Media Effects and Effectors

A Study on the Possible Effects of Media and the Intent of Future Media Effectors to Use Media to Influence Others

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Abstract

Almost everyone watches or listens to various forms of media every day, whether this comes in the form of television, radio, print, or movies. Not only is mostly everyone exposed to media, but also the typical American spends at least several hours a day in exposure to some kind of media. All this time Americans spend watching or listening to media raises the question: “If someone spends hours each day watching television or watching some other sort of media, is this going to have some sort of effect?” This study begins with a literature review of research which investigates the influence media has in the areas of violence, alcohol, sex, and body image. The study then documents and analyzes responses of Liberty University Communication students who are likely to be involved in the production of media in the future. The survey asks them questions regarding their beliefs on media influence and their intentions based on these beliefs to try to exert influence on media consumers.

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Media Effects and Effectors

Introduction

Is the television and other media that we watch exerting some kind of influence, is it just one of many influences, or is it a mere reflection of the society we live in? The influence of media has been studied over and over, producing results that reflect differences in behavior in individuals, in whole societies, and in whole countries. Scholars have put forth many views on media influence. Multiple studies have been performed over decades, many with an emphasis on violence and how people respond to the viewing of violence. This paper will examine various studies on media influence, including the effects of studies on violence, sex in the media, alcohol in the media, and how viewers' body image is affected. After the initial literature review, this paper will report on a study that focuses on how future media professionals view the media. This study will also examine what future media workers think of media influence, how much they watch media, and whether they intend to use the media to influence others.

Literature Review

Violence and Possible Effects

Violence as a direct influence. The ideas communicated visually through television are thought by some to be very powerful, and to quote Uncle Ben in "Spiderman," "With great power comes great responsibility." Television has reached across the globe and can be found in just about every American household. The statistics for television viewing show that Americans on average watch a lot of television. The average American family watches three hours of television daily, and television sets are kept on for an average of seven hours. Television is a regular resource for information in America (Hazen & Jain, 2007, 9). It is no surprise that people who believe that media has a negative influence are anxious about the influence of television, given how much time people spend watching it. According to the results of a study by Galician and Merskin, television has the greatest influence of all other media to change people's views and understandings about other people and races with whom they have no experience (2007, 104). According to this study, the constancy (three or more hours a day) and pervasiveness (almost everyone has one) of television makes it influential (Galician & Merskin, 2007).

The most studied aspect of the effect of media is that of media violence on children. Some believe strongly that violence on television is a pervasive and negative influence, especially for young impressionable children. A man known for being outspoken against television violence, Senator Paul Simon, believes the evidence against media violence is conclusive. He thinks that just as cigarettes have proven to do harm, in the same way media violence has been proven to be detrimental. (Donnerstein & Smith, 1997, 59).

There is even a company dedicated to reducing violence in films. Mediascope, a company that is trying to lessen the amount of violence in media, holds that viewing violence can result in imitation of or desensitization to that violence (Clark, 1995). Government agencies in the past have concluded that viewing violence is harmful to children. Government-sponsored studies by the Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) have concluded that there is a connection between viewing television violence and aggressive acts (NIMH report, 1982, 34). The authors of these studies claim that research reporting that television has no negative effect is weak and not entirely consistent.

Now government studies are not so quick to take sides. Instead of coming to a definite conclusion, government research puts their results into less certain terms. The most recent surgeon general report (2001) states that mass media are only one of many potential causes of aggression. The report also states that aggressive children may watch more violence, but there is more definite research that supports the view that media violence viewing is a precursor to increased violent behavior (Anderson et al., 2008). Television violence can be more influential than other media containing violence due to the fact that it is very common. Five to six acts of violence appear on prime-time television per hour. On Saturday morning children's shows, there are 20 to 25 violent occurrences per hour. By the time a child graduates from elementary school, he or she will have viewed about 8,000 killings and more than 100,000 other violent occurrences. By the later adolescent years, a teenager will have seen over 200,000 violent occurrences on television (Koenig, 1994, 31). According to this source, there is a problem with violence on television.

The violence that research refers to are violent acts, for example, rape, murder, car wrecks, fighting, shooting, and acts that result in spattered blood. There are several proposed effects from violence viewing that have been studied. These are desensitization, aggressive behavior, and fear of victimization. A study done on teenagers has shown that contemporary teens are more desensitized to violence and sex than previous generations (Mast, 2008, 3). Being desensitized to violence and sex makes these teenagers more accepting of these behaviors and more willing to watch media with more and more sexual and violent content. According to researcher Leonard Eron, approximately ten percent of violence can be linked to watching television (2008, 14). According to a study by George Gerbner, most heavy television viewers do not realize that they are being influenced by television (2008, 13).

Many worry that viewing violence can cause aggression in viewers. In one longitudinal study, boys became more violent adults after being exposed to media violence. The results were the same for everyone in the study, even when taking into account social class, parenting, and intellect (Donnerstein & Smith, 1997).

Video games are under attack particularly because of the role playing that the player takes part in. In these games, the player can shoot and kill other players or characters. Several studies on violent video games claim that they cause increased aggressive thoughts, hostility, anxiety levels, aggressive behavior and decreased pro-social behavior (Greitemeyer, 2009).

Besides causing aggressive behavior, viewing violence can have two other effects:

1. desensitization toward aggression, which results in decreased willingness to help victims.

2. fear of becoming a victim, which causes self-protective behavior and mistrust of others. A study by NIMH supports this conclusion (Donnerstein & Smith, 1997).

Weaknesses of studies on violence. George Gerbner is known for doing multiple studies on the effects of violence. Michael Hughes refutes the conditions and results of Gerbner's studies. He points out that in Gerbner's studies on violence, he does not have a control group for the surveys he conducts (1980). Hughes also points out that heavy television viewers can relay opinions and ideas to light television viewers, which would result in inconsistent and mostly indecipherable findings that television has a large effect (1980).

The most famous study of media violence was the 22-year study by Leonard D. Eron and L. Rowell Huesmann. This study was used as evidence for government action, but later Huesmann admitted that the study was flawed and the research conclusions were based on a small percentage of the subjects studied. This study took place between 1960 and 1982. Its conclusion that media violence affects boys was used as evidence by government agencies. Psychologists Leonard D. Eron and L. Rowell Huesmann studied children's behaviors as they grew up. Some children did not watch violent content on television and some did. Eron and Huesmann conclude that boys who watched violence on television became more violent as adults, while girls did not. This research was submitted to the NIMH and to the office of the US surgeon General. The 1996 Telecommunications Act put in place the V-chip requirements. Congress referred to Eron and Husesmann's study when they instituted this act. Huesmann made it known later that he and Eron based their results on only 3 out of 145 men in the study, which is not significant enough to base a result or government action on (Trend, 2007, 43).

One part of the debate on whether viewing violence is harmful is how researchers are unsure of exactly what the numbers and data that they collect mean. A result can have many causes, and it is hard to isolate the one cause that is being studied. Also, researchers are confused about the importance of the statistical data. One of the problems in regards to this is finding a way to ascertain the strength of the relationship between viewing violence and actions based on this viewing. Researchers are asking how much violence is causing these behaviors. It is hard to devise a scale to measure the degree to which violence is a factor in an effect (Sparks & Sparks, 2002, 277).

David Trend outlines the difficulty of isolating a single cause to a behavior, since human behaviors can be caused by the way a person was raised, culture, environment, circumstances surrounding the behavior, and brain chemistry. He also points out the possibility of short-term effects. Some studies about violence use one test group and one control group. The test group is shown some sort of violent video and the control group is not. Then the groups are questioned or asked to act out a scenario. These test groups often show an increase in aggression, but Trend says these are only short term reactions possibly caused by the participants getting excited (Trend, 2007, 38).

In the late 1990s a psychologist named Jonathan L. Freedman researched all the studies done on violence. He came to the conclusion that most of the studies came up with minimal effects resulting from subjects watching violence. Freedman noticed that most studies set up a controlled environment that was not representative of real-life. Freedman put together the results from 87 laboratory experiments on media violence effects. He analyzed the results and discovered that 41% of the studies disproved violence effects, 37% supported the hypothesis that violence has an effect, and 22% were unsure (Trend, 2007).

Violence as an indirect or irrelevant influence. According to Jennings Bryant and Dorina Miron (2002), most of the studies on media effects focus on unintended effects. They suggest that media are created for pleasure and entertainment without consideration of the consequences. They also suggest that there are unintentional and intentional influences that result from media. The unplanned ones come from content that is produced in an effort to attract and retain big audiences (2002). According to Trend, Hollywood movies have been getting more violent. Movie business executives keep track of what types of movies attract large audiences, and violence is one of those trends, so more violence is included in movies (Trend, 2007, 86). An alternate view of television influence contends that it is just showing Americans what they are really like. Hollywood producer Lionel Chetwynd contends that Hollywood is portraying what the society already is, and people's perception of society is what Hollywood is changing (Clark, 1995).

Evidence of American Influence on Other Cultures Via Television

Besides violence on television, other elements of television have proven to be influential. A correlation has been found in a study by Michael Hazen and Parul Jain (2007) between the recent mainstreaming of television across India and a shift in Indian behaviors toward American ones. The behaviors noted include: eating out, going to bars, live-in relationships, affairs, and pre-marital sex.

The emergence of these behaviors is surprising because traditionally India has been a very conservative society and it still is largely. Indians are leaning toward American products by lining up at Taco Bell, McDonalds, and Pizza Hut. Also, Indian children are buying American brand products such as clothes and shoes. Urban Indians not only sport Nikes and eat at McDonalds, they also like to celebrate American holidays,

such as Valentine's Day. In the past, Indian women, according to tradition, strove to be good housewives. Now, some women's attitudes and lifestyles are changing, and many are career-minded, bolder, and assertive.

This societal change is occurring in other countries as television sets and television service are becoming more readily available. A study done with Jamaican youth correlates with the study of Indians, that the more exposure to foreign media, the more likely the person is to depart at least a little from societal norms. Media have changed many areas of the Jamaicans' lives, including family values, individualism, gender roles, and use of language and dress (Jain & Hazen, 2007).

Effects of Music

Another form of potentially influential media is music. Barbara Wyatt, the president of the Parents' Music Resource Center in Arlington, Virginia, warns that, "[m]usic is a powerful tool that can change thinking and alter actions…" (Clark, 1995). According to some, listening over and over to music creates a mood. According to movie producer Lionel Chetwood: "[music] has shown a greater ability to shape ideas and popularize behavior than either of the two visual modes [television and movies] … because the audience for visual modes is essentially passive, while popular music is more interactive" (Clark, 1995).

Many studies have related negative effects to music. For example: rap and heavy metal were related to deviance such as psychoticism, acceptance of racial and sexual discrimination, vandalism, drug use, violence, and aggression. According to Greitmeyer, some studies point to music setting a mood and causing sexual arousal. Some of these moods can be beneficial, but only a few studies have been done on positive effects of music (2009).

Sylvia Knobloch and Dolf Zillmann (2002) studied the music choices and moods of happy and depressed people. Most of the people in bad moods chose happy and energetic songs and listened to them longer than the happy people did. The sad people's moods improved after they listened to these songs (Bryant & Miron, 2002, 565).

One study done on the positive effects of music reveals a different result from the study on violent songs. People in the study that listened to prosocial positive songs had increased empathy and a greater willingness to help. (Greitemeyer, 2009). In 2004, North, Tarrant and Hargreaves studied the effects of positive music. The researchers exposed gym users to annoying music or uplifting music and then asked them to hand out flyers. The users who listened to uplifting music were more willing to hand out pamphlets when they were asked to by the researchers (Bryant & Miron, 2002).

In other studies on the effects of music, negative effects resulted. According to Greitmeyer, lyrics containing sexual content were related to toleration of negativity and violence in respect to women. He also reviewed another study which found that listening to music with negative lyrics increases antisocial actions and beliefs (Greitemeyer, 2009).

Sex in the Media

Sexual content appears often on television, and this heightens the concern about its effects, especially to parents. Research done on the content of television shows reveals that in 1995, out of 220 sex scenes in television containing unmarried sex, only nine percent of these instances concluded that unmarried sex would be wrong, and two thirds of the scripts encouraged the desirability of sexual relations outside of marriage (Clark, 1995). Studies about the association between exposure to television and sexual behaviors found that high school students who watched television with a lot of sexual content were more likely to be having sex than other high school students who watched shows with

little or no sexual content (Eitel et al., 2005). Kunkel et al. (1999) documented the occurrences of sexual content on network television and cable for the 1997-1998 season. The study found that 56% of all shows contained sexual content (Harris & Scott, 2002, 309). These studies contain limitations because sexually active adolescents have been found to watch more television with sexual content than non-sexually active adolescents. It is hard to isolate the cause of the increased sexual activity, because these teens may be watching more sexual content on television because they are sexually active (Eitel et al., 2005).

Studies on how college freshmen are influenced by shows that include sexual intercourse show negative or positive reactions from viewers based on negative or positive reinforcement coming from the shows the participants viewed. Programs that showed negative consequences of sexual intercourse pointed to the participants' having negative attitudes toward premarital sex and negative judgments of people who were doing this. The study found, however, that programs that showed negative consequences are rare and that normal television shows makes sex appear desirable and without negative consequences (Eyal & Kunkel, 2008).

Shows that contain not just sexual content but also violent sexual content make some people who believe that media affects people particularly concerned. Studies point to media portrayals of a woman's being raped as being arousing to men if the woman is portrayed as enjoying the situation (Harris & Scott, 2002, 325). Some fear that the viewing of explicit sexual materials may affect the attitudes and values of viewers. For example, when teenagers are shown on television frequently being sexually active, the young adults viewing these shows may have weakened traditional values of abstinence from sex (313).

Allen, D'Alessio, and Emmers-Sommer (2000) found that the sex offenders they studied did not watch more pornography than non-offenders. They were, however, more likely to be aroused by this content and perform some sexual act afterwards. In a study by Linz, Donnerstein, and Ponrod (1984), a group of men were shown movies with violent sexual content. The more movies the men saw, the more desensitized they became to the content. They found the films humorous after several days of watching them (Harris & Scott, 2002, 307).

Almost a third of young men are getting information from pornography. In a study (Russell, 1998) about violent sexual materials, 29% of the young men surveyed said that pornography is their most important source of sexual information (Harris & Scott, 2002, 307). In 1998 CNN and Time did a survey about where teenagers got their information about sex from. 29% of the teenagers that responded said that they got their most important knowledge about sex from television. These studies conclude that some men may have a positive idea of mistreating women if they are shown a positive outcome of a rape scene (2002).

The results of the study by Kunkel lines up with the premise of social cognitive theory, which explains that when a behavior is reinforced with negative consequences, the observer will develop more negative thoughts toward that behavior. The more negative thoughts that are associated with a behavior, the less inclined a person is to repeat that same behavior. Conversely, when the situation is reinforced with positive consequences, the viewer will be more inclined to think favorably of the situation and will be more inclined to repeat the behavior (Eyal & Kunkel, 2008). Like the studies on violent sexual material, these studies on sex scenes point to this material influencing people because of positive and negative reinforcement.

Alcohol in the Media

Alcohol, especially advertisements for alcohol, appears often on television. Also, studies analyzing incidents of alcohol on television found that 71% of 168 primetime episodes analyzed in 2000 mentioned alcohol (2003). Researchers are split on whether alcohol in advertising affects viewers. Some think that media have a strong effect on how often people choose to drink. Several studies support this opinion and claim that media affect college students' behaviors and thoughts. There are also studies that argue against these conclusions (Albada & Kean, 2003, 278).

One study found characters that drank were looked up to, well liked, and rich. Another study found that 25% of the portrayals of alcohol consumption were positive and over 60% were neutral (Albada & Kean, 2003). Dutch Researchers observed 80 young men which they divided into three groups. One group watched a film with alcohol consumption and alcohol commercials, the second watched a film with no alcohol consumption and some alcohol commercials, and the third was a control group which watched a film with no alcoholic content. The men were offered alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks during the study. Men who saw alcohol commercials or the film with alcohol on average drank 1.5 glasses more than the men who were not exposed. This study concludes that men drink more alcohol when they see it advertised (Engels et al., 2009).

Although people may not accept certain facts on television as truth, they may be subtly influenced by attitudes and behaviors that they see on television. According to Karen Dill, a media critic, people pick up social nuances about how they should act in part from watching television and movies. They use these as reference points for what is

socially acceptable. When people see well-liked, attractive people drinking on television, this makes drinking alcohol more culturally acceptable (Dill, 84-85).

One perspective used to look at alcohol in the media is the “effects” model. This perspective is studied most in psychological research. It suggests that when alcohol is seen as seductive and normal, people are more inclined to drink. One study found that the more television students watched, the more they drank the next time they were hanging out with friends. A slight connection was made in this study between alcohol and television viewing. Both of these activities were associated with “enjoyment” and “relaxation.” Media are not the only suspected influence on drinking. There can be other influences especially parents’ drinking consumption (Farnham & Iagle, 1996).

Effects on Body Image

In a study on college students’ body images, the author claims that media influence was one of the major influences on a female’s decision to undergo cosmetic surgery. Women who are impressionable and who internalize media messages are at risk of having a skewed body image. Viren Swami’s research suggests that teaching media literacy to women by showing them how to interpret and inoculate themselves against media messages is key to overcoming this problem (Swami, 2009).

A study done in Fiji found that some adolescent girls there developed eating disorders after being exposed to Western television. Bulimia was at 0% in 1995 and rose to 11% by 1998. When interviewed, teen girls said they wanted to lose weight to be like celebrities on television. A study done with the assistance of Irish doctors concludes that media images of very skinny models and celebrities can be a factor in impressionable teenagers’ developing anorexia (Battles, 2009). Boston media critic Jean Kilbourne worries that because media are saturated with beautiful, perfect women, girls who do not

fit the norm will suffer low self-esteem when exposed to these media (Clark, 1995). Based on these studies, it seems that the introduction of American television in different parts of the world brings with it a desire to be skinny to impressionable young girls. While being skinny is not inherently a bad thing, the ways young girls devise to try to achieve thinness can be unhealthy.

Television as an Escape or as Reality?

Some say television is an escape. Producer of "Law and Order," Dick Wolf, supports this view, observing that "[c]hildren can distinguish between fantasy and reality. I grew up on 'Tom and Jerry' and I never climbed into a tower and pulled a gun on people" (Clark, 1995). Yet, the news reports stories of people's doing crazy things and then using the excuse, "Well, I saw it done on TV." A 16-year old from Baltimore, Maryland, who was accused of killing a 26-year-old woman told his girlfriend that he was thinking about absconding with a vehicle and guns so they could be like the movie characters Mickey and Mallory from Oliver Stone's 1994 movie *Natural Born Killers* (1995).

A study by Fox and Philliber (1978) examines whether people treat television as reality. Researchers asked subjects how many wealthy Americans they thought there were in order to see if watching television gave people a wrong impression of how many people are rich. The participants guessed a realistic number. This is contrary to the theory that people believe what they watch on television.

However, in a similar study, Gerbner tested how heavy viewers versus light viewers of television view reality. The heavy viewers as opposed to the light viewers had more unrealistic views of how many Americans held professional managerial jobs (Fox & Philliber, 1978). Why might people be influenced so strongly by moving images? One

answer to this question is the cultivation theory. This theory, created by Gerbner, says people who watch a lot of television base their assumptions about real life on what they view on television. Those who watch less than four hours of television a day are light viewers, and those who watch more are heavy viewers (cited in Hazen & Jain , 2007, 9). So, according to cultivation theory, the more people watch television, the more they think of the events on television as reality.

Positive Influence

If media are influential at least to some degree, as has been suggested by these studies, then what are the possibilities for using it for good? While there are many studies on negative influences, such as violence, there are not very many studies about the positive potential of television and other media. Marie-Louise Mares and Emory Woodard did a study on the positive effects of television. They found that children that watched pro-social content on television behaved better in social situations and had more positive attitudes than their peers. The researchers conclude that "… television has the potential to foster positive social interactions, reduce aggression, and encourage viewers to be more tolerant and helpful" (Mares & Woodard, 2005, 316). The researchers conclude on a hopeful note that other researchers will search out positive outcomes from television as well (2005).

If media can be used to influence others, what is the potential for Christians to use media to influence others? Christian filmmakers have been trying to do this for years. The best evidence that these Christian movies are making an impact is when they are shown at a Christian Film Festivals of America event. Each festival takes place at a theater, and free Christian movies are shown there for a week. After each show, a gospel message is related to the movie just shown. Then an invitation to receive Christ is given.

Thousands of people across the United States have made commitments to Christ in this manner. Based on this example, Christians can use media in an effort to influence people.

Conclusion

Many studies point to the possibility of media influence. These influences can possibly change attitudes about sex, morals, body image, drinking, and reality. There is no conclusive proof that media influences people due to the ongoing controversy. However, some people believe strongly in media influence and are trying to influence others through media, as is seen in the following study on future media effectors. This study is interested in how Liberty University students are interested in impacting others through the media, if they believe that they can influence others, and if they should try to influence others on the basis of Christian principles.

Research on Media Effectors

Research Overview

This study is intended to find out what future media professionals think about media influence and if they are going to act on this belief. Do they believe that media can influence other? If so, are they willing to act on this belief to put positive elements into the media or to inhibit the placement of negative messages that are suspected of having undesirable influence on viewers? This study will be restricted to subjects from Liberty University, a school that teaches strong Christian values and morals. This study predicts that the subjects, should they believe in media influence, will desire to affect others in light of a Christian perspective.

Method

Most of the research in the literature review referred to television viewing. However, students at Liberty University have limited access to television on campus and,

therefore, will not give an accurate portrayal of what they would watch with unlimited television access. Therefore, the respondents were asked about their movie viewing habits, since this may be a more commonly viewed medium. Movies are readily available for the students, whether it is DVDs, at the dollar theater, a regular theater, or a rental location such as a Redbox. Also, movie ratings are more memorable to the respondents because television ratings are not as noticeable as movie ratings, and Liberty students are forbidden to watch R-rated movies, so they are required to pay attention to movie ratings. Movies and television contain similar content such as sexual innuendo, sex scenes, violence, language, and drinking.

The survey asked what type of viewing habits the respondents have, asking them "How many movies do you watch per month?", "How often do the movies you watch contain sexual elements?", "How often do the movies you watch contain violence?", "How often do the movies you watch contain profanity?", and "How often do the movies you watch contain obscenity?" Participants have a better idea of how movies can or cannot influence others based on how much they are acquainted with movies. These questions are asked to determine what sort of mindset and ethics the respondents have. The type of materials they watch suggests what content they deem acceptable and what they will tolerate in future productions.

The next question asks how much the respondent thinks he or she is being influenced. The survey will ask if the respondent thinks his or her morals, values, and self-esteem are affected by movies and television watched. The respondent was given the choice to respond either "Positively, yes," "Negatively, no," or "No."

Next, the respondent was asked to imagine creating a production and what type of materials would be tolerated and included in this production. The respondent is asked if

he or she would include sexual references, sex scenes, rear nudity, full nudity, obscenity, profanity, war violence, grisly violence, violence in general, and drug content. These elements were chosen for inclusion in this survey because they are materials that are warned against in movie ratings. These ratings are made available for parents so they can filter what their children watch.

Compared to secular universities, many more students at Liberty University have Christian viewpoints. The study predicts that since many of the respondents are assumed to have a Christian viewpoint, they might be averse to including objectionable materials in proposed future media content.

The next questions ask if the respondent has any intention to use the media to influence others, and if so, then what type of influence he or she hopes to have through media. These questions are left open-ended. Many different answers are possible to these questions. In order not to exclude any relevant answers, the researcher has left these answers open so the researcher can ascertain how the students really think about what should be in the media.

Participants

The participants for this study were Liberty University students in the Department of Communication Studies. Over one hundred students from various COMS classes were asked to participate. Four upper-level COMS classes were asked by email to fill out the survey. Several lower-level COMS classes were asked to fill out the survey by their professors. Ninety students filled out the survey but only sixty-five indicated that their concentration was broadcast. The results were filtered so that only the responses from broadcast students would be used in the study. The respondents were almost equally female (51%) and male (49%).

Results

Movie frequency and content. Most of the students see movies occasionally, fairly often, or very often. The highest percentage (40%) see movies fairly often. Nobody said that they never see movies. When asked whether they viewed movies with elements of sex, the majority (52%) responded that they see these occasionally. One person responded “Never” and 6.2% responded that they see movies with elements of sex very often. When asked how much they watch violence, all of them replied that they watch movies with violence in them. Most of them (43%) watch violence fairly often. When asked how often they watch movies that contained profanity, one responded “Never,” and most responded either “Occasionally” (32%) or “Fairly often” (35%). Next, the participants were asked how much they view movies containing obscenity. Most (38%) replied that they see them occasionally, and many (28%) said they see them rarely. Out of these five objectionable elements, sex and obscenity were the most viewed.

Participants’ views on how they are affected. The survey asked if the respondents believe that their values, self-esteem, and morals are influenced by movies and television that they watched. The majority of respondents indicated that they did not believe that they were influenced by television and movies. Two-thirds (68%) of the respondents responded that their morals and values are not affected. Almost half (51%) of participants indicated that their self-esteem is not affected. Almost a third (32%) thought their self-esteem is negatively affected.

Participants’ views on allowable content. The students were asked if they would allow various objectionable materials in a television show or motion picture. Many (73%) replied that they would not put sexual references such as innuendo in a production. Most (97%) said they would not allow graphic sex scenes in a production. For obscenity

and profanity, many said they would not allow it (87% and 75%). This result is skewed because many of the students might not have known the difference between obscenity and profanity. Nevertheless, the participants did know that both are objectionable materials. Many objected to rear nudity (95%) and full nudity (98%). Many are in favor of war violence (86%) and violence in general (81%). Grisly violence is less acceptable, since 61.9% were not in favor of it. As for drug content, that was the closest split between approving (40%) and disapproving responses (64%). Many students thought violence was acceptable material to put in a movie. They differentiated between the appropriateness of certain types of violence. Many more favored war violence (86%) than grisly violence (38%).

Future intent to influence others. When asked if students would try to influence others in the future, two-thirds (68%) replied that they would. Some (20%) said they would not try to influence others, and some (12%) said they were uncertain. Two people responded “no” because they were not intending to go into production. One person stated that he or she was unsure because he or she viewed media as entertainment and not as a source of influence. If the results were adjusted so that the participants not intending to go into production were excluded from the results, the percentage of people wanting to influence others would be adjusted from 68% to 70%.

Type of message or influence. The students were asked to explain what type of influence they would have on their audience and in what type of media. Most of the respondents (54%) want to influence their audience with a Christian and/or a positive message. Most (32%) responded that they would like to make a positive impact on the audience. Many (22%) want to communicate a specific Christian message. Some (11%) are unsure of how they want to influence others. The types of media respondents

indicated they would like to be involved in included radio, news broadcasting as an anchor, hip hop music ministry, church ministry including lights, music, and video, motion pictures, and television. One specific type mentioned was television shows that help with depression. Another person mentioned including drugs and sexual references in their movies so they could portray these in a bad light.

Discussion

The findings of this study regarding the fact that many people think their morals and values are not impacted compared to the fact that many people believe that they can affect others in this way is rather ironic. The majority of people in this survey expressed a self-immunity to media. A large percentage (67%) of the respondents did not believe that their morals or values are impacted by television and movies. Yet, the same percentage (67%) believe that they can change other people's values and morals.

Most of the people want to impact others positively, and yet most want to include violence in their productions despite the fact that violence is a highly controversial theme in terms of media influence. This suggests that students are not thinking of the possibility of unintended effects, or it could suggest that some are intending to portray violence as a negative event and provide negative reinforcement for this behavior. One person stated that he or she would like to communicate hidden messages in their content. The person said that sex, drugs, and alcohol are in the world and that people should be discerning of these things. So this person is saying that by portraying negative elements in the media, he or she can teach viewers to be discerning of this material.

By expressing the desire to influence others, the respondents are communicating that they believe in media influence. They believe they can make a difference through media influence. Many respondents expressed desires to influence their audience

positively. Some want to focus on communicating the Gospel message, others want to express Biblical values in mediated works, and others want to spread positivity by specifically helping a group of people such as the depressed, by giving them healthy ways to combat their condition. One person even went so far as to say he or she wanted to manipulate people's emotions to teach them an unspecified message.

The researcher understands that students will not immediately have a position in production that allows them to make decisions about content. The researcher was interested in the ideas and opinions of the students because the students today are the leaders of tomorrow. Some of these people might possibly be in senior management position in 20 to 40 years. It is another question if their convictions and opinions will be the same in that amount of time.

Matthew 5:13-15 says that Christians should be the salt of the earth and a light to the world. Christians should stand out and make a difference, according to these verses. It is encouraging that so many of these Christian students who are potential media effectors are determined to be a positive influence on others. Whether media are proven to be a significant influence on others, through people like these Christian students, a positive message and/or the message of the Gospel will stand out in the darkness of society.

Limitations

The research questions only referred to movies when asking subjects about viewing frequency and viewing content. Most of the studies researched concentrate on the effects of television viewing and future studies could improve on this one by asking subjects about their viewing habits for different media and asking about their impressions about each medium. According to some, though, differentiating between media is becoming irrelevant in the face of the convergence of media and the availability of media

for viewing anywhere such as on a phone, laptop, or iPod. The need to examine effects from separate media may be obsolete (Anderson et al., 2008, 41).

The location and type of movies were not solicited from the students. This study could be improved if the questionnaire was more specific and asked the participants to specify what type of movie they were watching and where, such as viewing a DVD at home or viewing at a movie theater, or viewing a movie on television. This is because the effects may differ depending on the environment media is watched in and the type of media that is watched, such as a movie in a theater versus casual television watching.

The results could have been further narrowed down to relevant ones if a question was asked about whether a student intended to be involved in some sort of production. Several respondents indicated they had no intention of producing, so their views might not be relevant because they have not put as much thought into creating media as people who are intending to create media.

The researcher hopes that further studies will discover more information about the causation of behaviors, which will uncover the extent of the influence of media.

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