

Mediated Minds Conference, University of Cincinnati, Blue Ash April 19, 2019

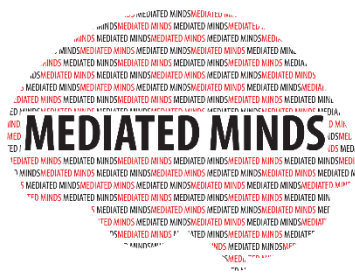
Utilizing Cultivation and Social Cognitive Theory to Understand the Media's Impact on Adolescents

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Abstract — In this presentation I will explore the development of adolescents through cultivation and social cognitive theory with the goal of determining the effects media has on children. Media is a such a major part of our day and it should come to no surprise that media is starting to impact the development of people, specifically adolescents. When something surrounds you throughout your entire day it is easy to conform and copy specific traits without even realizing it. Before media you would typically see children copy traits from other family members or friends and it was easier to control, but now with television and social media it is getting harder to control what children see. At such a young age you are influential and are more likely to mimic other people you see on specific platforms.

I. INTRODUCTION

Social cognitive and cultivation theory show that children consuming media are more likely to be influenced by their peers. The media impacts the way that children are acting and what characteristics they are developing. Cultivation theory makes people think that the real world is related to the world they see on TV and think that what you see on TV is what you can do in real life. Social cognitive theory shows that it is common for kids to adapt specific traits from characters they see in the media. These two theories show how media can impact the development of adolescents and what the effects can lead to. Social cognitive theory is when people consume media and start modeling their own behavior after what they see from specific characters they identify with. The development of children has changed immensely throughout the years due to the vast changes in media consumption. Through watching television and consuming either types of media such as YouTube children can start to conform to the actions they see. People see others doing a specific thing and think it is normal to do that same thing. We are starting to conform to the media and this can become manipulative if done correctly. Within specific shows there are traits that adolescents will adopt to be more like that character. At this age they are influential and are more likely to do things they see their peers doing. Cultivation theory studies that people who consume more



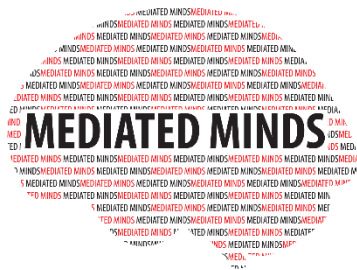
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television are more likely to see the real world as the way television reflects it. If you consume high amounts of television it starts to become harder to distinguish between TV and real life. Growing up in this type of environment you start to believe everything you see on TV.

II. FINDINGS

Cultivation theory says that people who consume more television are more likely to see the real world in the way that TV reflects it. When there is a specific message that is repeatedly shown then people become more likely to have those beliefs. This theory was first introduced by George Gerbner who said that television was influencing story telling during that time in society. The study of media was started in the mid-1960s to see how people watching television were being affected by what they saw. It states that watching television can have long term effects that start to impact people in their everyday lives. There can be different affects based on if they are a “light” viewer, who watches less than hours a day, and those who are “heavy” viewers, who watch 4+ hours a day. If you see someone on TV doing something you think you are able to do the same things, “media exposure to dangerous driving behaviors influence participants attitudes regarding driving,” (Wright and Kelly, 2018). Shows on TV make characters look invincible and this leads to teenagers thinking they can do the same things and nothing will go wrong. They forget about real consequences that can come from their actions.

Social cognitive theory is when people consume media and start to model their own behavior after what they see from specific characters they identify with. The development of children has changed immensely throughout the years due to the vast changes in media consumption. We are surrounded by media and it is easy to use things like the television to entertain children. As parents you can do as much as possible to monitor what you child is watching, but at times they are still being exposed to things that can impact their development. Through watching television and consuming either types of media such as YouTube children can start to conform to the actions they see. In the developmental stages it is critical for parents to demonstrate good behavior to instill in children versus negative things they see on different forms of media.



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