

An Exploration of Defensive Mediatization Strategies and Motherhood Media
Decision-Making

by

Emily Young

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

School of Communication and the Arts

Liberty University

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APPROVED BY:

Andrea Towers Scott, PhD, Committee Chair

Carol E. Hepburn, PhD, Committee Member

Erin Black, PhD, Committee Member

Abstract

This quantitative study focused on media-related decision-making in motherhood, with mediatization theory serving as a framework for the research. The study began with an overview of recent changes to motherhood and family media use. The purpose of this study was to explore the problem of how mothers make decisions about their children's media use. After providing a basic overview of the changes to motherhood and family media use, as well as establishing the purpose and problem for the study, the literature on relevant topics for this study was discussed. Primarily, the literature review focused on mediatization theory. Next, the survey methodology for this quantitative study was discussed in detail, followed by a detailed look at the survey results and a discussion on their importance. This study found that age and religion are not key indicators of mothers' media-related decision-making, unless they are moderated by defensive mediatization strategies.

Keywords: mediatization theory, systems theory, medium theory, media ecology theory, motherhood, media use, decision-making, defensive mediatization strategies

Copyright Page

Dedication

This study is dedicated to my family. First, to my parents and sister who supported me, encouraged me, and provided countless hours of free babysitting. To Paul who cheered me on, believed in me, gave me uninterrupted time to work for many weekends, and mastered the smile and nod while pretending to be interested in the ideas I often ran by him. To Todd for mustering the best level of patience a preschool-aged child could while I worked. While you may not understand the work I was doing or why, I pray that I have provided you an example that you can one day follow of being obedient to whatever God calls you to in your life, no matter how challenging the task. If God calls you to it, I promise you that He will provide the tools and strength you need to see the job through.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Motherhood is a defining aspect in a woman's life. From the moment of birth or adoption, her world becomes entirely different. Even when previous components of life stay the same, such as family, marriage, career, or hobbies, introducing a child into her life alters everything. Changes include her personal media use and her decisions to allow her child to interact with media. This quantitative study maintained its focus within these changes. The following section of this chapter shows the progression of recent changes to motherhood, much of which can be attributed to media. Thus, this study explored how media has changed motherhood. Specifically, the decisions mothers make regarding media were examined through mediatization theory.

This study examined the mediatization of media-related decisions in motherhood. First, this chapter introduces the problem and provides necessary background information on the foundation of mediatization theory and recent changes in motherhood due to media. Second, this chapter explains the study's problem, purpose, and significance. Finally, the research questions and definitions guiding the study are presented.

Background

The framework for mediatization theory developed out of medium theory and media ecology theory. Therefore, a brief assessment of each theory is necessary to understand mediatization in this study. Clark (2009) noted the importance of the connection between these theories, stating that there is an inseparable link between mediatization, medium theory, and media ecology. Thus, medium theory and media ecology theory are both briefly discussed in this introduction to lay the foundation for the use of mediatization theory in this study.

The Foundation of Mediatization Theory

Medium theory began with Marshall McLuhan and his mentor, Harold Innis, who proposed the concept that media are extensions of the human mind and senses, and influence the historical time in which they are developed and used (McLuhan, 1997). This idea later developed into media ecology, for which many credit McLuhan. However, Neil Postman was the first to use the term in a 1968 speech (Lum, 2006). Essentially, medium theory first showed that the medium and the biases inherent in its use were more important than the message sent via the medium, which then led to the idea of media ecology. Media ecology shows how media work in a single environment, or media ecology. Media ecology then links to mediatization, which studies how an environment changes because of media (Littlejohn et al., 2017). The differences in these theories are subtle and easy to miss, necessitating this brief discussion to lend clarity to the rest of this study.

The critical difference between media ecology and mediatization is the focus of this study. Cali (2017) pointed out that media ecology research starts with the medium and how it shapes an environment. In contrast, Littlejohn et al. (2017) stated that mediatization research begins with an institution to see how it evolved due to media influence. Lundby (2009) wrote that “mediatization research should put emphasis on how social and communicative forms are developed when media are taken into use in social interaction” (p. 117). Consequently, a new medium does not simply create a new environment, but a new medium comes into an existing social environment, and as a result, changes the environment. Hepp and Krotz (2014) noted that a critical difference between medium theory and mediatization is that medium theory is media centric.

In contrast, mediatization theory can focus on any institution which has been impacted by media. Fornäs (2014) noted this versatility as a strength of mediatization theory. Strate (2017b)

believed a key component of media ecology research is the idea of bias, where each medium is biased in how people use it and its potential benefits. Thus, media ecology studies how the bias of a medium creates media environments. For example, television is biased toward entertainment and consequently creates a media environment in which users desire amusement. The idea of bias was developed from Innis (2008), who believed that each medium's bias influenced media environments to the extent that history and civilizations were directly influenced by media bias. An example of this point was clearly depicted by Ellul (1964) who saw this concept in all technology when he noted how construction crews make homes to accommodate modern appliances. However, companies do not make appliances to fit in the existing home.

Even though each medium creates a media environment, Dowd (2014) pointed out that most people are unaware of their media environments. In fact, due to deep mediatization within culture, media environments are noticed little more than a fish notices the water in which it swims. Those who think about these environments are often called media ecologists and study "media as environments" (Postman, 1970, p. 161). Postman (1970) preferred to use the term ecology instead of environment, however, because the idea of ecology looks at connections in the ecological environment, just as media ecology looks for connections between a medium and the environment it creates.

While McLuhan (1974) and Postman (1970) are critical names in medium theory and media ecology research, Strate (2006, 2017a) pointed out that the ideas started with ancient philosophers like Plato. However, McLuhan developed the ideas with modern perspectives and technologies with medium theory, and then Postman went a step further by naming the field of inquiry media ecology. McLuhan was clear that the purpose of studying the impacts of media is not to determine if a new medium is positive or negative but rather to explore what is happening

because of the medium. Strate (2017a) saw this as a critical difference between McLuhan and Postman, because Postman took an approach that led to evaluating a medium as either beneficial or detrimental.

This present study focused on mediatization theory, not medium theory or media ecology. However, the foundations of mediatization are in medium theory and media ecology, so this basic understanding of the two precursors was essential to address, which Jensen (2013) noted. Krotz (2014b) also noticed similarities, where each theory recognizes media's influence on daily life. However, Krotz also believed that mediatization theory corrects three critical errors of media theory and media ecology. First, the previous theories assume the links between history and each new medium are clearly defined and linear whereas mediatization allows for the link to be a more complex and imbalanced ebb and flow (Hoskins & O'Loughlin, 2015). Building on this first error, the second error Krotz noted is that those earlier theories believed each medium has a singular impact when each medium can actually have many potential impacts. Finally, Krotz believed the idea of media bias limited the impacts of media. Previous theories focused on the singular bias of a medium but mediatization allows for the consideration of multiple biases.

Hjarvard (2013) pointed out that mediatization theorists must also note the difference between medium theory, which only looks at how a medium affects people, and other effects theories such as uses and gratifications research, which looks at why people choose to use specific media over other alternatives. Hepp (2020) supported the idea that mediatization looks at long-term social changes caused by media within an institution. Thus, this present study focused on the institution of family, specifically motherhood, and how media has altered this most fundamental institution in society. It is important to briefly note here that mediatization is also rooted in systems theory, which established that social systems are built by communication

(Luhmann, 1995). However, this macro theory is later discussed in greater detail in the literature review in Chapter Two. For now, it is just important to note that mediatization has its foundation in systems theory, which allows researchers to consider a family as an institution, or social system.

The State of Motherhood

A mother dramatically influences the dynamics of her family and children. Motherhood is an ancient position that began when Eve begot Cain and continues with the birth of each new child. However, the way women approach the role of motherhood has changed over time. While motherhood has changed like any institution throughout history, this overview on the current state of motherhood primarily focused on the 1950s through the present day, as this is when the most recent changes related to mediatization have occurred. In addition, this review only focused on traditional motherhood through birth or adoption by biological females. While modern motherhood may be approached from different views in other research, this study and its review of existing literature focused only on biological females.

According to Coontz (2010), in the 1950s and 1960s, teenagers took an established path to adulthood: graduate high school and possibly college, get married, buy a home, the husband gets a job, and the wife stays home and starts having children. By the 1970s, however, Coontz (2013) showed that women began to earn more degrees and work outside the home, even after marriage. Coontz (2006) pointed out that the period from the 1970s to the early 2000s marked the most significant changes in marriage in several hundred years. By association, these changes altered when women had children and how they raised them, consequently changing motherhood. In fact, by 2015, 65% of children aged six years and younger had a working mother or a mother looking for work, compared to just 20% of mothers in 1963 (Coontz, 2015).

Victorian society idealized the role of motherhood for women, excluding other rights and opportunities. This mindset lingered through the first few decades of the 20th century (Plant, 2010). However, by the latter half of the 20th century, changes in women's rights led to a new ideal in which women could work full-time and be mothers. Coontz (1995) pointed out that people often idealize the nuclear family model of the 1950s as the ideal state of the family to which American society should strive to return. However, this decade was a transitional time for the American family where women's focus shifted from a more Victorian mindset that valued motherhood, community, and connections with other women to a greater focus on family. Additionally, the 1950s nostalgia neglects to recall the state of American families of non-white races, which, while still not perfect in modern society, was tragically worse before the Civil Rights Movement.

Modern women marry later, often closer to thirty, after getting an education and establishing a successful career (Coontz, 2010). Delayed marriage changes motherhood because mothers are either older or unmarried when their first child is born. As women delay marriage and practice cohabitation instead, 40% of modern women have children outside of traditional marriage relationships (Coontz, 2016). This statistic means more single mothers are in less stable relationships than their married counterparts. Despite this, women who have a committed partner or spouse have a higher standard of living, according to Coontz (2000). In addition, committed relationships tend to be more egalitarian than in past marriages. Men and women can both work outside the home now, so traditional gender roles for housework in many relationships are fluid. Despite this, women are still the more likely partner to take time away from work to care for a child or another family member (Coontz, 2017). Ericsson et al. (2021) studied this phenomenon, which is called third shift, and explained how women often go from paid work to unpaid

housework to sleep without any breaks. Many women in their study reported feeling like a project manager all day. Similarly, Santhosh et al. (2020) observed that female doctors often watch male coworkers progress in their careers while they must make the choice between sacrificing career success or sacrificing time with family. The authors referred to these choices as invisible barriers that professional women face, often unnoticed by men in the same roles.

These changes to marriage, family, and motherhood have not occurred on their own. Throughout this time, the feminist movement directly led to many of these changes. In addition, greater accessibility and options for birth control methods have allowed women to delay motherhood even within marriage. In addition, Cowan (1983) pointed out that industrialization impacted every American family between 1860 and 1960. How and when the impacts of industrialization were felt depended on the family, where they lived, and what industrialized technologies they allowed into their homes. Industrialization parallels mediatization, as media (e.g., radio, television, and computers) entered home environments. For instance, Chua (2011) tried to raise her American children in the traditional Chinese-American way. Still, modern influences like media caused her to develop methods that worked for her unique family, even if those methods differed from tradition.

Family Media Use

Researchers have extensively studied the use of media within the family environment since radio first became an influence on the lives of children. Mitchell (1946) showed that parents were concerned about the impacts of radio on children's mental and physical health. Zajonc (1954) even experimented with a space-themed radio program that taught non-American values to see how the lessons would impact the children listening to the program. The study found that the negative impacts appeared to be temporary. Of course, television became the

primary entertainment influence affecting children after radio. Peirce (1983) discovered a link between extensive television viewing and poor writing skills. Lin and Atkin (1989) were even concerned about how the development of the VCR would take away parental authority over the television viewing experience. Austin (1992) later termed this parental authority as parental mediation, providing several approaches that parents could take to mediate their children's television intake and suggesting which of those seemed most practical.

Television was the dominant medium of the 1990s. However, the internet also developed at this time. As seen earlier with radio and television, parents had reason to be skeptical about the new medium and its potential impact on children. However, Ross and Williamson (1996) and Taylor (1996) showed that despite concerns, parents found the internet to be a place of support in their parenting. Thus, even early in the internet's history, parents turned to the medium for advice.

In this same decade, mobile phones became a popular means of communication, especially for younger generations. Henderson et al. (2002) found that phones created a way for teens to connect with parents when leaving home. On the other hand, they also became a means of breaking free from parental authority. However, phones were not the only source of change for parental mediation. As previously mentioned, the internet became more widely adopted during this time and Eastin et al. (2006) noted that web pages were challenging for parents to mediate. This early study advocated for parents to receive training in media literacy as they began navigating media that was unlike anything they used as children. Cottrell et al. (2007) developed a measurement tool to study how parents monitor online activity. While this was a significant step forward in understanding online parental mediation, it did not show how mediation in the online environment impacted or changed the role of parents.

Clark (2011) specifically studied parental mediation. She labeled parents as being active, restrictive, and co-viewers. Active parents talked about what their children watched on television. Restrictive parents set strict rules and guidelines about what their children watched. Lastly, co-viewing parents experienced television with their children. While developed around television, these concepts also apply to the internet and social media, which gained prominence in the early 21st century. Clark believed that these media changed the responsibilities of parents, especially mothers, as they figured out what technologies to allow into their homes. The decision was usually made emotionally instead of based on expert advice. Similarly, Staksrud (2008) developed four parenting styles based on a mediatization survey disseminated in Norway. The parenting styles were named after fairytale characters: Sleeping Beauty parents, Rapunzel parents, Little Red Riding Hood parents, and Hansel and Gretel parents (Staksrud, 2008). The concept of parental mediation has also been used in other studies (Konok et al., 2020). Clark (2011) also pointed out that parental mediation can now be delegated to technology since many technologies now provide ways to monitor children's use or location through parental controls and GPS technologies.

Regardless of how parents mediate their children's media use, most parents care about the impact of all types of media on their children. A common concern is media violence, which led Price and Dahl (2012) to study the consequences of media violence. Many people fear that violence in media directly affects viewers and causes them to become violent. However, the researchers found that media effects are not that simple. The media results depend on several factors, including the media content and time spent with the media.

Clark (2013) interviewed several families over the span of 10 years to determine how parents in different socio-economic classes made mediation decisions. She found that most

parents do whatever feels right in the moment instead of planning a specific media use strategy. She also noted that newer media, digital, and mobile technologies created a hyper-intensive form of parenting. According to Clark, hyper-intense parenting occurs when parents use technology to over-monitor and care for their children. Atkinson (2014) also noticed this trend in a study on intensive green mothering in advertising. This form of motherhood insists that mothers self-sacrifice their lives, needs, and desires for a fully child-centered approach to motherhood that also protects the environment. Cino (2022) believed modern parenting must be intense to be considered good. Lim (2016) added to this idea with a concept called transcendent parenting. More than any other generation, modern parents must be active and involved all day. They constantly communicate with their children and never get a break from parental responsibilities, which directly relates to many parents' hyper-intensive methods.

Understandably, to an extent, modern mothers put so much pressure on themselves. Hefner et al. (2019), Piotrowski et al. (2015), Rutherford et al. (2015), and Warren and Aloia (2019) all noted a direct connection between parenting styles and children's media use. This connection shows that the parental example is the most significant indicator of children's media use. With children using technology from a young age, the example that parents set must also start early. Nansen and Jayemanne (2016) even noted that infants have access to digital communication technologies, which directly defies the American Association of Pediatrics' (AAP) recommendation to avoid screens until the age of two (Al-Ali et al., 2018). Despite the AAP's recommendation, screen time may not be all bad because Nansen and Wilken (2019) noted that digital technology tends to be more interactive than previous media like television. Levine et al. (2019) found that young children are accessing media so much earlier because parents use it as an educational tool or a way to deal with challenging behavior. Griffith et al.

(2022) similarly found that when parents co-use media with young children for educational purposes, it can benefit the child. While many studies have focused on the negatives of media use, adding to parental guilt, Linder et al. (2021) believed that investigations should focus on finding ways to positively use media to create connections between parent and child for the benefit of both parties.

However, Krcmar and Cingel (2016) found a significant difference in the concern American parents show regarding children's media use compared to Dutch parents. This disparity showed that the stress that modern parents experience related to media may be a more significant phenomenon in America versus other countries. While the study did not explore the direct cause for this difference, cultural differences are likely part of the reason for this disparity. Al-Ali et al. (2018) and Ngula et al. (2018) both noted that American parents worry about exposing children to violent and sexual content, where this content may not be as shocking in other cultures. A Pew Research study by Auxier et al. (2020) conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic noted that 71% of parents believed their children spent too much time with technology. Accordingly, more than 66% of the parents in the study thought that parenting was harder for modern parents than it was at the turn of the century. The study was revisited post-pandemic by McClain (2022), who found that in March 2020, 51% of children younger than five had access to a tablet, and by 2021 that number increased to 69%. The same study found that one quarter of parents with young children said their child spent too much time using a smartphone or playing video games. Eight percent of these parents also admitted that their young children spent too much time on social media (McClain, 2022).

Christian parents are just as likely to feel stress over media use. Still, in an article from Barna, researchers found that more than half of involved Christian parents attend a church based

on its children's programming and find support and guidance in managing technology from the church ("One-Third of Engaged Christian Parents," 2020). Despite this support, the study found that one-third of Christian parents still found media a cause of stress, and the percentage increased as children got older and more active with new media or as the parents aged over 50 ("One-Third of Engaged Christian Parents," 2020). In addition, other studies shed light on why parents feel this stress. For example, Domoff et al. (2021) discovered that more than half of 11-year-old children own a smartphone. Additionally, the same study found that at least one quarter of teenagers spend more than eight hours per day using screen-based media regardless of demographic differences.

Mothers' Media Use

The above information shows how parents mediate their children's technology use, often allow their children to use media at a younger age, and allow media use for extended periods. However, mothers' media use is also relevant. As previously mentioned, Ross and Williamson (1996) and Taylor (1996) found that parents at the start of the internet, while skeptical of the new medium, also found it to be an excellent means of finding support. This trend continued, especially for mothers, as the medium matured and developed new avenues of social support like social media. Amaro et al. (2019), Archer and Kao (2018), and Kaufmann et al. (2017), showed that mothers predominantly used social media to connect with other moms. The downside of these online connections is that mothers often compare themselves to other moms, which can negatively impact mothers' mental health. These scholars also found social media to be addictive, which can negatively impact mothers' parenting and cause them to provide a poor example of good media use to their children. Abetz and Moore (2018) noted that the comparison between mothers has led to what is often called the mommy wars, where mothers online tend to

take sides on controversial issues like parenting methods, feeding options, or school choices. Although the community and parenting information mothers glean from the internet are beneficial, the comparison and negative emotions cause problems, which is why de los Santos et al. (2019) recommended that mothers participate in media literacy programs to better understand their internet use.

Another reason media literacy is an essential topic for mothers is that they often share information online that could cause potential concern for the safety of their children. Fox and Hoy (2019) found that while most mothers do set boundaries for what they will share online, they often cross these boundaries if a brand provides a contest or opportunity for free products for their children. They often share personally identifying information about their children on publicly shared sites, as well as potentially compromising information about their children through blogging. Archer (2019), Cummings (2019), and Hunter (2016) showed how moms used blogs to create an online community and generate a source of income. However, to create profitable blogs, mothers often share detailed stories about raising their children with little concern for how this could impact their children in the future.

Blum-Ross and Livingstone (2017) coined the term *sharenting* to describe how parents share information and pictures about their children online, specifically on social media. Cino and Formenti (2021) and Cino (2022) noted that this practice often begins during pregnancy and continues throughout the child's life. According to Cino (2022), a common reason is that the traditional, in-person family support system of grandparents and other close relatives is often lacking in modern families and *sharenting* online substitutes for this experience. Several other studies have considered the phenomenon of *sharenting* from different perspectives. For example, Siibak and Tracks (2019) focused specifically on the dangers of *sharenting*, Campana et al.

(2020) looked at influencer dads' sharenting behaviors, and Cino et al. (2020) considered how the number of likes on shared pictures of children impacted the parents who shared the photos. Additionally, Cino and Vandini (2020) showed how mothers navigate the challenges of other people sharing pictures of their children online, such as teachers.

Problem Statement

The preceding research demonstrates that parents have always been concerned about how media impacts their children. Unlike mothers in the 1940s, who worried about the radio, modern parents have many media to navigate. They are in a constant state of decision-making about their media use and that of their children. Auxier et al. (2020) showed that parents perceive their job as parents as more challenging than previous generations because of technology's sheer volume, influence, and constantly changing nature.

The family dynamic changes with each new medium a family adopts. Mothers are, most frequently and historically, the parent responsible for making the day-to-day parenting decisions. Thus, mothers have important choices as they navigate which communication technologies they allow to influence their families. Many of the previously mentioned studies reviewed how parents mediate their children's media use. However, other studies have simply shown that parents are concerned about media and have not necessarily researched how to address these issues. Hence, this study explored the problem of how mothers make decisions about their children's media use, using mediatization theory as a framework.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this quantitative, social-constructivist study was to understand how mothers use mediatization strategies to make decisions about their children's media use. The study included a quantitative internet survey of mothers over the age of 18. In the absence of

existing research linking mediatization to mothers' media-related decisions, an exploratory quantitative study was warranted to begin understanding the phenomenon. Data from the survey was analyzed with SPSS. Conclusions drawn from this study shed light on the impacts of mediatization on parenting and continued the discussion on how mothers can make better media-related decisions for their children.

Significance of Study

The significance of this study cannot be understated in terms of research both for motherhood and mediatization theory. Firstly, this study was important because it equipped moms to make better media-related decisions for their children. Results yielded practical advice for parents to make sound media decisions for their children. Secondly, most mediatization research has focused on politics and there are no studies to date on the mediatization of motherhood. Additionally, most mediatization studies have taken a qualitative approach through content analysis or interview methodology. In contrast, this study took a quantitative approach to mediatization theory in an effort to begin to understand how mothers make media decisions for their children. Lastly, European researchers have conducted most of the extant mediatization theory literature (Marcinkowski, 2014). Therefore, this current study broke ground for American research.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

This quantitative study took a social-constructivist approach to study the mediatization of motherhood. The social constructivist approach shows how individuals create meaning out of their lives. In this study, this approach was used to show how they create meaning out of media. To accomplish this task and better understand the problem of how mothers make decisions about

their children's media use, this study focused on answering the following hypotheses and research questions:

H1: Younger mothers (under 30 years old) will report the persistence mediatization strategy when making media decisions for their children.

H2: Younger mothers (under 30 years old) will report using a vigilance decision making strategy about their children's media use.

RQ1: Will mothers from different age groups make media-related decisions differently because of different mediatization strategies?

RQ2: Will mothers from different faith groups make media-related decisions differently because of different mediatization strategies?

Definitions

Before proceeding into the literature review, the following definitions are provided to lend a better understanding of this study.

Communication

Schulz (2004) pointed out that media's primary goal is to communicate a message. Communication can only occur when the sender and receiver have something in common to understand the message. Thus, Hepp (2013b) defined communication as any symbolic interaction that is planned or spontaneous, whereas Jensen (2013) defined communication as a field of study. Therefore, communication occurs when a sender transmits a comprehensible message to a receiver and the receiver can act on the message. The message may be planned or unplanned. This phenomenon can be studied, which is the point at which communication is defined as a field of study.

Mass Communication

Altheide and Snow (1979) defined mass communication as what happens when media is decoded and acted upon by an audience of multiple people, with no set or predetermined effect. Therefore, communication becomes mass communication when several people receive a message. Importantly, there is no guarantee that each receiver will act on the message similarly.

Media (Plural) / Medium (Singular)

Krotz and Hepp (2011) stated that media is a “modifier of communication” (p. 144). Additionally, media, which is the plural form of medium, is defined by Krotz (2009) as “anything to modify communication” (p. 23). However, Krotz also pointed out four levels to this definition—media can be a technology, a social institution, an organizational machine, or content. Stordalen (2013) supported the idea that media or a medium is “any device that facilitates communication between human beings, including, say, technological or social structures and traditions needed to perform communication” (p. 22). Meyer (2013) also supported this definition.

Researchers often study the news media as an institution when studying mediatization. Accordingly, throughout this paper, media will be used as the plural form of medium, and the media will refer to the institution of the news media. While this may seem confusing, it is typical to find different mediatization studies using the word media in different ways. Andersson (2017) pointed out this issue and clarified that media theorists do not need to agree on a universal definition of media. Instead, each researcher must specify which definition is used in their work. Thus, this present study focused on media as technology, not as an institution.

Mediation

Early mediatization research used the words mediatization and mediation synonymously. However, recent research has clarified that the two terms are not synonyms. Instead, mediation is

“communication via a medium, the intervention of which can affect both the message and the relationship between sender and recipient” (Hjarvard, 2008a; Hjarvard, 2013, p. 19). Similarly, Fornäs (2014) defined mediation as communication that occurs using a linking device or tool, which is generally the way all communication between humans occurs if one counts sound waves as a medium. Additionally, Silverstone (1999) saw mediation as the act of moving “meaning from one text to another” (p. 18).

Hjarvard (2013) defined the difference between mediation and mediatization by describing mediation as “specific instances of communication” in a specific communication context (pp. 2-3). In contrast, he defined mediatization as “the long-term structural change in the role of the media and society,” resulting in new social constructions and interactions (pp. 2-3). Dürrschmidt (2019) agreed with the distinction between mediatization as a transformation and mediation as a mode, while Agha (2011) stated mediatization is a form of mediation that changes institutions versus simply creating a bridge of communication between two actors. Simply defined by Couldry and Hepp (2013), mediation is a moment in communication compared to mediatization, which represents “ongoing mediation of meaning construction” (p. 197). Alternatively, Averbek-Lietz (2014) described mediatization as the intermingling process between media, culture, and society, versus a single instance of sensemaking, such as when a person speaks to another via a phone. Krotz (2017) referenced telephones as a simple example of mediated communication.

Despite the apparent difference in mediation and mediatization, the two terms cannot exist without each other. Averbek-Lietz (2014) called the terms complementary concepts because mediatization cannot exist without mediation. Strömbäck (2008) used the terms to study politics, one of the most studied institutions by mediatization theorists thus far. He showed that

mediated politics is where media become the sources of political information. In a literal sense, they become the mediators between politicians and the public. Mediatization would be the process of watching this phenomenon occur. Strömbäck and Esser (2014) saw the difference in political communication because as more political messages are mediated (i.e., as politicians use the media and various communication devices to transmit messages), political institutions undergo the process of mediatization. Hjarvard (2013) believed researchers should use mediatization to study institutions outside politics, such as religion, and many researchers have taken up this task. Livingstone (2009) saw this possibility as well when she stated that media and communication research should expand to look at ways to “explore the possible and actual mediation of everything” (p. 13). Although, she preferred to use the term mediate for both traditional mediation (i.e., communication using a communication tool) and for the process of mediatization because she believed they are both interdependent parts of the same theory. However, since mediation is not a linear process, Ekström et al. (2016) preferred to use the term mediatization.

Krotz (2014b) raised some critical questions regarding mediation research. Since media is constantly changing, it is hard to pinpoint what exactly to research. For instance, television is a well-known medium. However, is a researcher still studying the same medium when the pictures on the television screen change from black and white to color? What about traditional broadcast stations to cable? Alternatively, the even more recent technology upgrades allow shows and movies to be streamed through services like Netflix or live-streamed through Sling TV or YouTube TV. In that sense, is the television itself the medium or is the application used to allow streaming through a medium like Roku or Apple TV? Since mediation is a foundational concept

for mediatization, these unanswered questions plague mediatization theory research and add to the debate about exactly what it is and how to study it.

To conclude the discussion on mediation and how it is foundational to understanding mediatization, it is essential to understand that Lövheim (2014) also justified mediatization as a theory to explain the long-term result of mediation. He believed that mediatization research must focus on institutional and societal changes resulting from media and their intrusion into everyday life. Once a medium becomes part of a society's fabric, mediatization occurs. However, this cannot happen without the mediation of communication. There are still several questions for individual researchers to define on a project-by-project basis. Nevertheless, the terms have developed enough in modern research to be distinguishable, and it is essential to note that this present study maintained the distinction between the terms.

Mediatization

Mediatization, like many terms, is difficult to pin down with a singular, applicable-at-all-times definition. A significant reason that mediatization is challenging to define is that cultural and linguistic differences among researchers have caused debate over the term. The word originated in German as *mediatisierung*, according to Jansson's (2013) translation of Manheim (1933/1979). However, the word was not as impactful to English-speaking researchers, who found the term awkward and ambiguous (Clark, 2013; Väliverronen, 2001). Even when the word became more popular, researchers tried other spellings like *mediatisation* (Kunelius & Reunanen, 2012). Others used different words for the same idea, such as *medialized*, *mediation*, *mediazation*, *medialization*, *remediation*, or *mediatic turn* (Ekström et al., 2016; Friesen & Hug, 2009; Livingstone, 2009; Weingart, 1998). This debate over word choice led Couldry (2012) to decide the only difference between mediation and mediatization was that English-speaking

researchers preferred mediation and European researchers preferred mediatization. However, there are key differences between these terms, and they are not interchangeable.

Mediatization is a long-term meta-process in which media causes change in an entire culture and/or smaller institutions or social systems within a culture. Each section of this definition is looked at in more detail in the following paragraphs, starting with the idea that mediatization takes place over a long time. Verón (2014) emphasized that mediatization is longitudinal. In addition, Couldry and Hepp (2013), Fast and Kaun (2014), Fornäs (2014), Hepp (2013a), and Lövheim (2014) all emphasized the idea that mediatization is a long-term process of media and cultural changes. Kepplinger (2002) and Finemann (2014) also supported the notion that mediatization is long term. However, Kepplinger described the process as beginning with the technology of radio, while Finemann stated researchers should go farther back in time to include speech, writing, and print. Finally, Couldry and Hepp (2013) indicated mediatization theory research should start with the advent of mass media, whereas Krotz (2014b) took a broader approach stating that mediatization theory should be studied since the start of communication for all human history.

The next term in the definition is meta-process, for which Krotz (2001) is a significant supporter. Littlejohn et al. (2017) credited Krotz, whose study is only published in German, for the idea that a meta-process is small, long-term changes that cause long-lasting but slow changes that can be difficult to notice or quantify. Other meta-processes may be more familiar, like globalization or the process of moving from an illiterate society to a literate one (Krotz, 2014b).

Krotz (2014b) is not the only researcher to support the idea of mediatization as a meta-process. Lunt and Livingstone (2016) similarly called it a meta-process. Couldry (2014) agreed but clarified that it is not necessarily a linear process, which follows a straight timeline as

traditional historical research has typically done. Kortti (2017) looked at mediatization as a meta-process where media both consciously and subconsciously changes an institution's communication. In other words, mediatization looks at the history of how new media has changed society over time (Krotz, 2007).

The next key idea in defining mediatization is that it studies media-caused changes. In other words, in the study of history, it is possible to note numerous socio-cultural changes. However, when studying mediatization, the only changes a researcher should focus on are the ones caused by media. This idea was emphasized by Van der Meer et al. (2019). Hepp (2020) and Jansson (2015a) called the media-caused changes a molding force, which occurs when media and culture cause mutual change. Hepp (2012) noted that this could be classified as mediatization once media logic dominates an institution's original logic or when communication changes to fit the needs of the media and not the institution. In many ways, media and culture are inseparable when studying mediatization. However, as previously noted, for mediatization to occur, media must change a culture or a social system within a culture. These are two different approaches to mediatization theory, so the idea of cultural change should be explored first.

Knowing that media-created change is an essential first step in analysis, Block (2013) suggested that the next step is to look beyond the technology people used to communicate in order to see how they constructed or created cultural reality because of the technology. Similarly, Kunelius (2014) and Sumiala (2014) believed that researchers should look at individual cultures throughout history, as well as current cultures and people groups around the world, to determine how media changed each culture. Thus, in understanding that mediatization is looking at how media and cultural changes occur, Hartman (2014) translated Krotz's (2001) idea that

researchers should think of mediatization as a triangle, where the corners represent media changes, communication changes, and socio-cultural changes.

The next approach to mediatization is that it does not just cause cultural change but can also change smaller institutions or social systems within a culture. To summarize this idea, Hjarvard (2008a, 2013, 2015) stated that media are or can become their own independent institutions that also serve as the primary means of communication for other institutions. This creates reactions in societal institutions, according to Wilke's (2014) translation of Meyen (2009), whose work was published in German. In other words, changes in independent media institutions create changes in other institutions, such as a church, workplace, or family. For instance, Weingart (1998) studied how the media, as an institution, changed science, which is an entirely different institution. Change in media and institutions does not happen individually. Instead, it is a process that includes mutual interaction between both parties, according to Hepp (2020).

The definition of mediatization proposed at the start of this section is well-supported by the extant literature. However, it is essential to note that not every researcher has fit their research within the proposed definition. For example, Jansson (2013) and Jensen (2013) used mediatization, or mediatized, as an adjective to describe a culture instead of a noun that names a process. Jansson believed an institution is mediatized when it is inseparable from the media, such as the extension of social lives into the private home due to social media like Facebook. Similarly, Jensen stated that mediatization is a social condition and not a historical process.

In addition to understanding the outlying ideas of mediatization, it is crucial to understand what it is not. Hepp (2012) clarified the distinction between mediatization theory research and diffusion of innovation theory. At first glance, they appear similar but there are

significant differences. According to Hepp, mediatization theory is a broad means of investigating media and culture. On the other hand, diffusion of innovation studies how people adapt to using a specific medium over time. Mediatization considers any and all media and what changes occurred in the culture because of the media.

Parental Mediation

The definition of parental mediation is different from the term mediation. Austin (1992) named parental authority over children's media decisions as parental mediation. This term, which was previously discussed, was also studied by Clark (2011). Where mediation looks at any communication using a device, parental mediation is used when discussing how parents manage their children's media use. To avoid confusion between parental mediation and mediation throughout the rest of this paper, parental mediation will be called parental gatekeeping.

Polymedia

Madianou (2014) defined polymedia as an adjective that describes an environment where people can choose between several media options, many of which accomplish the same goal. In comparison, single mediums in the past (e.g., letter writing) were available but limited, where users had no alternatives. Modern society is now a culmination of all available media choices and their impacts combined.

Summary

Mediatization looks at the changes media and culture make on each other. Studies abound on the mediatization of politics and religion. Other social institutions have also been topics of research. However, motherhood is a new topic of study for mediatization theory. With each media change, a mother has new decisions to make about how she will allow the media to mediatize her home and family. Thus, the experience of mediatization may be different in every

family, making this an excellent topic of study for mediatization theory research. This quantitative study focused on the problem of mothers' media-related decision-making to better understand which mediatization strategies they use.

Now that the background for this present study has been explored, the literature review in Chapter Two will explain the social-constructivist paradigm, the foundation of mediatization research, and mediatization theory in greater detail. Then methods for this quantitative study will be provided in Chapter Three. The study will conclude with an explanation of the results and a discussion of the results in Chapters Four and Five.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter explores the topics of mediatization theory and its roots in systems theory, as mediatization stems from years of systems theory research, which states that communication is the foundation of social systems. The literature on mediatization is vast, and opinions are varied. These different perspectives on mediatization are important to understand. Thus, this review provides extant literature in defense of mediatization theory as part of the communication tradition. Next, it explains the theoretical framework and philosophical worldview used in this study, followed by an in-depth look at mediatization theory. Lastly, this chapter briefly discusses the macro theory of systems theory as it relates to mediatization theory.

Situation to Communication Tradition

The introduction provided a detailed definition for mediatization. This study followed the example set by Nölleke et al. (2021), who were published in the *Journal of Communication Theory* and whose writers represent communication departments from both the University of Vienna, in Austria, and the University of Münster, in Germany. The researchers in the Nölleke et al. (2021) study noted that the roots of mediatization theory are in systems theory, since the study focused on people and groups within social systems and how they used the news media to gain public attention, or purposefully defend against public attention.

Birkner (2015), published in the *European Journal of Communication* and written by a professor of journalism in the Department of Communication Sciences at the University of Münster in Germany, wrote that earlier, broader mediatization research focused on communication changes within a whole society. In contrast, researchers can narrow the focus of research by considering how individual social systems are impacted by media, which are often viewed as their own social system—the news media. Schulz (2014), a Professor Emeritus of

Mass Communication and Political Science at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg in Germany, noted, however, that new media have provided new opportunities for studying political mediatization. Consequently, mediatization can be examined in every social system, not just politics.

Additionally, new media can arguably shift the focus of contemporary research from only news-related media to all media. Some researchers may consider mediatization theory to fall within sociological fields of study instead of communication, since it is founded on the idea of social systems. However, D'Angelo and Esser (2014), both professors in communication departments at The College of New Jersey, USA, and the University of Zurich, Switzerland, respectively, clarified that mediatization theorists look at the impacts of media from a different perspective than other fields. Therefore, mediatization theory fits well within the communication tradition.

Understanding the definitions and origins of mediatization theory is necessary to place it within the communication tradition. It is common to find researchers who refer to mediatization as a concept, a meta-process, or a field and not as a theoretical framework. However, research within the last decade has shifted to focus on mediatization as a theory. Meyen et al. (2014), researchers at Germany's Institute of Communication Studies and Media Research, LMU Munich, even noted that mediatization has become a popular topic of study in the larger field of communication studies and addressed it in their research as a theory. D'Angelo and Esser (2014) stated that mediatization theory formed out of the idea that simply understanding political communication has become mediated is not enough to completely understand the changes that mediated communication has brought to political systems.

Additionally, Maurer and Pfetsch (2014), both researchers in communication departments at universities in Austria and Berlin, respectively, noted that researchers should continue empirical research on politics and mediatization to “advance the theory” (p. 351). Frandsen (2016) indicated in the *Journal of Communication and Sport* that scholars frequently use mediatization as a theoretical framework. Frandsen did this in her research, where sports organizations were considered instead of political ones. Additional researchers who have supported mediatization as a communication theory include Magin (2015), who researched communication at the University of Mainz in Germany. Lastly, the shift from concept to theory is displayed in the work of Daniel Nölleke, from the Department of Communication at the University of Vienna, Austria. In earlier work, Birkner and Nölleke (2016) referred to mediatization as a concept. In the later work of Nölleke et al. (2021), which included Birkner’s input, the research team referred to mediatization as a theory.

Despite researchers’ claims establishing mediatization as a communication theory, there is still significant ambiguity about how to study mediatization. This ambiguity is likely due to the lack of a definitive framework for every mediatization study (Knoblauch, 2013). However, Ekström et al. (2016) stated that this was a strength, not a weakness, because it provides an open research agenda. Mediatization theory offers excellent scope for study because every new medium creates new methods, changes, and opportunities for mediatization studies (Jensen, 2013). To accomplish effective mediatization research, this present study followed the lead of Nölleke and Scheu (2018), Birkner and Nölleke (2016), Meyen et al. (2014), and Scheu et al. (2014). In addition, this study was grounded in systems theory (Luhmann, 1995), as it is a natural foundation for mediatization based on the idea that communication is the foundation of social systems.

With no single framework for all mediatization research, researchers could question the use and validity of mediatization theory. However, Ekström et al. (2016) said mediatization theory is a complex meta-process that changes depending on the situational context of the study, thus providing a broad field of study with many options available for researchers. Therefore, despite the challenges, it is still an excellent theory for researchers to use in communication and other fields. Furthermore, the theory includes vast theoretical scope, or versatility, which Littlejohn et al. (2017) described as an excellent trait for communication theory. Sigman (1992) stated that combining social and communication research is advantageous. However, it is essential to keep communication at the forefront of the study to advance communication and not a different social science.

Theoretical Framework

Mediatization is an exciting theory to explore in communication, and even though it is newer, there is significant research supporting the theory. To use the theory as the theoretical framework for this present study, it is first important to understand the philosophical worldview, research paradigm, and research approach. Therefore, the following sections will explain these important theoretical aspects of this study and how they relate to mediatization based on the extant literature.

Philosophical Worldview

One of the first decisions with any research project's theoretical framework is which research paradigm or philosophical worldview to use. There are five primary approaches to research, according to Creswell and Poth (2018): narrative, phenomenological, grounded theory, ethnographic, and case study. Hepp (2020) promoted the use of phenomenological research for mediatization because it is best studied from an individual point of view to understand

perspectives on the changes and processes of mediatization. Accordingly, phenomenology, which Creswell and Poth said, “describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon” (p. 75), is an excellent fit for mediatization research from Hepp’s perspective. To date, no other researcher has noted a preference for different approaches. However, Hepp (2012) did note that creating grounded theories for mediatization research is possible, and Ekström et al. (2016) indicated that ethnographies could help provide more details to survey-based quantitative studies. This present study followed Hepp’s recommendation and used a phenomenological worldview to guide the research. In addition, using a quantitative analysis completed by mothers allowed individual mothers to provide empirical data from their lived experiences of making decisions about their children’s media use.

Research Paradigm

In addition to looking at the philosophical worldview, researchers must also consider which paradigm, or interpretive framework, to use when studying mediatization. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), there are several paradigms to choose from, including post-positivism, social constructivism, transformative frameworks, postmodern perspectives, pragmatism, feminist theories, queer theories, critical theory, and disability theory. Hepp (2020) believed that researchers should use the social constructivist tradition for mediatization research because the primary goal is to understand how media helps a culture or institution construct its social reality in a particular social environment.

This statement fits Creswell and Poth’s (2018) idea of social constructivism, where individuals “seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. They develop subjective meanings of their experiences—meanings directed toward certain objects or things”

(p. 24). Thus, in this tradition, researchers focus on subjective meaning for individuals within a larger culture or society, as well as how these meanings construct the social reality in which they live. Hepp (2020) is the only researcher found to date to make this suggestion or any suggestion about a paradigm for studying mediatization. Given this, it stands to reason that while other research paradigms show possibility, Hepp made definitive points in linking the goals of mediatization research with the goals of the social constructivist tradition.

Communication Tradition

Apuke (2017) summarized Craig's communication traditions, which are seven different areas of communication research. This study fit into the socio-cultural tradition, which Apuke said studies how communication produces society, or understands reality as a social construction based on communication. This tradition was fitting for this mediatization research, as weaker-form, institutional mediatization research, which will be described later in this literature review, stems from systems theory, which is based on the idea that communication is what builds or creates a society. Specifically, this study looked at the institution of family and how the media decisions that mothers make, and the mediatization strategies they use, play a role in the creation of the family institution.

Quantitative Approach

Finally, researchers must decide on a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods approach to mediatization research. Couldry and Hepp (2013) pointed out that researchers can study mediatization from any perspective. Ekström et al. (2016) believed researchers should focus on qualitative research to understand how media changes make people feel, not just that the changes are happening. Auslander (2014) added that questions related to people's feelings of control over media, or their relationship with media, are also pertinent to mediatization research.

Despite this, Ekström et al. (2016) noted that there is a place for survey methodologies, combined with mixed methodology in ethnographic research, to provide more depth to the study. Hepp and Hasebrink (2014) also believed either approach is possible, and the decision should be grounded in whether the researcher takes an institutional approach to mediatization or not. The scholars seemed to prefer qualitative research to understand that media do not have a singular direct impact or effect on culture, with their impact instead depending on how the culture uses the media. Hepp (2020) also supported the idea that either approach is valid.

Quantitative research should look at time, space, or society to find quantifiable data related to increased media use. Additionally, according to Hepp (2009), quantitative research focuses more on media availability and use versus a qualitative understanding of how media use and changes made people feel. Qualitative research, on the other hand, should look at history, diversity, and the connection between media and culture. Considering these perspectives, this study utilized a quantitative approach and used an internet-based survey for data collection. While extant literature is largely qualitative in nature, quantitative research is possible within this theory. Additionally, as there is currently a lack of quantitative research on this topic, this study helped to fill that gap and further the discussion on quantitative mediatization research in the communication tradition.

Related Literature

At this point, mediatization is thoroughly established in the field of communication as a theoretical framework and the details of this framework have been discussed. In the following sections, the related literature on mediatization theory is reviewed in greater detail.

Mediatization

The introduction established that the definition of mediatization should include the idea that it is a process, or meta-process. This section digs deeper into establishing the process of mediatization, the result of the process, and some possible phases of mediatization. First, however, it is vital to establish the right of mediatization's designation as a process. Several researchers used the term process, meta-process, or sub-process in their definition of mediatization (Hepp, 2013a; Hepp, 2013b; Hepp, 2020; Hjarvard, 2008a; Hjarvard, 2008b; Hjarvard, 2013; Hjarvard, 2015; Jansson, 2002; Kołodziejska et al., 2022; Krotz, 2014b; Rothenbuhler, 2009; Strömbäck & Esser, 2014). Where researchers differ is in defining what the process is.

Strömbäck and Esser (2014) defined mediatization as a process of media gaining importance and influence over individual parts of society. Hjarvard (2013) wrote that it is a "macro-social process" like urbanization, except it considers how media, instead of cities, shape society (p. 4). Hjarvard (2015) pointed out that while most processes involve a linear, step-by-step progression, mediatization is more like a change of regimes from one medium influencing society to a new media regime changing the environment. Jansson (2014) agreed that mediatization is not a linear process. Kołodziejska et al. (2022) followed the idea that mediatization is a meta-process of becoming reliant on media. Hjarvard (2008a, 2008b) extended this definition of reliance to a complete integration of media in social institutions, leading media to become an independent institution. Additionally, Hjarvard believed it was ultimately a part of the process of modernization. Finally, Krotz (2014b) saw mediatization as a meta-process of long-term social change due to media influence and a series of individual sub-processes of mediatization that make up the larger meta-process.

Hepp (2020) was adamant that mediatization is about the process of media becoming a molding force on reality. Hepp acknowledged that media are constantly changing, which is only more apparent with modern digital forms of media. Secondly, Hepp (2013a) saw specific media impacting individual institutions differently. In other words, there is no singular effect of a given medium that applies in every situation. Finally, Jansson (2018), Steinmaurer (2014), Miller (2014), and Hepp (2012) recognized that there is a dialectical tension between the media and social change because there are often several forms of media that impact the larger socio-cultural environment in an interconnected and complicated manner. This previous statement is a case and point for why it is so difficult to pin down mediatization research.

Deacon and Stanyer (2014) were transparently skeptical of mediatization research. One of their key reasons for skepticism is that most researchers refer to mediatization as a continuous process but cannot agree on a start or end point for the process. Instead, Deacon and Stanyer believed researchers should study mediatization as an “erratic process” (p. 1041). Similarly, though a proponent of mediatization research, Jansson (2014) pointed out that most research on the process of mediatization does not consider those who resist using a new medium or find ways to minimize its impacts. People who fall into this category are just as important to study, as the decisions to resist change still have consequences that can impact the institution.

As mentioned, most researchers see mediatization as a process, despite the objections of a few that the process definition is too linear or lacks the inclusion of those who resist new media. The next step in understanding mediatization as a process is to view it not just as a process but as a historical process. Krotz (2007) is perhaps the strongest proponent of taking a historical approach to mediatization. Krotz approached mediatization as a long-term meta-process, like other meta-processes that develop over decades and centuries with no clear start or ending point

that impacts society. Additionally, Krotz believed that meta-processes, like mediatization, must be understood in the long term to better understand the future. Krotz and Hepp (2011) emphasized the concept of meta-process mediatization on how the media used for communication over time changes daily life and society, rather than solely on new or more media. Finally, Krotz (2014b) supported that mediatization should be studied historically as a process that occurs and changes with time and new media. However, Krotz (2014a) also stated the benefits of moving away from a historical focus and thinking beyond current trends.

Mediatization is not a process that occurs identically in each time and environment but develops distinctively in separate cultures and environments. Additional researchers who also considered mediatization as a historical approach include Silverstone (1999) and Jansson (2013, 2015b). Silverstone believed that media are “historically specific” (p. 10). Jansson referred to mediatization as a meta-process that is “historically embedded” (pp. 280-281). Additionally, Jansson pointed out that, to prove mediatization has occurred, researchers must first prove that media has changed a social environment. Secondly, they must prove that the change made by media is significant and long-lasting enough to classify as mediatization. Jansson’s call supports the need for historical research to demonstrate endurance.

Results of Mediatization. From all the previous information, it is not difficult to see that pinning down what mediatization looks like for an empirical study is challenging. Most scholars agree that it is a process, but even the stages of the process are debated and not concrete for any potential researchers to use as a foundation for mediatization research. However, a few researchers have tried to create a standardized process, or set of stages or phases, for mediatization. Before discussing these researchers’ works, it is first essential to understand the

result of mediatization. This understanding shows how any process ultimately leads a researcher into the field of mediatization.

Deuze (2011) stated that the mediatization process occurs when media become invisible, where they are so ingrained in daily life that the novelty or mere presence of the medium goes unnoticed as a regular part of daily life. Similarly, Kunelius (2014) believed mediatization occurs when a medium reaches the point of “invading” an environment and changing the environment in an identifiable and researchable way (p. 65). If the invasion itself were not noticeable, there would at least be symptoms to alert a researcher to the occurrence of mediatization. In addition to the invasion, Kunelius noted that another vital symptom is a shift in power created between the institution and the medium. Jansson (2015b) called these power shifts negotiations, which cause institutions to lose some autonomy and the medium to gain power. Jansson (2014) described the outcome of mediatization in the simplest terms, calling it the “indispensability of media things” which results in a person feeling that something is missing without the medium (p. 274). Furthermore, even earlier, Jansson (2013) said that mediatization occurs when a medium “integrates with social practices at large” (pp. 287-288).

Krotz and Hepp (2011) thought mediatization occurs as media technologies shape the households and lives of individual users in a personal way. Hepp (2012) stated that mediatization increases communication possibilities for humans, which is a reminder that mediatization does not need to be viewed in a pessimistic or fatalistic light, though it often is. Jansson (2018) seconded this idea, stating that a challenge to mediatization research is that it is hard to define it as a good or bad process and this often creates a tension between new possibilities and increased dependence on media. However, new media and the process of mediatization do bring new possibilities, which can be positive or negative. According to Mazzoleni and Schulz (1999), who

specifically studied the mediatization of politics, it ultimately only occurs when media become a necessity in the domain. Schrott (2009) saw the process as a social fact that occurs regardless of an institution's awareness of it. However, each social sphere experiences mediatization differently. Perhaps the most intriguing result of mediatization was postulated by Kunelius (2014), who noted that mediatization creates several perceptions of reality depending on the medium, user, time, and location. Thus, mediatization often becomes a force in shaping reality and may even create a state of multiple perceived realities within cultures.

Considering the impact of mediatization requires mediatization to have an end. The end of mediatization is another ongoing debate among researchers within the field of communication. Schulz (2004) proposed three answers to the question of mediatization's end, which were rooted in three different perspectives. First, he provided an optimistic answer by stating that as media continue to evolve, media will eventually lose their limits and result in new forms of media on which humans are no longer dependent. Second, he postulated a moderate answer by describing the end of mediatization as a time in which new media come alongside old media, not losing their effect on the original environment but rather creating an entirely new media environment. Finally, Schulz provided a skeptical answer to the question by stating that as each new medium creates a new mediatization process, new media environments will incorporate or replace the old medium, depending on the situation. Additionally, Ekström et al. (2016) raised the question of demediatization, which is a process in which an institution or culture no longer depends on a medium. However, at this point, no additional research has been found on this concept.

Stages of Mediatization. Now that the possible results of mediatization are understood, a discussion on the proposed stages for mediatization is appropriate. Two researchers, Schulz (2004) and Strömbäck (2008), proposed processes to help study mediatization. However, the

processes proposed do not necessarily apply in every mediatization situation. For example, Strömbäck (2008) stated that his process only applied in the context of post-World War II westernized democracies. Despite this limitation, Strömbäck believed there was still a need for a defined process since most researchers define mediatization as a process. Therefore, he did not provide a single framework for researchers to use every time in developing a process. Instead, he showed that generating a process for context-specific mediatization is possible. However, despite the work of Strömbäck, and Schulz, which is detailed in the following paragraphs, researchers like Krotz (2014b) continued to debate the process and prove that nothing in mediatization research is yet concrete.

Schulz (2004) proposed four stages to the process of mediatization: extension, substitution, amalgamation, and accommodation. Extension occurs when a medium helps humans extend past the normal limits of communication. In other words, humans naturally can speak and use body language in the time and space they currently reside. Receivers within sight and hearing distance receive the sender's messages. These are the natural human limits of communication. However, the written word extends communication to people at great distances, and print can extend to different times. This process continues with each new medium that extends the idea of what is possible with only the human body. Thus, this phase is what Schulz defined as a continuous process in the evolution of human communication to push past natural limitations. Essentially this stage is mediation (Seethaler & Melischek, 2014).

The second step, substitution, occurs when the media, created as an extension of humans in stage one, replace the previous means of communication. Hjarvard (2013) provided two examples of substitution, where computer games substitute for playing with other humans and online banking replaces human interactions with bank tellers. Next, amalgamation goes beyond

extending human communication and substituting some parts by mingling and merging to the point where boundaries between the medium and human communication are blurred. To extend the previous examples from the substitution stage, amalgamation could occur when a computer game does not just replace playing with friends in person occasionally but becomes the primary method of playing with others. Another example is how it is common to see teenagers not only using their phones to communicate with one another when they are separated but even when they are in the same room. In this way, the need to speak in order to communicate is replaced.

The final stage of mediatization is accommodation. This stage occurs when society changes because of a medium. In other words, society accommodates to fit the medium, not the other way around. An example of modern accommodation is how stores have renovated to fulfill electronic orders for pick up or delivery, replacing the customer-to-store clerk interaction. Alternatively, online schooling has changed how some schools and families operate. Originally, online schooling was a novelty that extended the ability to teach in a classroom. Later, it substituted a class or two. Finally, amalgamation occurred when online schooling was pushed on students due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Today, schools and families regularly accommodate life to online schooling, with some choosing it as a permanent option and restructuring their home and work schedules to fit their children's learning into a fully online setting.

Schulz's (2004) work has endured in mediatization literature. Block (2013) reviewed the process concept in Schulz's work, rethinking the intersection of mediatization and politics. Lunt and Livingstone (2016) found his process helpful as "dimensions of mediatization" (p. 464). However, they were uncertain if it would become a conclusive framework outside the political communication field. Researchers like Strömbäck (2011) and Landerer (2014) worked from the idea that these stages are instead dimensions of mediatization. They based their research in the

fourth dimension, assuming mediatization had taken place. Instead of working through the stages or dimensions, they instead focused on the degree to which mediatization had occurred within a social system. Ekström et al. (2016) called each of Schulz's phases an individual sub-process of mediatization and would not use them unquestioningly to research mediatization. Finally, Seethaler and Melischek (2014) stated that the first step of extension should be mediation because that is what occurs in that process. These researchers showed that while Schulz started the conversation, his attempt at developing a process of mediatization is not without flaws.

Strömbäck (2008) also created a four-step mediatization process, although it was precisely to deal with the mediatization of politics. In the first step, Strömbäck stated that politics must become mediated. In other words, political communication occurs with a specific medium that it did not previously use. Second, the media break away from the government and start to follow media logic instead of political logic. In other words, communication occurs based on what works best for the medium, not the politics. Third, the medium becomes the primary source of political information. At this stage, people provide and receive information based on their adaptation to the given medium instead of making the medium adapt to their own needs. Finally, in the fourth phase, the media experience becomes more intense and impossible to avoid.

Hoskins and O'Loughlin (2015) used similar phases to examine the mediatization of war. Phase one develops in a specific media environment, with a single medium representing the war. Phase two increases the coverage and content related to the war, essentially immersing the public in the war. In phase three, the media and military collaborate in new ways based on how the communication developed in the first two phases. This approach is slightly different from the phases of Schulz (2004) and Strömbäck (2008), but essentially boils down to the same primary ideas with one less step. Researchers do not use any of these processes as the one way to

research mediatization, but they all provide a potential framework or starting point for future mediatization research.

Institutions and Cultures. Thus far, this review has looked at the definitions of mediatization, established the term as a process, and examined how previous research has attempted to define that process. Most definitions of mediatization point out that the process occurs within a culture or institution. Therefore, to fully understand mediatization, the understanding of institutions and cultures must be explored in more detail.

Krotz (2007) pointed out that “we live in a given culture and society” (p. 256). This concept is a good starting point for understanding mediatization because researchers can only study it within the boundaries of a specific society. Studying the mediatization of the entire world would not work because the world has several countries and cultures, and even within a country, several subcultures exist that all use media differently and therefore experience a different mediatization experience. Although Krotz (2014b) stated that each culture would use the communication technologies that benefit that society, it will not use every possible technology just because it exists. However, studying this statement in more detail veers into the realm of uses and gratifications research.

Hjarvard (2008b) pointed out that researchers must note that media and culture are no longer mutually exclusive. Media is enveloped in culture, and therefore researchers must instead look at the change caused by the omnipresence of media instead of trying to separate the two entities. Hjarvard (2013) also pointed out that as media change social institutions, they become their own institutions. Often these media institutions impact multiple other institutions simultaneously, though the impact is likely different in each culture. Finally, Hjarvard (2015) believed that institutions, such as a family or a church, provide stability for the individuals who

make up the institution. Despite this stability, they also evolve as the people and resources within the institution change. Block (2013) called Hjarvard's approach to mediatization the institutional approach and believed it lacked the flexibility non-institutional mediatization research allowed.

Additional researchers have provided more definitions of institutions, cultures, and society. Finnemann (2014) believed mediatization research should include digitization, education, religion, banking, and genres. Livingstone (2009) focused on the institution of politics, but also believed researchers should consider studying institutions like the family. Jansson (2013) followed the concept of social space, developed by Henri Lefebvre, to show that institutions include perceived space, which is represented by the five senses, conceived space, or the expectations of society, and lived space, referring to day-to-day life.

Knorr (2014) studied scopic mediatization, or the mediatization of technologies with a screen, providing institutions outside physical space. Kunelius (2014) believed researchers should include the media as a mediatized institution and study "the mediatization of the media" in addition to individual media institutions like journalism or publishing (p. 66). Ekström et al. (2016) referred to institutions as "cultural spheres," which they then decided were just "everyday life" (p. 1097). Wilke (2014) believed mediatization should include the arts. He stated that researchers should consider several perspectives including individual, institutional, or larger systems, which could also be called micro-level mediatization, meso-level mediatization, or macro-level mediatization, respectively. Finally, perhaps the simplest definition of an institution is an environment, which was provided by Strate (2017a) from the related field of media ecology. He recommended that researchers look at the media ecology, or environment, to understand the impacts of media. Additionally, he also pulled ideas based in medium theory from

McLuhan (1997) to state that the best way to study one environment is to compare it with an anti-environment, or essentially compare one environment to another.

Hepp provided significant content regarding studying mediatization in institutions. For example, Krotz and Hepp (2011) stated that media as the institution exists to support media as the technology and that the best way to study mediatization is to look at “mediatized worlds” (p. 146). In other words, they recommended researching the mediatization of small cultures because that is where “mediatization gets concrete and can be analyzed empirically” (p. 146). Hepp (2013a) further explored the concept of mediatized worlds. First, the mediatized world has a communication network outside its domain. Second, researchers can study mediatized worlds from small-scale, or local worlds, to larger scales, representing larger geographic areas. Third, the mediatized worlds are not entirely separated but intermingled, creating other “sub-worlds” (p. 622). Finally, Hepp (2013b) pointed out that media culture does not mean that mass media is the culture or that one medium dominates a culture. Instead, it is a culture being mediatized likely by several types of media, causing change as the culture adjusts to its newly constructed reality. As a result of studying mediatized worlds or cultures, Hepp (2013b) suggested that researchers perform transcultural comparisons to show how the process has occurred in different cultures. However, he also pointed out that his ideas are neither formal nor complete mediatization theory.

There are two uses of the idea of institution in mediatization theory. Much of this discussion has focused on the idea of institutions as being individual parts of society, or what will be viewed as social systems once the systems theory approach is detailed later on in this literature review. However, much of the earlier research on mediatization theory, especially research focused on politics and religion, used an institutional perspective of mediatization. The research focused on the news media, not media in terms of communication technologies or

devices. Scholars have approached the term media from this institutional perspective and have focused on the news media's impact on other institutions (Frandsen, 2016; Nölleke et al., 2021; Schulz, 2014; Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2011). Schulz (2014) pointed out that this institutional approach to the media needs to shift due to the influence of new media on society, as media is no longer an "autonomous media institution committed to homogeneous media logic" (p. 68). Instead, new media provides the opportunity for mediatization theory to reconsider the definition of media, as this study did.

Hepp and Hasebrink (2014) developed the idea of communicative figurations. A communicative figuration is a group that relies on various forms of communication, such as a family that converses and uses phone calls, text messages, e-mail, and social media to communicate. A second example is a classroom where the teacher and students use conversation, e-mail, chalkboards, and other means of communication to exist. Notably, these figures are in a state of change and transformation as new media provide opportunities for new ways to communicate. There are four primary features of communicative figurations, according to Hepp and Hasebrink. First, they use a variety of communication forms. Second, all figurations communicate in the same environment. Third, a figuration includes several individuals. Finally, there is a primary theme or focus to the communication. Thus, with communicative figurations, Hepp and Hasebrink recommended for mediatization research to reconsider looking at a process to instead simply looking at how media, communication, and socio-cultural factors change and develop a specific communicative figuration.

Previous Empirical Mediatization Research. The preceding details in this review have thoroughly described mediatization, its definitions, and various researchers' ideas on its process. While much of the work on mediatization has been conceptual, some empirical research does

exist. Researchers have studied mediatization in a variety of settings in a mix of both empirical research and exploratory essays on topics including education (Breiter, 2014), homelessness (Hartmann, 2014), corporations (Ihlen & Pallas, 2014), refugee crises (Krzyżanowski, 2018), domestication (Hartmann, 2009), individualism (Hjarvard, 2009), and politics within the United Nations (Jansson, 2015b). Additionally, mediatization researchers studied science (Schäfer, 2014), fashion (Rocamora, 2017), law (Bogoch & Peleg, 2014), ritual (Cottle, 2006), terrorism (Cui & Rothenbuhler, 2018), memory (Hoskins, 2014), storytelling (Lundby, 2014), sports (Frandsen, 2020), environment (Kannengieber & McCurdy, 2021), media life (Deuze, 2014), homes (Peil & Rosser, 2014), corporations (Fast, 2018), culture (Fornäs, 2016), and government agencies (Fredriksson et al., 2015). Lastly, mediatization researchers also considered social inequality (Paus-Hasebrink et al., 2019), cosmopolitanism (Christiansen, 2014), imagination (de Kloet, 2021), death (Han, 2019), social movements (Mattoni & Treré, 2014), music (Michelsen & Krogh, 2017), diplomacy (Pamment, 2014), automation (Wiesenberg & Tench, 2020), traditions (Xie, 2022), human rights (Salazar, 2020), and religion (Tudor et al., 2021) when exploring mediatization.

While these studies above may seem numerous, Ekström et al. (2016) pointed out that there are few empirical studies on mediatization. Most of the research listed provided theoretical ideas or brief content analyses. However, empirical research has been trending with several studies in the past few years. For example, Van der Meer et al. (2019) reviewed 14 years of plane crash data and news stories to show the mediatization of plane accidents. Assmann (2019) reviewed governmental food campaigns to show the mediatization of food education as a chapter in Dürschmidt (2019), taking researchers from various fields (primarily in sociology and anthropology) and using their perspectives on the mediatization of food in various cultures.

Another study in this work by Mak (2019) showed the mediatization of infant feeding in Hong Kong. Finally, Kołodziejska et al. (2022) interviewed church staff and conducted a content analysis of church publications from two different denominations in Poland to look at mediatization and how churches acted as media settlers. Their analogy showed the church's out-of-the-box approaches to using media to reach people outside of the church in unintended ways, like the settlers or pioneers moving to a new territory.

Politics is the arena where mediatization has been most studied (Ampuja et al., 2014). In the 1990s especially, it was a trending political topic (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999). Asp and Esaisson (1996) were one of the first to study mediatization and politics, or rather the medialization of politics, as a three-part process. First, mass media are deemed the primary mode of political communication. Second, they become independent of politics and influence the public. Finally, in the third part, society adapts to the use of the media as the primary source of information for politics.

Strömbäck (2008) is another researcher who focused on the mediatization of politics. His work was primarily discussed in the process section, and it can be noted that his processes were loosely based on those of Asp and Esaisson (1996). Strömbäck pointed out that the type of media makes no difference in the mediatization of politics. If media is the primary source of political information for the public, be it from a cable news channel, newspaper, or magazine, it is mediatization. Interestingly, Strömbäck did not see the significance of the internet in the mediatization of politics, though he admitted it would be wise to keep an eye on it to see if that would change in the future. As 2008 was a turning point in the use of the internet in the American presidential elections, his article showed how quickly a medium can change from being inconsequential to a critical player in the mediatization of a particular institution.

Block (2013) thought that mediatization was only a conceptual tool for understanding how the public handled politics based on the media they could access. He also posited that instead of a process, mediatization is a state of being after the process has occurred—the outcome of media impacting an institution, in this case, politics. Landerer (2013) pointed out that the narratives on the mediatization of politics often played off the media as bad or harmful to the good institution of politics. However, both are neutral institutions that impact each other positively and negatively. Asp (2014) reviewed how television mediatized politics. He said that mediatization is not a one-and-done transformation but that researchers should do the same with politics and the internet, given time and the gift of hindsight. Kunelius (2014) also noted that politicians no longer define their identities before communicating but construct their identities or their brands because of the technology they use to communicate. Additional studies have also considered the mediatization of politics, but without stating much that is different from the details above (de Souza & Hussain, 2021; Hepp et al., 2015; Strömbäck & Esser, 2009; Strömbäck & Esser, 2014; Strömbäck & Van Aelst, 2013; Thimm et al., 2014; Thorbjørnsrud et al., 2014; Van Waarden & Kohlrausch, 2022).

Outside of politics, other studies have also looked at the mediatization of other institutions. One of the earlier mediatization studies to venture outside politics was Välvirronen (2001). This study looked at the mediatization of science, specifically medicine. The author developed the term medicalization to show how media impacted the public's medical knowledge and how that led to a change in the medical expertise of the public. Kepplinger (2002) used mediatization to study parliament members in Germany after WWII, specifically during the 50 years from 1951 through 1995. McQuail (2006) analyzed the mediatization of war through a content analysis of modern books on war and the media. Finally, Couldry (2008) is a regularly

cited study where the researcher believed digital storytelling could be an area to approach with mediatization and mediation as a framework.

Several researchers continued the work of these early mediatization scholars. For example, Fast and Kaun (2014) compiled a list of all the current mediatization studies in Sweden to see what institutions were studying through the mediatization lens. They found that many researchers outside the field of communication used mediatization to study their fields and the changes brought about by media. For example, Sumiala (2014) looked at the mediatization of death, and Sun (2014) showed how Chinese media changed after a devastating 2008 earthquake. However, based on more recent mediatization research, the term mediatization in Sun's article may have been misused, which Ekström et al. (2016) noted often occurs in mediatization research since many researchers use the term loosely or fail to define it.

What Future Research Should Look Like

While there is a lack of quantitative research in mediatization, this opens the door for researchers to explore a new and changing field of inquiry. The research outlined above has laid the groundwork for concepts and ideas for researchers to consider when studying mediatization. Although, none of the suggestions are definitive or provide a fixed mediatization methodology, they do provide questions, suggestions, and support for mediatization research to move forward in the field in ways other researchers can test. First, when researching mediatization, it is essential to understand the primary goal of a study. Hjarvard (2013) stated that "the aim is to consider whether and how structural changes between the media and various social institutions or cultural phenomena come to influence human imaginations, relationships, and interactions" (p. 3). Deacon and Stanyer (2015) were critical of mediatization research and found the research idea oversimplified. They thought the main idea was to prove that an institution changed and, if

it did, a researcher could call the work mediatization. Their criticisms were noted but too simplistic. As Hjarvard pointed out, it is not just about whether changes occurred but also how they occurred and changed society. However, research needs to go a step further than previously attempted to show the impacts of these changes. Hepp (2012) pointed out that current research is heading in the right direction, with several studies in the works at the time of the publication. However, even now, a decade later, this review of literature has shown that only a handful of studies have successfully bridged the gap from theoretical to empirical.

This lack is due to the challenges presented by mediatization research, which largely stem from the previously mentioned debates about what it is. Finnemann (2014) questioned what media count when studying mediatization and how to study various media in one environment. Deacon and Stanyer (2015) also mentioned a disconnect between research theorizing about mediatization and the actual ability to apply it in research. Hepp and Hasebrink (2014) also understood this dilemma and realized it was challenging to ground mediatization into a process when the researchers themselves are part of a society that is still changing due to media. Therefore, Hepp (2013b) believed that the goal of mediatization is not a “grand theory” that can be used in every situation but instead an approach grounded in the theory that can adapt to different mediatization situations (p. 132).

Hepp (2020) realized that each instance of mediatization occurred in a specific context that the researcher needed to understand to study empirically. Livingstone and Lunt (2014) also questioned how to study mediatization and based their dilemma on understanding what defines media. In decades past, there was a distinct medium impacting culture. Modern researchers, however, are not dealing with a singular medium at a given time but polymedia environments. Fornäs et al. (2007) and Madianou (2014) brought up this same problem, especially for studies

that take a historical approach to mediatization. Earlier cultures had a primary medium compared to modern multimedia cultures. Thus, researchers trying to compare cultures must do so by realizing that apples may not be compared to apples. Also, even within the same time frame and the existence of the same media, different people choose to use different media, thereby creating different media environments even within the same culture and time.

Terminology is the primary confusion in mediatization research. Consequently, any researcher studying mediatization must clearly define the object of study and how he or she plans to define critical terms like media. Ekström et al. (2016) believed mediatization is a term thrown around too lightly by researchers and should only be used when media-related changes occur. Therefore, by defining terms clearly, a researcher can avoid misusing the terms. For example, researchers should be clear about whether they plan to use the phrases “mediatization of” or “mediatization and” (Deacon & Stanyer, 2015, p. 656). Though most researchers do not get hung up on this minutiae, Deacon and Stanyer (2015) believed that the terminology is vital.

Additionally, Hepp (2020) believed it is essential to consider all sides of mediatization. In this light, media researchers should propose alternative means of studying mediatization they chose not to use so that future researchers can consider these options. Next, when understanding the challenges and nuances of mediatization research, it is imperative to understand that not all extant mediatization research is equal, which is primarily due to these challenges. For example, Ekström et al. (2016, p. 1093) noted that only a few mediatization researchers are “highly committed” to the approach, others take some of the theoretical ideas to support their research, and others use the term because they like it without much thought. Finally, some researchers want to use mediatization but are still trying to wade through all the debate and figure out precisely what it is.

A final challenge, but also a strength of mediatization research, is its versatility. Mediatization happens in all cultures and institutions. Accordingly, there are endless possibilities for study. Numerous researchers have pointed out the imperative of working with and within other disciplines and fields of study to learn more about mediatization (Deacon & Stanyer, 2015; Ekström et al., 2016; Hepp et al., 2015; Hjarvard, 2013; Krotz, 2014b; Livingstone & Lunt, 2014). Lunt and Livingstone (2016, p. 463) suggested that researchers consider mediatization an umbrella search term like “#mediatization,” which could reveal studies in several fields and cultural areas, though currently, they would be few in number. While this is a strength of mediatization, Lunt and Livingstone also saw the potential weakness in that the process is likely to look and work differently in different fields of study. Mediatization might even have several ways of playing out within the same field of study, making empirical research based on one definitive mediatization framework nearly impossible.

Institutional or Cultural Approach. Bolin (2014) stated that the institutional approach is easy to organize, as a researcher can select a media institution and see how it impacts a culture. Jansson (2015b) researched the impact of media on various social institutions like religion and business. In this perspective, media is not the institution but the change agent. Hepp (2020) balanced these two perspectives but understood mediatization as how the institution of media impacts other external institutions. This perspective fit Krotz’s (2014b) idea that mediatization should “explain the connection between media development and the development of culture and society” (p. 153). Hepp and Hasebrink (2014) believed that researchers should focus on synchronous mediatization research. In other words, mediatization that is occurring at the same time in history, not at different times. Additionally, Hepp (2013a) supported the idea of

communicative figurations to study mediatization, which is essentially just a fancy phrase for social entities like family or another social group.

Hjarvard (2015) provided three supports for the institutional approach. First, mediatization is a long-term process between media and other institutions. The second support focuses on meso-level analyses, which are the mid-level range between micro and macro level analyses. Third, mediatization is not a one-way process but rather a give-and-take process between media and an institution. Lunt and Livingstone (2016) also supported the institutional approach because they stated that for mediatization research to count, it should focus on a specific domain that media might impact. This approach allows for researchers to then study the change in that domain, or institution, over time. Ekström et al. (2016) found that to show this change, researchers should “map more broadly how a range of different media mediate but also mediatize a particular area of life or social practice, for example, everyday life” (p.1101). Thus, the line between the institutional and social constructivist approaches blurs. On the one hand, the institutional approach says researchers should focus on a specific institution or domain, but now Ekström et al. extended that to the everyday life in the institution, which bleeds into the idea of social constructivism.

The social constructivist approach to mediatization focuses on how “mediatized worlds” are shaped by media (Kołodziejska et al., 2022, p. 4). Hepp (2013a) believed researchers should look at mediatization waves in history, which are demonstrated by the emergence of significant societal changes due to media such as the invention of print, and “zoom in” on a small part of those changes to complete a more detailed analysis (p. 625). Hepp and Hasebrink (2014) stated that mediatization should focus on the changes to social interaction because of communication technologies. Thus, the institution and social-constructivist approaches to mediatization are

different. However, the lines in recent research have blurred and cannot seem to escape the idea of studying the concept within an institution. Consequently, Hepp (2020) noted that the two approaches might be combined into a linked approach because media and the institutions they impact are “semi-independent institutions” that may, at this point, be too intertwined to separate from everyday lived experiences (p.7).

Many researchers believe mediatization should examine how media has changed culture over time, using a historical approach as a subcategory in the institutional perspective. Hepp and Hasebrink (2014) and Hepp (2013a) believed it is vital to conduct diachronous mediatization research that considers an institution’s change over time. They used the example of how family changed between the 1950s, 1980s, and 2010s. How far back to go, of course, is up for debate. Alternatively, Hepp et al. (2015) pointed out that despite the advantages of diachronous research, the data can be challenging to find. For this reason, they suggested researchers should consider synchronous research as a viable alternative.

Researchers have no definitive answer whether mediatization is only something worth studying in the last century or if studies should go back to the start of human communication (Hepp et al., 2015). Bolin (2014) determined that the approach may even depend on what institution a researcher is studying. For instance, if a researcher decided to look at the mediatization of politics, the researcher could go back only so far in history as politics started using media if such a time existed where the two institutions were separate. Verón (2014) believed that researchers should consider going back as far as possible to get a complete anthropological perspective on mediatization. Regardless of how far back a researcher goes, the importance of historical research is not in question. Ekström et al. (2016) believed it is necessary based solely on the idea that a long-term process should be researched with long-term data.

Similarly, Kortti (2017) pointed out that the process cannot be separated from its historical context and thus should be studied historically, possibly even primarily in the field of media history. This concept links well with Marvin (1988), who noted that many changes occurred due to the electric inventions of the late 18th century through the modern day. These technologies connected people to new communities, exposing them to new people and ideas. Essentially, communication technologies led to mediatization in society.

Livingstone and Lunt (2014) believed detailed research is possible if researchers look at research that already exists on mediation and reanalyze it from a historical mediatization perspective. Krotz (2014b) supported this concept stating that researchers could consider using previously conducted historical studies for mediatization research. When analyzing this data, or any new data a researcher collected, Lunt and Livingstone suggested that it be studied in decades, centuries, or millennia to help map out the changes logically. As with any mediatization research, the challenge of the historical approach is that it is nearly impossible to study the impact of only one medium on an institution, especially as a researcher progresses into modern polymedia times (Krotz, 2014b). Regardless of which approach a researcher takes to study mediatization, the only way to complete an empirical study is to find a means of measuring mediatization.

For the many reasons listed throughout this review of literature, measurement is often a challenging task. Ekström et al. (2016) realized this challenge and provided suggestions for researchers on how to overcome this difficulty. While the historical approach is the first suggestion, its weaknesses are that measuring how one media has impacted an institution over another media is very difficult, if not impossible, to achieve (Ekström et al., 2016). Thus, asking research questions about how the changes happened, or even if they happened, might be a way to

review data quantifiably. Ekström et al. also suggested that instead of using time, researchers could rely on data or research-specific generations and media use, to provide more detail.

Regardless of which type of historical approach a researcher takes, the fact remains that how a specific culture uses a medium in the culture, with other media or among individual members, makes the process uneven. Researchers typically like to look at history as a linear process. Therefore, Ekström et al. (2016) suggested that using historical documents to quantify data on mediatization may help provide a more concrete methodology for historical mediatization research. Regardless, it is essential to remember that mediatization research is not just looking at how often people use a medium or why, but how the use of that medium causes social change.

Simply looking at media saturation or uses would be better suited for the diffusion of innovations or uses and gratifications research. Ekström et al. (2016) suggested that researchers review all current quantitative research projects based on audience-centered theories and show changes to culture over time to develop a historical mediatization theory from that data. Despite this suggestion, this type of work has yet to be tried by a researcher to date. The final suggestion Ekström et al. made is that surveys can assist mediatization researchers, however, to overcome the weaknesses of survey data collection, researchers may want to consider big data as an alternative, though still imperfect source, to look at for empirical mediatization research.

Mediatization's Roots in Systems Theory

An empirical study of mediatization can be challenging (Ekström et al., 2016; Hepp, 2012). However, several researchers have overcome these challenges by going back to the roots of mediatization, which is systems theory (Luhmann, 1995). Systems theory is a macro theory, typically studied within sociology (Valentinov, 2019). Luhmann's (1995) book includes several

chapters which are explicitly related to communication. The main idea of these chapters is that social systems are broken down into smaller actions that can then be connected to communication. In other words, a researcher can take any social system, for instance a family, and break it down into the individual communications that created the social system within that family. Notably, Luhmann did not adhere to a traditional transmission model of communication with senders and receivers. Instead, he adhered to the idea that communication is a selection process where the communicators actively select what messages to communicate, what messages to receive, and how to act in response. The latter selection is the important point for social systems theory. Therefore, the selected responses to the selected communications are what make up a social system.

Despite its roots in sociology, Luhmann's (1995) thorough discussion on communication related to social systems has allowed the macro theory to serve as a framework for various studies within the communication tradition (Asencio-Guillén & Navío-Marco, 2018; Cheng, 2012; Graf, 2012). Laursen et al. (2022) pointed out that the framework can even be used to study modern communication topics like social media. Though sociological in background, Luhmann's main tenant is that society is only made up of communication, where communication is not a solitary act but a social act which requires more than one person (Laursen et al., 2022). Consequently, these communication acts create social systems.

This present study used the social system of a family, which is not difficult to explain. However, with Luhmann's (1995) theory, even smaller social systems can be observed. This is the case made by Graf (2012), who studied the communication of garden bloggers using social systems theory. Using a particular blogging topic as a social system showed that social systems do not need to be made of people in the same geographic location. As Asencio-Guillén and

Navío-Marco (2018) also explained, cyberspace can even be conceived as a social system, or more accurately, a hyper-system. This terminology reflects the fact that cyberspace on its own is nothing, but it is made of several subsystems acting as their own social systems.

Morales (2022) used systems theory as a framework to diagnose the transition of moral communication related to the COVID-19 pandemic and stated that the theory fit the study because it allowed researchers to study several individual, autopoietic, yet interconnected social subsystems, which all played a part in pandemic society. Other theories would have only allowed the researcher to consider one social system, diminishing the larger picture of the events of that time. Morales quoted Esposito (2020), who stated that individual social systems were like dominoes, where the healthcare social system suddenly impacts the political social system, and this continues through each other social system. Eventually, the impact goes right down to smaller social systems like the primary focus for this present study—the family. Finally, one of the most unique and modern approaches to the idea of a social system was Cheng’s (2012) examination of the App Store as a social system, particularly as it related to the Angry Birds game, which was popular at the time.

Mediatization Theory as Related to Systems Theory

Taking Luhmann’s (1995) ideas about communication and social systems into consideration, Adolf (2011) proposed that mediatization theory is the study of how media creates social systems and is therefore rooted in systems theory. Adolf posited that this approach differs from previous and primarily political approaches to mediatization, in which mediatization was considered a negative occupying force threatening earlier and better forms of political communication. When researchers consider the roots of mediatization in systems theory, social systems outside politics can be studied and the theory becomes analytical instead of a “head-on

critical assessment of the deteriorating power of media influence” (Adolf, 2011, p. 155).

Therefore, the author of this study was able to study the mediatization of mothers’ decision-making within the family as a social system because of mediatization’s relationship to systems theory. Adolf (2011) stated that mediatization theory takes on a social-constructivist research approach because of its relationship to systems theory. Thus, instead of considering how media logic takes over political logic, as was the case in much of the previous literature, systems theory allows researchers to consider how media creates social reality with a social system through observation of the changes introduced by allowing media into a system.

Strömbäck and Esser (2014) pointed out that mediatization theory recognizes that no institution is completely independent of the other institutions around it. Consequently, a familial social system is impacted by the political, religious, media, and other cultural systems of which it is part. As this lack of autonomy can make mediatization theory research challenging, the research must concentrate on media as the primary reason for change in a social system (Ampuja et al., 2014). Marcinkowski (2014) pointed out that this focus leads mediatization researchers to consider that mediatization theory is not, in fact, about media logic taking over a different system’s logic, such as political logic, but is instead about a social system adapting to media use to gain visibility within the media system. In some cases, like in politics, this process would be commonly referred to as gaining publicity.

Research stemming from mediatization’s relationship to systems theory is slightly different from more traditional mediatization research. The primary difference is what Ampuja et al. (2014) called strong and weak forms of mediatization. Mediatization on its own is the strong form, which bases its premise on the idea that “societies are easy prey for the power and logic of the media” (Ampuja et al., 2014, p. 116). Thus, mediatization is when media logic takes over the

logic of an institution or social system. On the other hand, the weak form of mediatization puts more emphasis on the social systems and less on media logic. This weaker form is based in systems theory because it establishes social systems as the building blocks of communication. In other words, social systems are the primary focus of the weaker form of mediatization.

In this form of mediatization, researchers can look at the concept of a push-and-pull model of mediatization (Blumler & Esser, 2019; Downey & Neyazi, 2014; Marcinkowski, 2014). This model shows that instead of media logic taking over, as in a stronger form of mediatization, there is a mutual push and pull in the mediatization process. Push forces are those which are exerted by media on a social system to change, while the pull forces are those which are accepted by the social system to allow changes to occur. Marcinkowski (2014) was a supporter of this view and of studying mediatization from this weaker, push-and-pull perspective because it removes the victim mentality from stronger forms of mediatization. Downey and Neyazi (2014) believed it changed the idea that one institution, like media, necessarily takes something away from a social system (e.g., a family). Therefore, a social system is no longer a victim changing at the whims of media. Instead, there is a give and take where the social system is involved in the process of mutual change.

To this end, Birkner and Nölleke (2016) defined mediatization theory as the study of when social systems purposefully adapt to media due to a desire to gain media exposure. This definition makes complete sense in the context of their study because the researchers were focused on soccer players' purposeful adaptation to the media to gain publicity. Nölleke and Scheu (2018) later explained this from a slightly different angle, proposing that social systems purposefully create relationships with other social systems only if it is beneficial. This fits within an institutionalist approach to mediatization theory and would show why one family, as its own

social system, may choose to interact with media because they find it beneficial to their system. However, a different family may choose to avoid media as it is not found to be beneficial within their own social system.

Of course, when discussing how media changes social systems, Krotz (2018) provided an important key to understanding mediatization. While social systems are often thought to be stable systems, the fact is that media itself is always changing and there are new media developments on a regular basis. In this way, the media social system is not stable and thereby can cause instability within the social systems it impacts. This instability is further explained by Eskjær (2018), who noted that social systems, despite their independence from each other, are often “coupled” in that they remain autonomous and regulate themselves (p. 136). However, other systems are still capable of interacting with and impacting the individual system. Eskjær clarified that this coupling does not happen in a fixed, singular, or linear fashion. Instead, as a social system, the coupling adapts to certain aspects of media over time and is impacted, depending on what media selections it makes.

Nölleke et al. (2021) is one of the most recent studies to consider mediatization from a systems theory approach. They revisited previous studies done by researchers to reexamine mediatization studies for defensive mediatization strategies. In other words, they approached mediatization as a means of a social system managing media to its benefit through offensive and defensive strategies, as conceptualized by Scheu (2019). Scheu posited that most previous mediatization studies have focused on social systems allowing media systems to have an impact, often by choice. In other words, political actors have allowed mediatization to occur in order to gain more attention from the news media and hopefully more votes or a positive public opinion. Scheu stated defensive mediatization strategies were just as important to study. Defensive

strategies occur when a social system rejects media due to the risk of losing control or power within the social system.

Mediatization Strategies. Scheu (2019) found five types of mediatization strategies: opposing, working toward, defensive, balancing, and offensive. The opposing mediatization group limits its media adaptations and does not see the benefit of media for its social system. This group is not necessarily defensive against media, or actively trying to avoid it. Instead, it just does not see media as beneficial and therefore acts little on it. Scheu does make it clear that this group is likely not going to replicate in other studies, as it is a rare and difficult position to take in modern society. Second, those working toward mediatization believe there is benefit and opportunity in mediatization, but they do not have the resources to act on that belief. Third, the defensive mediatization type understands that mediatization is legitimate but they refuse to just let it have control. This group seeks to be purposeful in its adaptation to make sure they handle media in a beneficial way. Next, the balanced mediatization group readily allows for mediatization to happen but they utilize offensive and defensive strategies. In addition, they are strategic using media beneficially while protecting the values of their social system. Lastly, the offensive mediatization group readily adapts to media to gain as much publicity as possible. However, in doing so, they also give up the most autonomy over their social system.

Nölleke et al. (2021) stated that offensive and defensive mediatization strategies are not oppositional but complementary. Just like sports teams need both an offensive and defensive strategy to win a game, offensive and defensive strategies can be used together as a means of providing a social system with active mediatization, or a means to protect a social system's autonomy. In their study, revisiting previous research, they found three primary defensive mediatization strategies consistent across a secondary analysis of 14 sports autobiographies, 39

interviews with members of the justice system, interviews with 26 politicians, 32 scientists, and nine health professionals. Additionally, more than 700 documents and 70 interviews in currently ongoing studies related to health, justice, politics, and science were revisited. In this reanalysis, the researchers discovered the defensive mediatization strategies of persistence, shielding, and immunization.

Persistence occurs when actors in a social system continue to do what they have been doing because it is working for them and they do not feel the need to change, even if pressured by other systems (Nölleke et al., 2021). Shielding occurs when the actors in a social system make proactive decisions to shield or create barriers to limit media impact. Lastly, immunization occurs when social actors take steps to protect the system from the worst consequences of the media through training, so that the actors within the system “know how the media work and are able to preserve their autonomy” (Nölleke et al., 2021, p. 745).

Scheu’s (2019) groups and Nölleke et al.’s (2021) development of defensive mediatization strategies can be studied because they relied on the weaker form of mediatization, looking at social systems. Stronger form mediatization is difficult to study empirically because there is no set framework developed for its testing. However, once the roots in systems theory are established, as the researchers above demonstrated, a weaker form of mediatization that studies social systems becomes possible. This perspective of mediatization theory, which allowed Nölleke et al. the ability to develop mediatization strategies, was the focus of this study.

Decision-Making

To study the mediatization strategies used by mothers, this present study will use mothers’ decisions as a means of measuring mediatization strategies. While decision-making is an independent topic with enough literature that several studies would still only scratch the

surface, this review included a brief overview of the related decision-making literature in order to provide a clearer understanding of the measurement of mothers' decisions. The primary study that is key to understanding this present study is Mann et al. (1997), which considered the validity of the Flinders Decision-Making Questionnaire. The results of their study guided the decision-making portion of the survey in this present study, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

Aside from measures used to study decision-making, a large body of current literature exists on the topic. One key idea in decision-making research is that decisions can be made individually, in pairs, or in groups. For this literature review, individual decision-making and pairs were the focus. As group decision-making is least applicable to media-related decisions made by one or both parents, the need to focus on individual or couple decision-making was established. For individual decision-making, Ivask et al. (2021) looked at journalists making individual decisions about sensitive visuals published with their stories. While the study looked at individual decisions, it suggested that photographers should assist journalists. In this way, individual decisions were no longer the result. Also, Arciniega et al. (2019) considered individual decision-making in a work environment. Specifically, the study considered how a person's work value influenced their ethical or unethical decision-making. Their study showed that decision-making can measure other topics because decision-making was a measure used to study work value.

The previous studies looked at decision-making as an individual activity. However, except for single mothers, most individuals are in a partnership with a spouse or significant other who may impact their decisions. This present study did not account for couples making decisions together. Although, as many mothers are married, it is important to briefly discuss shared

decision-making. For instance, Marleah et al. (2023) used the Shared Decision Making Model to explore how heterosexual couples made decisions about family planning when there was a known inherited possibility of passing a genetic risk to the children. Additionally, Ackerman (2023) recently looked at how couples make decisions about giving to charitable organizations. The study found that, while most couples decide on making their giving decisions together, if one partner decides on their own, it is usually the mother. Therefore, this present study focused only on the mothers' media-related decisions for their children. The Ackerman study and studies previously discussed in the introduction from Coontz (2017) and Ericsson et al. (2021) showed that, despite modern egalitarian relationships, mothers are still more likely to assume caregiving responsibilities. Given this, mothers were the focus of this study.

Summary

This literature review provided a detailed and thorough understanding of mediatization theory. First, it provided an explanation of mediatization's place within the communication tradition and established its place as a communication theory. Second, the related literature for mediatization theory was reviewed. Next, an explanation of how mediatization theory has its roots in systems theory was provided, which creates a weaker form of mediatization. This present study was guided by this weaker form, which studies the mediatization of social systems and lends itself to creating an empirical framework for the study of mediatization. Preceding information guided the methods for this present study, which are explained in greater detail in the next chapter.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This quantitative study was guided by the research of Nölleke et al. (2021) and used mediatization theory to explore how mothers make media-related decisions for their children. Specifically, it used the idea of offensive and defensive mediatization strategies. This chapter examines how the researcher conducted the study. Sections address the study's research method and design, hypotheses and research questions, setting, participants, instrumentation, procedures, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

Research Method and Design

This study used an online survey, which is not widely used in mediatization research but is supported by Ekström et al. (2016). To date, little quantitative survey research has been conducted to provide mediatization scales that could be used in this study. What does exist has used secondary analysis, such as the study conducted by Hjarvard (2013). Alternatively, other survey studies provided minimal details about the methodology. For instance, Fischer-Nielsen (2012) sent a questionnaire to all pastors in a Danish church denomination. A few questions from the questionnaire were published in the chapter, but the entire survey was not included. Fischer-Nielsen's survey questions included: "For what purposes have you used the internet within the last three months?" (p. 57), and "Have you used the internet for the following purposes within the last three months?" (p. 58).

Another study that provided some perspective for this present research was Paus-Hasebrink et al. (2019). This research was a 12-year longitudinal, socioeconomic study of 18 underprivileged families through the mediatization framework. While the study primarily used interviews and observations, it also involved a quantitative questionnaire for analyzing the family's current living conditions after each wave of interviews. Accordingly, this study did an

excellent job of managing data and participants over time. Additionally, it showed that using qualitative and quantitative data can be combined and that families are a worthy subject to study for mediatization research. The procedures used in this study were beyond this project's scope but provided an excellent example of what mediatization researchers can do.

Kramp and Loosen (2018) relied on surveys of German newspapers to complete their research. Unfortunately, the links to supplemental material from the surveys are no longer active to provide a basis for other researchers to use. Friemel and Bixler (2017) used a mix of social media analysis methods and a questionnaire that focused on student ownership and use of media devices, apps, and programs. Hjarvard (2013) also studied how movies with religious themes and undertones, such as *The Davinci Code* or *Harry Potter*, influenced participants' religion. The study used a survey with quantitative questions to gauge participants' interest in spiritual matters, how they engaged with religion, and what movies impacted their faith or made them interested in religion. In addition to surveys, content analysis is another popular methodology in this field (Dalla Pria & Bonnet, 2022; de Souza & Hussain, 2021; Fredriksson et al., 2015; Gessese et al., 2021; Kołodziejaska & Paliński, 2022; Thimm et al., 2014; Van der Meer et al., 2019; Zaid et al., 2022). However, there was limited content to analyze in this study to attempt this research approach.

Nwankwo (2022) is the most recent study using an online survey to measure quantitative and qualitative data on the mediatization of worship through mobile phones in Lagos, Nigeria. In addition to the survey, which used Google Forms, the author also provided autoethnographic details since his own experiences heavily influenced the purpose of the study. Unfortunately, Nwankwo's survey instrument was not published in the journal article about his study to provide the groundwork for other researchers. As explained by Nwankwo, the survey used 15 closed-

ended questions that were related primarily to demographics, phone use, and religion for quantitative insights and nine open-ended questions for qualitative insights. The qualitative questions focused on the religious use of the participants' phones in church services. The survey collected results from 125 participants. While this is not a large number for quantitative research, Nwankwo stated that the study was exploratory and, therefore, the findings were acceptable.

While Nwankwo's (2022) study did not provide an exact example and support for this present study, it supported the use of an online survey for quantitative data collection. Finally, it provided a participant number that this present study aimed to reach in order to offer adequate quantitative data in this field, which is still largely exploratory. The researcher in this present study anticipated the survey would collect more participants than Nwankwo's study because it used snowball sampling and its topic allowed for wider eligibility criteria, while Nwankwo's study set more significant limitations on who could take the survey.

In addition to this support for a survey design, extant literature also supports the use of a social-constructivist approach to mediatization theory research. In fact, the basis of mediatization theory that is rooted in a systems theory approach helps mediatization researchers take on a social-constructivist lens because this approach views media effects as the catalyst to constructing reality within a social system (Adolf, 2011). Thus, using a quantitative survey showed how media has helped to construct the reality of mothers within their individual family social systems through the mediatization strategies they employed in raising their children.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

Krotz (2018) stated that the primary research question in mediatization theory should be to consider "How are everyday life, social relations, and the identity of people, how are organization and institutions, and how are culture and society as a whole changing in the context

of media development” (p. 45)? Obviously, answering all of these questions is too big for one study. However, this study aimed to rephrase the question and target mothers’ decision-making: How are the everyday lives of mothers, especially related to their decision-making about children’s media use, changing in context of media development?

Since this study was quantitative, the research was guided by two hypotheses and two research questions, the testing for which will be explained in greater detail later on in this chapter’s instrumentation section.

H1: Younger mothers (under 30 years old) will report the persistence mediatization strategy when making media decisions for their children.

H2: Younger mothers (under 30 years old) will report using the vigilance decision-making strategy about their children’s media use.

RQ1: Will mothers from different age groups make media-related decisions differently because of different mediatization strategies?

RQ2: Will mothers from different faith groups make media-related decisions differently because of different mediatization strategies?

Participants and Setting

Motherhood was the primary qualifier for participation in this study. Each participant was at least 18 years of age. Each participant was a biological female since birth and who either gave birth to, or adopted, at least one child. Participants spoke English well and lived in the United States. Since the survey looked at the decisions mothers make regarding their children’s media use, each mother had at least one child between the ages of five and 12. The age of five was selected because, by this point, mothers have likely experienced situations for media decision-

making. The age of 12 was selected because social media in the United States requires members to be at least 13. Therefore, this age implies more autonomy with media use.

The setting for this study was entirely online. The survey used Qualtrics to provide the online survey to mothers. The survey was distributed via various social media channels to which the researcher had access, as well as email. The author utilized Facebook, LinkedIn, and email to directly recruit participants to the survey. She also asked friends and family members to post and share a recruitment copy. Given this form of network sampling, it is likely that other social media were also utilized including, but not limited to, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat.

Instrumentation

The primary instrumentation for this study was an online survey using Qualtrics for creation and distribution. All non-demographic questions used a seven-point Likert scale. The survey was adapted from Nölleke et al. (2021) and Flinders Decision Making Questionnaire (Mann et al., 1997). The Nölleke et al. (2021) scale directly addressed mediatization strategies of persistence, shielding, and immunization. Using a cross-disciplinary approach, Nölleke et al. identified various means of determining mediatization strategies. In this current study, the author used Nölleke et al.'s framework to develop specific questions related to mothers' mediatization strategies. This scale was then used to measure H1, RQ1, and RQ2.

The Flinders scale about general decision-making was adapted for media decisions. The original Flinders scale contained six factors, four of which yielded acceptable reliability. In an effort to retain only the most relevant items, the current study included three items from each category with the highest factor loading score. This scale was then used to measure H2, RQ1, and RQ2.

Procedures

To conduct this study, the survey was posted online to various social media channels with a request for mothers to take the survey and share with their friends. The first page of the survey included a consent form to let the participant know about the survey and any potential risks. Although, the risks for this survey were minimal. The survey remained open and active for one month, which allowed time for more than 100 participants to complete it. The researcher posted requests on different social media channels and groups she had access to over the time that the survey was open. With each request, she asked anyone who saw the post to share it with their friends. Once the month was completed and it was confirmed that there were more than 100 usable and complete surveys, the researcher moved on to data analysis.

Data Analysis

Data analysis occurred after the survey closed to participants. First, the data was cleaned in Excel so it would all be usable in SPSS. Next, the researcher used SPSS to analyze it. All data analysis was completed by the researcher with input and guidance from the dissertation committee, who did not have access to the results. All information was password protected.

The first hypothesis (Younger mothers will report the persistence mediatization strategy when making media decisions for their children) was analyzed using a linear regression analysis. Given the ratio-level independent variable and interval (continuous) level dependent variable, this method was warranted. The criteria outlined by Wrench et al. (2019) was met for linear regression in this case.

The second hypothesis (Younger mothers will report the vigilance decision-making strategy when making media decisions for their children) was analyzed using a linear regression analysis. Given the ratio-level independent variable and interval (continuous) level dependent

variable, this method was warranted. The criteria outlined by Wrench et al. (2019) were met for linear regression in this case.

The first research question (Will mothers from different age groups make media-related decisions differently because of different mediatization strategies) was tested using multiple linear regression modeling. Wrench et al. (2019) asserted that, when an independent continuous ratio-level variable and a dependent continuous ratio level variable with a moderating variable are present, a multiple linear regression is warranted. The second research question (Will mothers from different faith groups make media-related decisions differently because of different mediatization strategies) met Wrench et al.'s criteria for an ANOVA because there was a nominal independent discrete variable, dependent continuous ratio-level variable, and a moderating continuous interval level variable.

Ethical Considerations

This study posed minimal risk to participants. Each participant completed a consent form on the first page of the survey before proceeding. Additionally, each participant was able to leave at any time. No questions of a sensitive nature were asked in this study. All data remained and will continue to remain anonymous. In addition, no identifying information was collected or could be linked back to any individual participant. Data was not and will not be shared outside the researcher's committee. The study did not require at-risk participants and, although it was possible that a participant could be pregnant, elderly, or incarcerated, these were not requirements for participation. All participants confirmed that they were over 18 years of age and were legally considered adults in the United States where the research was conducted.

Summary

This social-constructivist, quantitative study utilized an online survey methodology to answer the hypotheses research questions. The survey was based on previously created survey instrumentation and provided limited risk to its participants who were required to be mothers over the age of 18. The highest ethical considerations were taken at every stage of the research to ensure the comfort and safety of participants and the anonymity of the data they provided to the researcher for the purpose of this study. Now that the theories and methods for this study have been thoroughly explained, Chapter Four will provide an analysis of the results from the data collected and Chapter Five will provide a discussion of what the data means and why it matters.

Chapter Four: Results

The Institutional Review Board of Liberty University approved this study on May 2, 2023. The survey ran for one month, beginning on May 2, 2023, using the Qualtrics platform. The researcher used a snowball sampling method on the social media platforms of Facebook and LinkedIn, as well as via email. Collectively, 171 mothers participated, and 137 surveys were completed and usable for the final analysis. Data analysis began on June 2, 2023. First, the researcher cleaned up the data in Microsoft Excel to be compatible with SPSS. Once this step was complete, analyses were performed on the data through June 22, 2023.

Overview

Qualified, complete surveys reached a total sample size of 137 ($n = 137$). Participants ranged in age from 25 to 55 years. The mode was ages 33 and 37 ($n = 18$). The survey asked participants to answer questions based on their oldest child between the ages of five and 12. There was a relatively even spread of participants with a child in this age bracket, where 14 mothers reported having a six- or eight-year-old and 21 mothers reported having a seven-year-old. The children were mostly male ($n = 77$), with 43.1% being female ($n = 59$). One participant declined to share their child's sex. Participants had anywhere from one to eight children in their families, with the mode being two children ($n = 55$) and the least common number being six children ($n = 1$).

Participants largely reported being white ($n = 125$), with five non-Hispanic or Latino participants, three Hispanic or Latino, three Black or African American participants, and one Asian participant. Most were also on their first marriage ($n = 115$), with 13 participants being remarried, five divorced, two never married, one separated, and one in a cohabitation situation. Additionally, most participants ($n = 60$) had a bachelor's degree, an additional 31.4% of

participants (n = 43) had a graduate or professional degree, 30 mothers had some college or an associate's degree, and four had a high school diploma. Annual household income was varied and ranged from less than \$10,000 per year to \$199,999 per year. See Table 16 for a detailed breakdown of the mothers' income responses.

Regarding religion, most participants reported being in the Christian, Protestant, or White-evangelical category (n = 102). Christian; Protestant; all others was the next highest response category (N = 13). The next highest category was Christian; Protestant; White; non-evangelical (N = 8), followed by nothing in particular (N = 3), and agnostic (N = 2). Lastly one mother responded in the Catholic; White category and one mother responded in the Mormon category. Additionally, seven participants opted to write in their responses in the other category option. These responses included "African American Christian," "Christian; Christ-follower," "Christian and spiritual," "Christian; non-denominational," "Follower of Christ," "Follower of Jesus," and "Non-denominational." For an overview of all participant demographics, see Table 9 through Table 17, which are located in Appendix A.

In addition to basic demographic questions, the survey asked each mother participant to respond to which media her oldest child had access to, supervised and unsupervised. Table 1 represents the mothers' responses to these questions, which showed that children between the ages of five and 12 were most likely to use a tablet or watch television unsupervised but were less likely to use a computer, video games, the internet, social media, or a smartphone. With each media option in the survey, children in this age bracket were unlikely to use any media without supervision.

Hypotheses and Research Questions

This quantitative, social-constructivist study aimed to understand how mothers used mediatization strategies to make decisions about their children's media use. The method included a quantitative internet survey of mothers over 18. Without existing research linking mediatization to mothers' media-related decisions, an exploratory quantitative study was warranted to understand this phenomenon. The conclusions drawn from this study shed light on mediatization through the media-related decisions mothers make for their children. The following hypotheses and research questions served as a guide to studying this phenomenon.

H1: Younger mothers (younger than 30) will report the persistence mediatization strategy when making media decisions for their children.

H2: Younger mothers (younger than 30) will report the vigilance decision-making strategy when making media decisions for their children.

RQ1: Will mothers from different age groups make media-related decisions differently because of different mediatization strategies?

RQ2: Will mothers from different faith groups make media-related decisions differently because of different mediatization strategies?

Reliability and Descriptive Statistics

The primary test of mediatization strategies and decision-making in the quantitative survey used a seven-point Likert scale. Thus, to test reliability, Cronbach's alpha was run to ensure all items were measuring the same thing. Therefore, the perceived acceptability of the scale run in this study was $\alpha = .891$, $M = 77.75$, and $SD = 22.371$. Cronbach's alpha was found reliable for each question and would only be improved if question 18 was removed from the scale with an $\alpha = .893$.

Once the scale's reliability was confirmed, the statistical significance of each hypothesis was addressed. H1 was tested using linear regression because the mother's age is classified as an independent ratio-level continuous variable and mediatization strategies are a dependent interval-level continuous variable. This method was warranted based on Wrench et al.'s (2019) criteria for linear regression. The results of the linear regression analysis were $R = .040$, $R^2 = .002$, adj. $R^2 = -.006$, $F = .221$, $df = F(1,135) = 136$, $p = .639$, $B = .009$, $\beta = .040$, $t = .470$, and $p = .639$. Since $p = .639 > .05$, H1 was not supported.

H2 was tested using linear regression because the mother's age is classified as an independent ratio-level continuous variable and decision-making strategies are a dependent continuous interval-level variable. This method was warranted based on Wrench et al.'s (2019) criteria for linear regression. The linear regression was run for this hypothesis and $R = .033$, $R^2 = .001$, adj. $R^2 = -.006$, $F = .147$, $df = F(1,135) = 136$, $p = .702$, $B = -.027$, $\beta = -.033$, $t = -.384$, and $p = .702$. Since $p = .702 > .05$, H2 was not supported.

RQ1 was tested using a multiple linear regression because the mother's age is classified an independent continuous ratio level variable and media-related decisions are a dependent continuous ratio level variable with a moderating variable of mediatization strategies. This method is supported by Wrench et al.'s (2019) criteria for multiple linear regression. The results of the multiple linear regression were $R = .384$, $R^2 = .148$, adj. $R^2 = .142$, $F = 23.416$, $df = F(1,135) = 136$, $p = < .001$, $B = .019$, $\beta = .384$, $t = 4.839$, and $p = < .001$. Since $p = < .001 < .05$, RQ1 was supported.

RQ2 was tested using ANOVA because faith groups are classified as a nominal independent discrete variable, media decisions are a dependent continuous ratio level variable, and mediatization strategies are a moderating continuous interval level variable. Therefore, the

ANOVA criteria listed by Wrench et al. (2019) were met. The results of the ANOVA analysis are outlined in Table 2. First, the ANOVA was run with the dependent variable of decision making and an intercept variable created in SPSS, which combined faith and mediatization strategies. This resulted in $df = 73$ (between) and 63 (within), $f = 1.467$, $p = .060$, effect size $\eta^2 = .630$, $N = 137$, $n = 137$, mean squared (between) = 1.467 , and mean squared (within) = $.834$. Since $p = .060 > .05$, RQ2 was not supported.

While the results of the ANOVA were not statistically significant at an alpha of $.05$, this was an exploratory study. The alpha of $.10$ $p = .060 < .10$ demonstrated statistical significance for exploratory research, so the ANOVA was also run with each individual decision-making strategy as a dependent variable instead of combining all decision-making results into one variable. With this exploratory approach, two decision-making strategies were found to be statistically significant as shown in Table 3. For hypervigilance decision-making, the results were $df = 73$ (between) and 63 (within), $f = 1.515$, $p = .046$, effect size $\eta^2 = .637$, $N = 137$, $n = 137$, mean = 3.0073 , and $sd = 1.24162$. Since $p = .046 < .05$, this decision-making style was demonstrated as statistically impacted by mothers' faith because of mediatization strategies.

The results of vigilance decision-making were $df = 73$ (between) and 63 (within), $f = 1.123$, $p = .319$, effect size $\eta^2 = .565$, $N = 137$, $n = 137$, mean = 2.8273 , and $sd = 1.33401$. Since $p = .319 > .05$, this decision-making style was not demonstrated as not statistically impacted by mothers' faith because of mediatization strategies. For procrastination decision-making, the results were $df = 73$ (between) and 63 (within), $f = 1.324$, $p = .127$, effect size $\eta^2 = .605$, $N = 137$, $n = 137$, mean = 3.4501 , and $sd = 1.37413$. Since $p = .127 > .05$, this decision-making style was demonstrated as not statistically impacted by mothers' faith because of mediatization strategies. Finally, for buck-passing decision-making, the results were $df = 73$ (between) and 63

(within), $f = 1.548$, $p = .039$, effect size $\eta^2 = .642$, $N = 137$, $n = 137$, mean = 3.4501, and sd = 1.37413. Since $p = .039 < .05$, this decision-making style was demonstrated as statistically impacted by mothers' faith because of mediatization strategies.

Results

Based on the above information, RQ1 was supported and RQ2 was partially supported depending on the decision-making strategy used by the mother. The data for H1 and H2 were not supported. These results demonstrate that while a mother's age or religion, on their own, do not impact decision-making strategies, they become significant when moderated by mediatization strategies. Chapter Five provides a discussion on the significance of these findings. Since religion is statistically significant with buck-passing and hypervigilant decision-making strategies, it is important to visualize how participants in each religion category scored in both mediatization and decision-making strategies. These results are provided in Table 4 and Table 5.

In a post hoc analysis of the survey results, the researcher ran independent sample t-tests comparing mediatization strategies that mothers used with each of the demographics represented in the study. Demographics in this comparison included (1) mothers responding with a five-year-old versus a 12-year-old, (2) mothers responding with a male child versus a female child, (3) mothers from a white race versus non-white races, (4) mothers' education level, and (5) mothers with one child versus mothers with more than one child. The only analysis that yielded significant results compared mothers from group one, who had more than one child, to mothers from group two, who had only one child. Results for which mediatization strategies were used by mothers with different amounts of children are demonstrated in Table 6. For group one, the persistence mediatization strategy with equal variances assumed $t = .527$, $p = .058$, $N = 124$, $M = 3.1781$ and $SD = 1.10341$. For group 2 $t = .527$, $p = .058$, $N = 13$, $M = 3.0128$, and $SD = .73821$.

In addition to the post-hoc t-tests, the researcher ran an ANOVA test with each demographic variable in the survey to look for decision-making with each demographic moderated by mediatization strategies, as was conducted with the demographic variable of religion for RQ2. Education, income, and the sex of the child were all found to be not significant. However, marital status, the number of children, and race or ethnicity were all found to be significant when moderated for mediatization strategies.

For the variable of marital status, the results were $df = 63$ (between) and 73 (within), $f = 1.614$, $p = .025$, effect size $\eta^2 = .582$, $N = 137$, $n = 137$, mean = 3.3017, and $sd = 1.02158$. Since $p = .025 < .05$, marital status was demonstrated as significant. The mediatization strategies used by mothers in each marital status category are listed in Table 7. For the variable of number of children, the results were $df = 83$ (between) and 53 (within), $f = 1.784$, $p = .013$, effect size $\eta^2 = .736$, $N = 137$, $n = 137$, mean = 3.3017, and $sd = 1.02158$. Since $p = .013 < .05$, number of children was demonstrated as significant. The mediatization strategies used by mothers with a different number of children is listed in Table 6. Finally, for the variable of race or ethnicity, the results were $df = 55$ (between) and 81 (within), $f = 2.020$, $p = .002$, effect size $\eta^2 = .578$, $N = 137$, $n = 137$, mean = 3.3017, and $sd = 1.02158$. Since $p = .002 < .05$, race or ethnicity was demonstrated as significant. The mediatization strategies used by mothers in each race or ethnicity category are listed in Table 8. Additionally, it is important to note that in the post hoc ANOVA of faith and decision-making, without the moderating variable of mediatization strategies, the results were found to be not significant with a $p = .782$. This result showed that the moderating variable of mediatization strategies is necessary for significance in RQ2.

Summary

This quantitative study included two hypotheses and two research questions. The hypotheses were not supported. However, RQ1 was supported and RQ2 was partially supported. In addition, a post hoc analysis found additional significance findings between (1) the number of children and mediatization strategies and (2) two additional variables when the moderating variable of mediatization strategies was included. Based on this information, the following chapter concludes the study with a thorough report of what this data means, discussing the significance of the results, limitations, and how these results can further future communication research on mediatization.

Chapter Five: Discussion and Conclusion

Mediatization theory is an important theory in communication. Krotz (2014b) noted the theory corrected errors in previous theories, such as media ecology theory, that state media can only have one effect or bias. Thus, using mediatization theory to study how mothers make media decisions was a good fit in this research because it allowed for the mutual changes of media and motherhood to be considered. This study looked at the lived experiences of mothers through their media-related decisions to better understand mediatization theory, and more specifically, defensive mediatization strategies.

What is clear from the previously reviewed literature on mediatization theory is that it is a relevant theory in modern polymedia culture. That being said, there is still exploratory work to be done to gain a fuller perspective on the theory and how to use it. Much of the research that has been presented has conceptualized the idea of mediatization but has not empirically studied it. Early empirical research took on the cultural mediatization perspective. Ampuja et al. (2014) noted that this form is considered the stronger form because institutions are victims of the mediatization process with no say as to how the process occurs. Thus, the strength of more recent institutional and weaker-form mediatization research is that institutions can purposefully adapt to media or have some say in the process (Birkner & Nölleke, 2016).

The idea that institutions have a say, or some power, in the process is key to understanding mediatization and the results of this study. Parental concern about media is well-documented in recent research and goes back to the 1940s (Auxier et al., 2020; Clark, 2011; Clark, 2013; Mitchell, 1946; Zajonc, 1954). Parents feel the pressure of mediatization, whether the cause of concern is the radio or smartphones. Clark (2011) specifically noted that parents often make media decisions based on their emotions or how they feel in a particular moment,

with little pre-planning or strategy involved in the process. This reality is not difficult to understand, considering mediatization is generally thought of as a victimizing process which an institution is powerless to avoid. If moms feel this victimization or overwhelming control of media, then emotional and in-the-moment decisions make sense.

However, the weaker-form approach to mediatization research, rooted in systems theory, provides mothers in the decision-making process with power and hope that mediatization does not have to be a victimizing process in the family institution. Scheu (2019) described offensive mediatization, where institutions have power in the process and can choose to oppose mediatization, work toward it, defend against it, balance it, or allow it to happen. Nölleke et al. (2021) considered the defensive mediatization concept in more detail and found the three defensive mediatization strategies of persistence, shielding, and immunization. These strategies have not been explored in more detail until this present study, which used the strategies to understand mothers' media-related decisions. The result, which is explained in more detail throughout this chapter, is evidence that mediatization research can and should use quantitative methods to explore motherhood and other institutions in more detail. In addition, the results of this study demonstrate that the concept of mediatization strategies is worthy of more research.

The impact of mediatization strategies is powerful for mothers. Learning to use defensive mediatization strategies to have a say in the mediatization process is a concept that can empower mothers to forgo emotional, in-the-moment media decisions and help them recognize that there are tools and strategies available that allow them to have a say in the process. The quantitative results of this study can springboard further research on mediatization to help mothers understand more about what these strategies look like in real-life decisions, as well as outcomes and applications of these strategies in other institutions. This chapter provides an overview of the

research results and a discussion of important insights from this study, practical and methodological implications of the results, limitations of this study, and recommendations for future research.

As discussed in the results section, this study was guided by two hypotheses and two research questions. The study aimed to see how mediatization occurred in mothers' media-related decisions. The survey asked mothers with children between the ages of five and 12 to answer two questions about which media they allowed their oldest child to use in supervised and unsupervised settings. The mother participants were also asked to answer 24 Likert scale questions in order to determine each mother's mediatization and decision-making strategies. These responses were used to determine the validity of each research question and hypothesis. H1 was concerned with the mediatization strategy used by mothers and assumed that younger mothers would use the persistence mediatization strategy. H2 was concerned with the decision-making strategy used by mothers and assumed that younger mothers would use the vigilance decision-making strategy. In addition to these two hypotheses, the research included two research questions. The objective of RQ1 was to discover whether age, moderated by mediatization strategy, impacted mothers' decisions. This research question was supported and demonstrated as significant. RQ2 explored whether faith, moderated by mediatization strategies, impacted mothers' decisions. This research question was partially supported.

Summary of Results

Results indicated no support for H1 or H2. Since both findings were concerned with age, the results demonstrate that a mother's age alone does not play a part in the media-related decisions that she makes. While these findings were mathematically insignificant, they clearly show that there is something else at play in mothers' media-related decisions. Since age was not

significant, it is possible that the milestone of motherhood holds more significance than the mother's actual age. If, indeed, age is not significant in the media decisions made by mothers, future research should consider other milestones and see whether the results remain consistent with this study. Since Clark (2011) stated mothers often make media decisions based on how they feel in the moment, it is possible that the feelings and experiences of raising children in a media-saturated culture are powerful regardless of whether a mother is 25 or 55 years old. Therefore, this study demonstrates that mediatization strategies are not impacted by age.

Alternatively, RQ1 was demonstrated as significant and dealt with the mothers' age. However, the difference in this research question is that the dependent variable of decision-making was analyzed with an independent variable of age and moderated by mediatization strategies. In this analysis, age was found to have a significant impact on mothers' decisions, but only when moderated by mediatization strategies. This shows that while age was not important on its own, mediatization strategies made it important and this demonstrated just how crucial Nölleke et al.'s (2021) defensive mediatization strategies are in media decision-making.

RQ2 was partially significant, depending on which way a mother made her decisions. In this research question, the analysis was looking at the dependent variable of decision-making and the independent variable of faith moderated by mediatization strategies. Vigilance and procrastination were demonstrated as insignificant decision-making strategies in this research question. However, hypervigilance and buck-passing were found to be statistically significant, with buck-passing being the most significant strategy with $p = .039$. When reviewing Table 5, it is clear to see that buck-passing was the most used decision-making strategy across several of the religions represented in the study. In this way, faith is important in how mothers make decisions but only when considering the mediatization strategy used in the decision. The importance of

mediatization strategies in media decision-making was also supported by the post hoc analysis of RQ2 without mediatization strategies as the moderating variable, which showed no statistical significance.

The sample population in this study was primarily evangelical Christian and therefore could have impacted the result of this finding as there was consistency in the faith that most participants shared. However, unlike age, faith is something that gives participants similar experiences. While age can give similar experiences, differences in other areas of life such as geography and economics can still create vastly different experiences. Faith, however, creates a common bond outside of age or other demographics and instills similar values and religious experiences in people, regardless of where they live or how much income they make. Thus, the significance of faith in determining which mediatization and decision-making strategies mothers use could hold up in future studies, as mothers of similar faith would be expected to share similar parenting goals and therefore may consider similar mediatization strategies in their media-related decisions.

In a post hoc analysis of the results, the researcher ran other demographics to see if any other factors would appear significant. These factors included the child's age, income, marital status, race and ethnicity, number of children, and child's sex. Marital status, number of children, and race or ethnicity were significant findings in this analysis, when moderated by mediatization strategies. The only finding that was significant both with and without the moderating variable of mediatization strategies was the number of children a mother had. Interestingly, as shown in Table 6, mothers with two or eight children were most likely to use shielding, while mothers with one, three, four, six, or seven children were more likely to use persistence. Notably, while

mothers with five children were equally as likely to use persistence or shielding strategies, none of the mothers, regardless of their number of children, were likely to use immunization.

In addition to number of children being significant with or without the moderating variable of mediatization strategies, marital status and race or ethnicity were also found to be statistically significant, though only when moderated by mediatization strategies. Marital status was found to help to uphold the idea that age may not be as important as milestones, which is discussed later in this chapter. Race or ethnicity was an interesting finding, as it was the one variable in this study that was not based in some way on milestones or other non-controllable factors in life that change such as age. Experiences within cultural groups represented by race are likely to play a part in the mediatization strategies. Additionally, since 91.2% of participants in this study were white, as represented in Table 13, it is also possible that the results of this post hoc will not hold up in future studies with more diverse populations.

Discussion

The fact that a mother's age is not statistically significant in her media decision-making without mediatization strategies was a surprising but encouraging finding for mediatization research, especially the idea of defensive mediatization strategies. Based on previously reviewed literature in Chapter Two, Clark (2011, 2013) stated that mothers tend to make media decisions in the moment based on emotions or what feels right at the time. Additionally, Warren and Aloia (2019) found that parental example is the most significant indicator of children's media use. These statements led directly to the idea that younger mothers may experience mediatization and make media-related decisions for their children differently than older mothers, as they are more likely to use more media and have different emotional responses at their different ages.

A second reason this finding was surprising is because the age range for mothers in this study ranged from 25 to 55 years. A mother who is 25 years old today was born in 1998 and is a member of Generation Z. Someone in this generation would have grown up with technology in a way that older participants in this study, born in 1968 and a member of Generation X, would not have. This age gap, with millennials between the oldest and youngest participants, implies that age would play a difference in media decision-making.

Additionally, Connell et al. (2015) studied parental co-use of media with kids and found that parental age made a difference in whether parents would co-use media with their children. Younger parents were found to be more likely to co-use video games and smartphones, while older parents were more likely to co-use tablets. This finding was corroborated in the Warren and Aloia (2019) study, which found that parents were also more likely to co-use media with their children if the parent used the medium themselves. The Connell et al. study specifically looked at media co-using and not mediatization strategies, which is likely why there is difference in results based on age. On the other hand, the fact that mediatization strategies are a necessary moderating variable for significant findings in this study shows just how important defensive mediatization strategies are in media-related decisions for parents. Therefore, these strategies should be studied more in regards to both parenting and other institutions. To illustrate how mediatization and decision-making strategies were used by mothers based on their religion, which was found to be significant for persistence and buck-passing, Figure 1 breaks down each mediatization strategy by religion represented in the sample population of this study.

Similarly, Figure 2 demonstrates how decision-making strategies were measured only based on which religion was most likely to use which strategy and not based on effectiveness. As noted by the significant results in RQ2, the buck-passing category was the most reported, with

nine religions reporting this type of decision. Though the agnostic category also tied highest with vigilance, the categories of “nothing in particular,” “other,” and “follower of Jesus” also tied with procrastination. The least reported categories were vigilance and hypervigilance, with only two responses each. Vigilance and buck-passing tied as the highest reported responses by mothers in the agnostic category. Vigilance was also reported highest by the Mormon participants. Hypervigilance was reported highest by the categories of “other,” “Christian and spiritual,” and “Christian non-denominational.” While effectiveness was not measured, it is obvious that the more passive categories of buck-passing and procrastination ranked highest across the board when compared with the more active strategies of hypervigilance and vigilance.

Implications

This study has methodological implications for mediatization research and practical implications for mothers. As the study used mediatization theory as a foundation, it has extended the research on mediatization theory outside of politics, where mediatization theory was originally rooted. Additionally, this study focused on motherhood and the media decisions they make for their children, as moderated by defensive mediatization strategies. Thus, the study has implications in for the methodology and practical implications for mothers.

Methodological

This study is one of only a handful of mediatization studies that have used a quantitative methodology (Fischer-Nielsen, 2012; Friemel & Bixler, 2017; Hjarvard, 2013; Kramp & Loosen, 2018; Nwankwo, 2022). Thus, this study, especially with its significant findings, showed that quantitative methodology is possible and worthwhile in mediatization theory research. The most significant aspect of the findings in this study is that, with exception of the number of children a mother had, decision-making had to be moderated by mediatization strategies to be significant by

age, religion, marital status, or race or ethnicity. Given this, more important than the demographic variable was the moderating mediatization strategy mothers used when making their media-related decisions. Since this study was focused specifically on the defensive mediatization strategies used by mothers when making mediatization decisions, this finding is key for the methodology because it shows (1) mediatization research can be studied from a quantitative perspective and (2) mediatization strategies are an important concept to continue researching. More quantitative research is needed on this topic to support the ideas demonstrated in this research and to see if they hold up in other settings and populations. There are limitations in this study, detailed later in this chapter, that may have impacted both the negative and positive results.

In addition to this study adding to the quantitative body of mediatization literature, it also furthers communication research in the socio-cultural tradition. The socio-cultural tradition views communication as a means of studying how communication creates reality (Apuke, 2017). This perspective fits together with mediatization research. Specifically, this tradition fits with weaker-form or institutional mediatization research, which this study represented. The idea that social systems are created by the communication of those in the system is key to understanding both institutional mediatization and socio-cultural communication research. Thus, this study demonstrates that mothers play a role in creating the social systems of their families through the media-related decisions they make for their children.

Institutional mediatization research that follows this socio-cultural perspective gives moms the tools and ability to defend against mediatization using mediatization strategies. Thus, mothers do not need to allow mediatization to overpower their families however it pleases, as earlier stronger-form mediatization researchers would suggest. Instead, they will play an active

role in developing their family social system by using persistence, shielding, and immunization defensive mediatization strategies.

Practical

This study has many practical implications. First, it showed that defensive mediatization strategies are key to understanding the media-related decisions mothers make. While the number of children a mother has did stand alone as one demographic that did not require mediatization strategies to moderate media-related decisions, for all other significant demographics (i.e., age, religion, marital status, and race or ethnicity), the defensive mediatization strategies were essential. For this reason, future studies should examine larger or more diverse samples of mothers to see what more can be learned about the defensive mediatization strategies mothers use in their media-related decision-making. Understanding these strategies can help empower parents as they make media-related decisions for their families. Since this study only measured strategies used and not effectiveness, future studies could study effectiveness so that mothers could learn if their current strategies are effective or if they should consider alternative mediatization strategies when making media-related decisions that could improve outcomes for their children in adulthood.

Third, this study implies that moms can utilize the defensive mediatization strategies, developed by Nölleke et al. (2021). The strategies were developed by Nölleke et al. after thoroughly reviewing several mediatization studies and other documents to look for evidence of mediatization strategies. This study was the first to use these strategies to develop a way to quantify how they are used in a real-life situation. In this case, they were applied to mothers as they make media-related decisions for their children. Thus, moms no longer need to fear media or feel powerless against the mediatization process, as they would from a stronger-form

mediatization viewpoint. Instead, they can work toward building their individual families through utilizing mediatization strategies to have a say in how mediatization takes place in their own social system. While more research on the topic is necessary, this study has provided practical significance for mothers in that they can learn how these mediatization strategies provide them a choice and say in raising their children in a media-saturated culture.

Delimitations and Limitations

Several decisions were made in this study that positively and negatively impacted the study. The use of snowball sampling helped the sample size grow quickly so that the study could proceed in a timely manner. Additionally, using social media was a very effective way to grow the sample size quickly and effectively. These strategies worked how they were intended to work, bringing in the necessary number of participants with completed surveys within a month. In addition to the delimitations previously mentioned, the narrowed focus of this study for mothers who only had children between the ages of five and 12 was beneficial in studying a small population with children who are starting to gain independence but not at the stage where parents would fully trust them to be completely independent with their media choices yet. This study would likely have very different results with a different age range for the children.

Despite the study's strengths, several limitations likely impacted the research results. The biggest limitation was that the snowball sampling resulted in participants similar to the researcher. While participants were asked to share the survey with friends, and many did, the study population largely represented a white, evangelical Christian population. This population is also representative of the Bible Belt location in which the researcher lives, showing that while the study did snowball past her small social media presence, it did not snowball outside of her faith community. Therefore, even though other faiths were represented, the evangelical

population was disproportionately represented in this study. This limitation could have impacted the research question results since the sample was significantly white, evangelical Christians and the common faith and race or ethnicity variables may have also created a similarity in mediatization strategies.

This limitation could also be why other demographics were not found to be a significant factor without mediatization strategies, as most of the participants shared the role of a mother in common as well as faith and race or ethnicity. With more variance in faith and race or ethnicity, other demographics may have become more significant. However, it is also important to note that Krotz and Hepp (2011) suggested studying mediatized worlds or the mediatization of small cultures. While this study intended to study a small culture of mothers in the United States with children between the ages of five and 12, the participants' disproportionate representation of a smaller subculture within that population unintentionally strengthened the mediatized world within this study to be mostly white, protestant, evangelical Christian mothers with children between the ages of five and 12.

In addition to the sample size that significantly represented evangelical Christians, the sample size was small with only 137 participants. While this is representative of other quantitative mediatization studies (Nwanko, 2022), a larger sample would have produced more reliable results. More participants would also have potentially helped the study have a more diverse population. Beam (2023) and Rosenzweig et al. (2020) stated that social media surveys are a quick way to collect participants, especially if a researcher is looking to reach a specific demographic. To reach specific demographics, researchers should use targeted ads. As this present study only used personal social media with requests for participants to share, future

studies should consider spending a small amount of money on ads to increase visibility of the survey on social media and better reach the targeted population.

Quantitative surveys are an excellent way to gather data quickly. However, despite attempts to be as clear as possible with questions, there is the possibility that participants' subjective understanding of the questions could have skewed results. For instance, the questions about media use asked mothers what media they allowed their children to use in supervised versus unsupervised settings. Some mothers may likely consider supervision as co-using media with their children, while others may consider it supervision to ensure parental controls are in place on the device. There are also several options mothers can use for supervision between those two options. For instance, while one mother may choose not to allow her child to watch television without direct supervision, that same child may be allowed to watch television shows on a tablet device where the mother is able to (1) set parental controls to certain ratings or (2) only allow the child to use specific child-friendly streaming services that the mother considers a safe option for unsupervised access. Thus, while Table 1 clearly shows that children between the ages of five and 12 mostly have access to media with supervision, the level of supervision and whether that supervision is provided by the parent or parental controls is unknown and warrants more exploration in future studies.

The challenges in understanding supervision lead directly to present-day polymedia culture, which was another limitation of this study and the main challenge facing mediatization research. This challenge has been well-documented by Livingstone and Lunt (2014), Madianou (2014), and Fornäs et al. (2007). This study was no exception to this limitation. Modern polymedia culture allows a variety of media to accomplish the same goals, thus making it challenging to define and specify media to participants in the study. For instance, mothers were

asked which media their children had access to in supervised and unsupervised settings. The results of this question can be reviewed in Table 1, which show that 52 children did not have tablet access with supervision. The reason for this reality could be because the child's parents do not own a tablet and therefore the child is instead supervised using a computer or smartphone, which can be used for the same tasks as tablets.

Similarly, as previously explained, it may also be that the child is, in fact, watching television shows. Since the parents want more control over what shows are being watched and advertisement exposure, the mother may only allow her child to watch shows on a device like a tablet with a streaming service that is child-friendly or has a high level of parental control. In this way, the child is technically watching television, but on a tablet. Similarly, video games, social media, and the internet, which are media the survey asked participants about, can be accessed on tablets, smartphones, computers, and even some televisions. Therefore, as there could be significant variation in what is represented by these results, the topic of how children are using media, and not just what media they use, warrants further exploration.

Future Research

Considering the limitations discussed above, there are many opportunities for future research to expand on this study. First, reconducting this study in a different part of the country with a more diverse population, especially where faith is concerned, could provide a different view of the same study and produce different results from the sample in this study. Second, future research could incorporate a mixed-methods approach to this topic. Mixed-methods research could incorporate interviews with mothers or add a qualitative component to the survey. This approach to the study would help researchers understand not just what mediatization strategies are significant but would also provide support for why they are significant.

Considering this, future research could also include a mediatization study that looks to see how media use changes with age. This study could be either a survey study with a large age range, without the prequalification of motherhood, or a longitudinal study that follows participants from childhood into adulthood. The goal would be to see how media use and mediatization strategies change with age. This study could also show whether parenting or other milestones equalize for similar media use and mediatization strategies, regardless of age. The concept of age may also be the wrong approach to mediatization strategies research. Instead, life milestones may have a greater impact than the age at which milestones occur. Since two of the post hoc analyses showed that marital status and the number of children impact media-related decisions when moderated by mediatization strategies, and these demographics could be considered milestones, it stands to reason that milestones may be significant in the mediatization strategies that mothers use.

Therefore, future studies could approach the topic of mediatization strategies and various life milestones such as a first job, marriage, childbirth, as well as children's milestones (e.g., starting school) to see if they are key indicators of mediatization strategies. Finally, there could be exceptional value in a study that extends this research a step further by considering the outcomes of mediatization strategies. For instance, a study could look at the mediatization strategies mothers use with children in the five to 12-year-old age range and explore the outcomes of those strategies once the children start making more independent media decisions as they age from 13 years old and into adulthood.

Summary

Motherhood is a well-studied topic by a variety of disciplines. Many studies in the field of communication have looked at mothers as the primary sample. In addition, mediatization is a

well-studied communication theory. Although it is more traditionally applied to political communication, it has branched out into other social sciences in recent years, making it a perfect option for this study on how mediatization strategies have impacted the media-related decisions mothers make for their children. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided this study to accomplish this task. After analyzing the results of the survey-based quantitative study, both hypotheses were insignificant. One research question was significant and the other was partially significant, which showed that age and religion alone do not determine mothers' media-related decisions. Instead, age or faith, moderated by mediatization strategies, do play a significant role in mothers' media-related decisions. This study showed that while mediatization is traditionally viewed as a powerful and unavoidable process that will change an institution against its will, more recent ideas on institutional mediatization, rooted in systems theory, provide institutions some power in the process. Thus, mothers can use defensive mediatization strategies in their family social systems to gain some control in how the mediatization process occurs within their families.

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Appendix A: Tables

Table 1

Children's Media Access as Reported by Their Mothers

	No	Yes
Tablet with supervision	52	85
TV with supervision	25	112
Computer with supervision	101	36
Video games with supervision	76	62
Internet with supervision	95	42
Social media with supervision	129	8
Smartphone with supervision	94	43
Tablet without supervision	111	26
TV without supervision	108	29
Computer without supervision	132	5
Video games without supervision	113	24
Internet without supervision	132	5
Social media without supervision	135	2
Smartphone without supervision	131	6

Table 2*ANOVA for Research Question 2 for All Decision-Making Variables*

	df	f	p	Mean Squared	η^2
Decision Making (Between Groups)	73	1.467	.060	1.467	.630
Decision Making (Within Groups)	63			.834	

*Significant with an alpha of .05.

Table 3*ANOVA for Research Question 2 for Each Decision-Making Variable*

	df	f	p	Mean	sd	η^2
Hypervigilance (Between Groups)	73	1.515	.046*	3.0073	1.24162	.637
Hypervigilance (Within Groups)	63					
Vigilance (Between Groups)	73	1.123	.319	2.8273	1.33401	.565
Vigilance (Within Groups)	63					
Procrastination (Between Groups)	73	1.324	.127	3.4501	1.37413	.605
Procrastination (Within Groups)	63					
Buck Passing (Between Groups)	73	1.548	.039*	3.4501	1.37413	.642
Buck Passing (Within Groups)	63					

*Significant with an alpha of .05.

Table 4*Mediatization Strategies by Religion*

Religion	Persistence	Shielding	Immunization
Agnostic	1.8750	1.8750	2.6250*
Catholic, white	1.500	3.2500*	2.0000
Christian, protestant, all others	3.5769*	3.3269	2.8077
Christian, protestant, white evangelical	3.2328	3.3456*	2.8775
Christian, protestant, white non-evangelical	2.7500	3.2500*	2.7188
Mormon	4.2500	5.2500*	4.7500
Nothing in particular	3.0833*	3.0833*	3.0000
Other: African American Christian	4.0000*	3.5000	3.2500
Other: Christian and spiritual	3.0000	2.5000	4.2500*
Other: Christian: Christ-follower	2.0000*	1.5000	1.0000
Other: Christian non-denominational	4.500*	3.2500	3.2500
Other: follower of Christ	5.0000	5.7500*	3.7500
Other: follower of Jesus	4.2500*	3.5000	4.2500*
Other: non-denominational	5.2500	4.7500	5.5000*

Notes: * indicates highest number represented for each religion.

Table 5*Decision-Making Strategies by Religion*

Religion	Hyper Vigilance	Buck Passing	Vigilance	Procrastination
Agnostic	2.1667	2.5000*	2.5000*	1.8333
Catholic, White	3.3333	5.3333*	2.6667	2.0000
Christian, Protestant, all others	3.3333	3.8974*	2.6923	3.6154
Christian, Protestant, White evangelical	2.9118	3.9183*	2.8562	3.4183
Christian, Protestant, White non-evangelical	3.2083	3.7917*	2.9167	3.0833
Mormon	3.3333	5.3333	5.6667*	5.6667*
Nothing in particular	3.3333	3.8889*	2.0000	3.8889*
Other: African American Christian	4.0000	4.3333	2.6667	4.6667*
Other: Christian and spiritual	4.0000*	3.3333	3.0000	3.6667
Other: Christian: Christ-follower	2.3333	3.3333*	1.0000	2.3333
Other: Christian non- denominational	4.3333*	3.6667	3.3333	4.0000
Other: Follower of Christ	4.6667	5.3333	1.0000	5.6667*
Other: Follower of Jesus	2.3333	4.0000*	4.26667	4.0000*
Other: non- denominational	3.3333	5.3333*	4.6667	5.0000

Notes: * indicates highest number represented for each religion.

Table 6*Mediatization Strategies by Number of Children*

Number of Children	Persistence	Shielding	Immunization
1	3.3462*	3.1731	2.5192
2	3.2227	3.5409*	3.1136
3	2.9778*	2.9556	2.5222
4	3.5577*	3.5000	3.1731
5	3.6667*	3.6667*	3.2500
6	4.5000*	4.2500	3.2500
7	5.3750*	4.2500	5.2500
8	3.3750	3.7500*	3.0000

Notes: * indicates highest number represented for each category.

Table 7*Mediatization Strategies by Marital Status*

Marital Status	Persistence	Shielding	Immunization
Divorced	2.5500	2.7000*	2.5500
First Marriage	3.2370	3.3391*	2.9000
Living Together	5.7500*	5.2500	5.2500
Never Married	2.6250*	2.6250*	2.6250*
Remarriage	3.5000*	3.5000*	2.9038
Separated	3.2482	3.3339*	2.9051

Notes: * indicates highest number represented for each marital status.

Table 8*Mediatization Strategies by Race or Ethnicity*

Race/Ethnicity	Persistence	Shielding	Immunization
Asian	1.7500*	1.7500*	1.0000
Black or African American	2.9167	2.4167	3.0833*
Hispanic or Latino	3.1667*	2.2500	2.4167
Not Hispanic or Latino	3.5500	4.000*	3.3000
White	3.2482	3.3339*	2.9051

Notes: * indicates highest number represented for each race or ethnicity.

Table 9*Mother's Age*

	N	%
25	1	0.7%
26	1	0.7%
27	1	0.7%
29	5	3.6%
30	5	3.6%
31	2	1.5%
32	4	2.9%
33	18	13.1%
34	5	3.6%
35	13	9.5%
36	4	2.9%
37	18	13.1%
38	11	8.0%
39	5	3.6%
40	9	6.6%
41	9	6.6%
42	6	4.4%
43	6	4.4%
44	3	2.2%

45	3	2.2%
46	1	0.7%
47	4	2.9%
50	1	0.7%
54	1	0.7%
55	1	0.7%

Table 10*Children's Age*

	N	%
10	19	13.9%
11	20	14.6%
12	17	12.4%
5	17	12.4%
6	14	10.2%
7	21	15.3%
8	14	10.2%
9	15	10.9%

Table 11*Children's Sex*

	N	%
Female	59	43.1%
Male	77	56.2%
Prefer not to say	1	0.7%

Table 12*Number of Children*

	N	%
1	13	9.5%
2	55	40.1%
3	45	32.8%
4	13	9.5%
5	6	4.4%
6	1	0.7%
7	2	1.5%
8	2	1.5%

Table 13*Mother's Race/Ethnicity*

	N	%
Asian	1	0.7%
Black or African American	3	2.2%
Hispanic or Latino	3	2.2%
Not Hispanic or Latino	5	3.6%
White	125	91.2%

Table 14*Mother's Marital Status*

	N	%
Divorced	5	3.6%
First marriage	115	83.9%
Living together	1	0.7%
Never married	2	1.5%
Remarriage	13	9.5%
Separated	1	0.7%

Table 15*Mother's Education*

	N	%
Bachelor's degree	60	43.8%
Graduate or professional degree	43	31.4%
High school diploma	4	2.9%
Some college or Associate's degree	30	21.9%

Table 16*Mother's Income*

	N	%
Less than \$10,000	2	1.5%
\$20,000 - 29,999	1	0.7%
\$30,000 - \$39,999	4	2.9%
\$40,000 - \$49,999	11	8.0%
\$50,000 - \$59,999	9	6.6%
\$60,000 - \$74,999	16	11.7%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	28	20.4%
\$100,000 - \$124,999	32	23.4%
\$125,000 - \$149,999	12	8.8%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	14	10.2%
More than \$200,000	8	5.8%

Table 17*Mother's Religion*

	N	%
Agnostic	2	1.5%
Catholic, White	1	0.7%
Christian, Protestant, all others	13	9.5%
Christian, Protestant, White evangelical	102	74.5%
Christian, Protestant, White non-evangelical	8	5.8%
Mormon	1	0.7%
Nothing in particular	3	2.2%
Other: African-American Christian	1	0.7%
Other: Christian and spiritual	1	0.7%
Other: Christian Christ-follower	1	0.7%
Other: Christian non-denominational	1	0.7%
Other: Follower of Christ	1	0.7%
Other: Follower of Jesus	1	0.7%
Other: Non-denominational	1	0.7%

Appendix B: Figures

Figure 1

Mother's Mediatization Strategies by Religion

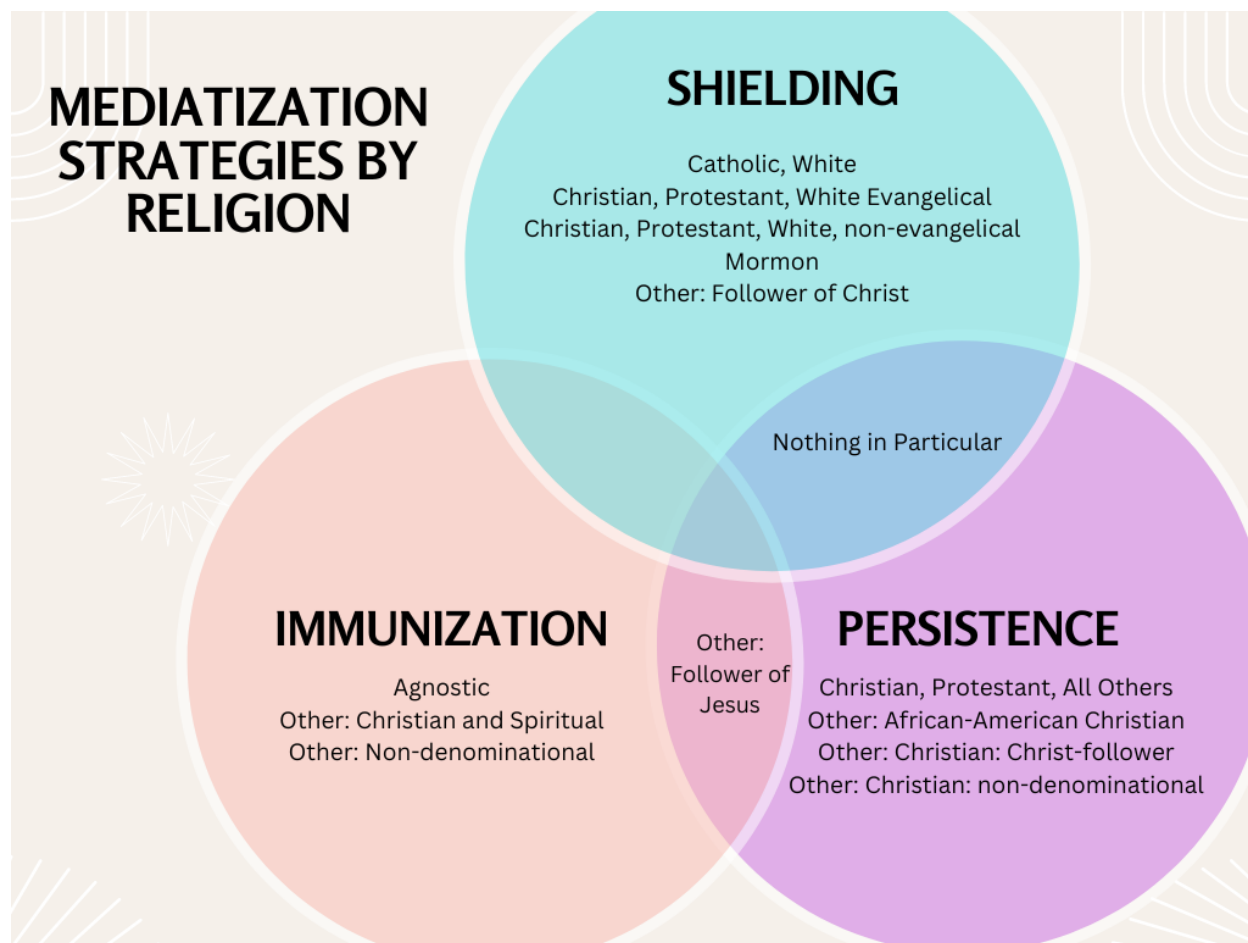
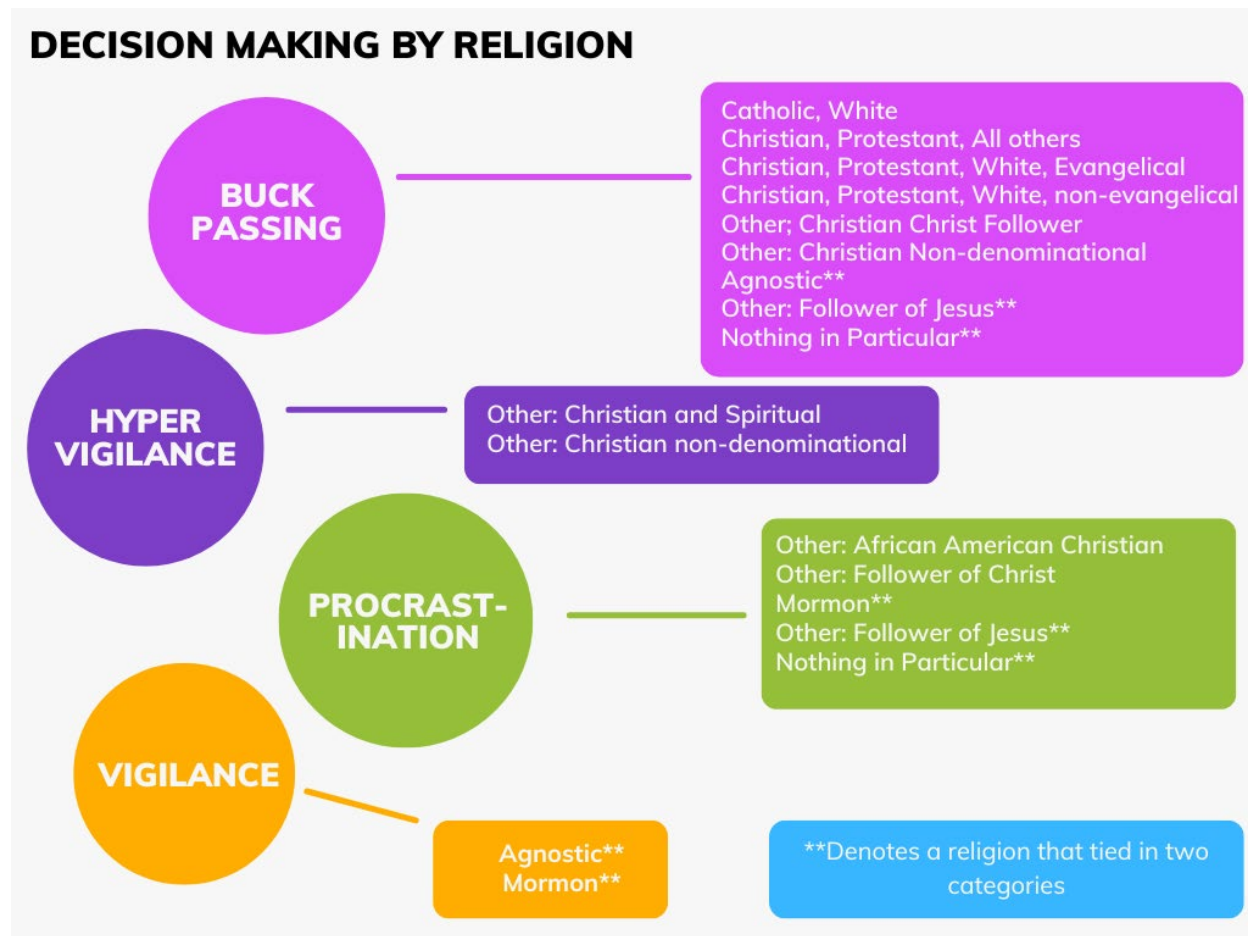


Figure 2

Mother's Decision-Making by Religion



Appendix C: IRB Survey Consent Form

Title of the Project: An Exploration of Mediatization and Motherhood Media Decision-Making

Principal Investigator: Emily Young, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study: You are invited to participate in a research study.

To participate, you must be an English-speaking mother over the age of 18 with at least one child between the ages of five and 12 primarily living in the United States as a U.S. citizen. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done? The purpose of the survey will be to understand better how mothers make decisions about their children's media use.

What will happen if you take part in this study? If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following: Participate in an anonymous online survey that should take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

How could you or others benefit from this study? Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

What risks might you experience from being in this study? The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected? The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher and faculty sponsor will have access to the records. Participant responses will be anonymous. Data will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years; all electronic records will be deleted and all hardcopy

records will be shredded.

Is study participation voluntary? Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time prior to submitting the survey without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study? If you choose to withdraw from the study, please exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

The researcher conducting this study is Emily Young. You may ask any questions you have now.

If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Andrea Scott, at [REDACTED].

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations.

The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. You can print a copy of this document for your records. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

Do you agree to the above terms? I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Appendix D: Survey Recruitment Email

Dear Recipient:

As a graduate student in the School of Communication and the Arts at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Ph.D. in Communication. The purpose of my study will be to understand better how mothers make decisions about their children's media use. I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be English-speaking mothers primarily living in the United States who are over the age of 18 and have at least one child between the ages of five and 12. Participants, if willing, will be asked to complete an anonymous online survey. It should take approximately 15 minutes to complete the survey. Participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

To participate, please click here:

https://liberty.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_7V6Ba0ZbVR0gB4a

A consent document is provided as the first page of the survey. The consent document contains additional information about my research. After you have read the consent form, please click the link to proceed to the survey. By doing so, you will indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the survey.

Sincerely,

Emily Young

Doctoral Candidate



Appendix E: Survey Recruitment Social Media

ATTENTION MOTHERS: I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Ph.D. in Communication at Liberty University. The purpose of my research is to understand better how mothers make decisions about their children's media use. To participate, you must be an English-speaking mother in the United States who is at least 18 years of age and has at least one child between the ages of five and 12. Participants will be asked to complete a survey which should take about 15 minutes to complete. If you would like to participate and meet the study criteria, please [click here](#). A consent document is provided as the first page of the survey. Please review this page, and if you agree to participate, click the "proceed to survey" button at the end.

To take the survey, Click here:

https://liberty.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_7V6Ba0ZbVR0gB4a

Appendix F: Survey Instrument

My name is Emily Young. I am a doctoral candidate at Liberty University. Please consider participating in this brief survey to help me learn more about the media related decisions parents make on behalf of their children. These responses will help future parents make good media choices for their children.

These first questions are to ensure the participant is qualified to take the survey:

Sex: M/F (if male leave survey)

Age: 0-17, 18+ (if 0-17 leave survey)

Are you a mother: Y/N (if no leave survey)

Do you have at least one child ages 5-12 years old?: Y/N (if no leave survey)

Are you a U.S. citizen primarily living in the U.S.? Y/N (if no leave survey)

Section 1: Demographics

What is your age:

Free range response

Race/Ethnicity:

White

Black or African American

American Indian or Alaska Native

Asian

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

Hispanic or Latino

Not Hispanic or Latino

Marital Status:

First marriage

Remarriage

Living together

Widowed

Divorced

Separated

Never married

Education:

Less than high school diploma

High school graduate (includes equivalent)

Some college or associate's degree

Bachelor's degree

Graduate or professional degree

Children:

How many children do you have?

What is the age of each child?

What is the sex of each child?

Media access: check all that apply

What media does your child currently have access to? (smart phone, tablet, TV, computer, internet, social media (subgroups: Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram YouTube, TikTok), video games).

What media does your child currently have access to without parental supervision? (smart phone, tablet, TV, computer, internet, social media (subgroups: Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram YouTube, TikTok), video games).

Annual Household Income:

Less than \$10,000

\$10,000 to \$14,999

\$15,000 to \$19,999

\$20,000 to \$24,999

\$25,000 to \$29,999

\$30,000 to \$34,999

\$35,000 to \$39,999

\$40,000 to \$44,999

\$45,000 to \$49,999

\$50,000 to \$59,999

\$60,000 to \$74,999

\$75,000 to \$99,999

\$100,000 to \$124,999

\$125,000 to \$149,999

\$150,000 to \$199,999

\$200,000 or more

Religion

Christian

Protestant

White evangelical

White, non-evangelical

Black Protestant

All others

Catholic

White

Hispanic

All others

Mormon

Orthodox Christian

Other Faiths

Jewish

Muslim

Buddhist

Hindu

Other

Religiously Unaffiliated

Atheist

Agnostic

Nothing in particular

Refuse to answer

Section 2: Decision Making

For this and the next section, please think of your oldest child between 5-12 years old.

When I make media related decisions for my child –

Please use the following scale: very strongly agree/strongly agree/agree/neutral/disagree/strongly disagree/very strongly disagree

1. I feel as if I'm under tremendous time pressure when making media decisions.
2. I prefer to leave the media decisions to others.
3. I try to find out the disadvantages of all media alternatives.
4. I avoid making media decisions
5. When I have to make a media decision, I wait a long time before starting to think about it.
6. I try to be clear about my objectives before choosing.

7. If a media decision can be made by me or another person, I let the other person make it.
8. Whenever I face a difficult media decision, I feel pessimistic about finding a good solution.
9. I take a lot of care before choosing. I choose on the basis of some small thing.
10. I delay making media decisions until it is too late.
11. After a media decision is made I spend a lot of time convincing myself it was correct.
12. I put off making media decisions.

Section 3: Media Use

Again, please consider your oldest child between 5-12 years old.

Please use the following scale: very strongly agree/strongly agree/agree/neutral/disagree/strongly disagree/very strongly disagree

When considering my child's media use...

1. I don't feel the need to seek out information about my child's media use.
2. I am content with my child's media use.
3. I see no reason to make changes to my child's media use.
4. I see no need to research media-related choices for my child.
5. I use parental blocking technology on my child's devices.
6. I do not let my child use devices without my supervision.
7. I do not let my child use their friends' technology devices.
8. I do not let my child use relatives/family technology devices.
9. I teach my child how to safely engage with media.
10. I use media with my child

11. I research age-appropriate media for my child.

12. I discuss difficult media decisions with my child.

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your response will help future parents make good media decisions for their children.

Appendix G: Survey Instrument with Measures

My name is Emily Young. I am a doctoral candidate at Liberty University. Please consider participating in this brief survey to help me learn more about the media-related decisions parents make on behalf of their children. These responses will help future parents make good media choices for their children.

These first questions are to ensure participant is qualified to take the survey:

Sex: M/F (if male leave survey)

Age: 0-17, 18+ (if 0-17 leave survey)

Are you a mother: Y/N (if no leave survey)

Do you have at least one child ages 5-12 years old?: Y/N (if no leave survey)

Are you a U.S. citizen primarily living in the U.S.? Y/N (if no leave survey)

Section 1: Demographics

What is your age:

Free range response

Race/Ethnicity:

White

Black or African American

American Indian or Alaska Native

Asian

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

Hispanic or Latino

Not Hispanic or Latino

Marital Status:

First marriage

Remarriage

Living together

Widowed

Divorced

Separated

Never married

Education:

Less than high school diploma

High school graduate (includes equivalent)

Some college or associate's degree

Bachelor's degree

Graduate or professional degree

Children:

How many children do you have?

What is the age of each child?

What is the sex of each child?

Media access: check all that apply

What media does your child currently have access to with parental supervision? (smart phone, TV, computer, internet, social media (subgroups: Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram YouTube, TikTok), video games).

What media does your child currently have access to without parental supervision? (smart phone, TV, computer, internet, social media (subgroups: Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram YouTube, TikTok), video games).

Annual Household Income:

Less than \$10,000

\$10,000 to \$14,999

\$15,000 to \$19,999

\$20,000 to \$24,999

\$25,000 to \$29,999

\$30,000 to \$34,999

\$35,000 to \$39,999

\$40,000 to \$44,999

\$45,000 to \$49,999

\$50,000 to \$59,999

\$60,000 to \$74,999

\$75,000 to \$99,999

\$100,000 to \$124,999

\$125,000 to \$149,999

\$150,000 to \$199,999

\$200,000 or more

Religion

Christian

Protestant

White evangelical

White, non-evangelical

Black Protestant

All others

Catholic

White

Hispanic

All others

Mormon

Orthodox Christian

Other Faiths

Jewish

Muslim

Buddhist

Hindu

Other

Religiously Unaffiliated

Atheist

Agnostic

Nothing in particular

Refuse to answer

Section 2: Decision Making

For this and the next section, please think of your oldest child between 5-12 years old.

When I make media-related decisions for my child –

Please use the following scale: very strongly agree/strongly agree/agree/neutral/disagree/strongly disagree/very strongly disagree

1. I feel as if I'm under tremendous time pressure when making media decisions. HV
2. I prefer to leave the media decisions to others. BP1
3. I try to find out the disadvantages of all media alternatives. V3
4. I avoid making media decisions. BP2
5. When I have to make a media decision, I wait a long time before starting to think about it. P3
6. I try to be clear about my objectives before choosing. V2
7. If a media decision can be made by me or another person, I let the other person make it. BP3

8. Whenever I face a difficult media decision, I feel pessimistic about finding a good solution.

HV1

9. I take a lot of care before choosing. I choose on the basis of some small thing. V1

10. I delay making media decisions until it is too late. P2

11. After a media decision is made I spend a lot of time convincing myself it was correct. HV3

12. I put off making media decisions. P1

Key:

HV = Hypervigilance

BP = Buck Passing

V = Vigilance

P = Procrastination

Section 3: Media Use

Again, please consider your oldest child between 5-12 years old.

Please use the following scale: very strongly agree/strongly agree/agree/neutral/disagree/strongly disagree/very strongly disagree

When considering my child's media use...

1 I don't feel the need to seek out information about my child's media use. P

I use parental blocking technology on my child's devices. S

I teach my child how to safely engage with media. I

I do not let my child use devices without my supervision. S

I am content with my child's media use. P

I use media with my child. I

I see no reason to make changes to my child's media use. P

I research age-appropriate media for my child. I

I do not let my child use relatives/family technology devices. S

I see no need to research media-related choices for my child. P

I do not let my child use their friends' technology devices. S

I discuss difficult media decisions with my child. I

Key:

P = Persistence

S = Shielding

I = Immunization

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your response will help future parents make good media decisions for their children.