



A Brief History of Children and Media Research

Workshop on Media Exposure and Early Child Development

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Recurring Concerns, Topics of Study, and Public Policy

- The introduction of each new technology of the past more than 100 years—film, radio, television, computers, and digital media—brings with it recurring concerns about children’s use of these new technologies

What Motivates Concerns?

- Children are early adopters and heavy users of new technologies
- Concerns about children's use of time—how youth spend leisure time with media and not other activities such as schooling

Leisure Time

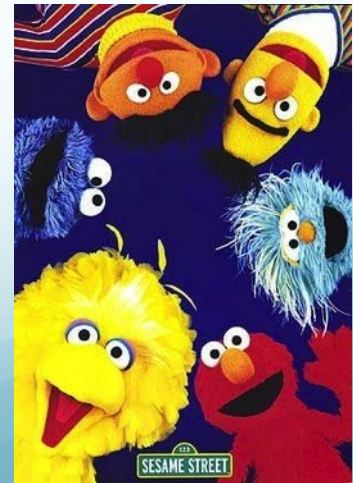
- By 1920's, concern that kids had too much leisure time
- 1911: Study of children age 11-14, 62% went to the movies 1 or 2x per week
- 1930's: Popularity of radio, teens spent 10 hrs per week with media (radio, movies, concerts)
- 1985: 14 hours, 14 mins of TV per week
- 2005: Spend 6.5 hours per day w/media
- 2015: 8 to 18 year olds average 9 hours of entertainment media use each day

Promises and Concerns

- Educational potential and social benefits
- Exposure to inappropriate content, especially violence, sex, and advertising

What themes repeated with each new type of media?

- Hope for educational benefit
 - Movies: “A means for education”
 - Radio: Vast potential to bring information & entertainment into homes, schools, etc.
 - TV: Bring sound and images into homes—opera, theater, sports, political events, educational talks, demonstrations



What themes repeated with each new type of media?

- Concern for violence
 - Movies: Immoral—exposing children to “violence and debauchery”
 - Radio: Showing too much crime and violence on children’s programs
 - TV: Teach violence and crime



“Your father kicked in the screen and threw the set out the window. He feels violence on TV is a bad influence.”

Film Era- Payne Fund Studies (1928-1934)

- 12 volumes of research by leading social scientists of the day examined the effects of movies on children and youth
- Diverse topics such as effects on sleep patterns, attitudes toward violence, and delinquent behavior
- First use of Galvanic Skin Response measurement and life history technique

Radio Era (1930s and 1940s)

- Increase in children's radio shows from 40 minutes per week in 1928, to 6 hours per week in 1930, to 21 hours per week in 1933
- Over same period, loss of educational radio stations (in 1927, 95 educational radio stations; in 1934, 35 educational radio stations)
- Programming too violent and emotionally arousing

Television Era

- 1955: Congressional hearings of TV crime and juvenile delinquency
- 1972: Surgeon General's study of television and social behavior
- 1974: 78 FCC and FTC hearings on TV advertising to children
- 1990: Children's Television Act passed
- 1994-1998: National Television Violence Studies

Television Studies (1950s-2000s)

Famous conclusion of 1972 Surgeon General's study:

“For some children under some circumstances some television has an effect”

Digital Media Era

- Social media use and adolescent depression
- Effects of virtual reality and augmented reality on perceptual development
- Effects of constant technology connection on children's well-being

What Matters in Studying Media Effects on Children?

CHILD

CONTENT

CONTEXT

Conclusion

- Every new technology is accompanied by a wave of both panic and excitement about potential effects, which is reflected in both popular press and empirical support.