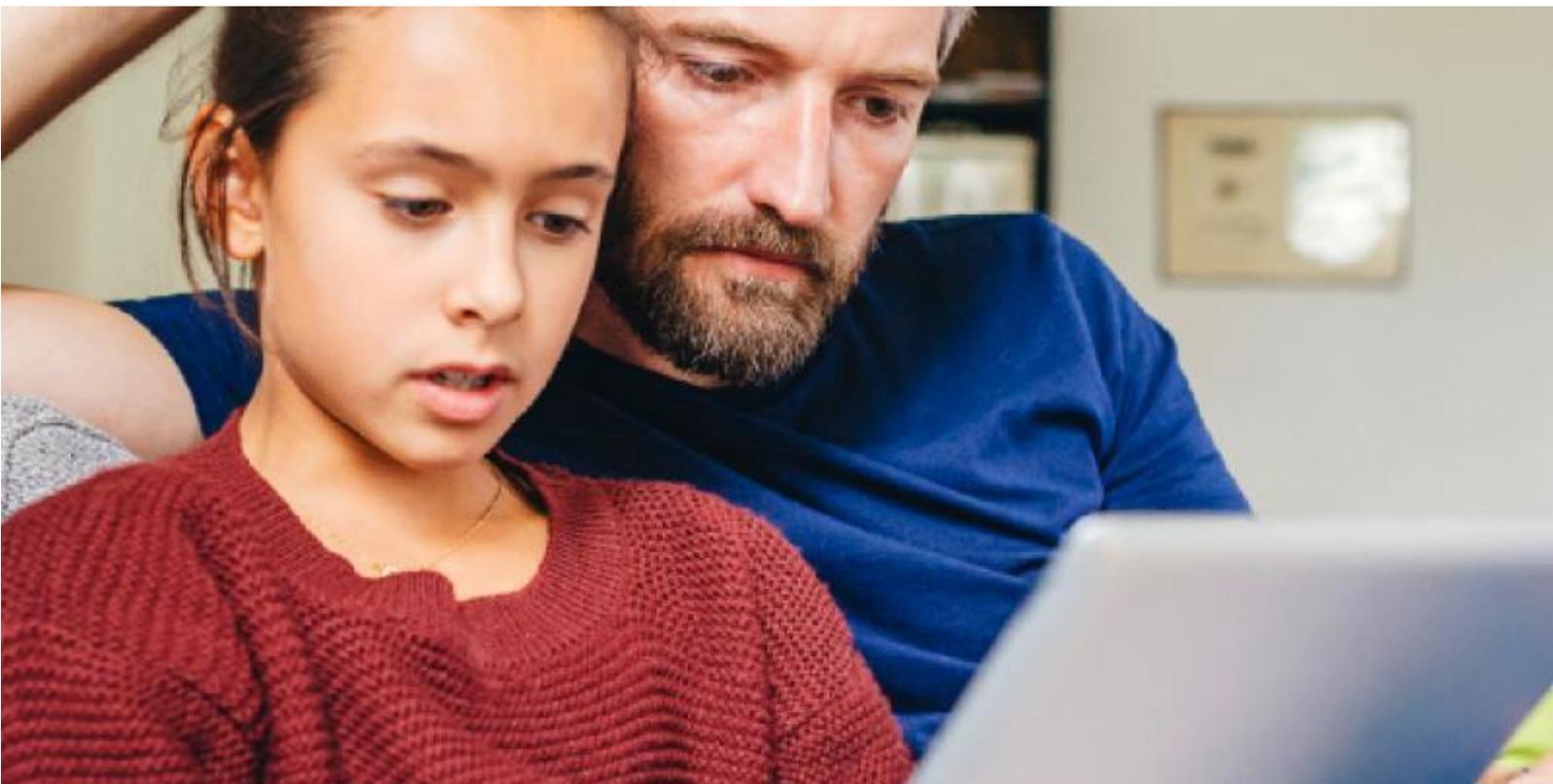


The Growth-Promoting Parental Mediation Scale

*The Effect of Positive Parental Mediation on Children's Experienced
Meaningfulness after Watching a Movie*



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Master Thesis Communication Science

Radboud University Nijmegen

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Abstract

The aim of this experimental study was to examine if children can experience meaningfulness after watching a meaningful movie and whether positive parental mediation can increase this effect. This experiment involves 82 children ($M = 10.83$; $SD = 1.098$) and 59 parents ($M = 46.49$; $SD = 5.174$). Children and parents in the experimental condition were exposed to a meaningful movie, namely *Coco*, while participants in the control condition were exposed to a comparable, but less meaningful movie, named *Despicable Me 3*. Afterwards, meaningful experiences and parental mediation are assessed by filling in a questionnaire. A regression analysis revealed that children exposed to the meaningful movie indeed experienced significantly more meaningfulness than children exposed to the less meaningful movie. Further, regression analysis showed a significant positive effect of parental mediation on the extent to which children experienced meaningfulness. However, this parental mediation did not increase the effect of meaningful movies on meaningful experiences. These empirical findings are the first to reveal that watching meaningful movies and positive parental mediation can lead to meaningful experiences by children.

Keywords: positive media psychology, eudaimonia, meaningfulness, parental mediation, children, and morality.

Table of Contents

Abstract

1. Introduction	5
2. Theoretical background.....	7
2.1 Watching Movies and Experiencing Meaningfulness.....	7
2.2 The Relation between Parental Mediation and Meaningful Experiences of Children	8
2.3 Differences between the Perspective of Parents and Children.....	9
2.4 The Present Study.....	10
3. Method	12
3.1 Sample Characteristics	12
3.2 Design and Procedure.....	12
3.3 The Movies.....	13
3.4 Measures.....	14
3.5 Strategy of Analyses.....	19
4. Results	20
4.1 Descriptive Statistics	20
4.1.1 Randomisation Check	20
4.1.2 Manipulation Check	23
4.2 The Effect of Watching a Meaningful Movie on Meaningful Experiences	23
4.3 The Effect of Parental Mediation on Meaningfulness.....	23
5. Conclusion and Discussion	25
5.1 Interpretations of the Findings	25
5.2 Limitations of this Study and (more) Directions for Future Research.....	26
5.3 Implications: Parental Mediation to Learn more from Movies?	29

References

1. Introduction

Media continue to be a dominant force in the life of children (Strasburger et al., 2013). From all types of media available today, television is still one of the most popular and widely used platforms (Common Sense Media, 2015). In society, there are concerns about the possible negative effects of this media-use on children, including for example the potential harm of exposure to violent content and the fear responses that can drive from frightening movies (Villani, 2001). Therefore, previous research mainly focused on these negative effects of television (e.g. Paik & Comstock, 1994; Villani, 2001). However, the relatively new field of positive media psychology started to investigate the ways in which media can have positive outcomes. More specifically, they examine whether media, and movies in particular, can be meaningful and help humans flourish (Oliver, Hartmann & Woolley, 2012; Oliver & Raney, 2011).

The extent to which a movie feature portrayals of moral virtues, makes it increasingly meaningful (Oliver & Bartsch, 2011; Oliver et al., 2012). The portrayals of these virtues elicit feelings of elevation, which can lead to motivations to embody moral virtues, such as being a better person, helping others and greater feelings of connectedness to other people (Oliver & Hartmann, 2010; Oliver et al., 2012; Oliver, Kim, Hoewe, Chung, Ash, Woolley & Shade, 2015). The positive media psychology currently has an emphasis on adults and there is barely no research conducted among children or adolescents (de Leeuw & Buijzen, 2016). However, also children's media contain positive role models and moral reference frames, which can lead to positive effects in children (Mares & Woodard, 2005). Therefore, it is interesting to investigate the experienced meaningfulness of children after exposure to meaningful movies.

The effects of the portrayals of moral virtues in meaningful movies are specifically interesting when children grow older. Children in their early adolescence spend less time with their parents and are more likely to reject their opinion, in an attempt to strive for independency (Smetana, Campione-Barr & Metzger, 2006). Despite this, research has shown that they still allow influence on them regarding long-term issues, like career choices, but also matters relating to morality (Smetana, 1995; Smetana et al., 2006). Moreover, dialog between parents and children about moral issues can result in higher levels of moral reasoning in children (Walker & Taylor, 1991). The fact that meaningful movies carry out moral values and can have positive effects on children (Mares & Woodard, 2005; Oliver & Bartsch, 2011) and that parents are still an important source of influence on children regarding moral issues (Smetana, 1995;

Smetana et al., 2006; Walker & Taylor, 1991), leads to the question whether parents can enhance the positive effects of meaningful movies.

Involvement of parents with their children's media use is called parental mediation and includes restricting the time children spend with media, co-viewing and talking about the content (Valkenburg, Krömer, Peeters & Marseille, 1999). Most of the research regarding parental mediation is, again, focused on the protection of children against negative effects of media exposure (Barkin, Richardson, Klinepeter, Finch & Krömer, 2006; Fikkers, Piotrowski & Valkenburg, 2017). To our knowledge, there are only a few studies that investigate the possibility that parental mediation can enhance the positive effects of media. The focus of these studies is mainly on dialogical co-viewing, in which parents ask open-ended questions and encourage children to make elaborations as they watch together (Mares & Woodard, 2005). The results of these studies show that dialogical co-viewing can have beneficial effects on learning from television or can result in more story comprehension (Mares & Woodard, 2005; Strouse, O'doherty & Troseth, 2013).

These are promising results, because parental mediation apparently can lead to higher learning experiences in children. Considering that meaningful movies carry out moral values and life lessons (Oliver, Hartmann & Woolley, 2012), and that parents have influence on their children regarding morality issues (Smetana, 1995), parental mediation can possibly lead to the fact that children learn more from these moral lessons. However, earlier research mainly focused on educational aspects instead of morality and the target group of these studies consisted of preschoolers. Therefore, it is interesting to investigate whether parental mediation can lead to comparable effects on meaningful experiences when children are older.

Watching meaningful movies together and discuss the portrayed moral values and lessons may be a good opportunity for parents to talk to their children about moral issues and be able to support them to be inspired by the virtues and strengths that emerge in the movie. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate whether children can experience meaningfulness after exposure to meaningful movies and if parental mediation can increase these meaningful experiences. This leads to the following research question:

To what extent does watching a meaningful movie lead to meaningful experiences for children, and can parental mediation increase these experiences?

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Watching Movies and Experiencing Meaningfulness

There are two perspectives to look at the concept of well-being: a hedonic and an eudaimonic perspective (Ryan & Deci, 2001). From a hedonic perspective, well-being consists mainly of happiness and pleasure. The eudaimonic perspective states that well-being is more than just happiness and consists of fulfilling one's true nature and personal growth (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Motives to watch entertainment can be related to those perspectives. Initially, it was thought that there was one motive for entertainment, namely enjoyment (Vorderer, Klimmt & Ritterfeld, 2004). This motive appears to be most closely associated with hedonic concerns (Oliver & Hartmann, 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2001). The emphasis is placed on positive effects, including fun and amusement. However, this is resulting in a seeming paradox: if people watch movies for fun and amusement, then why are people watching sad movies? The answer is found in the concept of appreciation (Oliver, 1993; Oliver & Bartsch, 2010; Oliver & Raney, 2011).

Where enjoyment includes experiences of fun and amusement, appreciation appears to be most closely related to eudaimonia and includes both cognitive and affective responses (Oliver & Bartsch, 2011). These responses can be associated with the experience of both happy and sad affect simultaneously. Examples of these mixed-affective and cognitive responses are 'moving', 'touching', and 'inspiring' (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010; Oliver & Bartsch, 2011). One plausible characteristic of content that gives rise to feelings of appreciation is meaningfulness (Oliver & Bartsch, 2011). Meaningfulness can be conceptualized in terms of the extent to which it focusses on questions of human virtue and provide viewers with greater understanding of what is important in life (Oliver & Bartsch, 2011; Oliver et al., 2012). Another way to conceptualize meaningfulness, is in terms of cognitive and affective challenge (Bartsch & Hartmann, 2017). The level of cognitive and affective challenge of the media content influences the entertainment experience of an individual. More cognitive and affective challenge leads to a stronger appreciation of the movie, whereas the absence of these challenges is related to the experience of fun (Bartsch & Hartmann, 2017). This supports the idea that fun is linked to recreation and appreciation to cognitive challenge and personal growth, which fits within the idea of hedonic and eudaimonic entertainment (Bartsch & Hartmann, 2017).

Research has shown that meaningful movies can lead to meaningful experiences in adults (Oliver & Hartmann, 2010; Oliver et al., 2012). There is to our knowledge only one study that investigates the meaningful experiences after exposure to a meaningful movie by children (de Leeuw et al., 2018). The results of this study revealed that watching the movie resulted in

stronger feelings of relatedness in children, compared to those who did not watch the movie (de Leeuw et al., 2018). This study assumes that watching a meaningful movie can lead to meaningful experiences in children, but the question remains whether children also described the movie as meaningful.

2.2 The Relation between Parental Mediation and Meaningful Experiences of Children

As mentioned before, meaningful movies contain issues of morality and life lessons (Oliver & Bartsch, 2011). Furthermore, research has shown that parents are an important source of influence regarding moral issues and have influence on the level of moral reasoning of their children (Smetana et al., 2006; Walker & Taylor, 1991). However, the fact that parents have the ability to use sophisticated moral reasoning does not mean that their children will develop the same ability, but dialog between parents and children about moral issues resulted in higher levels of moral reasoning in children (Walker & Taylor, 1991). Therefore, discussing moral issues with children is necessary to enhance their level of moral reasoning. The fact that meaningful movies contain issues of morality makes them a good starting point to discuss morality with children (Oliver et al., 2012).

When parents involve themselves in the media use of their children, it is called parental mediation. In various studies, there are three parental mediation strategies identified: restrictive mediation, co-viewing and active mediation (Barkin et al., 2006; Valkenburg et al., 1999). The first strategy, restrictive mediation, includes rule making. Parents set rules for viewing or forbid the viewing of certain content. Co-viewing refers to the occasions when adults and children watch television together but not discuss the content. The last strategy, active mediation, includes the process of explaining or discussing certain content with children, either during or after watching the content (Valkenburg et al., 1999). A great number of earlier studies have focused on the effectiveness of those strategies, showing both positive and negative effects (Morgenlander, 2010; Nathanson, 1999; Valkenburg et al., 2013). However, in earlier studies, investigators assume that active mediation was most effective in increasing desirable media effects or reducing undesirable ones (Fujioka & Austin, 2003; Valkenburg et al., 2013). Also, given that discussing moral issues can lead to increased levels of moral reasoning (Walker & Taylor, 1991), it is most likely that the active mediation strategy, in which parents discuss content with their children, will be most effective regarding experienced meaningfulness.

Not only the used strategy has influence on the effectiveness of parental mediation, but also the parenting style is important. Literature about parenting in general shows that the effectiveness of parenting practices is influenced by the parenting style that is used (Darling &

Steinberg, 1993), which lead to the assumption that also the style of parental media mediation influences the effectiveness. A possible answer to which style is most effective, can be found in the self-determination theory (SDT). The SDT states that children, through familial socialization, little by little acquire, accept, and endorse values in society (Grolnick, Deci & Ryan, 1997). This endorsement is most likely to occur when children are self-motivated. To be optimally motivated, three basic psychological needs must be satisfied: autonomy, competence and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Therefore, children are more likely to internalize the values and demands of their family and society when they are transmitted in an open, autonomy-supportive way rather than a compelling way (Grolnick, Deci & Ryan, 1997). Autonomy-support refers to the active support of the child's capacity to be self-initiating autonomous (Ryan, Deci, Grolnick & La Guardia, 2006). This parenting style minimizes the reactance of children against authority figures and support their self-motivation to optimal internalization of the values in society (Grolnick, Deci & Ryan, 1997; Valkenburg et al., 2013). Together with being involved and structured, autonomy support is one of the three components of successful parenting (Ryan et al., 2006). Therefore, it is assumed that parental mediation will be most effective when applied in an autonomy-supportive style.

In a recent study, Valkenburg et al. (2013) investigated the effectiveness of autonomy-supportive parental mediation on children. However, this study mainly focusses on protecting children from possible negative effects after media exposure. The next step is investigating whether this parental mediation style is also effective in enhancing possible positive effects of movies.

2.3 Differences between the Perspective of Parents and Children

Research has demonstrated that parent and child reports of family communication often differ (Fuijoka & Austin, 2003; Nathanson, 2001). Most of the time, parent's reports seem to be more favorable. This because of the fact that parents may overestimate their involvement, because of their wish to appear as good parents (Fuijoka & Austin, 2003). Another explanation for the differences in these reports is that parents may express difficulty answering a survey because they talked more about television with their children when they were younger and think they are too old for that now (Austin, 1992). The fact that children have a different view on parental mediation, can lead to undesirable effects on children. For example, children relate co-viewing with approval or affinity from their parents with the content, whereas the motivation of parents to do this is the belief that the content may be harmful (Nathanson, 2001). Therefore, research

should not just rely on parental reports of the mediation, but it should take in account the children's perspective as well (Austin, 1992).

Which report will be the best predictor of possible parental mediation effects, is questionable. On one hand, the SDT explains that children are more likely to internalize values transmitted from their parents when the children voluntarily accept those values (Grolnick et al., 1997). Given that parents can overestimate their involvement (Fuijoka & Austin, 2003), it is possible that children are not experiencing that their parents are trying or wishing to use an autonomy-supportive style of parental mediation and it will have less effect. On the other hand, it is possible to argue that parents have an influence on their children without children even recognize it. Given that children in their early adolescence are more likely to feel reactance to the opinion of their parents (Smetana, 1995), but also that parents have influence regarding moral issues and moral reasoning (Smetana et al., 2006; Walker & Taylor, 1991), it is possible that children are unaware of their parents influence on them. Therefore, there is no clear answer to the question which perspective is most close to the truth and which perspective would be the best predictor of the effect on children. For this reason, it is interesting to investigate the differences between children's and parents' report.

2.4 The Present Study

This experimental study investigated whether watching a meaningful movie can lead to meaningful experiences in children and if parental mediation can enhance these meaningful experiences. To examine this, children and their parents were invited to come to the theatre, to watch either a meaningful movie, or a less meaningful – and particularly pleasurable – movie.

Literature shows that meaningful movies can lead to meaningful experiences in adults (e.g. Oliver & Raney, 2011). Given that some researches that indicates that meaningful movies can also have positive outcomes for children (de Leeuw et al., 2018; Oliver & Bartsch, 2011; Mares & Woodard, 2005), it is expected that children also can experience meaningfulness after watching meaningful movies. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H₁: Children who watched a meaningful movie experienced more meaningfulness compared to children who watched a less meaningful movie.

Furthermore, research shows that parental mediation can have beneficial influence on story comprehension and learning experiences in children when watching television (Mares &

Woodard, 2005). Given that parents still have influence on their children regarding moral issues (Smetana, 1995; Walker & Taylor, 1991), and that meaningful movies contain portrayals of moral values (Oliver & Bartsch, 2011), the following hypothesis is formulated:

H_{2a}: A higher degree of parental mediation leads to more experienced meaningfulness in children.

However, the effectiveness of parenting practices is influenced by the parenting style that is used (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). To minimize reactance of children, an open, autonomy-supportive style must be used (Grolnick, Deci & Ryan, 1997). This leads to the following hypothesis:

H_{2b}: A higher degree of active parental mediation in an autonomy-supportive style leads to more experienced meaningfulness in children.

Finally, considering that the reports of children often differ from the reports of parents (Austin, 1992; Nathanson, 2001), this study investigated whether the perspectives on parental mediation differs between parents and children (RQ₁). In all analysis, general parenting style is included as covariate. This because of the fact that autonomy-support just one of the three components of successful parenting is, and therefore this parental mediation style can be related to the general parenting style (Ryan et al., 2006).

3. Method

3.1 *Sample Characteristics*

A total number of 142 persons participated in the experiment, of which 83 children between 7 and 13 years old ($M = 10,83$; $SD = 1,098$), of whom 54,2% were girls. The other part of the sample consisted of 59 parents between 33 and 57 years old ($M = 46,49$; $SD = 5,174$), of whom 72,9% were women. Most of the children (94%) and adults (88,1%) were born in the Netherlands.

3.2 *Design and Procedure*

Participants were recruited in collaboration with elementary schools close by the theatre. First, directors of elementary schools were phone called, to ask for permission to invite their pupils to participate in the experiment. From the 29 elementary schools that were called, 16 of them gave permission to come by to invite the children. The children were invited through an enthusiastic talk about a free theatre visit together with their parents. In an accompanying letter they could read more information about the experiment. In total, 1.033 letters were handed out. Children were told that the aim of the study was to look at the positive effects of animated movies on children and their parents and their opinions about these movies. Flyers were also used to invite all children in the age of ten until twelve years old and their parents, to participate in the study. Registration for the study could be done by sending an e-mail. In return, a free ticket was sent to them, including a declaration of consent. This declaration had to be signed by both the parent and the child to be able to participate in the experiment.

Data collection took place in May 2018. For the participants, it was a surprise which movie they were going to watch. The families were randomly assigned to one of the movies, based on the order of assignment. After watching the movie, the participants were asked to fill in a questionnaire that captured the extent to which they had meaningful experiences after watching the movie and their perception on parental mediation. From the people who signed up, 7 families did not show up during the experiment. From the participants, two of them were sisters from children who participated and one of them was a grandmother instead of a parent. Therefore, those three participants are excluded from analysis. The study was approved by the ethical committee of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Radboud University.

3.3 *The Movies*

For the experimental condition, *Coco* was chosen as a meaningful movie as this movie fulfils numerous characteristics of meaningful movies. First, it has been praised for its strong message about the importance of family relationships and human connectedness, and it stands out for character strengths (Common Sense, 2017a; Rotten Tomatoes, 2017a)— all prominent features of meaningful movies (Oliver & Hartmann, 2010; Janicke & Oliver, 2017). Another typical aspect of a meaningful movie, is that it provides viewers with greater understanding of what is important in life (Oliver & Hartmann, 2010; Oliver, Hartmann & Woolley, 2012). *Coco* has a thoughtful narrative that concerns life and death (Rotten Tomatoes, 2017a), and therefore, *Coco* can be considered to be a meaningful movie as well. Moreover, *Coco* is awarded The Purpose Award by the Greater Good staff as it shows the power of lasting, meaningful goals to shape our lives (Smith, Abdullah, Antin, Eva, Simon-Thomas, & Suttie, 2018; see also Ryan, Huta, & Deci, 2008). Finally, *Coco* appears to fulfil the characteristics of meaningful movies of being both cognitive and affective challenging (Bartsch & Hartmann, 2017), because of its thoughtful and deeply affective narrative and unexpected plot twists (Common Sense, 2017a; Smith et al., 2018).

For the pleasurable condition, *Despicable me 3* was chosen. This movie is also about family relationships, but is most often considered an presumably entertaining and amusing movie with zany humor (Common Sense, 2017b; Rotten Tomatoes, 2017b), which are typical characteristics of a pleasurable movie (Oliver & Raney, 2011). Besides the content, the movies are highly comparable: the movies are together at the top of highest-grossing animation feature movies from 2017: #1 *Despicable Me 3* with \$ 264,624,300 and #2 *Coco* with \$ 209,526,676 (IMBd, 2017). Moreover, both movies are described as animation adventure movies and were rated as PG: “Parental Guidance Suggested” by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) and as “Take care with children under 6” according to the Dutch motion picture rating system (Kijkwijzer, 2017).

A pretest among 64 adults ($M_{\text{age}} = 21,7$; $SD = 5,557$; 71.9 % female) demonstrated that *Coco* was more intellectually ($t [df = 63, N = 64] = 15,957, p < .001$; $M_{\text{Coco}} = 4,291, SD = 1,296$; $M_{\text{Despicable Me 3}} = 2.394$; $SD = 1.435$, on a scale from 1-6) and affectively challenging ($t [df = 63, N = 64] = 17,937, p < .001$; $M_{\text{Coco}} = 5,387, SD = 1,333$; $M_{\text{Despicable Me 3}} = 3.061$; $SD = 1.560$, on a scale from 1-6). Given that being cognitive and affective challenging is one of the characteristics of a meaningful movie (Bartsch & Hartmann, 2017), the results of this pretest show that *Coco* was indeed considered significantly more meaningful than *Despicable Me 3*.

3.4 Measures

Meaningful versus Pleasurable Movie Experience. To measure meaningfulness after watching, the audience response scale from Oliver & Bartsch (2010) was used. The scale includes two facets of movie enjoyment and appreciation, namely fun and moving/thought-provoking experience. The two dimensions were measured by using three different items. Every item was assessed using a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Because of our concerns that the items of moving/thought-provoking could be too difficult for children to answer, partly due to the translation, we also include an item ‘I’ve learned something from the movie’. Literature states that one of the characteristics of meaningful movies is that they contain life lessons (Oliver & Bartsch, 2011). Therefore, learning something from these lessons in meaningful movies can be seen as one of the characteristics of meaningful experiences. Cronbach’s alpha indicated that the items have relatively good internal consistency for meaningful experiences ($\alpha_{children} = .859$, $\alpha_{parents} = .955$) and fun ($\alpha_{children} = .807$, $\alpha_{parents} = .910$). Table 1 shows the alphas for every item if item deleted.

Table 1

Internal Consistency of Meaningful versus Pleasurable Movie Experience

	Cronbach’s alphas (if item deleted)	
	Children (<i>n</i> = 83)	Parents (<i>n</i> = 59)
<i>Fun</i>	.807	.910
It was fun for me to watch this movie	.749	.847
I had a good time watching this movie	.841	.804
The movie was entertaining	.423	.962
<i>Meaningful experiences</i>	.859	.955
I found this movie to be very meaningful	.834	.952
I was moved by this movie	.790	.938
The movie was thought provoking	.821	.932
I’ve learned something from the movie	.832	.942

Growth-Promoting Parental Mediation. To measure the extent to which children perceive their parents to engage in positive mediation, a new scale was constructed. The scale is based on the Perceived Parental Media Mediation Scale (PPMMS; Valkenburg et al., 2013). This scale is focusing on preventing the potential negative effects of media-exposure, for example, with

items as: “How often do your parents tell you that fighting and shooting in the media is different than it is in real life?”. In the new scale, the focus will be on potential positive aspects of movies, through the perspective of positive media psychology (Oliver & Bartsch, 2011). Earlier research has shown that movies can be meaningful and lead to meaningful experiences (Oliver & Bartsch, 2011; Oliver, Hartmann & Woolley, 2012). Meaningful experiences can occur when a movie is thought-provoking, contains character strengths and human virtues, leads to feelings of appreciation and is affective and cognitive challenging (Oliver & Bartsch, 2011; Oliver, Hartmann & Woolley, 2012; Bartsch & Hartmann, 2017). These characteristics of meaningful movies and meaningful experiences are summarized in four aspects: meaningfulness; strengths and virtues; emotions and thought-provoking. For every aspect, two items are included in the new scale. Also, three questions about the frequency of different parental mediation strategies are included. The aspects and their associated items are presented in Table 2 (children) and Table 3 (parents).

Another difference between the PPMMS and the new scale, is the style of the parental mediation. The PPMMS not only measures the degree of which mediation strategies occur, but also the mediation style (Valkenburg et al., 2013). Because of the fact that literature has shown that an autonomy-supportive style is most effective with children, only this style of parenting was included in the new scale (Grolnick, Deci & Ryan, 1997). The main questions of the PPMMS are therefore rewritten into questions including this autonomy-supportive style. The questions are rewritten through a SDT-perspective. From this perspective, it can be stated that it is important to take a child’s feelings and perspective very seriously (Joussemet, Landry & Koestner, 2008). Therefore, questions in the new scale are including words as “My parents are curious about...”; “My parents encourage me...” and “My parents are interested in...”. To be able to measure the perspective of parents on their positive parental mediation, the questions are also rewritten into questions through a parental perspective. Every item of the scale is measured on a 5-point Likert scale, with response options ranging from 1 = “totally not true” to 5 = “totally true”. The frequency questions are also measured on a 5-point Likert scale, with response options ranging from 1 = “not at all often” to 5 = “very often”.

A principal component analysis (PCA) was conducted on the 11 items with oblique rotation. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy for the analysis ($KMO_{children} = .850$, $KMO_{parents} = .895$). Bartlett’s test of sphericity indicated that correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA (children: $\chi^2 [df = 55] = 439.021$, $p < .001$; parents: $\chi^2 [df = 55] = 401.988$, $p < .001$). The two components explained for children 62.03% of the variance, for parents 68.46% of the variance was explained by the two components.

Cronbach's alpha indicated that the items have relatively good internal consistency, for both the factors frequency ($\alpha_{children} = .645$, $\alpha_{parents} = .734$) and mediation style ($\alpha_{children} = .903$, $\alpha_{parents} = .928$). Table 2 and Table 3 show the factor loadings after rotation.

General Parenting Style. To measure the perceived general autonomy-supportive parenting, the Six-Factor Model of Parent-Report of Parenting from Skinner, Johnson & Snyder (2005) is used. The scale consists out of different parenting dimensions. In this study, two of these dimensions are used, namely: warmth and autonomy-support. Both of these dimensions are contributing to the well-being of children. The dimension 'warmth' from a parents perspective consisted of 5 items, the dimension 'autonomy-support' out of 2. For children, both of the dimensions consisted of 4 items. Every item is measured on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = "totally not true" to 5 = "totally true". However, explanatory factor analysis showed that the factor loadings are not in line with these dimensions, considering that some items were loading on the opposite factor than literature stated. Moreover, Cronbach's alpha turned out to be higher when taken the scale as a whole than as separate factors, for both children ($\alpha_{total} = .864$; $\alpha_{warmth} = .858$; $\alpha_{autonomy-support} = .717$) parents ($\alpha_{total} = .788$; $\alpha_{warmth} = .729$; $\alpha_{autonomy-support} = .890$). Therefore, in further analysis, general parenting style is included as one construct.

Previous Exposure. To measure previous exposure, one item was used, namely: "How many times did you see "Coco / Despicable Me 3" before? (Before you participated in this study)". This item is measured through four response categories, namely: "Never", "One time", "Two times" and "More than two times" (de Leeuw & Van der Laan, 2018). The previous exposure was significantly non-normal ($D(82) = .230$, $p < .001$). Therefore, the variable is made into a dichotomous one ("0 = never", "1 = one time or more").

Table 2

Exploratory Factor Analysis for Growth-Promoting Parental Mediation from the Children's Perspective

			Factor loadings	
			1	2
<i>Factor 1: Frequency of Mediation</i>				
	Aspects			
1	How often are your parents watching movies together with you?	Co-viewing	.859	-.226
2	How often do your parents show interest in what you are watching?	Interest	.751	.141
3	How often do your parents talk with you about what you see in movies?	Active mediation	.578	.429
<i>Factor 2: Autonomy-supportive style of Mediating</i>			1	2
1	My parents are curious about what I learned from a movie	Meaningfulness	.054	.771
2	My parents wonder what I think were good deeds of a movie character	Character strengths/ human virtues	.153	.783
3	My parents encourage me to think about the story and relate that to real life	Thought-provoking	-.066	.758
4	My parents are interested in my emotions about what happened in a movie	Emotions child	.011	.635
5	My parents would like to know what I think that the underlying message(s) of a movie is	Meaningfulness	-.139	.885
6	My parents are interested in what I consider the strengths of a movie character	Character strengths/ human virtues	-.103	.877
7	My parents are curious to know what I would do if I were in the same situation as a movie character	Thought-provoking	.063	.792
8	My parents would like to know what I think was beautiful about a movie	Emotions child	.037	.664

Note. Factor loadings over .40 appear in bold.

Table 3

Exploratory Factor Analysis for Growth-Promoting Parental Mediation from the Parent's perspective

			Factor loadings	
<i>Factor 1: Frequency of Mediation</i>			1	2
1	How often do you watch a movie together with your child?	Co-viewing	.918	-.132
2	How often do you show interest in what your child is watching?	Interest	.747	.171
3	How often do you talk with your child about what you can see in movies?	Active mediation	.545	.445
<i>Factor 2: Autonomy-supportive style of Mediating</i>			1	2
1	I am curious about what my child learned from a movie	Meaningfulness	.101	.817
2	I wonder what my child think were good deeds of a movie character	Character strengths/ human virtues	-.059	.860
3	I encourage my child to think about the story and relate that to real life	Thought-provoking	-.072	.863
4	I am interested in the emotions of my child about what happened in a movie	Emotions child	-.020	.778
5	I would like to know what my child thinks that the underlying message(s) of a movie is	Meaningfulness	-.094	.872
6	I am interested in what my child considers the strengths of a movie character	Character strengths/ human virtues	.041	.820
7	I am curious to know what my child would do if he/she were in the same situation as a movie character	Thought-provoking	.063	.796
8	I would like to know what my child thinks was beautiful about a movie	Emotions child	.126	.675

Note. Factor loadings over .40 appear in bold.

3.5 Strategy of Analyses

After calculating descriptive statistics, *t*-tests and χ^2 -tests were conducted to examine whether randomization resulted in a balanced distribution across condition of children's and parent's sex, age, prior exposure to the movie, general parenting style and the educational level of the parents. The relation between watching a meaningful movie, *Coco*, and children's meaningful experiences and the relation between positive parental mediation and children's meaningful experiences were examined with linear regression analyses. In all analyses, perceived general parenting style was included as covariate, because of the fact that this can influence the degree of parental mediation (Ryan et al., 2006).

To look at the differences between parents' and children's perspective of parental mediation on the meaningful experiences from children, datasets from children and parents are merged. In this way, family members are linked together and the specific effects of parenting in a family can be investigated. Ten children came without their own parent to the cinema and are therefore excluded. From the parents who came with more than one of their children, the children outside our main target audience (children from 10 till 13 years) were excluded, which were four children. This is necessary because otherwise, when parent and child are linked together, there will be double data from parents. From the parents who came with more than one child in the target group, one of their children are randomly excluded from further analysis, ten in total. Also, two children came with both of their parents. One of their parents are randomly excluded from further analysis. After exclusion of these participants, 57 families remain for analysis.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The movie *Coco* was new for 54.5% of the children and for 73.3% of the parents, and the movie *Despicable Me 3* was new for 15.8% of the children and 53.6% of the parents. On average, children highly appreciated the movie *Coco* ($M = 8.70$, $SD = 1.268$ on a scale from 1-10). Parents also highly appreciated *Coco* ($M = 6.79$, $SD = 2.250$ on a scale from 1-10). Interestingly, *Despicable Me 3* was also highly appreciated by children ($M = 8.28$, $SD = 1.432$ on a scale from 1-10), but parents on the other hand, did not so much appreciate this movie ($M = 6.79$, $SD = 2.250$ on a scale from 1-10). A paired t -test is used to test the differences between parent's and children's report of frequency of parental mediation and parental mediation style. On average, the report of the frequency of parental mediation from parents was higher ($M = 3.570$, $SE = .115$) than from the perspective of children ($M = 3.130$, $SE = .122$). This difference is significant ($t(54) = -3.649$, $p = .001$, two-tailed). Also, the parental mediation style is higher from the perspective of parents ($M = 3.570$, $SE = .115$) than from the perspective of children ($M = 3.130$, $SE = .122$). The differences between these perspectives on parental mediation style were also significant ($t(56) = -7.601$, $p < .001$, two-tailed). Overall, the reports of parents indicate that they are from their perspective more engaged in parental mediation than children state they are.

4.1.1 Randomization Check

No differences were found between children in the experimental condition and the control condition in terms of children's age ($t [df = 70.260, N = 82] = -1.886$, $p = .063$). However, the experimental group consisted of more girls than the control group ($\chi^2 [df = 3, N = 1] = 8.094$, $p = .004$). Also, the children in the experimental group had a lower previous exposure than the control group ($\chi^2 [df = 1, N = 82] = 13.201$, $p < .001$). Therefore, both constructs (sex and previous exposure) were included as covariates. For parents, there were no differences found between adults in the experimental condition and the control condition in terms of adult's sex ($\chi^2 [df = 1, N = 59] = .873$, $p = .350$), age ($t [df = 57, N = 59] = .362$, $p = .719$), education level ($\chi^2 [df = 5, N = 59] = 2.456$, $p = .783$) and previous exposure to the movie ($\chi^2 [df = 1, N = 58] = 2.449$, $p = .118$). Descriptive statistics for all model variables per condition are presented in Table 4; correlations are presented in Table 5.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics for Participants' Characteristics and Outcome Variables by Condition

	Total		Experimental Condition		Control Condition	
	Children (<i>N</i> = 83)	Parents (<i>N</i> = 59)	Children (<i>n</i> = 44)	Parents (<i>n</i> = 31)	Children (<i>n</i> = 39)	Parents (<i>n</i> = 28)
<i>Prevalence</i>						
Boys/ Men ¹	44,6%	27.1%	29.5%	32.3%	61.5%	21.4%
Had seen the movie before ²	52%	35.6%	45.5%	25.8%	82.1%	46.4%
<i>Mean (Standard Deviation)</i>						
Age	10.83 (1.20)	46.49 (5.17)	11.05 (.93)	46.26 (5.20)	10.59 (1.23)	46.75 (5.23)
Meaningfulness ³	4.33 (.87)	4.44 (2.01)	5.16 (1.23)	5.87 (1.26)	3.41 (1.78)	2.85 (1.39)
Positive Parental Mediation ⁴	2.30 (.87)	3.46 (.89)	2.49 (.87)	3.69 (.80)	2.09 (.83)	3.20 (.93)
Frequency Parental Mediation ⁵	3.12 (.87)	3.59 (.85)	3.16 (.91)	3.86 (.85)	3.09 (.84)	3.31 (.77)
General Parenting ⁶	4.57 (.51)	4.21 (.54)	4.59 (.46)	4.36 (.51)	4.55 (.56)	4.04 (.53)

Note. ¹ Differences between children in the experimental condition and children in the control condition on their sex were significant ($\chi^2 [df = 3, N = 1] = 8.094, p = .004$).

² Also differences on children's previous exposure were significant ($\chi^2 [df = 1, N = 82] = 13.201, p < .001$). ³ Differences between the experimental condition and control condition for both children and parents on their meaningfulness were significant ($t [df = 66.681, N = 82] = -5.126, p < .001$) ($t [df = 57, N = 59] = -8.769, p < .001$). ⁴

Differences between the experimental condition and the control condition for both children and parents on positive parental mediation were significant ($t [df = 81, N = 83] = -2.142, p = .035$) ($t [df = 57, N = 59] = -2.154, p = .035$). ⁵ Differences between parents in the experimental condition and parents in the control condition on frequency parental mediation were significant ($t [df = 56, N = 58] = -2.556, p = .013$). ⁶ Also, differences on parents general parenting style were significant ($t [df = 57, N = 59] = -2.429, p =$

.018). No other significant differences were found between the conditions.

Table 5

Correlations between the model variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1-Condition ^a										
2-Children's sex ^b	.25									
3-Previous exposure children ^c	-.39**	.12								
4-Meaningfulness children	.47**	.11	-.42**							
5-Meaningfulness parents	.75**	.11	-.31*	.48**						
6-Perceived parental mediation children	.32*	.24	-.08	.42**	.28*					
7-Perceived parental mediation parents	.26	-.04	-.01	.22	.46**	.23				
8-Perceived general parenting children	-.01	.25	.11	.12	.07	.01	.12			
9-Perspective general parenting parents	.30*	.15	-.11	.07	.24	.34**	.48**	.04		
10-Perceived frequency parental mediation children	.07	-.04	-.02	.19	.08	.48**	.30*	.23	.30*	
11-Perspective frequency parental mediation parents	.33*	-.05	-.06	.30*	.48**	.28*	.56**	.05	.24	.49*

Note. ^a 0=control condition; 1 = experimental condition; ^b 0=boy; 1=girl; ^c 0 = never, 1 = once or more; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

4.1.2 Manipulation Check

For parents, the movie *Coco* seems to be significantly more cognitive ($t [df = 57, N = 59] = -6.260, p < .001$) and affective ($t [df = 36.401, N = 59] = -7.429, p < .001$) challenging than *Despicable Me 3*. This shows that the manipulation has succeeded, since earlier research has shown that cognitive and affective challenges lead to a stronger appreciation of the movie and thus to a more meaningful movie experience (Bartsch & Hartmann, 2017). Only parents are asked about the cognitive and affective challenge of the movies because this could probably be too difficult to understand for children. However, Bartsch and Hartmann (2017) state that cognitive and affective challenge for every individual can lead to meaningful experiences. Therefore, in all probability, the results of the manipulation check on adults imply that children also experienced the movie *Coco* as more meaningful than *Despicable Me 3*.

4.2 The Effect of Watching a Meaningful Movie on Meaningful Experiences

Linear regression analyses showed that parents who watched *Coco* were significantly more likely to report a meaningful movie experience after watching the movie, compared to parents who watched *Despicable Me 3* ($b = 3.023, p < .001$, one-tailed). Children who watched *Coco* also were significantly more likely to report a meaningful movie experience compared to children who watched *Despicable Me 3* ($b = 1.144, p = .002$, one-tailed). Therefore, hypothesis 1 is supported. R squares indicated that 33.1% of the total variance in the extent to which children experienced meaningfulness and 57.4% of the total variance in the extent to which parents experienced meaningfulness could be explained by exposure to the meaningful movie. Findings from the linear regression analyses are presented in Table 6.

4.3 The Effect of Parental Mediation on Meaningfulness

Findings from a linear regression analyses showed that there was no significant effect from the frequency of parental mediation on the meaningful experiences from children, according to children's report ($b = .210, p = .144$, one-tailed). According to parents' report there was also no significant effect from the frequency of parental mediation on meaningful experiences in children ($b = .461, p = .505$, one-tailed) Thus, hypothesis 2a is not supported.

However, a linear regression analysis demonstrated that there were significant effects from the parental mediation style on the experienced meaningfulness in children, according to both children's report ($b = .479, p = .011$, one-tailed) and parents' report ($b = .522, p = .039$, one-tailed). Therefore, hypotheses 2b is supported.

The effects of parental mediation on the experienced meaningfulness of children show that there is indeed a difference between the reports of parents and children. This is corresponding to the paired *t*-test that shows that there is a significant difference between the reports of parents and children, which answers the research question.

Table 6

Findings from Linear Regression analyses

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Model predicting meaningfulness children through children's perspective</i>				
Condition ¹	1.144	.379	3.020	.004
Children's sex ²	.477	.338	1.413	.162
Previous exposure children ³	-.661	.362	-1.825	.072
Perceived parental mediation	.479	.204	2.347	.022
Frequency parental mediation	.210	.196	1.072	.287
General parenting style	-.108	.335	-.324	.747
<i>Model predicting meaningfulness children through parents' perspective</i>				
Condition ¹	.970	.457	2.120	.039
Children's sex ²	.693	.415	1.670	.102
Previous exposure children ³	-1.399	.456	-3.070	.004
Perspective parental mediation	.522	.289	1.806	.077
Frequency parental mediation	.461	.276	1.674	.101
General parenting style	-.667	.409	-1.631	.109

Note. *b* = regression coefficient; *SE* = standard error; ¹ 0 = control condition, 1 = experimental condition; ² 0 = boy; 1 = girl; ³ 0 = never, 1 = once or more; *p* values are two-tailed.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

The current study is first to reveal that children experience meaningfulness after watching a meaningful movie. More specifically, findings demonstrated that watching a meaningful movie (*Coco*) leads to more meaningful experiences than watching a less meaningful – and particularly pleasurable – movie (*Despicable Me 3*) for both parents and children (H₁). Furthermore, the present study also examines the effect of parental mediation on the meaningful experiences in children. Findings reveal that there was no effect of frequency of parental mediation on experienced meaningfulness (H_{2a}). However, the parental mediation style did have an effect on experienced meaningfulness (H_{2b}). Although the parents' and children's report on the extent of parental mediation differs significantly, both of these perspectives show a significant effect of parental mediation style on experienced meaningfulness in children.

5.1 Interpretations of the Findings

Findings of this study contribute to the relatively small number of studies on positive media psychology focusing on children (de Leeuw & Buijzen, 2016; Mares & Woodard, 2005) by adding that not only adults, but also children can experience meaningfulness after exposure to meaningful movies. Meaningful movies contain important lessons about life and are considered as cognitive and affective challenging (Oliver & Hartmann, 2010; Bartsch & Hartmann, 2017), and apparently also children are learning from these lessons. This is interesting, considering that the degree of perceived challenge depends on personal dispositions and situational factors that can influence the viewers ability to process the media content (Bartsch & Hartmann, 2017; Hartmann, 2013). Children may find a movie more challenging than adults, and therefore parental mediation may support them to put their feelings into words and interpret aspects of the movie.

Findings of this study also contribute to the research of parental mediation strategies and their effects on children (e.g. Fikkers et al., 2017; Strouse et al., 2013; Valkenburg et al., 2013) by adding that parental mediation does not only have positive effects on young children, but also on older children. Moreover, the current study is the first that sees parental mediation through a positive media psychology perspective. It is not focused on preventing negative influence of media, but on using parental mediation to enhance the possible positive effects. These effects of parental mediation on the experienced meaningfulness of children seem to differ between children's and parents' perspective, which is in line with existing literature (Nathanson, 2001; Austin, 1992). Overall, parents' perception of parental mediation is in

general higher than children's report of parental mediation, which is also in line with literature (Fuijoka & Austin, 2003).

Interestingly, the frequency of parental mediation did not increase the experienced meaningfulness of children. Perhaps this could be explained by the fact that the parental mediation strategy and style is more important than the frequency of mediation, which is in line with literature (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Grolnick et al., 1997; Valkenburg et al., 2013). It is better to have a good conversation about the content in an autonomy-supportive way once in a while, than to interfere in children's media use in a compelling way.

5.2 Limitations of this Study and (more) Directions for Future Research

There are several limitations that need to be in mind when interpreting these findings. First, the sample of this study was relatively small and selective. The people that sign up for this study, are most likely people who really enjoy going to the movies and may even be film fanatics. The fact that the weather was extremely nice, may enhance this effect since some people sign out because of this weather. This can give a distorted image and is, therefore, not very representative for the population. A larger and more representative sample make it possible to draw stronger conclusions. Given that experiencing meaningfulness can be related to the storyline (Wirth, Hofer & Schramm, 2012), replication studies with other movies will also make stronger conclusions possible. Moreover, there are several studies that already indicated that Disney movies can act as a moral educator for children (e.g. Ward, 1996). It is interesting to investigate whether movies that are not from Disney can also lead to meaningful experiences and thus act as a moral educator for children.

Another limitation of this study is that the participants were not able to choose a movie on their own. This did not enhance the natural setting of the experiment, which provides lower ecological validity (Wester, Renckstorf & Scheepers, 2006). It is interesting to investigate if the effect still remains or is even stronger when the participants can choose a movie on their own, like a natural cinema visit. Also, most of the movies are watched at home instead of the theatre (Common Sense Media, 2015). Given that parental mediation can be influenced by the home setting of the family (Atkin, Greenberg & Baldwin, 1991), the question remains what the effect of parental mediation will be on the experienced meaningfulness of children when they watch a movie at home with their parents.

Third, the participants were asked about their perception of parental mediation in general, and not about the real parental mediation after watching *Coco* or *Despicable Me 3*.

Therefore, it is not possible to state that the fact that parents talked about the specific movie, leads to more experienced meaningfulness of the movie. For future research, it will be interesting to investigate whether parents are actually talking about the movie with their children. The closer a researcher gets to the actual behavior, the more reliable the data will be (Lytton, 1971). An observational study is the best way to come as close as possible to actual behavior (Lytton, 1971). Therefore, for future research, an observational study can be conducted to measure the real parent-child interaction during and immediately after watching a meaningful movie.

Furthermore, the children were asked if they thought the movie was meaningful. Therefore, only cognitive responses of the movie are investigated. However, meaningful movies can evoke both cognitive and affective responses (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010). The portrayals of moral virtues can elicit feelings of moral elevation, which entails pleasant feelings of warmth in the chest, feeling uplifted, moved, and being optimistic about humanity (Oliver & Hartmann, 2010; Pohling & Diessner, 2016). The portrayals of moral virtues and the feeling of moral elevation can inspire and motivate the viewer to become a better person, have optimistic thoughts about others, be able to help other people and to change the moral virtues into actions (Oliver & Hartmann, 2010; Oliver et al., 2012; Oliver et al., 2015). For future research, it is therefore interesting to investigate these affective responses.

It would also be fascinating to examine the real effect of meaningful movies and parental mediation on the moral development of children and the embodying of moral virtues. However, this research only examined the experienced meaningfulness in children and not the effect of the experienced meaningfulness on their moral development. For future research, this can for example be investigated through an experimental study in which children have to discuss a moral dilemma after watching a movie, can indicate whether a meaningful movie and parental mediation can indeed increase their level of moral reasoning (Walker & Taylor, 1991).

The findings of this study showed that parental mediation leads to more meaningful experiences in children, including that they learned something from the movie. Because of the positive valence of the parental mediation scale and the moral values displayed in the movie, it can be assumed that they learned positive lessons from the movie. However, this assumption should be investigated, since there are also theories in literature about the fact that parental mediation can lead to negative outcomes, like learning aggression from violent content (Nathanson, 1999). Besides the positive messages, role models and representations and the educational value of the movie *Coco*, the parents' guide from Common Sense Media (2017a) shows that *Coco* also contains violence and scariness, and drinking, drugs and smoking.

Despicable Me 3 scored relatively high on violence and scariness as well (Common Sense Media, 2017b). Earlier research has shown that violent content can lead to aggressive behavior in children (e.g. Anderson et al., 2003; Villani, 2001) and that the portrayals of alcohol in movies can have bad influence on drinking beliefs behaviors among youth (Grube & Waiters, 2005; Sargent, Wills, Stoolmiller, Gibson & Gibbons, 2006). Therefore, also these possible negative effects should be taken into account. For future research, it is interesting what the influence of positive parental mediation is and whether the positive, autonomy-supportive way of parental mediation not only enhance positive effects, but also diminish the possible negative effects in children.

Interestingly, although *Coco* seems to have better reviews than *Despicable Me 3* (Rotten Tomatoes, 2017a; Rotten Tomatoes, 2017b), children in this study appreciate both movies equal. However, parents indeed seem to appreciate the meaningful movie more than the pleasurable one, compared to children, which is in line with literature (Bartsch & Hartmann, 2017). An explanation can be found in the fact that older people experience higher levels of eudaimonic entertainment after watching a meaningful movie (Hofer, Allemand & Martin, 2014). This is because of the fact that eudaimonic motivations for entertainment tend to be stronger for viewers who score higher on measures of need for cognition, searching for meaning in life, and reflectiveness (Oliver & Hartmann, 2010). Older people tend to be more eudaimonically orientated “meaning seekers” than younger people and therefore have more positive experiences after watching meaningful movies (Hofer, Allemand & Martin, 2014). Another explanation can be found in the fact that the cognitive and affective challenge of the movie is influenced by personal dispositions, and therefore children may find a movie more challenging than adults (Bartsch & Hartmann, 2017; Hartmann, 2013). Considering this, it is possible that children found *Despicable Me 3* a challenging movie, in contrast to adults who did not experience this movie as being challenging. For future research, it would be interesting to examine whether children do not necessarily appreciate a meaningful movie more than a pleasurable one, or that children find a movie meaningful more quickly than adults.

Another interesting suggestion for future research can be to investigate the role of siblings. When children grow older, they develop more resistance towards authority figures, including their parents, and peers become more important (Berndt, 1979). Older siblings may be able to fulfil a role which is in between the role of parents and the role of peers. Given that children’s most common viewing pattern is with siblings, even more than viewing with parents (Alexander, Ryan & Munoz, 2009), this would be fascinating to examine. Earlier research has shown that interaction during co-viewing of two siblings can create a learning environment

(Alexander, Ryan & Munoz, 2009). Future research can build on this research by examining whether mediation of an older sibling can lead to more meaningful experiences in children.

Finally, it would be interesting to examine whether the questionnaire about positive parental mediation also can be used in combination with other media types. For children, not only films are a frequently used media type, but also surfing on the Internet, social media and playing games are important (Common Sense Media, 2015). There are already several studies that investigated the role of parental mediation and Internet use (e.g. Livingstone & Helsper, 2008; Mesch, 2009) and the role of parental mediation concerning videogames (e.g. Nikken & Jansz, 2006; Shin & Huh, 2011). However, all these studies including reducing the possible negative effects, like protecting children from cyberbullying and protecting children against the violent content of videogames. Therefore, it is interesting to find out if parental mediation can also have positive effects on the experiences from children when using these types of media.

5.3 Implications: Parental Mediation to Learn more from Movies?

Based on the findings of this study, it can be stated that meaningful movies have a good influence on children and that parental mediation can enhance meaningful experiences of children after exposure to movies. These findings have contributed to the relatively small number of studies on the impact of meaningful movies on children (Mares & Woodard, 2005; de Leeuw et al., 2018) and the studies regarding parental mediation (e.g. Valkenburg et al., 2013). Previous research mainly focused on reducing the negative effects from movies on children (e.g. Barkin et al., 2006; Valkenburg et al., 2013), but this study shows that positive parental mediation enhances meaningful experiences in children. Based on these findings, one might argue that parental mediation after exposure to meaningful movies is important to promote growth-development and help children flourish. However, because of some limitations regarding the sample size, ecological validity and the fact that only cognitive responses are measured, more research is necessary before making strong arguments. Nevertheless, it is promising that autonomy-supportive parental mediation can increase meaningful experiences in children.

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