

ROLE OF TELEVISION IN CHANGE OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAMILY MEMBERS

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ABSTRACT

This article has brought out a total analyze of T.V relationship with family , in the first halves of the article we have seen the definition of media and the evolution of T.V, then in the middle halves of the article we have analyzed and compare the relationship of T.V with family members by throwing lights in the early period and also in the present period and then we have discussed about the positive gains that have been derived from the T.V and then in the lower halves of the article we have focused on the major impacts of T.V and came to concluded that relationship of T.V with family at one side gives families privileges and on the another side it gives the families mostly the bad effects and so for the welfare of family in our society I would recommend that relationship with T.V should be kept in a safe distance from the family by the family members like that relationship that family members used to keep in zoo from animals. With the passage of time media has become the base of our society. It had been helping us by providing useful information relating to politics, soaps, movies day to day life affairs, tragedies, historical materials, geographical knowledge, temperature of places, notification about events, synopsis of share market etc. It had been providing us information of the above mentioned types through the medium of T.V, newspapers, internet spontaneously without any break, In the last 50 years we had seen that the media influence has grown exponentially with the advance of technology, first there was the telegraph, then the radio, the newspaper, magazines, television and now the internet.

Key Words: Television and Family

Introduction:

Families and television are practically inseparable. Although television sets are now prominently featured in restaurants, airports, lounges, and the like, the center of television viewing remains in households and with families.

The relationship between families and television is symbiotic. Television depends on families for viewership and to buy the wares it advertises, thereby keeping the television industry financially solvent. Families depend heavily on television for information and entertainment, for subject matter for conversation and casual interaction, and for many other social and psychological functions.

Despite these mutual dependencies, families often have a love-hate relationship with television. Judging from the immense quantity of time modern families spend watching television programs, one might assume that television would be liked and admired by most if not all families. In fact, television is widely criticized for the negative effects it allegedly has on family members,

especially children. Included in this criticism are concerns about the way families are portrayed on television and the negative effects television programming has on family values.

The Changing Family

When people talk about the family, undoubtedly many think of the "classical" nuclear family. However, modern families only rarely are accurately characterized by stereotypical images of Dad, Mom, Sis, and Junior. The National Opinion Research Center (NORC) has conducted annual nationwide surveys about families since the early 1970s. An NORC report entitled "The Emerging 21st Century American Family" (Smith, 1999) indicates just how much the American family evolved in the last quarter of the twentieth century. The following are some of the major changes that have been observed:

- ◆ whereas at the beginning of the 1980s most American families included children, by the year 2000 just 38

- percent of homes included children,
- ◆ although two married parents with children aptly described the typical family unit a generation ago, by the year 2000 that type of family could be found in only one in four households,
 - ◆ the most typical household in the year 2000 was that of an unmarried person with no children, which accounted for one-third of all U.S. households (double the 1990 rate),
 - ◆ whereas three out of four adults were married a generation ago, only slightly more than half of them were by the year 2000,
 - ◆ divorce rates more than doubled between the 1960s and the 1990s,
 - ◆ the number of women giving birth out of wedlock increased dramatically over the past generation, from 5 percent of births to nearly one-third of births, and
 - ◆ the portion of children living with a single parent increased over one generation from one out of twenty to approximately one out of five children.

In other words, those who see families only in stereotypical terms of a mother, father, and two-plus children have a very inaccurate image of families.

The Changing Television

As David Atkin (2000) noted, it is best to conceive of television as a dynamically changing variable. In fact, television may have changed even more than have families since the early 1970s.

Many of television's most notable changes have happened within the family context. A generation ago, the typical family had a single television that was located in the living room or the family room. As the twenty-first century began, television sets were scattered throughout the home and had become increasingly portable. A national survey conducted for the Kaiser Family Foundation (Rideout et al., 1999) revealed that, whereas 35 percent of homes in 1970 had more than one television set, 88 percent of homes had more than one set in the year 2000. In fact, 66 percent of households surveyed had three television sets, 20 percent of homes had four sets, and 12 percent had five or more sets.

Programming sources changed as dramatically as the number of receivers. As recently as the mid-1970s, what had been seen on television was determined largely by the relatively homogeneous programming of three major commercial broadcast networks (ABC, CBS, NBC) and the

somewhat divergent programming of one public network (PBS); by the year 2000, what was viewed on the household's many sets was in part determined by whether signals were delivered by cable, satellite, broadcast, VCR, DVD, the Internet, or other sources; whether the viewer subscribed to premium services; and by the type of programming the viewer preferred.

Television changed dramatically in many other ways during the last quarter of the twentieth century—in terms of technology, network ownership, regulation, audience research, finances, and other factors too numerous to mention. Perhaps the most important way that television changed in terms of family use, however, was that as the twentieth century drew to a close, many parents appeared to be relinquishing their control of the television set to the children. Two findings from the Kaiser Family Foundation survey (Rideout et al., 1999) are illustrative: In 1970, 6 percent of sixth graders had a television set in their bedroom; by the year 2000, 77 percent of sixth graders had a working television set in their bedroom. Moreover, by the year 2000, approximately one-half (49%) of children did not have any rules about how much or what kind of television they could watch. These changing norms regarding parental "gate keeping" suggest that attention needs to be paid to how families use television.

Family Use of Television

Throughout the 1990s, Nielsen Media Research has reported that a television in the typical American household is turned on for approximately seven hours per day. These findings indicate that, after sleeping and working, television watching consumes the largest share of a typical American's time.

Although television viewing varies considerably by household, Jennifer Kotler, John Wright, and Aletha Huston (2000) have identified some useful developmental and demographic trends in viewership. Children from two to five years of age watch between two and three hours of broadcast or cable television per day, and they spend nearly thirty minutes per day watching videos. Their television diet is made up largely of "edutainment" programming and cartoons. Children from six to twelve years of age watch television slightly less than preschoolers, in large part because they are in school several hours per day. This age group watches a lot of cartoons, comedies, and music television. Teenagers watch less television than younger children and tend to watch music television, comedies

featuring younger casts, and reality programming.

Among adult family members, women watch more television than do men. Older adults watch more than younger adults. Viewing differences also vary by educational and ethnic factors. George Comstock (1991) has pointed out that highly educated and economically advantaged families watch less television than their less educated and poorer counterparts, and that African-American and Hispanic-American families watch more television than European Americans, even when socioeconomic status is controlled.

Roper Organization surveys indicate that more than two-thirds of the American public turn to television as their major source of news. When asked what medium they would most want to keep if they could have only one, respondents to the Roper polls between 1959 and 1999 chose television; since 1967, television has held more than a two-to-one advantage over its nearest rival, the newspaper. As a possible indication of things to come, the most recent Kaiser Family Foundation poll (Rideout et al., 1999) reported that more children (eight years of age and older) said they would choose computers rather than television, if they were forced to pick only one medium.

Do Television's Families Affect Viewers' Families?

Public concerns about the way families are depicted on television typically are grounded in assumptions that family portrayals on television will be assimilated into the psychological reality of the viewing public. Theories such as Albert Bandura's (1994) social cognitive theory or George Gerbner's cultivation theory (e.g., Gerbner et al., 1994) suggest that such media effects can and do occur, for better and for worse. Psychologists Jerome and Dorothy Singer (e.g., Singer, Singer, and Rapaczynski, 1984) have underscored such concerns, arguing that television has as much potential to influence the family as does the home environment, parental behavior, and the socioeconomic status of the family. Moreover, several influential research summaries have reached the conclusion that such concerns are valid, after examining considerable empirical evidence of media effects on families. For example, the National Institutes of Mental Health, in their summary of research about television's effects, concluded that the behaviors in "television families almost certainly influence viewers' thinking about real-life families" (Pearl, Bouthilet, and Lazar, 1982, p. 70).

Such findings suggest that it is imperative that

scientists continue to monitor the way families are portrayed on television. Moreover, researchers must continue to strive to understand better the effects of television's portrayals on the public health and psychological well-being of society's rapidly evolving families.

The relationships between television and the family are not fully explored by asking about the effect of portrayals. Indeed, a significant body of research asks not what television does to families, but how families use television. These perspectives, with particular emphasis on the children within viewing families, can be roughly subdivided into three over-lapping areas of research: family image, parental mediation, and the family viewing context.

Family image. The paradigmatic question asked by researchers within this area is: What is the effect of television content about families on viewers? Research has looked for evidence that television's images of marriage and family life influence the conceptions that children and adults hold about family. Social learning theory (Bandura 1977) argues for imitative behavior and learning from television of behaviors seen as rewarding and realistic. It uses both imitation and identification to explain how people learn through observation of others in their environment. The cultivation perspective (Gerber and Gross 1976) posits the cultivation of a worldview skewed toward that of televised portrayals among heavy viewers. This worldview, although possibly inaccurate, becomes the social reality of heavy viewers. Both social learning theory and the cultivation perspective provide the theoretical linkage between exposure to content and its consequence.

Evidence suggests that depictions do have consequences. For example, those who watch more television than average, particularly children, tend to hold more traditional notions of gender roles. Television cultivates beliefs in children such as "women are happiest at home raising children" and "men are born with more ambition than women" (Signorielli 1990).

Images of family life itself may also be influenced. Heavy viewers tend to perceive being single as negative, express profanity sentiments, and believe that families in real life show support and concern for each other. On the other hand, heavy soap opera viewers tend to overestimate the number of illegitimate children, happy marriages, divorces, and extramarital affairs (Signorielli 1990). In all, these studies suggest that media portrayals reflect and reinforce views about the nature of the family in society. Changing

social norms and television portrayals mean that assessing the impact of portrayals must be an ongoing effort.

Parental mediation. The paradigmatic question for those working within this area is: What is the structure and effect of parental mediation of television viewing? Within this domain researchers ask about the nature and consequences of the efforts made by parents to influence the potential outcomes of exposure. Much of the writing within the area has concentrated on coviewing, rulemaking, and interaction.

Coviewing. Television viewing with family members is common. Reports estimate that 65 to 85 percent of young children's viewing is with family members, with more than half of that viewing with parents (Van Evra 1998). Although early studies equated coviewing with mediation, research soon established coviewing was more coincidental than planned, and most likely had a modeling rather a mediative effect on children (Singer and Singer 2001). Coviewing occurred least often with younger children, who need it most, and reflected similar preferences rather than explicit mentoring. Viewing with siblings clearly influences the younger child: they watch up to the older children's preferences, and are the recipient of older siblings' interpretation.

Interaction. A number of studies convincingly demonstrate the potential for family interaction to mediate the impact of television. In experimental settings parental or adult comments have been found to aid children's understanding of program content to shape perceptions of families in the real world, to foster critical viewing skills, and to increase recall of information from educational programs (Bryant and Bryant 2001). Despite these potential benefits, little evidence exists to suggest that Coviewing between children and their parents can help the children develop critical viewing skills, increase understanding of content, and increase recall of information. Here, a French family watches election coverage together. OWEN FRANKEN/CORBIS parents actually engage in these behaviors. Coviewing in a context of limited interaction tends to be the norm, restricting the learning that interaction could promote.

There is a growing body of observational research that describes how interpretation of meaning is accomplished within the family viewing context. Most of the research in this area has focused on the development of

children's understanding of the television medium. Empirical observation of interaction is sparse, but the existing research suggests that children as well as adults create television-related interactive sequences. Very young children interact with the television during viewing, including naming or identifying familiar objects, repeating labels, asking questions, and relating television content to the child's experience. The majority of sibling television-related interaction for these young children was interpretive in function. Younger children asked about character identification, problematic visual devices, narrative conventions, and the medium *per se* (Lindlof 1987).

Interview and observational data reinforce these conclusions. Mothers report frequent use of interpretive or evaluative statements. They describe a variety of interactions in which they tell children about things that could not happen in real life, including drawing complex distinctions between the improbable and the impossible and explaining disturbing images, such as immorality and poverty (Van Evra 1998). Rulemaking. In many families television gives rise to issues involving control of how much, when, and what is viewed. Control of television viewing has been studied in terms of explicit rules about amount and content of exposure, sometimes called restrictive mediation. The most consistent finding is the paucity of rules, with estimates ranging from 19 to 69 percent of families that report any rules, varying due to age of children, class, and by whether mother or child responded (Singer and Singer 2001). Parents commonly report more attempts to control the amount and time of viewing of younger children, and the viewing content of older children. Beyond the explicit rules about television viewing that operate within the family system, it is easy to miss the implicit rules that govern viewing. For example, the television may never be on during weekend days because children have learned that if parents find them "goofing off too much" they will be assigned chores. Although it is doubtful that anyone would describe this as a family rule, such practices have the force of limiting viewing contexts.

The family viewing context.

The paradigmatic question within this research frame is: How do families use television within the family system? One important area of research addresses the uses and gratifications tradition that asks about the psychological needs and motivations of viewers and their gratifications from viewing. Thus, researchers in this tradition have explored family uses of media as an aggregate of individual

viewing motives and gratifications.

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the consumption of media became an increasingly solitary experience. Multiple television sets, as well as video games, computers, and stereos, allow members, particularly older children, to select content based on individual needs. Viewing becomes a social family activity when a special event occurs, such as a special movie rental or a major television event such as the Super bowl.

Family systems-based media research uses a communicative perspective on the role of television in family interaction and begins by examining the family as the context in which viewing is performed and made meaningful. Of the many contexts that influence meaning and behavior, none is more ubiquitous than the family. This integrationist perspective from family process research has been modified by communication researchers with a strong symbolic orientation to become the predominant position in the field of communication.

The most frequently used measure of family communication in mass communication research comes from the work of Jack McLeod and Steven Chaffee (1973). Their schema of family communication patterns is based on two communicative dimensions (socio- and concept-orientation) in which parents stress harmony and obedience on the one hand, and negotiation and self-reliance on the other. It has been linked with differences in political knowledge, exposure to types of programming, social adaptability, and family rules.

From a critical/cultural perspective, researchers have asked about how media and families consuming media are reproducing social structures of power in regard to race, class, and gender. For example, David Morley (1986) examined the construction of gender roles in his observations of the media selection process in homes in the United Kingdom. Steven Klein writes about the political economy of children's television production, and the resulting commercialization of childhood (Klein 1993). Concerns with media literacy are international in scope. Many countries have adopted media literacy programs for children, with strong emphases on understanding the commercial nature of media systems and its possible consequences (Buckingham 1998).

With the emergence of interest in qualitative investigations of how media are used in everyday life, researchers began to observe the nature and consequences of television-related interaction in the home (Lindlof 1987).

One major conclusion from this line of research is that television may serve an almost limitless range of diverse uses and functions. Family members can watch television to be together, or to get away from each other; as a basis for talk or to avoid interaction; as a source of conflict, or an escape from it (Lull 1980). Because much of the time that family members spend together is in the presence of television, television at least partially defines the context within which family interaction occurs and therefore helps determine the meaning of that interaction. From this perspective, family themes, roles, or issues are carried out in a variety of contexts, and the television viewing context becomes one in which it is useful to study patterns of family interaction in general. As such, media are implicated in the accomplishment of numerous family functions, including defining role expectations, articulating the nature of relationships, and using economic and relational currencies in the negotiation of intimacy and power.

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