Lecture 9: Media & Children

Why Media & Children?

- Often the issue is framed in terms of “protecting kids vs. first amendment”

3 Approaches in Violence Studies

1. Clinical Studies: Psychiatrists & psychologists; typically talking to kids who’ve gotten into trouble → “not normal” kids → maybe some truth to media cause, but can’t tell which direction (e.g. reverse causality is likely, etc.); also, can’t generalize to the entire population of kids
2. Surveys: Again, causal inference is difficult
3. Experiments: Causal inference is good here, but generalizability may be a problem

Social Learning Theory: Observational Learning

- Def.: Social Learning Theory - Learning through Observing Models

- Learning through observing, not necessarily through actually doing and being either rewarded or punished.
- Symbolic events (e.g. television contents) can produce an equal amount of learning

- Triadic Determinism – These three factors determine and influence the learning through observing models

1. Personal Factors
   - Cognitive abilities, goals, etc.
2. Environmental Factors
   - Peers, culture, social structures, where you live, etc.
3. Behaviors
   - actual physical, attitudes, emotions

4 Fundamental Processes of Symbolic/Observational Learning

- Attention
  - Def.: Acquisition of new/additional information from the media (i.e. model).
  - Content Factors: Attributes of the event or model make a diff. In terms of how and what you learn – (1) Salience – Stand out? (2) Affective Valence – Emotional responses (3) Complexity (vs. simple) (4) Prevalence (frequency –
ex) substance abuse) (5) functional value – useful to you? (e.g. for social purposes, etc.)
- Observer Factors: (1) Perceptual capabilities (e.g. eyesight, training in the area (music) (2) Perceptual set – Guides what you look at (3) Arousal level (e.g. a curvilinear relationship) (4) Acquisition preference – what you like and attend to
- Importance of “Consequences”: Pay more attention to the “rewarded” behaviors;

- Retention
  - Def.: Encoding → Then, storing for later retrieval & using for subsequent action
  - Cognitive Rehearsal: Fantasizing images of yourself → Rehearse in head (ski slope) for future use → Anticipatory learning process

- Production
  - Def.: Conversion of the symbolic representation into subsequent actions
  - Appropriateness Cue: Similar setting & context from model to life (e.g. futuristic violence has typically less impact than realistic violence)

- Motivational
  - Various Incentives: Why would you do the production processes? The most important issue here is the expected consequences/outcome.
  - External Incentives: Sensory, tangible (object), social (acceptance) control
  - Vacarious Incentives: Indirect, abstract, delayed consequences. Departure from immediate, concrete consequences. Watch behaviors & consequences of others (kids need connections)
  - Self-Incentives: Reward oneself (tangible) & self evaluations (personal standards)

⇒ Learning vs. Performance Distinction: Here the “Learning vs. Performance” distinction is extremely relevant & important ⇒ Learning = Acquisition (Internal, unobservable), Performance = Later Behavior
- Why Consequences is so important?
  Ex) Bandura → Bobo doll experiment → Boys more aggressive than girls → Each more aggressive when rewarded vs. punished → No consequences when expecting punishment almost identical amount of aggressiveness as when rewarded → No Consequence = Reward → Then, when asked (= reward) to do it, they all do it. → Shows that those who did not perform did learn
Violence in Media

3 Major Effects of Viewing Symbolic Violence

1. Increased Aggressiveness
   
   - Comstock: 4 Factors Mediating Responses to Symbolic Violence
     
     1. Efficacy: Affect perception; worth learning; are there consequences (reward/punishment); does it work (utility)
     
     2. Normativeness: Seems to be way the world is (the norm); justification of behaviors; intentionally hurtful
     
     3. Pertinence: Relate to your life? Cartoons as fantasy → Not pertinent; Realistic is important for learning; but, fantasy found more powerful than control group, especially for younger viewers
     
     4. Susceptibility
       
       - Learning vs. Performance Distinction Revisited: Again, this distinction is relevant → If incentives are provided, then susceptible.

2. Desentization:
   
   - People ignore real attack → Media dampen our responses to plight of others? Increases amount of violence viewed, the level of sensitization over in physiological response decreases → Overload
   
   - Catharsis Hypothesis: A Countering hypothesis to the desensitization hypothesis
   
   - Watch a lot of violence → Releases violent impulses (without action)

3. Fear
   
   - Watching violence makes us more fearful (cultivation); change how people relate to each other
   
   - People tend to exaggerate the violence in the society → Become fearful → Cultivation studies is a good example
Pornography

- Sex & Sexuality on Media:
  - More graphic like violence
  - Dramatic changes in movies → Couldn’t show married couples in the same bed → On TV, much more talk about sex
  - Then, does this constant talk about and portrayal of sex have an impact on how people think & talk about sex? Does this change the views of children on marriage?

- Gender Differences
  - Mostly, male uses.

3 Categories of Content

1. Standard Porn
   - Hard-core porn
   - No violence (90%)
   - Highly stylized & conventional
   - Male audience
   - Exclusive sex → No conversation, affection, emotion, foreplay, safe sex → No talk of consequences (e.g. pregnancy, etc.)
   - Typically, women are eager, solicitate, hysterically euphoria. → Degrading and no social relations.

2. Violent (Coercive) Porn
   - Approx. 5% of all porn.
   - Violence → Precursor to or integral part of sex
   - Violence, rape, coercion, etc.
   - Perpetuates “Rape Myth”: Women end up enjoying the abusive rape → This is highly problematic

3. Soft Porn: Idealized Sex
   - Soft Porn (2-3%)
   - Often called “erotica” → Geared towards women audience
   - Compassionate, dialogue, relationship, love, & foreplay
3 Models of Effects

1. Sexual Communication (Positive Effects)
   - This model argues that porn is “educational”/“therapeutic” → Positive consequences

2. Sexual Callousness (Feminist Model)
   - Lack of caring in porn creates detrimental perceptions of female sexuality (for men, too)
   - Promotes inter-gender violence
   - Creates misogynist cultural climate → Legitimates hatred of women

3. Desensitization
   - Medium Differences: the medium of porn makes a difference.
     - Most consistent effects are found in (1) print, (2) audio, then (3) video.
     - Explanation: Print is less explicit, so YOU yourself fill in
   - Another Experiment by Zillman: Showed that non-violent porn viewing could yield similar effects
     - Studied the effects of repeated exposure w/ 180 college students (1/2 male and ½ female) → More realistic than 1 time exposure studies
     - Treatment Grp 1 → Watched 1 hr. of porn every week for six weeks
     - Treatment Grp 2 → ½ hour porn, ½ hour non-porn
     - Control Grp 1 → no porn
     - Control Grp 2 → No film
     - At 7th Week: Asked to watch soft porn, hard porn, and violent porn → Got physiological responses to measure arousal level → Grp 1 scored the lowest level of arousal
     - At 10th Week (more importantly): Attitudes measured: Grp 1 & 2 → Increased opinions of amount of rough sex, bestiality in society; Grp 1 → Far less severe penalties for rapists → Both males & females even though they did not see “violent porn”; neg. related to the support for women’s liberty & equality; Grp 1 Men → Much more callous towards women
   - Another study: Do implicit themes in porn influences other areas of our lives?
     - Porn Grp & Non-porn Grp → After 6 weeks → Checked on “Control Items” (unrelated to sex or women → The two groups were the same)
     - Perceptions of others/about the world: Promiscuity in men/women → “How natural or common do they think it is among other people → the porn grp scored much higher
     - “Faithfulness” → The porn grp scored much lower
- Self Attitudes: Much more accepting of (1) extramarital sex (for yourself & for your partner), (2) non-exclusive sex, (3) more willing to take health risks (e.g. more likely to say, “multiple partners frees themselves from sexual repression”, etc.)
- As to Children: The porn grp much less decisive to have children
- As to “having boys vs. girls”: a huge drop for women to desire to have girls ➔ Degradation
- Personal Sexual Behavior: Decrease in satisfaction w/ the porn grp