BENGİSU ŞİMŞEK REFLECTING ON VIOLENT MEDIA Bilkent University 2023

REFLECTING ON VIOLENT MEDIA: EMPATHY AND PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR IN FICTIONAL VERSUS REAL FRAMES

A Master's Thesis

By

BENGİSU ŞİMŞEK

Department of
Communication and Design
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University
Ankara
May 2023

To my mother.

REFLECTING ON VIOLENT MEDIA:

EMPATHY AND PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR IN FICTIONAL VERSUS REAL FRAMES

The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
of
İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University

by

BENGİSU ŞİMŞEK

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS IN MEDIA AND VISUAL STUDIES

THE DEPARTMENT OF
COMMUNICATION AND DESIGN
İHSAN DOĞRAMACI BİLKENT UNIVERSITY
ANKARA

May 2023

REFLECTING ON VIOLENT MEDIA: EMPATHY AND PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR IN FICTIONAL VERSUS REAL FRAMES
By Bengisu Şimşek

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Media and Visual Studies.

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

Ayşenur Dal Tokdemir
Advisor

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Media and Visual Studies.

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

Emel Özdora Akşak
Examining Committee Member

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Media and Visual Studies.

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

Özen Baş
Examining Committee Member

Approval of the Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

Refet Soykan Gürkaynak
Director

ABSTRACT

REFLECTING ON VIOLENT MEDIA:

EMPATHY AND PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR IN FICTIONAL VERSUS REAL FRAMES

Şimşek, Bengisu

M.A. Media and Visual Studies

Supervisor: Asst. Prof. Dr. Ayşenur Dal Tokdemir

May 2023

The prominence of media violence is taking novel forms with the rise of technologies such as virtual reality and artificial intelligence. The nature of these technologies calls for a study of what real and fiction means in terms of mediated violence reception, in order to account for the mechanisms through which audiences will respond. In this regard, this thesis aims to integrate the theoretical framework offered by positive media psychology, specifically by adapting eudaimonic media consumption into the reception of mediated violence in fictional versus real frames. The possible occurrence of prosocial behavior is regarded as a result of moral engagement processes, initiated by empathic concerns and reflective thoughts on viewing violence. The formal elements of citizen witnessing as a specific type of violent imagery are integrated into the framework to enhance the importance of reception processes in the face of different portrayals of violence. To investigate these mechanisms, a between-subject online survey experiment was conducted on 176 participants recruited via convenience

sampling of undergraduate students at a private university in Turkey. The results indicated that although the framing of violence as real and fictional did not affect prosocial behavior, reflective thoughts on violence viewing and perceived realism had a significant relationship with the initiation of empathic reactions, and, eventually, prosocial behavior. The findings suggest that violent media requires further and explicit attention in line with eudaimonic media use, as the moral engagement processes related to it are significantly different from other forms of complex entertainment.

Keywords: Media Violence, Eudaimonic Media, Prosocial Media Use, Media Psychology.

ÖZET

MEDYA ŞİDDETİ ÜZERİNE YANSITICI DÜŞÜNME:

KURGUSAL VE GERÇEK ÇERÇEVELERDE EMPATİ VE TOPLUM YANLISI DAVRANIŞ

Şimşek, Bengisu

Yüksek Lisans, Medya ve Görsel Çalışmalar

Tez Danışmanı: Asst. Prof. Dr. Ayşenur Dal Tokdemir

Mayıs 2023

Medya şiddetinin önemi, sanal gerçeklik ve yapay zeka gibi teknolojilerin yükselişiyle birlikte yeni biçimler alıyor. Bu teknolojilerin doğası, izleyicilerin yanıt vereceği mekanizmaları açıklamak için, medya şiddet alımlaması açısından gerçek ve kurmacanın ne anlama geldiğinin araştırılmasını gerektirir. Bu bağlamda, bu tez pozitif medya psikolojisi tarafından sunulan teorik çerçeveyi, özellikle de ödemonik medya tüketimini kurmaca ve gerçek çerçevelerdeki medya şiddetinin alımlanmasına uyarlayarak bütünleştirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Toplum yanlısı davranışın gerçekleşmesi ihtimali, empatik kaygılar ve şiddeti izlemeye ilişkin yansıtıcı düşünceler tarafından başlatılan ahlaki katılım süreçlerinin bir sonucu olarak kabul edilir. Belirli bir şiddet imgesi türü olarak yurttaş tanıklığının biçimsel unsurları, farklı şiddet tasvirleri karşısında alımlama süreçlerinin önemini tartışmak için kuramsal çerçeveye entegre edilmiştir. Bu mekanizmaları araştırmak için, Türkiye'deki özel bir üniversitedeki lisans öğrencilerinden kolaylı örnekleme yoluyla alınan 176 katılımcı üzerinde bir çevrimiçi anket deneyi yapılmıştır. Sonuçlar, şiddetin gerçek ve kurgusal olarak

çerçevelenmesinin toplum yanlısı davranışı etkilememesine rağmen, şiddeti izleme konusundaki yansıtıcı düşüncelerin ve algılanan gerçekçiliğin empatik tepkilerin başlaması ve nihayetinde toplum yanlısı davranışla önemli bir ilişkisi olduğunu göstermiştir. Bulgular, şiddet içeren medyanın, ödemonik medya kullanımıyla uyumlu olarak daha fazla dikkat gerektirdiğini, çünkü şiddet medyasıyla ilgili ahlaki taahhüt süreçlerinin diğer karmaşık eğlence biçimlerinden önemli ölçüde farklı olduğunu gösteriyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Medya Şiddeti, Ödemonik Medya, Prososyal Medya Kullanımı, Medya Psikolojisi.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Firstly, I would like to start by expressing my sincere gratitude to my thesis advisor Asst. Prof. Dr. Ayşenur Dal for her support throughout this process. Her knowledge, experience, and patience were and always will be a motivation and a reminding factor for me of why I want to build a career in research and teaching. Most importantly, I would like to thank her for always showing her trust and support in my academic progress, even at times when I had a hard time trusting myself.

I would like to sincerely thank Assoc. Prof. Dr. Emel Özdora Akşak and Asst. Prof. Dr. Özen Baş for being the committee members of this thesis. Their suggestions and feedback are invaluable to me.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to my family. It is the love and trust of my parents, Serpil Şimşek and Erhan Şimşek that always made me feel supported. I cannot thank them enough for providing me with the educational opportunities that brought me to this day. I would also like to extend my warmest thanks to my grandmother, Şükran Yiğit, as she has always supported me from the day I started to learn reading.

I would like to sincerely thank Alp Karaçaylı, for he always trusted in me, gave me comfort, and got me through times of stress. I thank him for

always being here for me; I am so lucky to have him in my life. I would like to thank our dear cat, Quentin. He has been my greatest source of comfort during this process.

I would like to thank Oğuz Kayır, my ultimate study buddy and dear friend. His passion gave me strength, and his friendship gave me comfort; we are yet to discover the Midwest together!

Lastly, I want to thank two very powerful women in my life; their presence has been an undeniable source of support for me during this process. I thank Sevdenur Doğan, for growing with me over the years and for being a friend whom I can always trust. We will always find our way back home!

And I would like to thank Eda Güven for always listening to me, and always being there to pick up the phone when I needed her support. Her strength is a great source of motivation for me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In April 2022, images of graphic violence struck Twitter users of a woman called Loab; her body was mutilated, bleeding, and in horrifying shape, along with mutilated children in a similar bodily condition (Dazed, 2022). These images unsettled many Twitter users, and many noted that these images were terrifyingly realistic. They were images created using an artificial intelligence image generator by the Twitter user Supercomposite. The images were accompanied by a trigger warning, flagged by the author to be "violence and sensitive content." The conversations were not only shaped around the amount of gore in the images but how realistic they looked. But everyone exposed to these images eventually knew they were AI-generated, thus knowing that no women or children were harmed during their production.

The prominence of media violence is certainly not limited to AI-generated images, but the conversations around the possibility of blurring the line between real and fiction in graphic violence are prone to increase. As this distinction bears importance for future media technologies, understanding the mechanisms of reception with regard to real

versus fictional violence is a crucial step in examining the outcomes of such reception processes.

In addition, as the mediated environments of the last decade are becoming increasingly more interactive and immersive with technologies such as virtual reality, the distinction between reality and fiction is prone to becoming less discernible gradually (Shapiro & McDonald, 1992). These technologies "have the potential to both replicate the sensory information of the physical world and provide information in ways that go far beyond current representational systems" (Shapiro & McDonald, 1992, p.95). Thus, integrating real versus fiction distinction into communication research focusing on reception processes becomes even more central.

Recognizing how fictional and real frames contribute to the reception processes of violent genres can be implemented within the contemporary research that takes violent media in line with prosocial media use, ranging from violent films to video games. In this vein, the distinction between violence as entertainment and violence as a documented reality can help further the focus on the "non-monolithic" (Zillmann, 1988; as cited in McCauley, 1998, p.51) nature of media violence and can add to the already existing research that takes mediated violence reception within the framework of positive media psychology (Kobach & Weaver, 2012; Bartsch & Mares, 2014; Bartsch et al., 2016; Waddell et al., 2019).

Reception of media violence is no longer simply explained by the occurrence of antisocial behavior such as aggression, but there are theoretical frameworks and empirical studies which take violence reception into account as a complex mechanism

(Tamborini, 1990; Hoffner, 2009; Kobach & Weaver; 2013; Bartsch & Mares, 2014; Bartsch et al., 2020). The poignant mixed affect raised when consuming violent media can lead to "a greater sense of ambivalent and complex nature of life, and that joy and sorrow are often equal partners on the road to meaningful life experiences" (Ott et al., 2021, p.6). That is, contrary to what one might think about mediated violence; it can allow people to accept the human condition in a variety of ways, such as through the mediated witnessing of the suffering of others.

While mediated witnessing keeps the violence and terror at a distance, framing violence as real plays a role in removing the safety net, introducing the viewer to the possibility that someone might have actually been harmed in the event that they have just witnessed. In this vein, this study mainly uses the framework provided by eudaimonic media consumption to further the understanding of moral concerns related to violence viewing by explicitly focusing on the prosocial outcomes that may occur.

This study aims to contribute to the literature by addressing an unaddressed theoretical link where empathy will be thought in relation to the framing of violence, the framing of violence will be considered in relation to the reactivity towards real-world violence, the relationship between the framing of violence and empathy will consider the possible effect of group status of the victim and the relationship between empathy and prosocial behavior will consider the potential effect of the ability to reflect on violent media. Theoretically grounding the research on *unpleasant* mediated violence, the intent is to show how the eudaimonic motivations related to viewing unpleasant violence stem from moral concerns that result from the lack of moral justification presented in these types of violent images, whether there is the will to act upon real-world violence as a result of

these concerns and how much of these concerns are facilitated through the reported levels of empathy. In this regard, this study adopts a between-subject experimental design, carried out through an online survey experiment in the way of seeking answers to the following questions:

> **RQ1:** How does self-reported empathy differ when individuals are exposed to the real versus fictional framing of the same violent footage?
>
> **RQ2:** How does the group status of the victim (in-group vs. out-group) moderate the relationship between the framing of violence (real vs. fictional) and self-reported empathy?
>
> **RQ3:** How does self-reported empathy affect prosocial behavior?
>
> **RQ4:** How do reflective thoughts on violence viewing moderate the relationship between empathy and prosocial behavior?

The second chapter of this study will outline the theoretical framework that will be useful in designing the research under two main headlines: The content itself and its reception. The content itself will be explicated through an emphasis on the formal qualities of violence that refer to realism and fiction, by mainly focusing on the aesthetics of citizen witnessing and bridging it to the literature on snuff and false snuff in recreating violence through realistic manners, which are eventually fictional in their production. The latter part will focus on the mechanisms that can affect the relationship between the framing of violence and prosocial behavior, such as empathy, reflective thoughts on violence viewing, group status, and perceived realism. The literature supporting these mechanisms is explained and implemented into the theoretical model presented at the end of the chapter.

Chapter three will outline the methodology of the study by stating the data collection and sampling procedures, the design of the survey experiment, the materials, and the measures adopted. Lastly, this chapter will outline the empirical findings in the results section.

Chapter four will summarize the findings and discuss them in detail by building a conversation with previous literature as well as offer paths for future studies. Methodological considerations and limitations will be addressed in terms of how they might have affected the study results.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Thus far, media violence research has focused on various aspects of the matter, with its content and reception being prominently studied. When it comes to the type of violence, the literature falls short in exploring how media violence is categorized and what such categorizations mean to audiences. There are terminologies that have long existed that could help make categorizations, such as happy violence and unpleasant violence (Gerbner, 1999), but they have rarely been put into use when conducting empirical research (Waddell et al., 2019). Explicating the categorization of violence in line with how audiences respond can further our understanding of how audiences make sense of media violence by going beyond violence as entertainment and revealing additional gratifications of violence viewing. Exposing a particular type of violent imagery to questioning violence as entertainment and violence as a documented reality can help explore where the line between enjoyment and more complex emotional responses are given to such content.

The violence viewing experience certainly differs from knowing a particular image is a documentation of an actual event as opposed to knowing that the violence is part of a fictional narrative. The problem arises not from this distinction but from how one makes a reality judgment in exposure to or consciously exposing oneself to violent media. Considering the removal of *immediacy through mediacy* as the basic principle of mediated environments, deciding on what the source of a mediated image is not upon the viewer but the contextual framing of the image *for* the viewer (Goldberg, 1998). In this line, inquiring about the effects of not solely the content of violent images but also the context they are presented in gains importance in understanding what real-life implications mediated violence can have.

With these points in mind, this chapter will mix the literature on the content of violence itself as well as its reception within a continuing line of theories in order to outline the empirical framework. The first part of the chapter will conceptualize unpleasant violence and its formal qualities that allow talking about realism, linking it to how real violence is recorded and circulated by citizens as well as terrorist organizations, to point to the disruptive and transformative characteristic that media violence may take on in real life. Additionally, how such disturbing media content can be used as a means for meaningfulness-seeking through the framework of eudaimonic media consumption will be explained by taking perceived realism, the group status of the victim, and moral engage such as reflecting on violence, that could lead to prosocial behavior into consideration. In the end, this chapter will review the literature and provide a theoretical framework for studying mediated violence reception in line with real/fiction distinction, empathic reactions, and reactivity to real-world violence.

2.2 Eudaimonic Media Consumption

Eudaimonic media consumption derives from the distinction between hedonic enjoyment and eudaimonia, in which eudaimonia refers to "live in accordance with the *daimon*" or "true self" (Waterman, 1993, p.678). In this view, the conception of the true self is related to the effort one puts into reaching their potential and the ability to express oneself virtuously as a result of such effort (Waterman, 1993). When hedonic enjoyment is attached to the primitive needs of humans, mainly including physical gratifications such as hunger and sexual desires (Aristotle, 1985 as cited in Waterman, 1993, p.679), eudaimonia is related to enjoyment taken out from the effort in reaching one's full potential, which is associated with a meaningful mental process of self-realization (Waterman, 1993, p.679).

Media content has been put into the framework of eudaimonia specifically for types of content with complex consumption patterns, such as ones that raise negative emotions in viewers. These negative emotions, such as anger, fear, and sadness, can result in a "rewarding experience" such as the raising of more complex emotional responses of "righteous indignation, thrill or bitter-sweet melancholy" (Bartsch et al., 2008, p8). With the arousal of such complex emotions, eudaimonic consumption of media content can help "increase viewers' ability to make sense of difficulties, their acceptance of the human condition, and their motivation to pursue moral goals" (Ott et al., 2021). Briefly, eudaimonic happiness is strongly related to "feelings of concentration, challenge, and competence" (Oliver et al., 2018, p.382).

The complexity of such consumption patterns derives from their opposition to hedonic gratifications, which are associated with "feeling happy, content, and relaxed" (Oliver et

al., 2018, p.382). In a hedonistic consumption pattern, a consumer would be expected to get rid of the negative affect, such as in the case of choosing to watch a horror film to get rid of the state of boredom (Oliver, 2009). Mood management theory, which explains that media users engage with a variety of content when needed to "enhance normal and pleasant states," has been considered the default form of media engagement for a considerably long time in the literature (Zillmann, 2000). However, more recent literature points out that this type of consumption means that individuals can always precisely detect how they are feeling and how they will reduce or enhance it. This precision is not always possible, and acknowledging this inability would mean that individuals may sometimes expose themselves to media that enhances negative affect rather than reducing it (Oliver, 2009). Hence, when an individual is sad, they may mistakenly choose to watch a tragic film rather than a happy one. As Oliver (2009) points out, approaching these choices as mistakes can disallow seeing that there may be greater purposes attached to these choices, such as aiming towards meaningfulness-seeking.

Despite the considerable difference between the terms, the literature on eudaimonic media consumption is closely related to hedonistic consumption and its conceptualization as telic hedonism, allowing for a further counter-definition of hedonism (Zillmann, 2000). Telic hedonism grants access to today's eudaimonic media consumption literature by stating that emotional states may relate to media experiences that are "beyond hedonism" (Zillmann, 2000, p.106). As an advancement to mood management theory, telic hedonism suggests that mood management is not "restricted to instant applications" (Parrott, 1993 as cited in Zillmann, 2000, p.107) and can be

considered for a more extended period than simply considering the immediate moment that media content has been consumed.

In that, “there might be circumstances where people opt to prolong their negative states for some future, positive outcome” (Oliver, 2009, p.174). By delaying the positive affect, people can open space for a longer-lasting negative affect, which would be unwanted in hedonistic media consumption, and they strive for a future benefit that may be the result of media experiences. Angry males consciously exposing themselves to violent media for the sake of reciprocating the anger they are feeling towards another human is one of the earlier examples of why people can choose to hang onto their negative states (O’Neal & Taylor, 1989) so that they are confronted with their feelings through reflection allowed by mediation. Such a choice refers to how media content is not only used by individuals to “escape from reality” (Zillmann, 2000, p.108) but to latch onto the reality they are in, to be relieved from a negative state after a period of time of being exposed to that negative state intensely. This is in line with psychological well-being, which suggests “a lifespan theory of human flourishing” (Ryan & Deci, 2001, p.146), allowed through experiences beyond pleasure. Eudaimonic media consumption can direct the individual in “personal growth,” “life purpose,” and “positive relatedness” (Ryan & Deci, 2001, p.146) by not delaying the negative state through the adoption of hedonistic genres such as comedy but to last the negative affect longer through content that involves distressing aspects, such as violence.

The negative affect does not mean that eudaimonic media consumption does not end in a positive state. It is conceptualized as a particular type of appreciation that results from the initiation of poignant emotions. The part where eudaimonic appreciation strictly

differs from hedonic happiness is the enhancement of meaningfulness (Oliver & Bartsch, 2011). The courage to allow oneself to discover the negative state results in a type of happiness that is more valuable to the human condition when compared to hedonic happiness (Oliver & Bartsch, 2011) since this happiness is allowed by the recognition of others in situations that are beyond oneself.

The types of content that could arouse these poignant emotions are not limited to a particular genre, but various media products from a range of genres have the potential to drive audiences to strive for "greater insight, meaning, and purpose in life" (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010, p. 76). Within this framework of eudaimonic media experiences, it is important to note where violent media stands and how the formal qualities of particular types of violent imagery can play into raising eudaimonic engagement processes in viewers.

2.3 Conceptualizing Unpleasant (Impulsive) Violence

Unpleasant violence is attributed to types of violent images that lack moral justification or narrative resolution and are not often represented in popular media (Waddell et al., 2019). To place unpleasant or impulsive violence (Berkowitz, 1989 as cited in McCauley, 1998, p.145) within a contemporary framework, the structure posed by McCauley (1998) can be followed. Starting with an example, unpleasant violence is the opposite of what we would expect to see in Hollywood films that feature violence. Violence in Hollywood is often a way to reach an end where someone, or often a community, is relieved from a catastrophic event and can return to the normal state of their lives. Such films can belong to various genres ranging from war films to science fiction (McCauley, 1998, p.146). The perpetrators could be out-of-world creatures, and

the violence inflicted on them by humans is justified through self-defense or protecting the community. Alternatively, in the case of a war film, there are usually very high levels of gore that could make viewers uncomfortable. However, in the end, there is a narrative resolution that makes violence make sense to give the audience a sense of relief.

An instance of where Hollywood's typical usage of violence does not work is in horror films, where violence is substantial and unjustified. The abundance of violence often communicates to the audience as ridiculous, disgusting, and firmly, not understandable. These films do not leave any screen time for the audiences to see the outcome of the violence since the violent acts depicted do not indicate a narrative means but are solely committed for the pleasure of hurting a living being. Many sub-genres of horror, such as slasher, body horror, found-footage, exploitation, and faux-snuff, fit into the description of unpleasant violence. The type and amount of violence these films reflect violate moral norms to the extent the audience cannot experience firsthand. Despite all this, this kind of violence has a faithful audience who enjoy their time watching such content.

This type of enjoyment has been explained through a variety of theories, such as catharsis, sensation seeking (Zuckerman, 1979), mood management (Zillmann, 1988), and excitation-transfer theory (Zillmann, 2008). However, these theories and others that focus on the enjoyment of violence, specifically in horror, all hint at the fictional quality of horror as the signals of fictionality can allow the audience to make sure they are "confronted with a [purely] fictional spectacle" (Carroll, 1990, p.68). It is the trust in the fictional spectacle that allows the audience to stay in their seats "rather than calling out the army" (Carroll, 1990, p.68).

Unpleasant violent images are known to shock viewers since they lack moral concern, possibly leading the audience to try and compensate for the morality lacking on-screen (Hoffner, 2009). This has been the case for fictional violence that had motivated audiences to action regarding real-world violence (Waddell et al., 2019), and unpleasant violent images have been noted to be "negatively associated with moral disengagement and positively associated with moral concerns" (Tsay-Vogel & Krakowjak, 2016, p.56). However, as much as unpleasant violent imagery is a category on its own that is defined by various characteristics, including the power to push audiences to action, the reality value of these images requires further elaboration. Emphasizing realism within the framework of unpleasant violent imagery can further the understanding of how and why audiences interact with these images. In this regard, it is important to focus on the characteristics that impose cues for realism and unrealism in unpleasant violence. How might these cues communicate to the audiences and shape their attitudes toward real-world violence?

2.3.1 Documentary Quality

The enjoyment taken out of violent content lies in the obscure comfort of knowing that the violence is not real (Goldberg, 1998, p.32). Even though repulsive emotions such as disgust may still occur through the fictional framework of violence with the "immediacy of reality removed" (Kobach & Weaver, 2012), these emotions are less likely to decrease enjoyment compared to a real frame of violence. In addition to the naturally existing distance between the audience and mediated content which stems from the essential characteristic of mediated environments, there is also the distance added by the fictional framing. In genres that do not rely on violence, suspension of disbelief is the

"default processing mode for mediated content" (Kobach & Weaver, 2012) because audiences choose to be present within the fictional world by engaging with it as if the content is real.

Yet, for unpleasant violence, the case is just the opposite. The effort in suspending disbelief is put into reminding oneself that the content is not real to reduce the negative affect the images may invoke in the viewer (Kobach & Weaver, 2012). Nonetheless, this effort does not exist when the unpleasant violence is framed as real since the frame provided for the viewer does not allow for any other assumption other than that the content is real. In this respect, it is helpful to try and discern the formal qualities of real and fictional violence, and where they intersect to pave the way in explaining how audiences react to these different frames in distinctive ways.

The real framing of unpleasant violence emanates from the documentary quality. As per its name, the documentary genre relies on documenting realities in an audiovisual manner and essentially claims to be factual. The inclinations of a documentary suggest a different type of viewer experience in terms of the suspension of disbelief since there is no fictive quality to suspend to increase engagement in the first place. Although the definition of a documentary seems straightforward in explaining the aim of it as a cinematic medium, its characteristics are adopted within various fictive genres that depict violence (Eitzen, 1995).

One such example is the horror subgenre called faux-snuff, which relies on documentary aesthetics as a cue for realism even though it is fictional. A faux-snuff is a genre of film acting as real in depicting various types of violence, such as torture, lynching, and on-

screen death. The “faux” in front of “snuff” refers to the imitative quality of the genre, as it mimics snuff, which is a category of violent media that depicts actual death happening on-screen. Despite the ongoing emphasis on its resemblance to the documentary genre, the differentiating line between documentary and snuff is that in a documentary, no living being is purposefully harmed during production. In contrast, the distinguishing feature of snuff is killing an actual living being on-screen.

The FBI claims the defining characteristics of snuff to be involving “the torture, murder, and mutilation” of most commonly a female and “reputedly commissioned and distributed for the delectation of a shadowy group of sensation seekers” (Jackson, 2016, p.9). Supposedly, snuff is a market for people seeking to buy and consume such violent content. In comparison, faux-snuff is just pretending to be snuff by adopting the formal elements of snuff. What faux-snuff allows the viewers is a “safety net,” “allowing to speculate what it might be like to watch ‘real’ death with the moral reassurance that no one is actually being hurt” (Heller-Nicholas, 2014, p.58). In this respect, the aforementioned documentary aesthetics in reality construction in faux-snuff films purposefully serve as a means to blur the line between reality and fiction, which is expected to puzzle the audiences’ ability to detect the level of realism formally but still provide a peek into what the actual footage might look and sound like.

With respect to the realism aspect of documented reality and its replications, there are forms of footage recorded by citizens that depict acts of unimaginable violence, such as the killing of a person through lynching, that do not provide a safety net since it is known for a fact that what they have recorded through their witnessing is real, and they are inviting other viewers to witness the event. Footage provided by these recording

practices resembles documentary in terms of the formal qualities and will be mentioned within the framework of this study in line with the qualities of faux-snuff to replicate everyday violence. Thus, imagery related to citizen witnessing is central in trying to explain how violence can be reconstructed and replicated through mediation and what purposes the replication might serve in terms of referring to actual events.

2.3.2 Aesthetics of Citizen Witnessing

Citizen witnessing refers to a type of pseudo-witnessing to events, which is provided through the distance allowed by mediation (Andén-Papadopoulos, 2013). Such practices and the aesthetics they bring allow for "a new kind of witnessing" that "forges new points of connection and empathic engagement between 'us' and suffering 'others' in the global mediapolis" (Andén-Papadopoulos, 2014, p.754). The power of the violence presented in these images derives from their capacity to hold the parts of media witnessing, which are "eyewitnessing (those who have first-hand experience of the event)," "mediators (the various agents and agencies who produce and broadcast)" and audiences (Andén-Papadopoulos, 2014, p.758). The experience of media witnessing is compressed within these images, reminding the audiences of the suffering of *others.*

These footage are specifically called "citizen" witnessing as they are recorded by a passerby citizen. The aesthetic qualities of these footage closely resemble a documentary since it has a "deep reality effect" (Andén-Papadopoulos, 2013, p.342), endorsed by the poor technical quality and the challenge in verifying the source of the images. The footage served through citizen witnessing often involves crises depicted by violence, such as lynching, and can transfer the "proximity to the real" (Andén-Papadopoulos, 2013, p.342) to viewers, eventually leading viewers to engage in feelings of moral

responsibility. The perceived realism is higher in these footage compared to those provided by news agencies, as the genuine and "first-person" (Andén-Papadopoulos, 2013, p.344) nature of citizen witnessing translates much more effectively to the viewers. The feeling of being there and the lacking intentionality of documenting make the images closer to being perceived as real and imply "liveness, immediacy, and co-presence" (Andén-Papadopoulos, 2013, p.345). As the feeling of immediacy is still mediated through the existence of a recording device of some sort, the witnessing of viewers is referred to as pseudo-witnessing, and the proliferation of such type of viewing bears proximities to that of a documentary, hence, can be replicated through adopting the formal elements of a documentary.

The aesthetics provided by the citizen witnessing literature particularly explain the parts that enhance the authenticity of images, non-narrativity being one of them. Footage coming from citizen witnesses does not have a narrative, such as in the case of professional photojournalism, and is defined by its non-narrativity (Andén-Papadopoulos, 2013, p.346). The non-narrativity goes even beyond the work of a professionally produced documentary since documentaries often rely on a script to depict their narrative. The lack of narrative in citizen witnessing indicates a close relationship to unpleasant violence where there is no narrative resolution to the presented violence. Thus, the viewers are left with a sense of ambivalence and spontaneity where the result of the event is either entirely unknown or the result does not make sense, such as in the cases of extreme violence.

The hypermobilised camerawork of citizen witnessing is underlined by its capacity to reflect the feeling of being there, as the passerby has taken the risk of getting hurt by the

event they are recording. Similar to a documentary, the camera is not professionally placed but in a constant state of movement since the person behind the camera is also trying to protect themselves simultaneously. Thus, some parts do not fit into the frame, indicating that the event is still ongoing, but the person can record only a part of it (Andén-Papadopoulos, 2013, p.346). This also indicates that the event may go on even after the recording ends, giving the footage a sense of spatiotemporal realism and legibility. In this sense, what a replication could take from this formal element is the found-footage aesthetic of citizen witnessing, precisely the mobile and amateur camera movements that depict a sense of immediacy.

Related to the hypermobility, or the found-footage aesthetic in a replicated version, the opacity is an essential part of the citizen witnessing aesthetic. Opacity refers to how the recording device or the "medium" itself becomes a part of the "message" (Andén-Papadopoulos, 2013, p.346). The image's low resolution and the camera's sudden movements add to the "representational inadequacy" (Andén-Papadopoulos, 2013, p.346), which adds to the immediacy and reality aspect of the presented footage. Opacity could be translated as the editing aspect of a replicated version where the parts of the video are either not edited at all, since this would be the case for most citizen-witnessing footage, or the editing is done in a lazy manner where it does not serve a purpose in representing the event. If it did serve a purpose, it could easily take away from the presented reality since the footage would feel fabricated and organized, eventually losing its legibility. However, since there is no narrative implication presented in the footage itself, it is already blocked for editing to serve a purpose in telling a story.

Raw audio is the last defining characteristic of the aesthetics of citizen witnessing, where the sound is also unedited and helps underline the rawness of the footage itself. One such example provided by Andén-Papadopoulos (2013) is the killing of Muammar Gaddafi, in which the footage presents the "manic yelling and screaming" of (p.346) Gaddafi, and the questioning of the realism value is further disallowed since the raw sound adds to the non-narrativity, hypermobility, and opacity as the last aesthetic embedded in such imagery. The replication of sound also holds a similarity in replicating the real, where the sound editing is non-existent or seemed to look like it is non-existent so that it is communicated to the audience that everything they are viewing or hearing is diegetic to the footage itself.

Speaking of replicating images of citizen witnessing that mainly record violent events such as lynching hold particular importance for the current research. Understanding the formal elements are constructive in later explaining the perceived realism of mediated content and how audiences react to content that depicts the suffering of another human being. Thus, the qualities mentioned earlier of hypermobility, opacity, and raw sound require further explanation to understand how they can be replicated in fiction films that aim to seem real. The corresponding formal qualities in replicating documented violence are found-footage aesthetic, sound, and editing.

2.3.2.1 Found-Footage Aesthetic

The essential production aspect of found-footage is rooted in amateur filmmaking aesthetics. The hand-held camera usage is the first hint at an amateur aesthetic, where the camera is usually not still but moves with characters, inflicting a sense of mobility

closer to what we might experience in real life. The mobility suggests a solid link to the video recording technologies, as it is possible to record a distressing or dangerous event with a pocket camera instead of building a set to place a still camera to get a clear picture of what is happening. Additionally, the shaking of the camera echoes the "illegitimate and prohibited nature of the action" (i.e., torture, lynching) and elicits "a pre-established sense of authenticity through a duplication of the visual motifs associated with documentary filmmaking" (Hobbs, 2016, p.64). Hand-held camera usage is inherently accompanied by subjective point of view (POV) shots where we are either seeing the unpleasant violence through the POV of the victim or the perpetrator (Kimber, 2016, p.234). In cases where either of these characters are not using the camera, the visuals are presented in the form of CCTV footage or a form of accidental recording by a passerby (West, 2005, p.83).

The premise of the found-footage quality is that the "self-evident non-professionalism certifies that the presented event is not staged because both the technology utilized and the operator controlling it lacks the sophistication to fake" (West, 2005, p.85). As a result, the amateur quality achieved through low technology and lacking skills is communicated to the audiences to be real or holding the imminent capacity to be real.

2.3.2.2 Sound

The sound quality is a continuation of the found-footage aesthetic, as the recorded sound during production is amateur by design. More precisely, using an external sound recording device is not the case as it is in professional productions. The camera device is also used as the sound recorder, and the result of the sound is "distorted" and "muffled" (Kimber, 2016, p.234). This is in line with what McCauley (1998) posits on the quality

of sound as a depiction of the reality value of a mediated product; the inexpensive documentary production lacks music or voice-over but is entirely consistent with the sounds of the action taking place (p. 156). He adds that "perhaps mediated violence that lacks music or extra-diegetic sound would be more easily perceived as a recording of reality" (McCauley, 1998, p.156). There are no extra-diegetic sound elements because the footage initially proposes that the event is real; everything seen or heard through the screen has happened, so essentially, everything is diegetic to the real narrative.

2.3.2.3 Editing

The editing of filmed footage highlights the low-technology quality initiated by the found-footage aesthetic and the built-in sound. Through the editing stage of production, the enhancement of "poor quality, grainy images lacking in tonal contrast and textual detail, over and underexposed images" (Kimber, 2016, p.234) are made possible, which adds to the documentary quality as the footage is made to look like it was filmed with much older technology. The inclination is often made to VHS cassettes, also making a historical connection to the video-nasties frenzy of 1982 (Gallio & Mendik, 2016, p.106), which posited the snuff phenomena as a global problem and banned these graphic horror videos which were perceived to be real to those exposed to it.

2.3.2.4 Snuff 2.0: ISIS Execution Videos

Despite these ambiguous and possibly alarming production processes, the documentary-like production quality has also transferred into images of political violence. The ISIS execution videos in circulation during 2015 and 2016 are prominently analyzed through their resemblance to snuff films and are explicitly named Snuff 2.0 (Astley, 2016, p.154). The adoption of low technology in production that defined snuff has transferred

into ISIS beheading videos with achieving low technology through high-technology filming devices (Venkatesh et al., 2020, p.1755). The usage of the latest technology in producing these execution videos was not the only way that ISIS made use of the media of the day. The immediacy of a public execution had moved onto a mediated one, where "beheadings had become Internet events" (Astley, 2016, p.162). Sites such as Ogrish, LiveLeak, and Bestgore became more popular than ever as they were responsible for disseminating these videos on the Internet, where anyone could access them whenever they wanted to.

However, as the circulation of these videos elevated, the conspiracy theories related to the reality value of them were also entering the picture. People were speculating whether these execution videos used digital media "to create the impression of the slaughter…that did not happen in actuality" (Astley, 2016, p.164). The experience where the "consumer struggles with the temporal aspects of reality" (Venkatesh et al., 2020, p.1763) is a perpetual one achieved through the reliance on the Western snuff aesthetic.

Considering these production technologies that make fiction seem real, such as in the case of faux-snuff films, the framing of media products becomes increasingly powerful in how they are perceived. The perceived reality of a violent clip is closely related to how the viewer perceives it (Tamborini et al., 2013); thus, the behavioral outcome of varying perceptions is likely to change according to the real versus fiction frame. The presence of mediated violence in daily experiences can be better understood if individuals are aware of these perceptions and the underlying mental processes.

2.4 Violence and Eudaimonia

Conceptualizing violent genres in line with eudaimonic media consumption heavily depends on the justification of the presented violence. Regarding gore and audience choice, Bartsch and Mares (2014) theorize that "individuals may choose to watch violent, gory material if they anticipate that the depiction is a meaningful and valuable reflection of reality" (p.957). An example could be given from the same empirical research, where participants were more likely to view a film featuring very high levels of gore, such as *Saving Private Ryan* (Spielberg, 1998) and *Hotel Rwanda* (George, 2004), since perceived meaningfulness was also higher (Bartsch & Mares, 2014) as these films hold the capacity to richen the understanding of cruel consequences of war for humanity through the violence they depict. In this respect, "some types of violent and even gory content may be sought by audiences as an opportunity for reflection and meaning-making" (Bartsch et al., 2016).

Exemplification theory (Zillmann, 2002) suggests that more clearly perceptible situations expect "fewer demands on cognitive processing" (Zillmann, 2002, p.25, as cited in Grizzard et al., 2017). In accordance with exemplification theory, Grizzard et al. (2017) also focused on the graphicness of mediated violence and how it interacts with the arousal of moral emotions and found that a higher level of graphicness elicited higher levels of anger and disgust compared to lower levels of graphic violence (p.775). Nonetheless, other empirical research showed that there was another essential indicator that could surpass the effect of graphicness in responding to violence (Tamborini et al., 2013), which is the perceived realism of the violent content. Realism was detected to be "the most important predictor for preference of violence" (Tamborini et al., 2013; Potter

et al., 2003). This was explicitly the case for violent films compared to video games since film as a medium is one where people can compare to "what they see or expect to see in real life" (Tamborini et al., 2013). As suggested by previous literature, how audiences engage with the realism value of mediated violent content is also an essential focus of the current study that requires more attention.

2.4.1 Perceived Realism

Potter's (1988) two-dimensional explication of perceived realism follows the semantic and syntactic subcomponents, where semantic refers to the "belief that the meaning or the substance of the message contains or deals with reality" (Potter, 1988, as cited in Pouliot & Cowen, 2007, p.244) and the latter refers to *how* the message is delivered, how it is structured (Potter, 1988). The interaction of these subcomponents helps the viewer make a judgment about the level of realism attached to media content. However, the semantic context refers more specifically to the "perception of psychological realism" (Pouliot & Cowen, 2007, p.244). The viewer's judgment is related to how much they understand the mediated content to be a documentary or a fictional film; this judgment could include specific types of mediated content, such as violence, as previous studies note that perceived realism plays a vital role in viewer response to violent images, sometimes even more so than the level of graphicness of the violence (Tamborini et al., 2013).

The importance of perceived realism can be further explicated through the categorization of typicality versus untypicality (Shapiro & Chock, 2003). Atypical items in a narrative are defined as "plausible but are not a necessary or a usual part of the story" (Graesser, 1981, as cited in Shapiro & Chock, 2003, p.168). In other words, atypicality does not

equal unrealism but hints at unrealism consistently. In contrast, typicality refers to the items that resemble the daily life of most of the audience being exposed to the content. So, typicality "tells us more about the realness" of the content (Shapiro & Chock, 2003, p. 169). So, as the information is closer to what might be expected to be seen in routine life, the more typical it becomes.

In addition to the typicality of information communicated through the content, the production value of it also matters. When this aspect is considered, the typical and atypical terminologies get intertwined but still are helpful. For example, even if the content is typical of what might be expected to be encountered in the news, such as murder or burglary, the "atypically poor-quality" (Shapiro & Chock, p.168) of the footage may increase the perception of it being real. This could explain why news and documentaries seem more realistic than fictional media such as "soap operas and cartoons" (Eastin, 2013, p.315). With this in mind, faux-snuff quality with citizen witnessing aesthetics and content fall into a place where the content is typical of what might happen in real life, and the quality is bizarrely low, as would be expected in news or documentaries.

Typicality and untypicality are supported by other dimensions of perceived realism, such as plausibility, factuality, and perceptual quality (Cho et al., 2012). Plausibility refers to the number of cues for unrealism included within the narrative, such as monsters or demons; thus, it resembles typicality in this sense of the audience's assessment of the possibility of an event taking place in real life. When typicality judgment is made based on audiences' past and present experiences (Cho et al., 2012), plausibility is the general perception of whether an action, character, or event could occur in real life. Through

factuality, audiences are able to regard events in a mediated content with the questioning of whether the content has actually happened or is happening in the real world; in other words, is it documentation of reality? Perceptual quality addresses the "audio, visual, and other manufactured elements of a media narrative" (Cho et al., 2012) that convince the viewer of the reality or fictionality of content. As posited by Cho et al. (2012), Shapiro and Chock (2013), and Hall (2003), perceived realism is a multidimensional construct where the reality judgment is based on not one but several factors.

The type of violent content in relation to realism is categorized under four titles by Wilson et al. (1997):

> "depictions of reality (e.g., newsreel footage), recreations of reality (e.g., reenactments of crime scenes), fictional portrayals of scenes that could realistically happen in real life (e.g., an action scene in a Hollywood war movie) and fantasy portrayals of events that are not possible in the real world (e.g., a monster battle in a film or video game" (Wilson et al., 1997, as cited in Tamborini et al., 2013, p.104)

All of these depictions of reality play a role in the perceived realism of viewers, as some are evidently more fictional than others, such as a monster battle. As the perceived realism of violence is higher, the audience may feel the need to take action, as "real events sometimes require action, while obviously fictional events can usually be enjoyed vicariously" (Condry 1989, as cited in Shapiro & McDonald, 2008, p. 102). When the event is perceived to be more realistic, the likelihood of perceiving the victim of violence as part of real world rather than a mediated world is higher. The recognition of the social presence of another within the real world "is likely to expediate identification" (Ma, 2020, p. 871) and initiate a moral engagement process which could result in taking action to help the victim of violence.

2.4.2 Moral Engagement with Violent Content

Entertainment that causes negative effects has the potential to "help viewers cope with or confront their realities" (Vorderer, 2001, as cited in Oliver & Raney, 2011, p.985). This is the opposite of escapist media, where audiences seek to run away from their daily lives through narrative transportation into a fictional world. Violent media has been associated with both types of gratifications, as it can initiate hedonic processes that allow escapism, such as purging, mood management, and relief (McCauley, 1998). On the other hand, violent media has the capacity to help individuals prepare for distressing events in real life through negative affect such as anxiety by acting as a rehearsal for dangerous real-world scenarios (Scrivner et al., 2021). However, both types of these gratifications are posited for fictional violence with no hint of real violence. The typicality of violence in a footage that holds a faux-snuff quality and its atypically low video quality can suggest another way of engaging with this particular type of violent content, which is predominantly related to the gratification of moral needs and a possible other-oriented emotional response such as empathy.

Moral emotions are reliant on the "self-other" dimension that requires a certain level of identification with other people other than ourselves (Grizzard et al., 2017, p.766). In this line, as social reality theory suggests (Shapiro & Lang, 1991), real events are processed as more relevant than fictionalized events by audiences (Kobach & Weaver, 2012). Within this reasoning, moral emotions are more likely to be elicited by mediated content that has the potential to seem more real to audiences through the uncertainty induced by the interaction between the typicality of the content and the atypicality of its video quality.

Empathy is a moral emotion that stems from other-orientedness in real-life situations before being a skill that is also transferred in reactive processes to mediated environments (Nathanson, p.111); the recognition of media content as being a representation of reality requires less effort in empathizing with the characters as opposed to content that relies on exaggeration, such as elements of fantasy in depicting violence. These types of exaggerations are prone to distancing the audience and interfering with the process of making a connection between the content and their own life (Kobach & Weaver, 2012). According to this reasoning, when mediated violence is perceived to be more realistic due to its formal qualities and content, empathic concerns are likely to raise as an indicator of moral engagement.

2.4.3 Empathic Concern

The definition of empathy has taken many forms, and although there is still not one definition of empathy, there are commonalities between definitions. Empathy consisting of "affective role taking" and "cognitive role taking" is embedded in most definitions (Eisenberg & Miller, 1987, p.91). When affective role-taking is to *recognize* others' affective states, the latter refers to *understanding* others' cognitions (Eisenberg & Miller, 1987). Hence, empathy refers to understanding and feeling similar or the same emotions as another human. There have been definitions that include specific emotions that empathy can initiate, such as feeling concerned for another (Batson et al., 1981), and "the affective self-arousal is likely to be experienced as either personal distress (self-oriented feelings such as anxiety and worry) or sympathy (other-oriented concern)" (Batson & Coke, 1981, as cited in Eisenberg & Miller, 1987). Either of these responses

could explain the occurrence of empathy; however, when the first is rooted in self-focused reasons, the latter is related to empathy through a direct other-oriented concern.

Within the framework of this study, empathy is defined as "the degree to which a person identifies and commiserates with a victim and feels emotional distress" (Anderson et al., 2010), explicitly defined for "a person in clear need" (Batson, Fultz, & Schoenrade, 1987, as cited in Stocks et al., 2009). Based on Zillmann's (1991) three-factor theory of empathy, the first step for initiating empathy is the feeling of distress caused by the pain of another person in the case of viewing a violent act. Following the distress, the "excitatory reaction energizing the emotional experience of the viewer" takes place (Tamborini et al., 1990, p.619). Lastly, the viewer finds their emotions to be "concordant to that of the character" (Tamborini et al., 1990, p.620), and as this reaction is found to be appropriate, the viewer can imagine themselves in a similar situation to that of the character; in other words, empathy takes place. In such a situation where empathy occurs, if the event is tragic, "the individual should experience great sorrow" (Tamborini et al., 1990, p.620) as opposed to viewing a happy event where the experience would be similar to that of great joy.

As empathy results from an "aversive emotional response to pain and suffering" (Tamborini 1996, as cited in Hoffner, 2009, p.287), violence viewing is expected to decrease the joy taken out of the content while increasing empathic reactivity. Depending on the number of cues for pain and harm the victim of violence is being inflicted, these empathic reactions can heighten (Smith et al., 2002), and the counter-empathic responses to the perpetrator will also intensify (Hoffner, 2009). Thus, the distress caused by violence viewing results in empathy with victims of violence

(Kobach & Weaver, 2012; Ramos et al., 2013, Waddell et al., 2019). In line with this reasoning and the perceived realism of violent content, the following is hypothesized:

> ***H1:*** *The self-reported empathy will significantly increase in response to the real framing of violence when compared to the fictional framing.*

2.4.4 Group Status

As per the social identity theory, the social identities of individuals "transforms the concept of self and redefines it as a part of the group" (Huddy, 2013; Tajfel, 1982, as cited in Tokdemir, 2022, p.78). Identification with a particular group identity enhances the sense of belonging to the point that the interests of the individual align with group interests (Tokdemir, 2022, p.79), and at that stage, what matters to the individual is the words and actions of one's fellow (Sherif, 1967). The group status of a victim of violence can supersede the empathic reactivity of an individual due to the lack of recognition of the out-group victim as undifferentiated (Tajfel & Turner, 2004) and immediate recognition as different, distant, or potentially, as a rival. The rivalry occurs due to seeking the interests of the in-group members, especially when the out-group is recognized as a competitor for resources (Velez et al., 2012).

Hence, when the group status of the violence victim is altered, the level of self-reported empathy is subject to fluctuations. This is explained by the strong moderating effect of group status on empathy toward the victim since empathy levels are more likely to be lower when the victim is said to belong to an out-group (Bruneau et al., 2017). The lower level of empathy towards the out-group victim is accompanied by a high level of empathy for one's in-group, so in cases especially where the out-group is perceived as a threat, the group status is a vital explanatory factor for empathic concern towards victims of violence (Bruneau et al., 2017).

Returning to Zillmann's (2003) three-factor theory of empathy, as elaborated by Tamborini and colleagues (1990), there could be two cases through which empathy can occur that could lead to prosocial behavior. The first scenario through which an empathic reaction may occur is when the viewer may watch the violent acts from start to finish and feel distressed throughout the experience as well as after it has finished. In this case, the viewer puts effort in trying to appraise the reaction of distress to determine whether "the distress response is appropriate" (Tamborini et al., 1990, p.636) by questioning whether the violence victim is a good person or how much their position (e.g., cultural, social) resonates with the victim in general. In other words, there is the evaluation of how much the victim is an in-group or an out-group based on the characteristics attributed to the victim, such as ethnicity or religion.

If the viewer believes the response to be appropriate, they continue to watch while experiencing negative emotions, and the empathic response becomes available. The same response could occur when the viewer is unable to watch after a certain point because the violence is too unpleasant. However, the empathic reaction still occurs as they are aware of the victim's agony and feel distressed because of it. This is considered a case where the empathic reaction is mediated by a coping mechanism such as looking away from the screen (Tamborini et al., 1990).

The opposite case of this scenario is when the viewer does not deem their response appropriate because there is dissonance between what they feel and the status of the victim. In such a case, there may be coping mechanisms that are not related to empathy but happen due to an effort to reduce personal distress caused by the suffering of a victim when the viewer does not find it appropriate to resonate with the victim (Moyer-

Gusé et al., 2008), such as in cases when the victim is recognized to be an out-group member. As changes in empathy mediate the occurrence of prosocial behavior in viewing mediated violence (Prot et al., 2103), following the changes in self-reported empathy, the occurrence of prosocial behavior is likely to be altered.

The omnipresence of in-group favoritism in intergroup relations (Tajfel & Turner, 2001) usually already exists without the interference of any manipulations in laboratory experiments. “The mere perception of belonging to two distinct groups is sufficient enough to trigger intergroup discrimination favoring the in-group” (Tajfel & Turner, 2001, p. 56), and there is no need for a previous hostility to happen between the two nonoverlapping groups (Tajfel & Turner, 2001). Application of this finding is critical within the context of violent media since the pervasive discrimination and hostility towards an out-group can sufficiently transform into negative feelings, including anger (Velez et al., 2012). As the negative feelings are not felt towards the *situation* that the out-group member is in but directly towards *the out-group member*, these emotional reactions can become impediments in the way of realizing the distressing situation that an out-group member may be in since the intergroup discrimination is already primed (Tajfel & Turner, 2001).

Previous research on bystander intervention also indicates a similar finding where the similarity level to a victim could have a moderating effect on the “reactive behaviors” (Wang, 2021, p. 1385) one may have to the victim; such that “bystanders are more likely to help others who are more similar” (Wang, 2021, p.1385). In this direction, greater perceived similarity will increase the sense of *we-ness*, while reduced perceived similarity will result in less reactivity toward the situation of the out-group member

(Wang, 2021). The lack of empathic reactivity could result in passivity when encountering the suffering of an out-group member, such as showing indifference to a donation campaign that an out-group member could benefit from.

Thus, the prior group membership (Velez et al., 2012) is a factor that moderates the emotional reaction one may have towards someone else in need. Hence, the priming of group status matters in the context of understanding violent media experiences by focusing on the group status of the victim. When the victim is in-group, the available heuristics of an individual is more likely to result in negative affect, such as anger and distress, which is followed by positive affect, including empathy. This reasoning leads to the following hypothesis:

> ***H2:*** *When the victim of violence is in-group, empathy will be higher both in real and fictional frames.*

2.5 Prosocial Behavior, Altruism, and Empathy

Despite there being many different reasons and cognitive processes to explain why we help others, the existence of such behaviors is a well-established fact in social psychology. Prosocial behavior is an umbrella term that refers to a group of behaviors that could briefly be described as involving "interactions between a benefactor (or helper) and someone being helped" (Dovidio et al., 2006, p.5). Although the numerous explanations for the motivational reasons behind prosocial behavior are beyond the scope of this research, it is essential to note some points in the literature that will be particularly useful in constructing the framework of the current study.

Certain explanations for the occurrence of prosocial behavior suggest that an individual cannot benefit another for the sole sake of helping others, but the motivations are

individualistic. “Witnessing the distress of another person is often physiologically arousing, and if this arousal is strong enough, it is perceived as aversive” (Davis, 2015, p.286). In other words, empathy is not pure; in fact, it is aversive. The aversive-arousal reduction hypothesis (AARH) proposes that people use empathy to help others for the purpose of “reducing the empathy they experience” (Stocks et al., 2009, p.650). In the case of AARH, the source of empathy is pitying a person whom the empathy is developed for.

However, more contemporary research, as well as earlier research, has established that AARH fails to explain the empathic reactions one may have for someone in need in some cases, such that when the result of empathy is still helping even though the person is given a chance to escape the situation (Batson et al., 1981; Batson et al., 1986; Stocks et al., 2009). The corresponding theoretical framework for the distress that is situated within the empathy-altruism hypothesis (EAH) is evident in communication research as empathic distress (Zillmann, 2006), which refers to “an emotional response to danger and suffering experienced by characters” (Hoffner, 2009, p.288) in mediated messages.

The empathy-altruism hypothesis puts forth that “empathic concern produces altruistic motivation” (Batson, 1987; 2011 as cited in Batson et al., p. 261), where the empathic concern precisely refers to feeling *for* others not feeling what others feel, resembling other definitions of empathy that focus on the other-oriented dimension of the self. Altruistic behavior is conceptualized as a type of prosocial behavior, which denotes an “ultimate goal” that is “to increase someone else’s welfare” (Batson et al., 2014, p.261). Hence, it is a more specific version of the conceptualization of prosocial behavior because it includes the welfare of only the *other* and not the self. In this direction, it

suggests actions that align with self-transcendence, as offered by Oliver et al. (2018); thus, it requires further explanation within the framework of this research.

For the ultimate goal to occur, the individual has to have "a perception of another in need," which is conditioned by the recognition of "a negative discrepancy between the other's current state and what is desirable for the other on one or more dimensions of well-being" (Batson et al., 2014, p.262). This recognition is further conditioned by the incorporation of "other's welfare into my own value structure" (Batson et al., 2014, p. 263), meaning that there is no threat that I am personally facing to my welfare, but I am solely moved by a threat to other's welfare.

In this direction, the current study focuses on one particular path of Batson et al.'s (1991) three paths of perception of other's needs and the occurrence of prosocial behavior, which is *Path 3: Empathically Evoked Altruistic Motivation* where the internal response is an empathic concern, the motivational state is the "altruistic motivation to have other's need reduced" (Batson et al., 1991 as cited in Dovidio et al., 2006, p.133) and the behavioral response is to help the other in need directly or have someone else help them. As Batson and colleagues take into account other possibilities in different paths, such as *Path 1:Reward Seeking Egoistic Motivation* and *Path 2: Arousal Reducing Egoistic Motivation* and see that Path 3 is an explanation that particularly emphasizes altruistic motivations as a result of empathy, there is the possibility for egoistic needs being overshadowed by the need of another (Batson et al., 1991). Additionally, research that focused on testing alternatives for Path 3 has shown that people often help not only because they want to reduce the adverse affect, although this may sometimes be the case, but there is the ultimate goal of helping the other in need

and not just engaging in any type of helping behavior to reduce the aversive state cause by empathy (Dovidio et al., 1990). Hence, it is a prominently occurring possibility that people are "motivated by a desire to solve the other person's main problem, not to eliminate another problem or find another way to feel better" (Dovidio et al., 2006, p.139).

Since the current research focuses not only on the occurrence of prosocial behavior as a result of empathy but takes into account the group status of the victim, EAH is a theoretical framework that can take into account the possible occurrence of prosocial behavior when faced with an out-group victim and it already accounts for an in-group victim of violence. That is, EAH already disagrees with the proposition that people are inherently selfish and they are unable to recognize the needs of others if there is no benefit they can acquire (Dovidio, 2006, p.140). In line with this reasoning, the hypothesis is suggested:

> ***H3:*** *Higher self-reported empathy will indicate a greater intention to engage in prosocial behavior.*

2.5.1 Self-transcendence and Prosocial Behavior

Within the framework of eudaimonic media consumption, self-transcendence is defined by Oliver and colleagues (2018) as "not only a means for self-focused well-being, but also as a catalyst for greater appreciation of other-oriented connectedness, virtue, and actions." (p.381). The definition highlights a potential for media not only to initiate complex emotions and provide a meaningful experience to the audiences but also to act upon them if needed. These actions are not necessarily of any physical benefit to the individual undertaking it but to other people who require help of any kind. Violent

media is particularly important in triggering this emotional process by showing the audience pain of another person they may not encounter in real life, working as an audiovisual reminder that human suffering does exist even when not visible to us every day (Waddell et al., 2019). Consequently, this reminder is a motivating factor in the emergence of prosocial behavior regarding victims of violence through engaging in costly helping such as volunteering and donating money (Bruneau et al., 2017).

However, as the changes in empathy are expected to mediate the occurrence of prosocial behavior, the differences in the results of when the victim is an out-group and in-group can demonstrate a specific effect in line with self-transcendent behavior. When the victim is an in-group, the donation behavior as an indication of prosociality could partially demonstrate self-transcendence as there will be a benefit to the person who is donating since they will be helping someone who can resonate through group status. Still, a moral action is initiated (Oliver et al., 2018) by recognizing someone else's suffering. However, when the victim is an out-group, and prosocial behavior still occurs, the indications are stronger in terms of the level of interconnectedness on a more extensive scope that indicates the recognizing a sense of "shared humanity" (Oliver et al., 2018, p. 384) that surpasses one's geographical and cultural boundaries. Such indications of violence viewing could help first to understand and later to find ways to manage how violence is perceived in intergroup statuses.

Another mechanism that highlights the sense of shared humanity and contributes to the occurrence of prosocial behavior is the ability of audiences to reflect on violent media in a serious and contemplative manner. Such ability of reflection in exposure to media content comes across as a niche pattern for violent media, allowing to focus on "active

and reflective forms of information processing" (Bartsch et al., 2020, p.796) that results in understanding the intricate structures of violence processing. It has been established in previous empirical work that perceived meaningfulness has an effect on viewing gore; such that when perceived meaningfulness of violent content is high, individuals still want to view gory content despite the aversive feelings accompanying the images (Bartsch & Mares, 2014). However, a specific framework for what parts of violent media individuals reflected in relation to their past and present experiences was not covered solely by eudaimonia or the literature on positive media psychology (Bartsch & Mares, 2014).

As suggested by the general aggression model (Anderson & Bushman, 2002), reappraisal is a critical factor that can prompt people to reflect on their impulsive action tendencies and to explore alternative actions which are more thoughtful of others around them. Deriving from the general aggression model, Bartsch and colleagues (2020) suggest an elaborate framework to consider the effects of violence processing and how it reflects in real-life situations. This framework builds on the general aggression model by noting that "reflective processes of meaning-making and reappraisal could be rehearsed during exposure to violent media content" (Bartsch et al., 2020) similar to how aggressive schemata is maintained in memory to result in impulsive action (Bushman & Anderson, 2002). Through a rehearsal process whilst viewing violent content, "reappraisal and meaning-making could then become more accessible in real-life situations" (Bartsch et al., 2020).

In that respect, reflective thoughts while encountering violent media is related to moral engagement processes such as empathy, and result in prosocial behaviors, especially by

engaging in social and political issues that are causing or resulting from violence since reflective use of violent media is "an opportunity to confront and make sense of violence as a painful, yet essential fact of social reality" (Bartsch et al., 2020, p.801). It is also important to note that eudaimonic media usage has already been associated with prosocial behavior, by decreasing moral disengagement (Tsay-Vogel & Krakowiak, 2016) and increasing the motivation to help others (Oliver et al., 2012). However, reflective thoughts on violence viewing still require further empirical exploration as it is a specific type of paradoxical entertainment phenomenon compared to media content that is non-hedonistic in other ways, such as being sad or moving (Bartsch & Schenieder, 2014). In order to see the underlying mechanism of how violent media is related to moral engagement processes like empathy and prosocial behaviors that may occur as a result of engagement processes, such as altruism, the following hypothesis is suggested:

> ***H4:*** *Reflective thoughts on violence viewing will moderate the relationship between empathy and prosocial behavior.*

2.5.2 Framing of Violence and Prosocial Behavior

The theory of planned behavior suggests (TPB) that one of the most critical aspects of understanding behavior is to understand "the individual's intention to perform a given behavior" simply because as the intention to engage in the behavior is more robust, "the more likely should be its performance" (Ajzen, 1991, p.181). Intentions are influenced by "attitude (positive or negative evaluations of performing a behavior), subjective norm (perceived social pressure and expectations to perform or not to perform a behavior), and perceived behavioral control" (Knowles et al., 2012, p.2098).

However, the individual's intention is not free from the available resources and opportunities; in fact, the presence of these elements is the explanatory factor of the TPB, which is perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). Perceived behavioral control can only occur realistically if there is enough information about the behavior. In order to account for this, the intentions and perceptions of control "must be assessed in relation to the particular behavior of interest, and the specified context must be the same as that in which the behavior is to occur" (Ajzen, 1991, p.184). Accordingly, when predicting the behavior of "donating money to a victim of violence," what should be assessed is not "donating money" generally nor "helping the victim of violence" but assess "donating money to a victim of violence" (Ajzen, 1991, p.185).

Focusing on donation behavior in a given context can help further understand the long-term indications of such behaviors (Knowles et al., 2012), which could shed light on how individuals perceive specific messages given in a particular context. For the sake of this study, the given context assesses (1) helping victims of violence when exposed to fictional framing of violence and (2) helping victims of violence when exposed to a real framing of violence. Hence, there is the observable act of donation to a specific target who is the victim of violence and restricted to s specific frame of (1) fictional or (2) real (Hartmann, 2009).

Therefore, the theory of planned behavior considers the aspects mentioned earlier for a behavior to occur. Accordingly, TPB cannot consider habitual media behaviors that fall in line with escapist or mindless media consumption since they do not take any planning in the first place (Hartmann, 2009). These media habits are noted to be harmful and

include examples such as binge-watching does not require cognitive processes to elaborate on what one is being exposed to (Das et al., 2017).

In contrast, for the case of eudaimonic media consumption, where the behaviors resulting from the media are volitional, TPB is useful as an explanatory theoretical framework. Since the intention is the precursor for volitional behavior, eudaimonic media consumption for the case of mediated violence illustrates an on-point example for TPB, as eudaimonia requires higher-order cognitive elaborations (Smith & DeCoster, 2000) that differ strictly from automatic processes. The higher-order cognitive processes occur when people care about the results of a particular decision and, most importantly, when they have the time to think about their decision since they regard it too important not to decide in a short amount of time (Hartmann, 2009). As Hartmann (2009) illustrates with an example, deciding to watch a film about the Holocaust is cost-intensive, and it involves crucial values or other critical personal beliefs (p.36) and the decision process as well as the reception process is not automatic but require higher-order cognitive processing. The same logic could be applied to making decisions based on media messages, such as helping behavior, which is directly in line with eudaimonic media use.

Eudaimonic media engagement also requires "cognitive effortful processing" (Oliver et al., 2018, p. 382), where individuals can realize "the importance of human virtue and endurance, and the inevitability of sadness, cruelty, and pain as part of the human condition" (Bartsch & Hartmann, 2015, p.5) as a result of these cognitive efforts. Especially for cases of unpleasant violence, where a happy or a just ending is absent, audiences are not only challenged to "endure the negative affect elicited by the media

content but are also challenged to engage in the process of meaning-making to resolve conflict and to restore their threatened belief in a just and meaningful world (Anderson & Kay, 2013; Bartsch & Mares, 2014; Lewis et al., 2014 as cited in Bartsch & Hartmann, 2015, p.7). Hence, audiences can make judgments that the content they are exposed to is a threat to the meaningful human condition and compensate for the lack of moral action on screen.

The conditions suggested by TPB for a behavior to occur are provided within the framework of eudaimonic media consumption. Exposure to mediated violence is the initial information for perceived behavioral control, where the presence of another human or a living being getting hurt initiates higher-order cognitive elaboration since the content itself is associated with negative affect rather than positive. There is an imminent cognitive dissonance associated with these images since they are strictly inconsistent with "attitudinal structures or moral institutions" (Bartsch & Hartmann, 2015, p.8), causing difficulty for the viewers to integrate the images within their value structures. As the challenges are heightened with the graphicness or the context of mediated content, the handicap in processing it also gets harder for the viewer on a cognitive level (Bartsch & Hartmann, 2015).

Previous empirical studies have focused on varying levels of challenging media content ranging from escapist entertainment to content that requires higher-order cognitive processing, such as war films (Bartsch & Mares, 2014; Hall, 2005; Oliver & Bartsch, 2010; Lewis et al., 2014). However, there are still grounds to discover by focusing on one particular type of media content that requires higher-order cognitive processing and exploring within real and fictional frames. The current study is in line with TPB; in

addition to the violence presented, giving the fictional and real contexts strengthens perceived behavioral control, as the audience will be given both the content and the context they will be watching.

2.6 Theoretical Model

Prosocial behavior has been previously linked with viewing graphic violence in former empirical research (Waddell et al., 2019). Several studies explained this link by focusing on the reminding role of violent images to audiences of the detrimental results of violence (Smith et al., 2002), their role as explanatory mechanisms in making moral judgments (Grizzard et al., 2017), and the potentiality in reducing desensitization in viewers (Ramos et al., 2013).

Empathy is an explanatory variable for the emergence of prosocial behavior in several studies (Kobach & Weaver, 2012; Prot et al., 2014; Mares & Stephenson, 2017; Mares, 2022). The framing of violence is "a meaningful distinction" (Goldstein, 1998, p.212) that can result in varying responses on its "accurateness of reflecting reality" (Goldstein, 1998, p.212). In this vein, the differing prosocial behavioral outcomes of framing of violence is proposed to be happening through empathy, as empathic concerns are more likely to raise negative emotions that could work as a pushing factor in taking action (Kobach & Weaver, 2012). In a real frame, suspending disbelief is more challenging when compared to a fictional one since there is no space to pretend the victim is only portrayed as being hurt within a fictional narrative (Goldstein, 1998, p.3). Hence, the enjoyment is more likely to decrease enjoyment taken out of the content and increase empathic concerns.

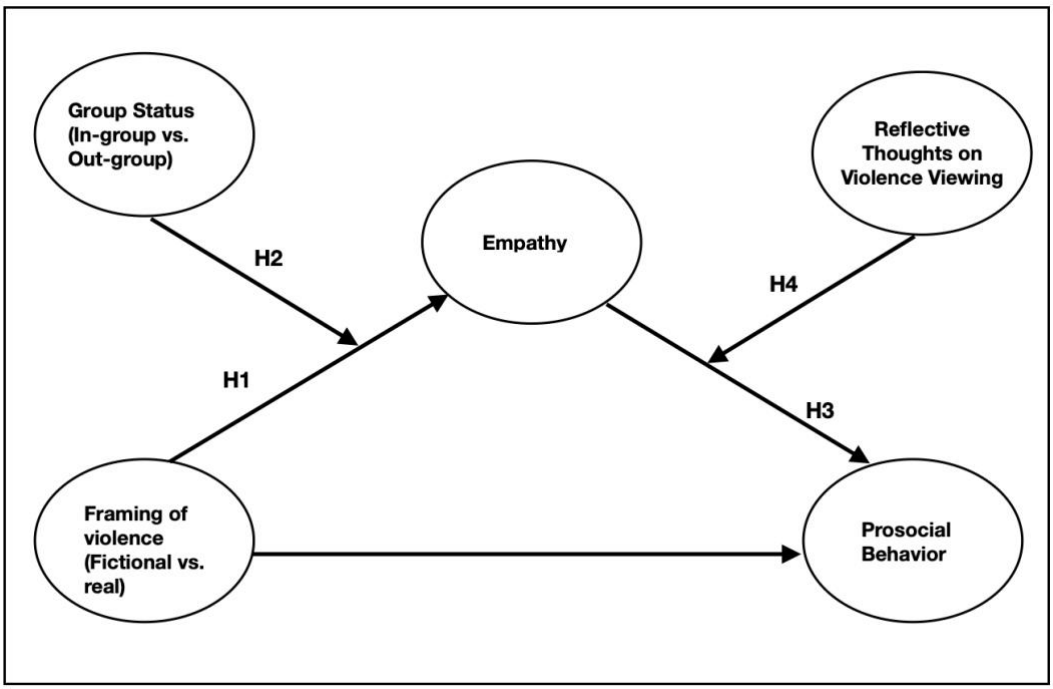
Behavioral outcomes of violence viewing are further related to how closely the viewer identifies with the victim (Geen & Stonner, 1973, p.143). In this light, as an aspect of identification, empathy (Shapiro et al., 2010) could be moderated by the changes in group status, as empathy is also a moral emotion shaped by social identity (Bruneau et al., 2017, p.940). The moderating role of group status gains further importance as the strength of the effect can further explain the implications of prosocial behavior in situations in the presence of others' suffering (Bruneau, Cikara, & Saxe, 2017) depending on the group identification of the observer of the violence to the victim.

Considering the possible changes in the relationship between empathy and framing of violence due to empathy being a mediating variable in a number of previous empirical research (Kobach & Weaver, 2012; Prot et al., 2014; Mares & Stephenson, 2017; Mares, 2022), and the strength of the victim's group status' effect on empathy, the theoretical model considers the mediating effect of empathy in the occurrence of prosocial behavior in fictional versus real frames of violence.

Lastly, the moderating effect of reflective thoughts on violence viewing is a part of the theoretical model, using the currently developed scale by Bartsch et al. (2020), in order to address the possible effects of reflectively viewing violence and how it moderates the relationship between empathy and prosocial behavior. The theoretical model that addresses the suggested points can be seen in the figure below (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Hypothesized relationships among variables.



2.7 Conclusion

As outlined throughout this chapter, this study aims to contribute to the current literature on mediated violence reception and eudaimonic media use by testing a moderated mediation model that exposes several factors that have been tested separately before in the literature. The suggested theoretical model will aim to address a gap in the literature in understanding the mechanisms behind mediated violence and its implications in real life. By bridging between the predictors of violence viewing and the occurrence of prosocial behavior and the hypotheses suggested throughout this chapter will be tested. The next chapter will discuss the methodology of this study by mentioning specific aspects of the experimental design, the results of the study, and methodological considerations and limitations.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The primary purpose of this research is to consider media violence reception within the framework of eudaimonic media consumption by taking the fictional and real framing of violent imagery into account as a factor that could affect the reception process. Eudaimonic media consumption refers to "a new perspective on entertainment gratification" (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010) where the gratification is related to having contemplative media experiences that could lead to "outward-focused" responses that promote "concepts beyond the self" (Oliver et al., 2018). These responses have been put in perspective with possible positive societal outcomes, such as forms of prosocial behavior that could be initiated through violent media exposure (Mares & Stephenson, 2017). As an indicator of prosocial behavior, this study focuses on empathy and its mediating role on prosocial behavior when media violence is presented in fictional versus real frames. Group status is considered as a moderating factor that could affect the relationship between the framing of violence and empathy and reflective thoughts on violence viewing was integrated into the model as a moderating factor between empathy

and prosocial behavior. Thus, this research proposes a moderated mediation model to test the causal mechanisms through which people can engage in prosocial behavior due to exposure to mediated violence. To test the theoretical expectations, a 2x2 factorial design is employed through an online survey experiment.

3.2 Data Collection and Survey Sample

The survey participants included students recruited from undergraduate programs at Bilkent University for an online survey experiment. Participants were informed about the experiment via the institutional email system and were instructed to send an email to the researcher if they wished to participate in the survey experiment via an anonymous link.

The informed consent at the beginning of the survey noted that the participants must be over the age of 18, they should be native Turkish speakers, and they should not be currently taking a course from Dr. Ayşenur Dal. They were informed that the study might be disturbing for some as it involves graphic violence, and if they felt any discomfort, participants could withdraw from the study without facing any consequences. Undergraduate students who were eligible for taking course credit were informed at the end of the survey that they should copy the random ID number that had been assigned to them in order to receive course credit.

A total of 176 participants attended the survey, where the age average was 21.7, with 64.2 percent of the participants being female, 34.1 percent male, and 1.7 percent self-identifying as other. Moreover, 90.3 percent of the participants reported feeling closer to being Turkish whereas 9.7 percent felt closer to other ethnicities (Kurdish, Laz,

Georgian, Arab, Circassian, Roman, Bosnian). Table 1 summarizes the descriptive statistics for the key, control, and demographic variables can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics

Variables	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	α
Key Variables						
Framing of Violence	176	0.48	0.5	0	1	
Group Status	176	0.42	0.5	0	1	
Empathy	176	3.28	0.81	1	5	0.79
Reflective Thoughts on Violence	176	3.65	0.84	1.33	5	0.59
Prosocial Behavior	176	3.11	0.92	1	5	
Control Variables						
Perceived Realism	176	3.59	1.18	0	5	0.62
Eudaimonia	176	3.74	0.69	1	5	0.66
Demographic Variables						
Age	176	21.78	4.29	19	52	
Sex	176	1.38	0.52	1	3	

3.3 Design

A between-subjects factorial experiment was carried out through an online survey. Participants were told that the study was about viewing media violence and how it affects them in terms of their already-existent media consumption patterns.. They were not given the information regarding the real/fiction distinction that the study aimed to test, nor were they given information about what was tested regarding the group status and prosocial behavior.

Upon providing consent, participants were randomly presented with one of the four conditions: 2 (Real framing of violence: in-group, out-group) x 2 (Fictional framing of violence: in-group, out-group) experimental design as illustrated in Figure 2 The conditions were randomized by using the randomizer in Qualtrics survey flow, and each condition was assigned to a random number through embedded data, ranging from 1-4. These conditions were 1: Ingroup-real (n=34); 2: Ingroup-fiction (n=48), Outgroup-real (n=50); Outgroup-fiction (n=44), respectively.

Figure 2

Conditions of the experimental design

		GROUP STATUS (B)	
		IN-GROUP (B1)	OUT-GROUP (B2)
FRAMING OF VIOLENCE (A)	REAL (A1)	REAL/ IN-GROUP (A1B1)	REAL/ OUT-GROUP (A1B2)
	FICTIONAL (A2)	FICTIONAL/ IN-GROUP (A2B1)	FICTIONAL/ OUT-GROUP (A2B2)

These conditions were presented through the same 28-second footage, where each condition involved a text about the source of the footage and the group status of the victim of violence. In the real framing, participants were told that this was a documentation of an event that actually took place, and the footage was taken from the archive of *Turkish Radio and Television Corporation*. For the ingroup-real (A1B1)

condition, participants were given the following information: *"The video you are about to watch is about a Turkish shopkeeper who is beaten to death by people he does not know. This video, personally shot by someone who was there when the event took place, was accessed from the TRT news archives."*

In order to test the outgroup-real condition (A1B2), participants were given the following explanation: *"The video you will watch shortly is about an Israeli shopkeeper who is beaten to death by people he does not know. This video, personally shot by someone who was there when the event took place, was accessed from the TRT news archives."*

In the fictional framing, the participants were informed that the footage was a reenactment of a lynching that took place for a documentary. Within the fictional framing, to test the ingroup-fiction condition (A2B1), participants were informed as follows: "*The video you are about to watch is about a Turkish shopkeeper who is beaten to death by people he does not know. This video is reenactment footage, shot for a documentary about the event."*

For the outgroup-fiction condition (A2B2), participants were given the following explanation: *"The video you will watch shortly is about an Israeli shopkeeper who is beaten to death by people he does not know. This video is reenactment footage shot for a documentary about the event."* Additional to these explanations, which were provided accompanying the footage, the real versus fictional framing was also embedded within the footage (TRT and reenactment). The corresponding screenshots can be seen below, in Figures 3 & 4.

Figure 3

Real framing (A1B1-A1B2)

Figure 4

Fictional Framing (A2B1-A2B2)

The reasoning for the outgroup victim being Israeli is due to the perspective that Turkish citizens have on Israeli people, mostly due to the military interventions of Israel in Palestine. A similar event to what is depicted in the footage happened in 2006, where Turkish shopkeepers set fire to Israeli goods in their shops to protest Israel's military intervention in Lebanon (Haberler.com, 2006). Such actions are mostly taken with the motivation based on religion, where Islam is a binding force for Turkish people in taking action when Israel intervenes with another Muslim population, explained by "genuine concern for the well-being of Muslim populations elsewhere in the world" (Bishku, 2006, p.191). This view is supported by the political strategies of the current government of Turkey, where "Turkishness is also defined in terms of religion" and "the boundary between *us* and *them* is defined in religious terms" (Yavuz, 2005, p.261).

After viewing the clips they were randomly assigned to, participants were asked about their empathic reactions towards the victim of violence, their perception of realism when viewing the footage, their reflections on the violent aspects of the footage, and their general media consumption patterns. The survey concluded with a question that was displayed to all treatment groups, which asked participants whether they would be willing to provide financial or moral support to an organization that was aimed towards protecting small business owners against violence.

3.4 Stimuli

The footage for the survey experiment is from the 1969 film *Z*, directed by Costa Gavras. The selected scene was officially a minute long; eventually, it was cut down to 28 seconds. The parts that had cues for fiction were evaluated and taken out in order for them to be believable for the real framing treatment group. The cues for realism and

fiction were evaluated based on the theoretical framework provided on unpleasant violence and the aesthetics of citizen witnessing. The 28-second footage depicts a man getting lynched by a group of other men, which fits into the aesthetics of citizen witnessing content-wise. The editing in some parts was too neat and organized that it was not in line with real framing; thus, the reaction shots of characters were cut out of the scene. In the end, the depiction of lynching is obvious, and there is blood on the man's face as he falls through the end, which depicts the consequences of the violent actions. In line with the conceptualization of unpleasant violence within the framework of this study, there is no narrative justification for the violence being presented, but the sole action of lynching is the focus of the footage.

3.5 Measures

3.5.1 Empathy

Empathy was taken into account as a state measure since this research aims to assess the self-reported level of empathy during message processing, specifically in the case of receiving violent messages from the media. In this regard, the *State Empathy Scale* by Shen (2010) is adapted within the framework of this study.

This component refers to the "mechanism through which audience members experience reception and interpretation of the message from the inside as if the events in the message were happening to them" (Cohen, 2001, 2006, as cited in Shen, 2010, p. 507). Through the self-reported measure, viewers' involvement with the violent imagery and the initiation of empathic reactions as a result of this involvement was measured. The responses were collected on a five-point scale (1=*Strongly Disagree,* 2=*Disagree,* 3=*Neither Agree nor Disagree,* 4=*Agree*,5=*Strongly Agree*). The 12-item scale was

translated into Turkish from English, then re-translated back into English in order to check for readability and cross-check meanings in both languages. A total of 4 items were adapted within the context of this study (α= 0.79, M=3.27, SD= 0.80).

For affective empathy, the items *"I experienced the same emotions as the character when watching this message," "I can feel the character's emotions,"* and *"I experienced the same emotions as the character when watching this message."* were used. For cognitive empathy, the item *"I can see the character's point of view"* was used. There was a second item for cognitive empathy, which was dropped upon conducting confirmatory factor analysis, as it lowered the reliability of the scale within the purposes of this research, the item was: *"The character's reactions to the situation are understandable."*

3.5.2 Perceived Realism

Perceived Realism refers to the dimensions of realism perceptions in receiving media messages, including plausibility, typicality, factuality, narrative consistency, and perceptual quality (Cho et al., 2012), and was used as a control. Previous empirical research has put forth that not only the characteristics of the message is valuable in constructing mediated realism, but also the perceptions of the viewers of the message hold critical importance in narrative persuasion (Busselle & Bilandzic, 2008; Green, 2004; Larkey & Hetch, 2010 as cited in Cho et al., 2012). Thus, the scale is adopted within the framework of this study in order to account for how much the participants believe the production qualities of the footage are persuasive in terms of referring to cues of fiction versus realism of violence. It is further conceptualized in terms of how

much involvement through perceived realism effectively raises the will to initiate prosocial behavior.

Normally, the items are based on the reality perceptions of viewers regarding advertisements; hence, the wording is arranged according to the current study, where "ad" was replaced with "footage." The scale comprises 21 items divided into plausibility, typicality, factuality, narrative consistency, and perceptual quality. The narrative consistency dimension is disregarded in this study, as the type of violence presented in the footage is unpleasant violence, and the defining characteristic of it is that it does not have a narrative, to begin with. Thus, to avoid attempting to test a dimension that does not exist, the remaining four parts are used in this study (α= 0.62, M=3.59, SD=1.18), reverse coded to avoid response biases. The scale items were translated into Turkish from English, then re-translated back into English in order to check for readability and cross-check meanings in both languages.

The items for plausibility are as follows: *"The footage showed something that could possibly happen in real life,"* and *"Never in real life would what was shown in the footage would happen."* Perceived plausibility refers to the degree to which people believe "narrative presentations of behaviors and events *could* possibly occur in the real world" (Hall, 2003, as cited in Cho et al., 2012). In other words, it refers to how much the mediated representation resembles real-life events for the viewer.

For typicality, the item *"The footage portrayed an event that happens to a lot of people."* was used. This item focuses mainly on how much the mediated events parallel the viewer's past and present personal experiences (Cho et al., 2012). Typicality is

considered a more rigid dimension of perceived realism for viewers since plausibility does not take personal experiences into account. Even though plausibility occurs, it is rarer for typicality to become a dimension of viewers' perceived realism of mediated content. Thus, it is a stricter evaluation of perceived realism than plausibility (Cho et al., 2012).

For factuality, the following item was adopted: *"What was shown in the footage had actually happened."* Factuality refers to the degree to which the mediated event is perceived to portray a "specific individual or event in the real world" (Cho et al., 2012, p.4). Factuality can be thought of in relation to typicality, where a mediated event is perceived as factual but not typical since factuality refers to a specific event in the real world, but the event's occurrence may not be perceived as typical by the viewer.

The analysis was conducted on only one item of the perceived realism scale, as others were dropped upon conducting factor analysis; the mentioned item was: *"What happened to the people in the footage is what happens to people in the real world"*, specifically testing perceived typicality.

3.5.3 Eudaimonic Media Consumption

As control variables, *Eudaimonia and Hedonism* assess how much participants' media consumption patterns align with meaningfulness seeking versus enjoyment seeking (Oliver & Raney, 2011). Meaningfulness-seeking is conceptualized as the path to eudaimonic happiness through media experiences that hedonistic means cannot explain. Thus, the type of mediated experiences that the scale considers as eudaimonic consist of ones that raise complex reactions such as unpleasant emotions of sadness and anger.

Hedonistic emotions are considered straightforwardly in line with more positive emotions, such as happiness, and mainly occur as a result of escapist uses of mediated content (Oliver & Raney, 2011). The scale assesses both types of choices and gratifications taken out of these choices. Within the framework of this study, this control scale is used to consider participants' consumption patterns and how much they are already willing to use media through eudaimonic means rather than hedonistic ones in their daily media choices.

This scale consists of 12 items in total, with six items for each type of media choice. The responses were collected on a five-point scale ranging from strong disagreement to strong agreement: 1=*Strongly Disagree,* 2=*Disagree,* 3=*Neither Agree nor Disagree,* 4=*Agree*,5=*Strongly Agree*. The 12-item scale was translated into Turkish from English, then re-translated back into English in order to check for readability and cross-check meanings in both languages. During the analysis, a total of 4 questions were used within the scope of the current survey experiment (α= 0.66, M=3.73, SD=0.69), since a factor analysis revealed two components of the scale which were hedonic and eudaimonic, and in line with the aim of the current research, only the component of eudaimonia was included in the analysis.

These 4-items for eudaimonia include the following: *"I like movies that challenge my way of seeing the world," "My favorite kinds of movies are ones that make me think," "I am very moved by movies that are about people's search for greater understanding in life"* and *"I like movies that have profound meanings or messages to convey."*

3.5.4 Reflective Thoughts About Violent Media

Reflective Thoughts About Violent Media Content focuses on the potentiality of violent media experiences in raising inquiries about meaning-seeking and realizing the suffering of others (Bartsch et al., 2020). The items in the scale consider how viewing violence can help individuals realize "violence as a fact of social reality" (Bartsch et al., 2020, p.795). In line with complex emotional and cognitive gratifications taken out of eudaimonic media experiences, violence viewing is considered as a complex mode of reception which is noted to have possible prosocial outcomes since it can "stimulate interest and information seeking about social and political issues" (Bartsch et al., 2020, p.795).

In this direction, the scale comprises five parts that complement one another. These parts involve *(1) human cruelty and suffering from violence, (2) own or close others' experiences with violence, (3) moral complexities of violence, (4) the true story behind violent content, and (5) strategies learned for dealing with violence in real life.* Since the current study aims to test how much violent media allows one to realize the suffering of others by considering the realism value of the content, parts (1) and (4) are used from the five parts. Thus, only eight items are adapted to this study from the 20-item scale (α= 0.59, M=3.65, SD=0.84). The scale items were translated into Turkish from English, then re-translated back into English in order to check for readability and cross-check meanings in both languages.

The four items for *(1) human cruelty and suffering from violence* are as follows: *"I was shocked at how cold-blooded the violence was," "I was upset to see violence against*

innocent victims," "I wonder what must have happened to a person to develop such cruelty," and *"I thought about the horror that humans can inflict on each other."*

The three items for *(4) the true story behind violent content* are: *"I thought the violence in this story was a wakeup call for people to take the issue seriously," "I thought about the true story behind it,"* and *"I thought about the historical or current events in the story."*

Upon conducting factor analysis, the items that were used for analysis were: *"I wonder what must have happened to a person to develop such cruelty," "I thought about the true story behind it,"* and *"I thought about the historical or current events in the story."*

3.6 Results

The correlation matrix can be seen in Table 2 to refer to all variables can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2

Correlation matrix of all variables

	Group Status	Perceived Realism	Reflective Thoughts	Eudaimonia	Framing	Empathy	Prosocial Behavior	Age	Sex
Group Status	1								
Perceived Realism	0.006	1							
Reflective Thoughts	0.04	0.19	1						
Eudaimonia	-0.07	0.07	0.13	1					
Framing	-0.12	-0.01	0.06	0.08	1				
Empathy	-0.05	0.24	0.22	0.18	-0.05	1			
Prosocial Behavior	-0.05	-0.06	0.20	0.11	0.005	0.24	1		
Age	0.04	-0.12	-0.03	0.009	-0.03	0.008	-0.14	1	
Sex	-0.01	0.02	-0.10	0.01	-0.01	-0.23	-0.25	-0.08	1

A series of one-way ANOVAs were conducted by regressing empathy onto the predictor variables in all four conditions. For the ingroup-real condition, the only significant

predictors of empathy were reflective thoughts on violence viewing ($F(1,26)=5.48$, $p<.05$, $\eta^2= .004$), indicating that participants with higher levels of reflective thoughts reported higher levels of empathy. However, the partial eta squared of .004 indicates a small effect size of reflective thoughts on the variance in empathy. In the ingroup-fiction condition, the only significant predictor of empathy was perceived realism ($F(1,40)= 8.66$, $p< .005$). The effect size of perceived realism on the variance in empathy was large ($\eta^2= .20$), with higher levels of perceived realism indicating higher levels of empathy. For the outgroup-real condition, both reflective thoughts ($F(1,43)= 15.22$, $p<.005$) and perceived realism ($F(1,43)= 4.16$, $p<.05$) were significant predictors of empathy. The effect size of perceived realism ($\eta^2= .10$) on changes in empathy was bigger than the effect size of reflective thoughts ($\eta^2=.07$). In the outgroup-fiction condition, sex was the only significant variable in relation to empathy ($F(1,37)= 9.1$, $p<.005$) but its effect size ($\eta^2=.002$) was considerably small.

A mediation analysis was conducted to check the mediating effect of empathy on the relationship between framing of violence and prosocial behavior by using SPSS PROCESS Macro (Hayes, 2018). The direct effect of framing of violence of prosocial behavior was 95% CI [-.17, .38], indicating that there was no significant direct effect of framing of violence on prosocial behavior. The indirect effect of empathy on prosocial behavior was 95% CI [-.30, .76], failing to support the assumption that empathy has a mediating role on the relationship between framing and prosocial behavior.

H1 predicted that self-reported empathy would significantly increase in response to the real violence framing. The Welch Two Sample t-test indicated no significant effect of framing on empathy, $t(162.2)=.77$, $p >.05$, failing to reject H1. However, the linear

regression where all variables were accounted for showed that perceived realism (*b*=.14, SE=.05, p< .005), reflective thoughts (*b*=.14, SE=.69 p< .05), and eudaimonia (*b*=.17, SE=.08, p<.05), are significant predictors of empathy.

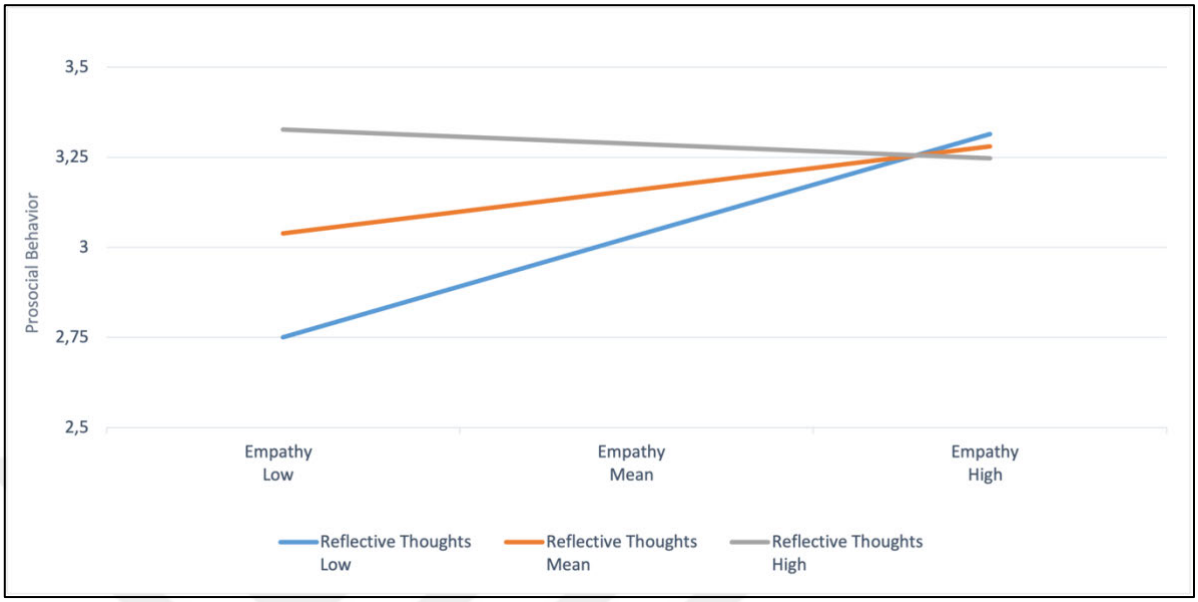
H2 predicted that when the victim of violence is in-group, empathy would be higher in both real and fictional frames. Since the variance was considerably low in participants who reported to be non-Turkish in the ethnicity demographic variable and there was no participant who reported being Israeli, there was no ingroup condition for when the victim of violence was Israeli. Thus, a new variable, "ingroupTurk" was formed by selecting the participants who reported feeling closer to being Turkish (1) and the ingroup condition (1) in all four conditions. When these two conditions were met, the corresponding values for 1 for each participant, and the rest was coded 0. Consequently, the interaction regression showed that the model suggested for this hypothesis had no statistical significance F(3, 172)= 0.96, p >.05, and belonging to the same group as the victim had no effect in predicting the changes in empathy (*b*= -.24, SE= .17, p >.05), failing to provide support for H2.

H3 suggested that higher self-reported empathy would indicate a greater intention to engage in prosocial behavior. The multiple linear regression test indicated a significant relationship between empathy and prosocial behavior, supporting H3. The adjusted R squared of .14 showed that 14% of the variation in prosocial behavior is explained by this model. Moreover, reflective thoughts (β=.17, SE=.80, p<.05) had a significant positive effect on prosocial behavior while perceived realism (*b*=-.12, SE=.06, p<.05) had a significant negative effect in predicting prosocial behavior, meaning that higher levels of perceived realism indicate lower levels of prosocial behavior.

H4 predicted that reflective thoughts on violence viewing would play a moderating role in the relationship between empathy and prosocial behavior. The results of moderation analysis using SPSS PROCESS Macro (Hayes, 2018) showed that there was a significant effect of empathy on prosocial behavior when moderated by reflective thoughts. Empathy significantly predicts prosocial behavior at low levels of reflective thoughts on violence viewing 95% CI [.14, .58], but as reflective thoughts increase, there is no moderating effect on the relationship between empathy and prosocial behavior. The interaction term between reflective thoughts and empathy in predicting prosocial behavior further indicates that there is a negative significant effect between the variables with a coefficient of -.24 ($p < .05$), 95% CI [-.41, -.64] with lower levels of reflective thoughts being associated with higher levels of empathy. Thus, there is a moderating effect of reflective thoughts on the relationship between empathy and prosocial behavior, but only at lower levels of reflective thoughts, supporting H4. An interaction plot that demonstrates the moderating effect of reflective thoughts on violence viewing on the relationship between empathy and prosocial behavior can be seen in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Moderation by reflective thoughts



An OLS test was conducted to examine the relationship between prosocial behavior and predictor variables across the treatment variables of framing of violence and the group status of the victim. The overall model was significant but only some of the variables were significantly related to prosocial behavior. As the key variables, empathy (b=.21, p<.05) and reflective thoughts (b=.17, p<.05) were positive significant predictors of prosocial behavior. As a control variable, perceived realism (b=-.12, p<.05), and as demographic variables age (b=-.03, p<.05) and sex (b= -.37, p<.005) were significant negative predictors of prosocial behavior. A table that refers to all variables can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3

Prosocial behavior by key and control variables

	Prosocial Behavior				
	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**	**Model 5**
Framing	0.010 (0.139)	0.037 (0.135)	0.027 (0.137)	0.003 (0.136)	-0.029 (0.131)
Empathy		0.278*** (0.084)	0.275*** (0.084)	0.234*** (0.086)	0.210** (0.088)
Group Status			-0.076 (0.138)	-0.095 (0.137)	-0.081 (0.132)
Reflective Thoughts				0.171** (0.083)	0.173** (0.081)
Perceived Realism					-0.129** (0.058)
Eudaimonia					0.092 (0.096)
Age					-0.039** (0.015)
Sex					-0.374*** (0.129)
Constant	3.109*** (0.096)	2.185*** (0.295)	2.231*** (0.307)	1.759*** (0.380)	3.325*** (0.636)
Observations	176	176	176	176	176
R2	0.00003	0.059	0.061	0.084	0.179

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.
*p<0.1; **p<0.05; *** ; p<0.01

3.7 Conclusion

The experimental design conducted through an online survey experiment aimed to test the effect of violence framing (real versus fictional) on prosocial behavior while accounting for empathy as a mediator between the two variables, group status as a moderating factor between the framing of violence and empathy, and reflective thoughts on violence viewing as a moderator between empathy and prosocial behavior.

Overall, the results of the analyses indicate that violence framing had no significant effect as treatment, empathy had no mediating effect, and group status was also an insignificant factor within the model, failing to provide support for the overall theoretical model. However, the relationship between empathy and prosocial behavior was moderated by the changes in reflective thoughts on violence viewing, offering a chance for paths for future research when researching media violence reception. by stating connections to the previous literature, the limitations of the current research, and point out venues for future directions in media psychology research, specifically for eudaimonic media consumption and mediated violence reception in fictional and real frames.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to contribute to the literature on media violence in line with positive media psychology. The suggested theoretical model aimed to test the relationship between the framing of violence as real and fictional on the emergence of prosocial behavior by accounting for factors that could play into this mechanism, such as empathy, group status, and reflective thoughts. Although the survey data did not support the overall theoretical model, the current study's findings are worth mentioning in the way of suggesting avenues for future research and discussing the significant findings in light of the literature on eudaimonic media use and violence consumption.

This chapter will recap the current study's research questions and hypotheses while restating the data analysis results in communication with previous literature. The methodological considerations and limitations will be discussed by accounting for the insignificant results and how methodological considerations should lead the way in designing future research.

4.1 Discussion and Future Studies

4.1.1 Framing of Violence

The results of this study indicated that framing violence as fictional versus real has no significant effect on the empathy levels of viewers. This finding of the current study is in line with previous research, which suggests that the relationship between violent media exposure and empathy is not significant (Krahé & Möller, 2010) but is not in line with studies suggesting real versus fiction distinction holds importance as a factor that affects viewer empathy (Ramos et al., 2013, Kobach & Weaver, 2012). This may have several reasons. First and foremost, the factors that play into the type of violence other than its framing were not included within the empirical model, such as the level of graphicness. The level of graphicness is defined mostly according to the amount of physical harm being depicted, with extreme levels including blood, and mutilation body parts in torture scenes. Such depictions are mostly uncensored and use "close-ups of the aggression and its consequences" (Weaver & Wilson, 2009, p.447). Cases, where the level of graphicness is considered low, avoid any portrayal of blood and gore (Wevaer & Wilson, 2009), but the violence is indicated through sanitized means, such as a character being in the hospital after a gunshot rather than seeing blood coming out from the wounds.

Although there is research indicating the real versus fictional qualities of violence do have more impact than its graphicness (Tamborini et al., 2013), research that has classified violence according to its amount of graphicness revealed that the negative affect of increasing levels of graphicness can result in changes in empathy. (Kobach & Weaver, 2012). In light of previous research, the current study's finding suggests that

the conceptualization of violent media in constructing a theoretical model by considering framing and level of graphicness could have had a significant effect on empathy levels.

Second, an additional factor that affects the violence viewing experience is the difference between happy and unpleasant violence. The current model took unpleasant violence into account, where there was no inherent justification or resolution of the violence on screen. Enabling a comparison between these two types of violence through exploring various violent genres has shown significant results on eudaimonic media consumption in viewers (Bartsch & Mares, 2014) without considering fiction versus real distinction. An additional layer that would have produced more illuminating findings could include distinguishing between the type of violence, its level of graphicness, and the framing of fiction versus real. About this, as previous studies point out, an important "contextual feature is the portrayal of negative consequences to the victim" (Smith et al., 2002) where "the absence of physical harm (i.e., injury, incapacitation, blood, gore) or emotional suffering in a violent scene" (Smith et al., 2002) can fail to initiate inhibitory reactions such as empathy; making the distinction between fictional and real violence counterproductive when the level of graphicness is not considered in line with its effects on empathy levels.

Thus, when considering empathy as a predictor of prosocial behavior in being exposed to violent media, the formal qualities of violence, which have been suggested to affect viewer response in previous studies separately, can be considered together within the same theoretical model. The main titles for these qualities would include the type of violence (happy versus unpleasant), level of graphicness (high violence, moderate

violence, low violence), and the framing of violence (real versus fictional), and this would be a theoretical implication of the insignificant result of the current research.

4.1.2 Group Status

In the current study, group status had no effect on the relationship between the framing of violence and empathy. This finding does not support previous research, which suggests that when someone categorizes a person as an outgroup member, "s/he will then begin to naturally exhibit discrimination and competitive responses toward that outgroup member" (Tajfel & Turner, 2004; Velez et al., 2012, p. 6). Whether the group belonging is voluntary or involuntary, the group status of interacting parties has been shown to affect everyday relations among intergroup members, as well as specific prosocial behavior, such as donation (Velez et al., 2012). In line with social identity theory, "individuals will not interact as individuals, on the basis of their individual characteristics or interpersonal relationships, but as members of their groups standing in certain defined relationships to the members of other groups" (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, p.278). However, research that has put social identity theory in light of media violence has shown that additional factors affect the strength of group belonging, affecting prosocial or antisocial behavior (Velez et al., 2012). Such additional factors can be competition for resources between members of different groups (i.e., in the context of a violent video game) or cooperation between members of the same group against the out-group competitors (Velez et al., 2012).

The current research design did not include a real-life event or an imaginary scenario to trigger hostility or kindness; the group status was solely defined based on being Turkish (in-group) or Israeli (out-group). The violence victim was framed to be innocent in both

cases since there was no justification given as to why a lynching took place. Previous research investigating intergroup relations suggests that the empathic reactions between different group members can be initiated through imagined interactions (Warner & Villamil, 2017), although this has not been tested in the context of real versus fictional violence. The intrapersonal communication allowed by imagined interactions has been shown to enable people to "learn about members of the outgroup, reduces anxiety about intergroup interactions, increases empathy with members of the outgroup, and improves attitudes toward the outgroup" (Hewstone & Swart, 2011 as cited in Warner & Villamil, 2017, p.449). When considered in relation to imagined interactions and the enhancement of group status via an imaginary scenario (to promote competition or cooperation), the current study's findings can influence the literature in several ways.

The current research design can be improved in future research to take into account testing the ways in which cooperation and competition can be promoted through non-interactive media, such as fiction films or violence in the news, especially for cases of political violence (Fishman & Marvin, 2003). Thus, the group status can be enhanced through intrapersonal communication, which is proven to allow for imagined interactions with the out-group members, further affecting the real-life interactions between intergroup actors (Warner & Villamil, 2017).

4.1.3 Empathy and Prosocial Behavior

The finding of this study on the relationship between empathy and prosocial behavior is in line with previous literature, which suggests that empathy is an indicator of prosocial behavior. However, it is valuable to distinguish between trait and state empathy while speaking of the current research results, as it focuses on state empathy. Both state and

trait empathy are recorded to indicate prosocial behavior, but state empathy is specifically an indicator of altruistic behavior, whereas trait empathic concern was also shown to result in prosocial behavior due to egoistic motivation (Davis, 2014). The current study focused on the participants' reactions to the violent footage; thus, they were asked about their responses to the imagery rather than testing their trait empathy. Although there are studies that show a strong link between trait empathy and helping behavior by considering egoistic motivation and altruistic motivation (Batson et al., 1987; Eisenberg & Miller, 1987; Unger & Thumuluri, 1997), media violence research has particularly focused on state empathy.

The item to test prosocial behavior in the current study involved a real-life organization based on the violent clips that the participants were exposed to. Similar studies that focused on the relationship between empathy, prosocial behavior, and violent media (Ramos et al., 2013; Kobach & Weaver, 2012) have also used a similar design, where trait empathy was not considered. In light of previous research, the current finding of this study suggests a path for future studies in terms of research design. Focusing on donation behavior in making a link between empathy and prosocial behavior may limit the breadth of understanding of media violence reception under the umbrella of eudaimonic media consumption, as eudaimonic media consumption is not solely interested in particular experiences but also patterns of experiences (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010). Thus, an enriching research design could include voluntarism instead of donation behavior, as it involves continuous helping and is reflective of eudaimonia since it promotes both "individual well-being and organizational efficiency" (Unger & Thumuluri, 1997, p.786).

A longitudinal study that navigates the relationship between fictional violent media usage patterns and voluntarism targeted at victims of real-world violence can include trait empathy as a measure that indicates prosocial behavior. This could allow for understanding the dimensions of trait empathy in relation to violent media, such as fantasy, which has been found to affect altruistic behavior (Rushton et al., 1981). Considering fantasy as a particular dimension of trait empathy can improve the understanding of the discussion on egoistic and altruistic motivations in helping behavior since violent media have commonly been discussed with egoistic motivations such as coping behavior, where viewers may simply want to decrease their level of stress by showing empathy to characters who are in distress (Cialdini et al., 1987).

4.1.4 Reflective Thoughts on Violence Viewing

Reflective thoughts on violence viewing bears importance both within the context of the current study and in discussing directions for future studies. As the current study pointed out, reflective thoughts on violence viewing was a factor that predicted the relationship between empathy and prosocial behavior, offering empirical support for the improvement of the General Aggression Model (Bushman & Anderson , 2002) as suggested by Bartsch and colleagues (2020). The ability to reflect on the suffering of others through violent media can be transferred into real-life situations where individuals encounter violence. The heuristics offered by the General Aggression Model where exposure to violence “can make hostile knowledge structures accessible” (Bushman & Anderson, 2002) is developed to include reflective reappraisal as a way to “open an opportunity for alternative, nonviolent courses of action” (Bartsch et al., 2020), further leading to thoughtful actions in line with self-transcendence.

The operationalization of self-transcendence is closely related to specifying the type of prosocial behavior as altruistic behavior, where social good is not conducted with egoistic motivations such as reducing negative affect (Oliver et al., 2018). Altruistic motivations triggered by a sense of interconnectedness and shared humanity (Oliver et al., 2018) can be the possible outcomes of reflectively viewing violent media, in line with the literature on eudaimonic media consumption. This state of reflectivity is different from other genres of entertainment, such as drama which can also be related to thoughts that can lead to self-transcendent actions (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010) because violent media is inherently more complex since it evokes negative affect not initiated by other genres such as disgust, shock, and anxiety (Bartsch & Mares, 2014). Thus, it is valuable to consider reflective thoughts on violence viewing as a framework that is different from other forms of empathic concerns, which can lead to prosocial behavior. Since violence viewing also has antisocial effects based on personality differences and amount of exposure (Bushman & Anderson, 2002; Bushman & Huesmann, 2006), it is crucial to keep these individual aspects in mind when planning future studies that examine how reflective thoughts affect media users' moral thinking and behavior.

4.1.5 Personality Differences

Referring to personality differences in violence reception, morbid curiosity (Scrivner, 2021) comes across as a thought-provoking connection in exploring eudaimonic media choices and possible real-life impacting results of such consumption patterns. Morbid curiosity is a psychological trait referring to the motivation to "seek out information about dangerous phenomena" (Scrivner, 2021, p.1), where "morbid" suggests that "death plays a central role in the defining object of curiosity" (Scrivner, 2021, p.2).

Although the scale and the accompanying framework have not yet been used in line with the eudaimonic use of violent media, based on empirical evidence, Scrivner (2022) has noted that individuals high in trait morbid curiosity are not low in empathy, challenging previous studies which advocated that fans of violent genres, especially horror, were positively correlated with dark traits, specifically psychopathy (Battista, 2011; Hoffner & Levine, 2005). The focus on viewers of violent genres and the emerging empirical work that aims to discover the motivation to view violence through the trait of morbid curiosity has not been in conversation with the literature on eudaimonic media consumption.

Scrivner's (2022) remark on the lack of empirical evidence on the relationship between trait morbid curiosity and prosocial behavior can be a significant path for future studies when the framework on reflective thoughts on violence viewing (Bartsch et al., 2020) is taken into consideration. It is already recognized via the development of reflective thoughts on violence scale (Bartsch et al., 2020) and theoretical elaborations of scholars of positive media psychology (Bartsch & Mares, 2014) that the psychology behind violent media requires specific attention with regard to eudaimonic consumption abilities of the viewers. This specific attention also covers the different genres of violence, making the formal qualities of the content very important in detecting the level of perceived meaningfulness (Bartsch et al., 2016). Trait morbid curiosity is already an intricate scale that specifies the type of violent content (e.g., paranormal, body) and which parts of the specific violence the viewers are drawn to. On the other hand, the perspective offered by reflective thoughts on violence viewing make clear connections

to the real-life implications of violence viewing, and as demonstrated by the current study, it is an important factor in predicting prosocial behavior.

4.1.6 Perceived Realism

Another finding of the current study that is significant for future studies is the role of perceived realism in viewing violent media. Perceived realism was significantly related to empathy in the ingroup-real and outgroup-real conditions, which was a predicted outcome when considering previous literature that focuses on the perceptions of realism in the reception of non-interactive violent media, such as film (Tamborini et al.,2013). As defined by Wilson et al. (1997) realism is the "actuality of characters, settings, and events" (as cited in Tamborini et al., 2013, p. 104) and the four different types of realism are "depictions of reality" such as newsreel footage, "recreations of reality and real events" such as documentaries, "fictional portrayals of events that could realistically happen in real life" such as an action scene from a war film, and "fantasy portrayals of events that are not possible in real world" such as battles in video games (Wilson et al., 1997, as cited in Tamborini et al., 2013).

The particular type of realism tested in the current study was (1) depictions of reality, and (2) recreations of reality and real events, from which the latter was not significantly related to empathy. This supports the notion that violence framed as real removes the "safety net" (Heller-Hicholas, 2014) which assures the audience that no one has been harmed. The acknowledgement of the morally questionable actions and their direct link to real life is recognized by the viewer to be more "full of conflict" (Diener & Woody, 1981, p. 293), which as a result can motivate the viewers to take action towards violence in real life, since the high perceived realism of the mediated violence can allow seeing

the “amount of physical harm or injury that would result if the same act of violence were to occur against a human in real life” (Smith et al., 2002). In line with eudaimonic media consumption, mediated violence when considered with the level of perceived realism, can “increase viewers’ ability to make sense of difficulties” and “their motivation to pursue moral goals” (Ott et al., 2021, p.1).

Nonetheless, an influential point for future studies to consider can be the willingness of individuals to view violent content that the perceived realism is low, moderate, and high, and contrast their eagerness to engage in prosocial behavior. This would allow to see preferences for violent media and how it interacts with moral engagement processes by accounting for the insignificant results that may occur due to involuntary exposure (Raney et al., 2020, p.96). Considering the previous elaboration of personality traits in media choices, trait morbid curiosity can be used as a control to account for personality differences, as well as media preferences about specific types of violence portrayals.

4.3 Methodological Considerations/Limitations

This study has several methodological limitations related to mainly sampling and the research design. First, survey participants were initially recruited via convenience sampling, and later on in the data collection process, the sampling method also involved snowball sampling. Due to the mentioned sampling methods, the study was prone to undesirable limitations such as sampling bias caused by the non-random selection of participants, further resulting in the non-generalizability of the data. Additionally, there was the issue of homogeneity in the sample due to convenience sampling, where the participants were mostly from the same institution and within a similar age range. Although this homogeneity might not have been a limitation if the study was interested

in a particular age group, since this was not the case and the desired data would be one that could have been representative of a larger population, the low variance in key variables such as group status was a limitation in the way of detecting relationships between the suggested predictor variables.

In addition to the limitations caused by sampling, a major issue is raised from the execution of the experimental model. The initial research design involved a laboratory experiment. Still, due to constraints related to time and finances, the experiment took place as an online survey, which in turn affected key aspects of the initial design. The footage that was chosen for this study had to be sanitized since an online survey does not give a chance to have a conversation with the participants upon their completion of the study. Additionally, since it is hard to make sure that the participants read the informed consent form and the debriefing form in an online survey, using stimulus material that is graphically violent in an online survey would mean risking the participants by leaving them unattended while viewing such content. In order to avoid any and all harm that the participants would be faced with, the stimulus material was very sanitized, which conflicted with the aim of this study. As with previous literature on the topic, the lack of physical harm presented on screen can stand in the way of the audience empathizing with the victim of violence (Smith et al., 2002). It could initiate desensitization, decreasing the will to help victims of violence (Bushman & Anderson, 2009).

Since the violent imagery was sanitized in the first place, the fictional versus real treatment of the stimulus material was weaker than intended, which potentially affected the results where most of the expected outcomes did not occur. Furthermore, the limited control over the environment of the participants while they took the survey, was an

additional limitation of the weak treatment. The participants may have viewed the stimulus material in an environment that they felt comfortable in, which would contribute to decreasing the effect of the treatment since the circumstances under which people are exposed to violent imagery play an essential role in its appeal (Goldstein, 1998). Thus, the lack of control over standardizing the environment in which participants were exposed to the stimulus material in a survey experiment was a vital factor that decreased the treatment's effect.

The results for the prosocial behavior item indicate that the majority of the 176 participants have given the answer "I am not sure" (n=68) to the question in which they were asked about their willingness to provide financial or moral support for an organization that was aimed towards protecting small business owners against violence. The weak treatment effect can also be seen in this case, where the footage displayed a small business owner being lynched, but the harmful consequences of the violence were not graphically depicted. Additionally, the limitation of the homogeneity of the sample regarding the age of the participants (M= 21.8, SD= 4.2) had an effect on the dependent variable of prosocial behavior since the sample does not show variability to capture an age range that could possibly resonate with small business owners.

4.4 Directions for Future Studies

The integration of violent content is overlooked in empirical studies. The concern about the content itself in violence reception studies is mostly related to the medium (Bushman & Anderson, 2002; O'Neal & Taylor, 1989; Tamborini et al., 2013) or the implementation of violence in various genres (Bartsch & Mares, 2014). However, the specific formal qualities of violent media are not applied to empirical studies. The focus

on formal qualities of violence bears importance especially when considering the perceived realism of violence in understanding the mechanisms through which perceived realism affects prosocial behavior. The study by Venkatesh et al. (2018) contributes to the media violence literature by examining ISIS execution videos through a critical lens that exposes the relationship between producing fictional and real violence. ISIS videos are regarded as interchangeable when it comes to viewer reception since the formal qualities are questionable in making a clear distinction between fiction and reality. They note that such content needs "further examination and theorizing" (Venkatesh et al., 2018) especially when it comes to how they affect viewer empathy, and whether the type of empathy experienced can result in prosocial behavior. This is not to say that the focus of further studies should solely be on ISIS videos, as it is only one striking example of how the distinguishing line between real and fiction is a blurry one. However, the emphasis on formal qualities of violence in empirical studies would be a promising path for future studies, and Venkatesh et al. (2018) propose a potential in this direction.

The distinction between fictional and actual violence in reception studies can be broadened in this direction to include newer technologies like artificial intelligence. Technologies such as deepfakes are becoming a concern, especially for the dissemination of sexual and political violence (Antinori, 2019). The online conversations upon the dissemination of certain deepfake videos which enhance sexual violence are reported to be concerning by many women (Stricevic, 2023). Highlighting the difficulty in separating reality and fiction in such videos requires an examination of the technologies that make them possible, as well as how it translates to audiences' perceived realism of violent content is helpful in the way of researching audience

responses to such content. Focusing on how individuals navigate their online spaces upon exposure to violent deepfake videos would be an auspicious path for future studies, resulting in possible policy implications in regulating such content that may harm certain individuals.

4.5 Concluding Remarks

Viewing mediated violence is certainly different from other types of media since it seems commonsensical to think of negative affect such as disgust, anxiety, and shock. It is increasingly understood that violent media consumption needs more investigation beyond the negative affect or the antisocial outcomes as a result of the path that media psychology research is currently taking.

This study contributed to the literature on eudaimonic media use for the case of viewing violence in fictional versus real frames. The findings of the current study suggest further studies to consider media violence reception beyond the general framework on positive media psychology and consider it by focusing on the specific formal elements of violence and how they might be related to real life in the viewers' perception.

Although the main empirical model of this study could not be supported, primarily due to methodological limitations, the findings concerning reflective thoughts on violence viewing and perceived realism are significant for future research on the prosocial effects of violence viewing. These findings again underline the significance of conducting research that examines viewers' processes for moral engagement, with a focus on measures that assess viewers' ability for moral reflection in the face of violent media.

Within mediated environments that are gradually getting more concerning in discerning between reality and fiction, media violence research should focus on ways to account for this distinction, specifically when seeking ways to use such media in ways that could result in prosocial outcomes, improving the path in discovering the possible positive effects of violent media on the lives of many.

REFERENCES

Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *50*(2), 179–211. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/074959789190020T

Andén-Papadopoulos, K. (2013). Media witnessing and the "crowd-sourced video revolution." *Visual Communication*, *12*(3), 341–357. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470357213483055

Andén-Papadopoulos, K. (2014). Citizen camera-witnessing: Embodied political dissent in the age of "mediated mass self-communication." *New Media & Society*, *16*(5), 753–769. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444813489863

Antinori, A. (2019). Terrorism and deepfake: From hybrid warfare to post-truth warfare in a hybrid World. In P. Griffiths & M. N. Kabir (Eds.), *European Conference on the Impact of Artificial Intelligence and Robotics (ECIAIR 2019)*. Academic Conferences and Publishing International Ltd.

Astley, M. (2016). Snuff 2.0: Real death goes HD ready. In N. Jackson, S. Kimber, J. Walker, & T. J. Watson (Eds.), *Snuff: Real Death and Screen Media* (pp. 153–170). Bloomsbury Publishing.

Bartsch, A., & Hartmann, T. (2016). The role of cognitive and affective challenge in entertainment experience. *Communication Research*, *44*(1), 29–53. https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650214565921

Bartsch, A., & Mares, M.-L. (2014). Making sense of violence: Perceived meaningfulness as a predictor of audience interest in violent media content. *Journal of Communication*, *64*(5), 956–976. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12112

Bartsch, A., Mares, M.-L., Scherr, S., Kloß, A., Keppeler, J., & Posthumus, L. (2016). More than shoot-em-up and torture porn: Reflective appropriation and meaning-making of violent media content. *Journal of Communication*, *66*(5), 741–765. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12248

Bartsch, A., Scherr, S., Mares, M.-L., & Oliver, M. B. (2020). Reflective thoughts about violent media content – development of a bilingual self-report scale in english and german. *Media Psychology*, *23*(6), 1–26. https://doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2019.1647248

Bartsch, A., & Schneider, F. M. (2014). Entertainment and politics revisited: How non-escapist forms of entertainment can stimulate political interest and information seeking. *Journal of Communication*, *64*(3), 369–396. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12095

Bartsch, A., Vorderer, P., Mangold, R., & Viehoff, R. (2008). Appraisal of emotions in media use: Toward a process model of meta-emotion and emotion regulation. *Media Psychology*, *11*(1), 7–27. https://doi.org/10.1080/15213260701813447

Batson, C. D., Duncan, B. D., Ackerman, P., Buckley, T., & Birch, K. (1981). Is

empathic emotion a source of altruistic motivation? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 40*(2), 290–302. https://doi.org/10.1037//0022-3514.40.2.290

Batson, C. D., Fultz, J., & Schoenrade, P. A. (1987). Distress and empathy: Two qualitatively distinct vicarious emotions with different motivational consequences. *Journal of Personality, 55*(1), 19–39. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.1987.tb00426.x

Batson, C. D., Fultz, J., & Schoenrade, P. A. (1990). Adults' emotional reactions to the distress of others. In J. Strayer & N. Eisenberg (Eds.), *Empathy and Its Development*. Cambridge University Press.

Batson, C. D., Lishner, D. A., & Stocks, E. L. (2015). The empathy-altruism hypothesis. In D. A. Schroeder & W. G. Graziano (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Prosocial Behavior* (pp. 259–282). Oxford University Press.

Battista, M. E. (2011). *Does Anyone Really Like Horror Movies? Personality and Automatic Affective Reactions to Frightening Films* [Doctoral thesis, The University of Western Ontario].

Berkowitz, L. (1989). Frustration-aggression hypothesis: Examination and reformulation. *Psychological Bulletin, 106*(1), 59–73. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.106.1.59

Bishku, M. B. (2006). How has Turkey viewed Israel? *Israel Affairs, 12*(1), 177–194. https://doi.org/10.1080/13537120500382099

Bruneau, E. G., Cikara, M., & Saxe, R. (2017). Parochial empathy predicts reduced altruism and the endorsement of passive harm. *Social Psychological and Personality Science, 8*(8), 934–942. https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550617693064

Bushman, B. J., & Anderson, C. A. (2002). Violent video games and hostile expectations: A test of the general aggression model. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *28*(12), 1679–1686. https://doi.org/10.1177/014616702237649

Bushman, B. J., & Anderson, C. A. (2009). Comfortably numb: Desensitizing effects of Violent media on helping others. *Psychological Science, 20*(3), 273–277. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2009.02287.x

Bushman, B. J., & Huesmann, L. R. (2006). Short-term and long-term effects of violent media on aggression in children and adults. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, *160*(4), 348. https://doi.org/10.1001/archpedi.160.4.348

Carroll, N. (1990). *The philosophy of horror, or, paradoxes of the heart*. Routledge.

Cho, H., Shen, L., & Wilson, K. (2012). Perceived realism. *Communication Research*, *41*(6), 828–851. https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650212450585

Cialdini, R. B., Schaller, M., Houlihan, D., Arps, K., Fultz, J., & Beaman, A. L. (1987). Empathy-based helping: Is it selflessly or selfishly motivated? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 52*(4), 749–758. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.52.4.749

Das, E., Nobbe, T., & Oliver, M. B. (2017). Moved to act: Examining the role of mixed affect and cognitive elaboration in "accidental" narrative persuasion. *International Journal of Communication*, *16*. http://ijoc.org.

Davis, M. H. (2015). Empathy and prosocial behavior. In D. A. Schroeder & W. G. Graziano (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Prosocial Behavior* (pp. 282–307). Oxford University Press.

Dazed. (2022, September 15). *Loab: The horrifying cryptid that's haunting the internet*. Dazed. https://www.dazeddigital.com/life-culture/article/56964/1/loab-the-horrifying-cryptid-haunting-ai-latent-space-supercomposite

Diener, E., & Woody, L. W. (1981). Television violence, conflict, realism, and action: A study in viewer liking. *Communication Research*, *8*(3), 281–306. https://doi.org/10.1177/009365028100800302

Dovidio, J. F., Piliavin, J. A., Schroeder, D. A., & Penner, L. A. (2006). *The Social Psychology of Prosocial Behavior*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Eastin, M. S. (2013). *Encyclopedia of media violence*. SAGE Publications.

Eisenberg, N., & Miller, P. A. (1987). The relation of empathy to prosocial and related behaviors. *Psychological Bulletin*, *101*(1), 91–119. https://doi.org/10.1037//0033-2909.101.1.91

Eitzen, D. (1995). When is a documentary?: Documentary as a mode of reception. *Cinema Journal*, *35*(1), 81. https://doi.org/10.2307/1225809

Feshbach, S. (1976). The role of fantasy in the response to television. *Journal of Social Issues*, *32*(4), 71–85.https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.1976.tb02507.x

Fishman, J. M., & Marvin, C. (2003). Portrayals of violence and group difference in newspaper photographs: Nationalism and media. *Journal of Communication*, *53*(1), 32–44. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2003.tb03003.x

Gallio, N., & Mendik, X. (2016). From snuff to the south: The global reception of *Cannibal Holocaust.* In N. Jackson, S. Kimber, J. Walker, & T. J. Watson (Eds.), *Snuff: Real Death and Screen Media* (pp. 105–120). Bloomsbury Publishing.

Geen, R. G. (1975). The meaning of observed violence: Real vs. fictional violence and consequent effects on aggression and emotional arousal. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *9*(4), 270–281. https://doi.org/10.1016/0092-6566(75)90002-1

Geen, R. G., & Stonner, D. (1973). Context effects in observed violence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *25*(1), 145–150. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0034339

George, T. (Director). (2004). *Hotel Rwanda*. Metro-Goldywn-Mayer.

Gerbner, G. (1999). The stories we tell. *Peace Review*, *11*(1), 9–15. https://doi.org/10.1080/10402659908426225

Goldberg, V. (1998). Death takes a holiday, sort of. In *Why We Watch: The*

Attractions of Violent Entertainment. Oxford University Press.

Goldstein, J. H. (1998). Why we watch: The attractions of violent entertainment. In *Why We Watch: The Attractions of Violent Entertainment*. Oxford University Press.

Grizzard, M., Huang, J., Weiss, J. K., Novotny, E. R., Fitzgerald, K. S., Ahn, C., Ngoh, Z., Plante, A., & Chu, H. (2017). Graphic violence as moral motivator: The effects of graphically violent content in news. *Mass Communication and Society*, *20*(6), 763–783. https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2017.1339804

Haberler.com. (2006). Yalova: Yalovalı esnaf, dükkanındaki israil mallarını ateşe verdi. *Haberler.com*. https://www.haberler.com/guncel/yalova-yalovali-esnaf-dukkanindaki-israil-haberi/

Hall, A. (2003). Reading realism: Audiences' evaluations of the reality of media texts. *Journal of Communication*, *53*(4), 624–641. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2003.tb02914.x

Hall, A. (2005). Audience personality and the selection of media and media genres. *Media Psychology*, *7*(4), 377–398. https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532785xmep0704_4

Hartmann, T. (2009). action theory, theory of planned behavior and media choice. In T. Hartmann (Ed.), *Media Choice: A Theoretical and Empirical Overview* (pp. 32–53). Routledge.

Hayes, A. F. (2018). *Introduction to Mediation, Moderation, and Conditional Process*

Analysis: A Regression-Based Approach. The Guilford Press.

Heller-Nicholas, A. (2014). Snuff-Fictions. In *Found Footage Horror Films: Fear and the Appearance of Reality*. McFarland & Company.

Hobbs, S. (2016). Animal snuff. In N. Jackson, S. Kimber, J. Walker, & T. J. Watson (Eds.), *Snuff: Real Death and Screen Media* (pp. 63–81). Bloomsbury Publishing.

Hoffner, C. (2009). Affective responses and exposure to frightening films: The role of empathy and different types of content. *Communication Research Reports*, *26*(4), 285–296. https://doi.org/10.1080/08824090903293700

Hoffner, C. A., & Levine, K. J. (2005). Enjoyment of mediated fright and violence: A Meta-Analysis. *Media Psychology*, *7*(2), 207–237. https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532785xmep0702_5

Jackson, N., Watson, T. J., Walker, J., & Kimber, S. (Eds.). (2016). *Snuff : Real Death and Screen Media*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Kimber, S. (2016). "Why would you film it?" snuff, *Sinister*, and contemporary US horror cinema. In N. Jackson, S. Kimber, J. Walker, & T. J. Watson (Eds.), *Snuff: Real Death and Screen Media* (pp. 225–239). Bloomsbury Publishing.

Knowles, S. R., Hyde, M. K., & White, K. M. (2012). Predictors of young people's charitable intentions to donate money: An extended theory of planned behavior perspective. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *42*(9), 2096–2110. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2012.00932.x

Kobach, M. J., & Weaver, A. J. (2012). Gender and empathy differences in negative reactions to fictionalized and real violent images. *Communication Reports*, *25*(2), 51–61. https://doi.org/10.1080/08934215.2012.721087

Krahé, B., & Möller, I. (2010). Longitudinal effects of media violence on aggression and empathy among german adolescents. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, *31*(5), 401–409. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2010.07.003

Lewis, R. J., Tamborini, R., & Weber, R. (2014). Testing a dual-process model of media enjoyment and appreciation. *Journal of Communication*, *64*(3), 397–416. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12101

Ma, Z. (2019). Effects of immersive stories on prosocial attitudes and willingness to help: Testing psychological mechanisms. *Media Psychology*, *23*(6), 1–26. https://doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2019.1651655

McCauley, C. (1998). When screen violence is not attractive. In J. H. Goldstein (Ed.), *Why We Watch: The Attractions of Violent Entertainment*. Oxford University Press.

Moyer-Gusé, E., Giles, H., & Linz, D. (2008). Communication studies, overview. In L. Kurtz (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, & Conflict (Second Edition)*. Academic Press.

Nathanson, A. I. (2003). Rethinking empathy. In J. Bryant, D. Roskos-Ewoldsen,

& J. Cantor (Eds.), *Communication and Emotion: Essays in Honor of Dolf Zillmann*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

O'Neal, E. C., & Taylor, S. L. (1989). Status of the provoker, opportunity to retaliate, and interest in video violence. *Aggressive Behavior*, *15*(2), 171–180. https://doi.org/10.1002/1098-2337(1989)15:2<171::AID-AB2480150205>3.0.CO;2-T

Oliver, M. B. (2009). Affect as a predictor of entertainment choice: The utility of looking beyond pleasure. In T. Hartmann (Ed.), *Media Choice: A Theoretical and Empirical Overview* (pp. 167–184). Routledge.

Oliver, M. B., & Bartsch, A. (2010). Appreciation as audience response: Exploring entertainment gratifications beyond hedonism. *Human Communication Research*, *36*(1), 53–81. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.2009.01368.x

Oliver, M. B., & Bartsch, A. (2011). Appreciation of entertainment. *Journal of Media Psychology*, *23*(1), 29–33. https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-1105/a000029

Oliver, M. B., Hartmann, T., & Woolley, J. K. (2012). Elevation in response to Entertainment portrayals of moral virtue. *Human Communication Research*, *38*(3), 360–378. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.2012.01427.x

Oliver, M. B., & Raney, A. A. (2011). Entertainment as pleasurable and

meaningful: Identifying hedonic and eudaimonic motivations for entertainment consumption. *Journal of Communication*, *61*(5), 984–1004. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2011.01585.x

Ott, J. M., Tan, N. Q. P., & Slater, M. D. (2021). Eudaimonic media in lived experience: Retrospective responses to eudaimonic vs. non-eudaimonic films. *Mass Communication and Society*, *24*(5), 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2021.1912774

Potter, W. J. (1988). Perceived reality in television effects research. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *32*(1), 23–41. https://doi.org/10.1080/08838158809386682

Potter, W. J., & Tomasello, T. K. (2003). Building upon the experimental design in media violence research: The importance of including receiver interpretations. *Journal of Communication*, *53*(2), 315–329. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2003.tb02593.x

Pouliot, L., & Cowen, P. S. (2007). Does perceived realism really matter in media effects? *Media Psychology*, *9*(2), 241–259. https://doi.org/10.1080/15213260701285819

Prot, S., Gentile, D. A., Anderson, C. A., Suzuki, K., Swing, E., Lim, K. M., Horiuchi, Y., Jelic, M., Krahé, B., Liuqing, W., Liau, A. K., Khoo, A., Petrescu, P. D., Sakamoto, A., Tajima, S., Toma, R. A., Warburton, W., Zhang, X., & Lam, B. C. P. (2013). Long-Term relations among prosocial-media use, empathy,

and prosocial behavior. *Psychological Science*, *25*(2), 358–368. https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797613503854

Ramos, R. A., Ferguson, C. J., Frailing, K., & Romero-Ramirez, M. (2013). Comfortably numb or just yet another movie? Media violence exposure does not reduce viewer empathy for victims of real violence among primarily Hispanic viewers. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, *2*(1), 2–10. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0030119

Raney, A. A., Janicke-Bowles, S. H., Mary Beth Oliver, & Dale, K. R. (2020). *Introduction to Positive Media Psychology*. Routledge.

Rushton, J. P., Chrisjohn, R. D., & Fekken, G. Cynthia. (1981). The altruistic personality and the self-report altruism scale. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *2*(4), 293–302. https://doi.org/10.1016/0191-8869(81)90084-2

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2001). On happiness and human potentials: A review of research on hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *52*(1), 141–166. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.141

Scrivner, C. (2021). The psychology of morbid curiosity: Development and initial validation of the morbid curiosity scale. *Personality and Individual Differences*, *183*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2021.111139

Scrivner, C. (2022). Bleeding-heart horror fans: Enjoyment of horror media is not related to lower empathy or compassion. PsyArXiv Preprints. https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/rhc23

Scrivner, C., Johnson, J. A., Kjeldgaard-Christiansen, J., & Clasen, M. (2021). Pandemic practice: Horror fans and morbidly curious individuals are more psychologically resilient during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Personality and Individual Differences, 168*, 110397. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2020.110397

Shapiro, M. A., Barriga, C. A., & Beren, J. (2010). Causal attribution and perceived realism of stories. *Media Psychology, 13*(3), 273–300. https://doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2010.502874

Shapiro, M. A., & Lang, A. (1991). Making television reality: Unconscious processes in the construction of social reality. *Communication Research, 18*(5), 685–705. https://doi.org/10.1177/009365091018005007

Shapiro, M. A., & McDonald, D. G. (1992). I'm not a real doctor, but I play one in virtual reality: Implications of virtual reality for judgments about reality. *Journal of Communication, 42*(4). https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1992.tb00813.x

Shen, L. (2010). On a scale of state empathy during message processing. *Western Journal of Communication, 74*(5), 504–524. https://doi.org/10.1080/10570314.2010.512278

Sherif, M., & Sherif, C. W. (1967). Group processes and collective interaction in delinquent activities. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency, 4*(1), 43–62. https://doi.org/10.1177/002242786700400104

Smith, E. R., & DeCoster, J. (2000). Dual-Process models in social and cognitive psychology: Conceptual integration and links to underlying memory systems. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *4*(2), 108–131. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327957pspr0402_01

Smith, S. L., Nathanson, A. I., & Wilson, B. J. (2002). Prime-Time television: Assessing violence during the most popular viewing hours. *Journal of Communication*, *52*(1), 84–111. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2002.tb02534.x

Spielberg, S. (Director). (1998). *Saving Private Ryan*. DreamWorks Distribution; Paramount Pictures.

Stocks, E. L., Lishner, D. A., & Decker, S. K. (2008). Altruism or psychological escape: Why does empathy promote prosocial behavior? *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *39*(5), 649–665. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.561

Striceciv, M. (2023). Deepfake pornography: A new epidemic of violence against women. *Roar*. https://roarnews.co.uk/2023/deepfake-pornography-a-new-epidemic-of-violence-against-women/

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (2004). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In J. T. Jost & J. Sidanius (Eds.), *Political Psychology : Key Readings*. Psychology.

Tamborini, R., Stiff, J., & Heidel, C. (1990). Reacting to graphic horror: A model

of empathy and emotional behavior. *Communication Research*, *17*(5), 616–640. https://doi.org/10.1177/009365090017005003

Tamborini, R., Weber, R., Bowman, N. D., Eden, A., & Skalski, P. (2013). "Violence is a many-splintered thing ": The importance of realism, justification, and graphicness in understanding perceptions of and preferences for violent films and video games. *Projections*, *7*(1). https://doi.org/10.3167/proj.2013.070108

Tokdemir, E. (2022). "You are not my type": The role of identity in evaluating democracy & human rights promotion. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, *24*(1), 74–94. https://doi.org/10.1177/13691481211016946

Tsay-Vogel, M., & Krakowiak, K. M. (2016). Effects of hedonic and eudaimonic motivations on film enjoyment through moral disengagement. *Communication Research Reports*, *33*(1), 54–60. https://doi.org/10.1080/08824096.2015.1117443

Unger, L. S., & Thumuluri, L. K. (1997). Trait empathy and continuous helping: The case of voluntarism. *Journal of Social Behavior & Personality*, *12*(3).

Velez, J. A., Mahood, C., Ewoldsen, D. R., & Moyer-Gusé, E. (2012). In-group versus out-group conflict in the context of violent video game play. *Communication Research*, *41*(5), 607–626. https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650212456202

Venkatesh, V., Podoshen, J. S., Wallin, J., Rabah, J., & Glass, D. (2018). Promoting extreme violence: Visual and narrative analysis of select ultraviolent terror propaganda videos produced by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in 2015 and 2016. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, *32*(8), 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2018.1516209

Waddell, T. F., Bailey, E., Weber, M., Ivory, J. D., & Downs, E. (2019). When media violence awakens our better nature: The effect of unpleasant violence on reactivity toward and enjoyment of media violence. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *63*(4), 698–715. https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2019.1677444

Wang, S. (2021). Standing up or standing by: Bystander intervention in cyberbullying on social media. *New Media & Society*, *23*(6). https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820902541

Warner, B. R., & Villamil, A. M. (2017). A test of imagined contact as a means to Improve cross-partisan feelings and reduce attribution of malevolence and acceptance of political violence. *Communication Monographs*, *84*(4). https://doi.org/10.1080/03637751.2017.1336779

Waterman, A. S. (1993). Two conceptions of happiness: Contrasts of personal expressiveness (eudaimonia) and hedonic enjoyment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *64*(4), 678–691. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.64.4.678

Weaver, A. J., & Wilson, B. J. (2009). The role of graphic and sanitized violence

in the enjoyment of television dramas. *Human Communication Research*, *35*(3), 442–463. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.2009.01358.x

West, A. (2005). Caught on tape: A legacy of low-tech reality. In G. King (Ed.), *The Spectacle of the Real: from Hollywood to "Reality" TV and beyond* (pp. 83–93). Intellect.

Yavuz, M. H. (2005). *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*. Oxford University Press.

Wilson, B. J., Kunkel, D., Linz, D., Potter, W. J., Donnerstein, E., Smith, S. L., Blumenthal, E., & Gray, T. (1997). Violence in television programming overall: University of California, Santa Barbara study, National Television Violence Study (Vol. 1, pp. 3–268). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Zillmann, D. (2002). Exemplification theory of media influence. In J. Bryant & D. Zillmann (Eds.), *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research* (pp. 19–43). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Zillmann, D. (1988). Mood management through communication choices. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *31*(3), 327–340. https://doi.org/10.1177/000276488031003005

Zillmann, D. (2000). Mood management in the context of selective exposure theory. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, *23*(1), 103–123. https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2000.11678971

Zillmann, D. (1991). Empathy: Affect from bearing witness to the emotions of

others. In J. Bryant & D. Zillmann (Eds.), *Responding to the Screen: Reception and Reaction Processes*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

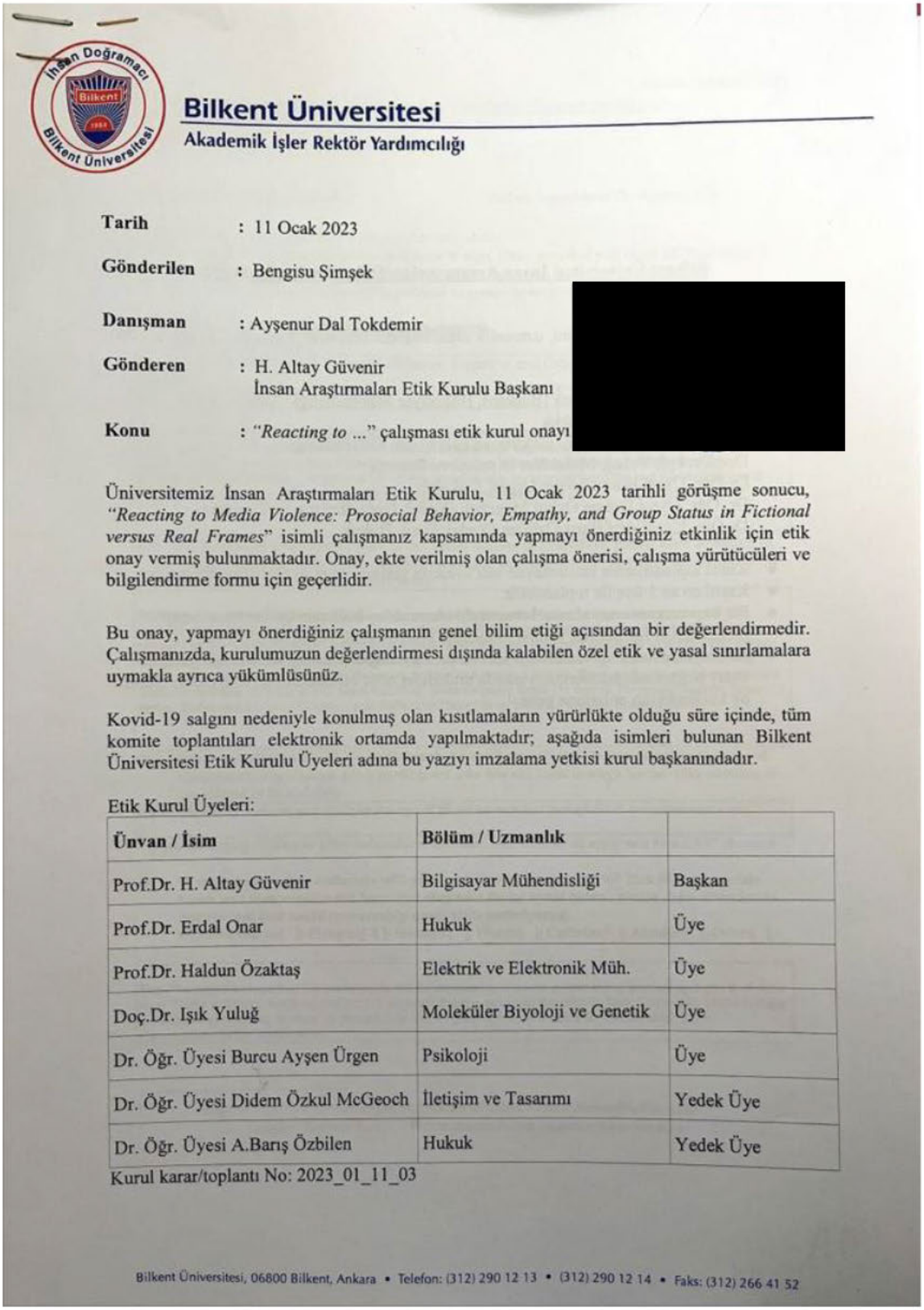
Zillmann, D. (2006). Empathy: Affective reactivity to others' emotional experiences. In J. Bryant & Peter Vorderer (Eds.), *Psychology of Entertainment*. Routledge.

Zillmann, D. (2008). Excitation transfer theory. *The International Encyclopedia of Communication*. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405186407.wbiece049

Zuckerman, M. (1979). *Sensation seeking : Beyond the optimal level of arousal*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL PAGE



Bilkent Üniversitesi
Akademik İşler Rektör Yardımcılığı

Tarih : 11 Ocak 2023

Gönderilen : Bengisu Şimşek

Danışman : Ayşenur Dal Tokdemir

Gönderen : H. Altay Güvenir
İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başkanı

Konu : *"Reacting to ..."* çalışması etik kurul onayı

[redacted]

Üniversitemiz İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu, 11 Ocak 2023 tarihli görüşme sonucu, *"Reacting to Media Violence: Prosocial Behavior, Empathy, and Group Status in Fictional versus Real Frames"* isimli çalışmanız kapsamında yapmayı önerdiğiniz etkinlik için etik onay vermiş bulunmaktadır. Onay, ekte verilmiş olan çalışma önerisi, çalışma yürütücüleri ve bilgilendirme formu için geçerlidir.

Bu onay, yapmayı önerdiğiniz çalışmanın genel bilim etiği açısından bir değerlendirmedir. Çalışmanızda, kurulumuzun değerlendirmesi dışında kalabilen özel etik ve yasal sınırlamalara uymakla ayrıca yükümlüsünüz.

Kovid-19 salgını nedeniyle konulmuş olan kısıtlamaların yürürlükte olduğu süre içinde, tüm komite toplantıları elektronik ortamda yapılmaktadır; aşağıda isimleri bulunan Bilkent Üniversitesi Etik Kurulu Üyeleri adına bu yazıyı imzalama yetkisi kurul başkanındadır.

Etik Kurul Üyeleri:

Ünvan / İsim	**Bölüm / Uzmanlık**	
Prof.Dr. H. Altay Güvenir	Bilgisayar Mühendisliği	Başkan
Prof.Dr. Erdal Onar	Hukuk	Üye
Prof.Dr. Haldun Özaktaş	Elektrik ve Elektronik Müh.	Üye
Doç.Dr. Işık Yuluğ	Moleküler Biyoloji ve Genetik	Üye
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Burcu Ayşen Ürgen	Psikoloji	Üye
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Didem Özkul McGeoch	İletişim ve Tasarımı	Yedek Üye
Dr. Öğr. Üyesi A.Barış Özbilen	Hukuk	Yedek Üye

Kurul karar/toplantı No: 2023_01_11_03

Bilkent Üniversitesi, 06800 Bilkent, Ankara • Telefon: (312) 290 12 13 • (312) 290 12 14 • Faks: (312) 266 41 52

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT

Değerli katılımcımız, Bilkent Üniversitesi İletişim ve Tasarım Bölümü'nde Medya ve Şiddet konusunda Bengisu Şimşek tarafından yürütülen bir araştırmaya davetlisiniz. Çalışmanın amacı, toplumların medyadaki şiddet temsillerini nasıl ele aldıklarını incelemektir.

Çalışma boyunca sizden 30 saniyelik bir video izlemeniz ve videoyu izlemenizin ardından 28 soruluk bir anket cevaplamanız beklenmektedir. Bu çalışma yaklaşık olarak 10-15 dakikanızı alacaktır.

Çalışma size doğrudan fayda sağlamasa da araştırmacıların insanların medyadaki şiddet görüntülerinden nasıl etkilediğini daha iyi anlamasını sağlayacaktır. Ayrıca çeşitli kişilerin ve grupların medyadaki temsillerinin çeşitlendirilmesine ve iyileştirilmesine dolaylı yoldan katkı sağlanabilmesine yardımcı olacaktır.

Bu çalışmada izleyeceğiniz kısa video içeriği sizin için rahatsız edici olabilir. Bunun sebebi görüntülerin şiddet içeriyor olmasıdır. Eğer herhangi bir şekilde rahatsızlık duyarsanız, lütfen araştırmacıyı bilgilendirin. Böylece herhangi bir sonuçla karşı karşıya bırakılmadan çalışmadan çekilebilirsiniz.

Sonuçlar da dahil olmak üzere çalışmanın tüm detayları gizli tutulacak ve sadece araştırmacılar, katılımcılar hakkındaki bilgilere erişebilecekler. Çalışmanın sonuçları tamamen anonim bir şekilde Medya ve Görsel Çalışmalar Yüksek Lisans Programı (Bilkent Üniversitesi) tez projesi kapsamında kullanılacaktır. Tanımlanamayan veriler daha sonra yeni analiz tekniklerini veya hipotezlerini test etmek için tekrar kullanılabilir. Hiçbir bireysel sonuç bildirilmeyecektir. Bireysel yanıtlar, her katılımcıya benzersiz kimlik numaraları atanacak ve yanıtlar yalnızca bu numarayla ilişkilendirilerek gizli tutulacaktır. Kişisel olarak tanımlanabilir hiçbir bilgi, katılımcı yanıtlarının herhangi biriyle ilişkilendirilmeyecektir.

Katılım tamamen gönüllülük esasına dayalıdır. Katılmak zorunda değilsiniz ve katılmanız halinde herhangi bir sebep sunmadan ve özellikle Bilkent Üniversitesi ile olan ilişkinize karşı herhangi bir sonuçla karşılaşmadan herhangi bir zamanda geri çekebilirsiniz.

Bu bilgileri okuduktan sonra, araştırmacıya dilediğiniz soruları yöneltebilirsiniz. Bu araştırma ile ilgili herhangi bir şikayetiniz veya çekinceniz varsa, araştırmacı Bengisu Şimşek [redacted] mail adresinden veya araştırma sorumlusu Dr. Ayşenur Dal Tokdemir ile [redacted] adresinden e-posta ile iletişime geçebilirsiniz.

Dile getirdiğiniz tüm sorunlar gizlilik içinde ele alınacak ve eksiksiz bir şekilde araştırılacak ve sonuçtan size bilgi verilecektir. Bu araştırmanın etik olarak yürütülmesine ilişkin herhangi bir endişeniz varsa [redacted] adresinden Bilkent Üniversitesi Etik Kurulu ile iletişime geçebilirsiniz. Medya ve Şiddet isimli çalışmaya katılmamın istenmesi üzerine alttaki kutucuğu işaretleyerek rıza gösteriyor ve aşağıdaki maddeleri kabul ediyorum:

1. Araştırma projesi yukarıda açıklandığı şekliyle gerçekleştirilecektir. Sağlanan bilgileri okudum ve anladım.

2. Katılımım gizlidir ve çalışma sırasında kazanılan bilgiler yayınlanabilir, ancak kimliğimi ortaya çıkaran hiçbir kişisel bilgi kullanılmayacaktır.

3. Katılımım rızam doğrultusunda gerçekleşecektir. Bilkent Üniversitesi ile olan ilişkimi etkilemeden herhangi bir zamanda çalışmadan çekilebilirim. Rızamın geri çekilmesi için bir sebep sunmak zorunda değilim.

4. 18 yaşın üzerindeyim ve şu anda Dr. Ayşenur Dal Tokdemir'den herhangi bir ders almıyorum.

() Bu çalışmaya katılmak için rızam vardır.

() Bu çalışmaya katılmak için rızam yoktur.

APPENDIX C: SURVEY QUESTIONS

Demographic Questions

Lütfen doğum yılınızı belirtiniz.

_____

Lütfen cinsiyetinizi belirtiniz.

() Kadın () Erkek () Diğer

Aşağıdaki gruplardan hangisine kendinizi en yakın hissettiğinizi belirtir misiniz?

() Türk () Kürt () Laz () Gürcü () Arap () Çerkes

() Roman () Boşnak () Diğer _____

Empathy

Lütfen aşağıdaki soruları izlemiş olduğunuz videoyu düşünerek yanıtlayınız.

	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum	Katılıyorum	Kesinlikle katılıyorum
Bu görüntüyü izlerken karakterle aynı duyguları yaşadım.					
Karakterin bakış açısını görebiliyorum.					
Karakterin duygularını hissedebiliyorum.					
Karakterin neler yaşadığını anlayabiliyorum.					
Karakterin duruma verdiği tepkileri anlaşılır buldum.					

Perceived Realism

Lütfen aşağıdaki soruları izlemiş olduğunuz videoyu düşünerek yanıtlayınız.

	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum	Katılıyorum	Kesinlikle katılıyorum
Görüntüler gündelik hayatta olabilecek bir durumu yansıtıyordu.					
Görüntülerde gösterilenler gündelik hayatta asla yaşanmaz.					
Görüntülerdeki insanların başına gelenler, birçok insanın başına gelebilir.					
Karakterin neler yaşadığını anlayabiliyorum.					
Görüntüler gerçekten olmuş bir şeyi gösteriyordu.					

Reflective Thoughts on Violence Viewing

Lütfen aşağıdaki soruları izlemiş olduğunuz videoyu düşünerek yanıtlayınız.

	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum	Katılıyorum	Kesinlikle katılıyorum
Böyle bir acımasızlıkta bulunmak için bir insanın ne yaşamış olabileceğini düşündüm.					
İnsanların birbirine yaşatabileceği dehşeti düşündüm.					
Görüntüdeki şiddetin, insanların bu konuyu ciddiye almaları için bir uyandırma çağrısı olabileceğini					
Görüntülerin ardındaki olan biteni düşündüm.					
Görüntülere sebep olan tarihsel veya güncel olaylar hakkında düşündüm.					
Görüntülerdeki şiddetin soğukkanlılığı karşısında şok oldum.					
Masum kurbanlara yönelik şiddeti görünce üzüldüm.					

Eudaimonia

Lütfen aşağıdaki soruları medya tüketim alışkanlıklarınızı göz önünde bulundurarak cevaplayınız.

	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum	Katılıyorum	Kesinlikle katılıyorum
Dünya görüşüme meydan okuyan filmleri severim.					
En sevdiğim türdeki filmler beni düşündüren filmlerdir.					
Karakterlerin hayatta büyük anlamlar aradığı filmlerden çok etkilenirim.					
Derin anlamları veya iletecek mesajı olan filmleri severim.					
Film izlerken eğlenmek benim için önemlidir.					
"Aptalca" veya "basit" olarak nitelendirilen filmlerin beni güldürdüğü sürece keyifli olabileceğini düşünüyorum.					
Benim için en iyi filmler eğlenceli olanlardır.					
En sevdiğim film türü mutlu ve pozitif olanlardır.					

APPENDIX D: DEBRIEFING

Medya Şiddeti ve Toplum isimli çalışmamıza katıldığınız için teşekkür ederiz.

Medya şiddetine günlük hayatta farklı formlarda maruz kalıyoruz veya kendi rızamızla şiddet içeren medya ürünlerini tüketiyoruz. Bu tarz şiddet içeriklerinin olumsuz etkileri çok fazla olabildiği gibi insanlarda empati gibi pozitif duyguları ortaya çıkardığına ve topluma daha faydalı bir şekilde davranmaya ittiğine dair çalışmalar mevcut.

Bu çalışma, aynı şiddet görüntüsünün kurgusal ve gerçek olmak üzere iki farklı çerçevede sunulduğunda, katılımcıların empati seviyesini nasıl etkilediğini ve gerçek hayattaki şiddete olan duyarlılıklarını nasıl değiştirdiğini ölçmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Aynı zamanda şiddet görüntüsündeki kurbanın ait olduğu grup kimliğinin empati seviyesi üzerinde nasıl bir etkisi olduğuna bakılmıştır.

İzlemiş olduğunuz linç görüntüsü gerçek bir olayın kurgusal canlandırmasıdır. Söz konusu görüntüde kimse gerçekten fiziksel hasar görmemiştir, tümüyle prodüksiyon ve oyunculuk ürünüdür. Bu görüntünün bazı kısımları prodüksiyon özellikleri gerçekliği yansıtmadığı ve kurguya işaret ettiği için kesilmiştir ve totalde 40 saniyeyi bulan bu sahne 30 saniyeye düşürülmüştür. Deney boyunca katılımcılardan bazıları aynı 30 saniyelik görüntünün (1) tümüyle gerçek olduğu, (2) tümüyle kurgusal olduğu konusunda bilgilendirilmiştir. Bunun yapılmasının sebebi, çalışmanın bağımsız değişkenini yani kurgusal ve gerçek şiddeti ölçmenin başka bir yolu olmamasından kaynaklanmaktadır. Deneyin başında görüntünün kurgusal olduğunu her iki gruba da söylemek, ölçülmesi beklenen değişkenin etkisiz hale gelmesine sebep vereceğinden dolayı katılımcıların bir bölümü görüntülerin gerçek olduğuna dair yanlış bilgilendirilmiştir. Bu tür bir yanlış bilgilendirme medya psikolojisi çalışmalarında mesajın çerçevelenme biçiminin izleyiciler üzerindeki etkisini test etmek adına sık sık kullanılır (Kobach & Weaver, 2012; Ramos et al.,2012; Geen, 1975). Grup kimliğinin empati üzerindekine etkisine bakmak için ise bir deney grubu şiddet mağdurunun (1) Türk (grup içi) (2) İsrailli (grup dışı) olduğu konusunda bilgilendirilmiştir.

Çalışmada izlediğiniz videonun içeriğinden veya içeriğin gerçekliğiyle alakalı yapılan bilgilendirmeden kaynaklanabilecek herhangi bir rahatsızlığınız ile alakalı Bilkent Üniversitesi Psikolojik Danışma ve Gelişim Merkezi'ne başvurabilme hakkınız vardır. Lütfen bu konuda araştırmacıyı bilgilendiriniz. Lütfen herhangi bir nedenle, verilerinizin çalışmaya dahil edilmemesini isterseniz, araştırmacılara hemen bildiriniz. Bu çalışmayla ilgili başka sorularınız varsa, lütfen bizimle e-posta yoluyla iletişime geçmekten çekinmeyin: Bengisu Şimşek, bengisu.simsek@bilkent.edu.tr veya Dr. Ayşenur Dal Tokdemir, aysenur.dal@bilkent.edu.tr