous research.

The confirmation of H1 provides evidence that eudaimonic and hedonic states can be induced through television viewing. This idea is further supported by H2 in that meaningful and fun affective responses shown to be associated with eudaimonic states can be attained through television viewing of media also thought to engender eudaimonic and hedonic qualities.

H3 was partially supported in that participants did not consistently choose to maintain their eudaimonic or hedonic state with a subsequent clip after they watched *Rescue Me* or *The Wire*, but did choose to maintain their eudaimonic or hedonic state with a subsequent clip after they watched *Freaks and Geeks*. In other words, *Freaks and Geeks* was also the only manipulation shown to have a significant effect on subsequent program selection in the anticipated direction. It is important to note that *Freaks and Geeks* elicited the strongest responses across all measures. So, while the hypothesized effects on selective exposure were not fully supported, the predicted pattern of hedonic and eudaimonic selection did happen within *Freaks and Geeks*. Therefore, despite lack of full evidence for an overall effect of hedonic and eudaimonic states on selective exposure, there is some support for the idea that the effect is present when viewers are highly responsive to the initial show.

Repeating all analyses for effects of clip tone and show after controlling for typical media preferences produced the same main effects as the initial ANOVAs. The only difference was that the effect of clip tone was moderated slightly by show in magnitude for the meaningful and fun affect measures across shows. In other words, the effects of clip tone on show were present, but varied across programs. These results suggest that the general effects of eudaimonic and hedonic television exposure are robust enough that they are present both before and after controlling for trait preferences regarding eudaimonic and hedonic programming, and that eudaimonic and hedonic states can generally be induced regardless of existing trait preferences.

In the supplemental analyses of effects of the selected second clip on eudaimonia, hedonism, meaningful affect, and fun affect, it was found that eudaimonic and hedonic states were influenced in the expected directions by the tone of the clip selected. Choosing a eudaimonic clip led to more eudaimonic states and choosing a hedonic clip led to more hedonic states. This suggests that while exposure to a randomly assigned stimulus in a laboratory setting can influence eudaimonic and hedonic states and related affect, viewers' deliberate selection of a eudaimonic or hedonic clip in a laboratory setting is also associated with subsequent eudaimonic and hedonic states and related affect.

Previous research has used self-reports in surveys to suggest that hedonic motivations are correlated with hedonic media choices while eudaimonic motivations are correlated with eudaimonic media selection—or at least that respondents' memories and self-assessments indicate such correlations. The present research expands on this previous knowledge by examining the effects of hedonic and eudaimonic states on subsequent program selection in a controlled laboratory experiment guided by the behavioral perspective rather than the retrospective self-report surveys used in previous research. This study provides evidence that laboratory experiments can effectively examine responses to hedonic and eudaimonic media, both in experiments manipulating that tone in media content and in studies employing eudaimonic and hedonic tone as a self-selected quasi-independent variable.

Although the present study was only able to partially replicate those previous findings regarding the variable of program choice, results for program choice point to a plausible post-hoc explanation—namely that hedonic and eudaimonic states induced by a

television show seem to drive subsequent media selection when viewers have strong general responses to that television show, though perhaps not as much with shows that do not invoke strong responses in general. Because participants in the present study were not given an option as to which show they watch or whether that show was hedonic or eudaimonic in nature, it is understandable that they would not necessarily respond with strong feelings. It may also be the case that as Kim and Raney (2009) found that typical media preference was the strongest predictor of media selection; typical preference in program tone may be the strongest indicator of media choice when the viewer is not highly involved in a program prior to selecting a program to watch.

Because each show had a hedonic and eudaimonic condition that effectively manipulated hedonic and eudaimonic states, results indicated that television shows can have both hedonic and eudaimonic components in varied plots and episodes. This is important for our understanding of viewing motivations because it demonstrates that hedonism and eudaimonia are not mutually exclusive and in fact can coexist not only within genres, but within different segments of the same program. Further, given that hedonic and eudaimonic motivations are not mutually exclusive (Oliver and Raney, 2011), it is likely that a large number of television programs feature aspects of both eudaimonia and hedonism—even within a single episode. This supports Tamborini and colleagues' (2010) assertion that media enjoyment encompasses the satisfaction of both hedonic and eudaimonic needs.



While we know that states can be manipulated, we can conclude that those states work somewhat differently than traits when it comes to selecting television entertainment, and that difference may be attributed to viewer involvement.

### **Limitations**

While these results are promising, they should be considered in light of the limitations of this experiment. First, the clips used were approximately 10 minutes in length, therefore not fully emulating the experience of watching an entire television episode. While the experience was artificial in that sense, the results suggest that hedonic and eudaimonic states can be manipulated in a relatively short amount of time.

Participants were asked about their typical viewing preferences last, after answering similar questions in response to programs they just viewed. This placement of the measure may be considered a limitation given the possibility that their previous answers and exposure to clips might have influenced their answers.

This study did not allow for a diverse range of ages, which inhibits the ability to generalize results to a broader population. Another limitation of this study is that participants did not have the option to choose the program featured in the first television clip they watched. While the manipulations were effective, the subject matter of clips may not have been consistent with programming that participants might normally view, so results may differ with programs that participants are accustomed to frequently viewing.

### **Future Research**

By validating the utility of hedonic and eudaimonic manipulations in laboratory research and evidencing the existence of eudaimonic and hedonic states, this study

provides the opportunity for future research to examine other effects of these temporary states. For instance, inquiries into how mood, anticipated situations, and co-viewing might moderate the entertainment choices as a result of temporary states would be fruitful to this area of research.

The *Freaks and Geeks* program yielded the highest level of responses across response measures, and *Freaks and Geeks* was the program for which the clip tone manipulation influenced program preference. Future research should explore what specific characteristics might have lead stronger responses, and in what sorts of programs eudaimonic and hedonic tone influence subsequent program selections. This may help lead to a better understanding of what show characteristics can drive a viewer to continue watching something of the same nature.

It would also be worthwhile to conduct similar research using participants of a wide range of ages. Trait-like motivations for entertainment consumption can change with age, with preference for eudaimonic entertainment increasing with age (Oliver & Raney, 2011).

Because television shows can feature both hedonic and eudaimonic content, future research would benefit from examining how those types of content affect subsequent viewing motivations for viewers with varying trait motivations. Future research might also allow participants to choose the initial clip watched before conducting a similar experiment. This would increase the likelihood of involvement in the first clip and thus may lead to stronger effects on succeeding program selection.

**Conclusion**

There is still a considerable amount of work to be done toward a comprehensive model of entertainment selection motivations. There is a complex interplay between the management and adjusting of moods, hedonic and non-hedonic need satisfaction, and a number of factors influencing even those approaches to our understanding of media selection. In previous research, hedonic and eudaimonic motivations have largely been conceptualized as long-standing traits. However, it is acknowledged that motivations for seeking entertainment do vary within individuals (Oliver & Raney, 2011) and the present research confirms that hedonic and eudemonic states can be elicited even with a short television clip. Although research is far from developing a cogent theory incorporating the array of motivations for media entertainment consumption, this study makes a humble contribution to the research area by developing hedonic and eudaimonic state manipulations and examining the effects that those states have on media selection. Results of this study suggest that while hedonic and eudaimonic states can be induced, only the strongest responses to a television show lead to subsequent selection of a similarly based show in terms of hedonic or eudaimonic valence.

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### **Appendix A: Pilot Study Post-Exposure Questionnaire**

#### **Eudaimonia/Hedonicism:**

1. This clip challenged my way of seeing the world
2. This clip made me reflective
3. This clip focused on meaningful human conditions
4. This clip made me think
5. This clip conveyed profound messages
6. I had fun while watching this clip
7. This clip made me laugh
8. This clip was simple, but enjoyable because it was fun
9. This clip was “silly” or lacked depth
10. This clip was entertaining
11. This clip was happy and positive
12. This clip focused on a character’s search for greater understanding in life

#### **Enjoyment:**

1. This clip was enjoyable
2. I would not recommend this show to others
3. I like the main character
4. I would like to watch other shows that are similar to this one

### **Appendix B: Main Experiment Questionnaire Administered after First Clip**

#### **Affective Responses:**

1. Compassionate
2. Inspired
3. Introspective
4. Contemplative
5. Humored
6. Entertained
7. Amused
8. Excited

#### **Eudaimonia/Hedonicism:**

1. This clip challenged my way of seeing the world
2. This clip made me reflective
3. This clip focused on meaningful human conditions
4. This clip made me think

5. This clip conveyed profound messages
6. I had fun while watching this clip
7. This clip made me laugh
8. This clip was simple, but enjoyable because it was fun
9. This clip was "silly" or lacked depth
10. This clip was entertaining
11. This clip was happy and positive
12. This clip focused on a character's search for greater understanding in life

The next television clip you will watch in this study will be from the Australian television series *Underbelly*. You have four clips to choose from. Rank the clips below by clicking and dragging the descriptions so that the clip you would like to watch is at the top marked "1," the clip you would like to watch second most second marked "2", and so on.

The clip you would like to watch most will be the clip that you watch.

### **Enjoyment:**

1. I had a good time watching the clip
2. I liked watching this clip
3. I enjoyed watching the clip
4. I felt good watching the clip
5. It made me happy to watch the clip
6. I did not enjoy the subject matter of the clip\*
7. The clip was entertaining
8. I would not recommend this clip to others\*
9. I would like to analyze this clip
10. I would like to talk about this clip with other people
11. I would like to seek out additional information about this clip
12. I really thought about the clip when I watched it
13. I would hate to be distracted while watching this clip
14. I would like to re-watch this clip
15. I really got involved in the plot
16. This clip made me think

### **Eudaimonic and Hedonic Television Viewing Trait Preferences:**

1. I like television programs that challenge my way of seeing the world
2. I like television programs that make me more reflective
3. I like television programs that focus on meaningful human conditions
4. My favorite kinds of television programs are ones that make me think

5. I am very moved by television programs that are about people's search for greater understanding in life
6. I like television programs that have profound meanings or messages to convey
7. It's important to me that I have fun when watching a television programs
8. Television programs that make me laugh are among my favorites
9. I find that even simple television programs can be enjoyable as long as they are fun
10. I like television programs that may be considered "silly" or "shallow" if they make me laugh and I can have a good time
11. For me, the best television programs are ones that are entertaining
12. My favorite kinds of television programs are happy and positive