

Technological Changes in Mass Media and Social Impacts: Movie/Film

Student Name

Course Number: Course Name

Due Date

Technological Changes in Mass Media and Social Impacts: Movie/Film

The technology which stands behind the mass media industry of motion picture and film had an explosive change since its inception as silent movie industry in the early 20th century. Technology within the film industry has three core themes which have been drivers of change – the recording and projecting of images; the medium of communication which was organized in response to organizational responses in each historic period; and, growth as a result of struggles and control of audience and distribution. There has been a significant impact from his technological change of film in terms of how people enjoy, connect with others, interpret and are impacted in social, cultural and behavioral terms. This discussion will examine critically the effects the movie industry has had on people through the one-hundred years of technological change and advancement, with focus on the hegemonic framework which supports the industry. Film is a mode of entertainment which was morphed into a sociological tool for enlightened ideas and cultural influence; this may be a sign of growth, sophistication, and liberation, but conversely, freedom, opinion and cultural quality may also have been compromised. To ascertain the impact of movies on people, research will be used to corroborate the positive or negative social influences of film.

From the earliest periods of communication, the human race has been fascinated by the strategies it applies in communicating and preserving information. The means through which people communicate with each other symbolizes our identity and is a primary element of foundation of society's culture and distinctiveness. Through extensive periods, there has been an evolution of media over a wide assortment of channels (the internet, newspapers, TV, and radio). Each of these communication channels possesses distinctive traits, just like the individuals that utilize them.

No one adequately comprehends different media and the way they operate like Marshall McLuhan. McLuhan was born in 1911 in Edmonton, Canada and is considered as one of the individuals that laid a foundation for the study of media theory. Even though he did not have the chance to experience that new media that we currently enjoy, there was nothing that impeded him from having a profound impact on it. McLuhan was one of the few people that demonstrated the capacity that communication and technology have in enabling a global village. Being a pioneer in research regarding communication and the way it has evolved, McLuhan presented numerous observations concerning the effect of new types of expression and media.¹ A particular aspect of McLuhan theories that had a definite influence on mass media is "The medium is the message."

This theory has never been overlooked or ignored since it has been extensively reviewed across many domains in research and utilized in the internet, TV, and print. Whereas most individuals seem to understand the underlying principle, the actual philosophy is usually misunderstood or neglected. Therefore, to have a solid grasp of the exact truth requires an overview of the general idea behind it. The principal concept of "the medium is the message" is

¹ Jeff, Melanson, "The Medium Is The Message," HuffPost Canada, January 18, 2017, http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/jeff-melanson/the-medium-is-the-message_b_14230182.html, paragraph 1.

that the medium through which information is relayed has a significant function in the manner it is comprehended. This is undoubtedly self-evident on the internet, in the way people receive news compared to the way it was with print media. However, maybe an even richer exemplification can be portrayed while avoiding communication or technology references.

There is a study that has analyzed the impacts of viewing R-rated films on young adult and adolescent religiosity while incorporating essential controls such as family and peer influence that have exhibited an influence on religiosity. The results of the research indicated that even when controlling for these impacts, watching R-rated films still had adverse influences on church attendance and the prominence of belief. The outcomes of this study are fundamentally crucial since they propose that religiosity might be impacted not only through conventional means of socialization such as peers and family but additionally through media content, like that possessed by R-rated flicks. Apart from the determinants of religiosity such as church attendance and the prominence of belief, the research also assessed the impacts that media and peers may have on whether subjects question their convictions, or consider it is appropriate to select religious views.² Watching R-rated films or peers did not have a substantial influence on either the prominence of belief or church attendance.

Moreover, the results proposed that watching R-rated films might impact the observance and significance of religion in individual's life, but does not affect personal convictions. A known problem of analyzing the influences of R-rated movies on religiosity is establishing the direction of causation. Watching these films may affect the religiosity of young adults and adolescents, but there may also be a scenario that young adults and adolescents that are less pious are more probable to prefer watching R-rated movies. This process is defined as self-socialization, and unlike most types of the process such as school socialization and family, young adults and adolescents have the capacity to select the forms of media that eventually have a function in their religious socialization. These age groups opt to consume information for several aims, incorporating identification.³

Still, similar to classic drama, traditional story-telling, medieval morality play, or folk tales, movies might be considered as a channel through which individuals comprehend their personality, the worth of their group, and their social position. Additionally, it is a way through which a person puts himself/herself in a multiplicity of events that seem to happen unsystematically and randomly. An individual's need for profound experience is a requirement for order. The craving has emotive elements because the lack of consistency in experience develops apprehension in the person, from which he/she is looking for reprieve.⁴

² Phil, Davignon, "The Effects of R-Rated Movies on Adolescent and Young Adult Religiosity: Media as Self-Socialization," *Review of Religious Research* 55 (2013): 625.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Franklin, Fearing, "Influence of the Movies on Attitudes and Behavior," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 254 (1947):70.

A film is not a rigid pattern of connotations or concepts that are grasped by the passive mind. Instead, what a person receives is controlled by his/her needs and background. The individual absorbs from the movie what will work in his/her daily life or the things that are essential for him/her. The content of movies is conflict, movement, characterization, and action expressed in rapidly shifting images. Whatever importance films have for the one that watches them, whatever way they are perceived relies on the concrete structure of needs that accompany the person. The individual uses the scenarios in the movie in the process of comprehending the larger setting. This is the theoretical context from which the relevant analyses of the impacts of films on attitudes and behavior should happen.

Internally, a significant part of this process is involvement. This is the distinct trait of these media that the person has a chance to imagine himself/herself in the scenes and to some extent participate in experiences that are alien to him/her. An individual might walk into a world that is completely different from what he/she is accustomed to and assimilate social characters and have social responsibilities that would have been unavailable to him/her. A person can indirectly experience the way other individuals respond in numerous circumstances.

Furthermore, there are studies by the University of Utah that have revealed that children that have been significantly exposed to violence on television could be slightly numbed to it when contrasted with those that watch little TV or rarely do at all. This might imply a potential emotional dulling of the child to violence observed or a possible cessation of conscience and worry in the manifestation of violence. Most social psychoanalysts have expressed great concern over the lately recognized occurrence called bystander apathy. This is where individuals prefer only to look while others are killed or harmed, and the witnesses do not help the victim in any way. This insinuates a callous or unsympathetic reaction by people in the presence of anguish on the part of others. A likely reason for this indifference, particularly in the vast urban regions, is that most people have become pacified to violence observed mainly in films on TV. Although there is accessible data on the U.S that demonstrates the high levels of violence in movies, this is a concern and problem generic to most of the culturally progressive countries of the world with large percentages of the population owning a TV set.⁵

Because of films and TV, children might watch more violence in 30 minutes than the average adult does in a lifetime.⁶ The concept that children borrow from films is that violence is a normal occurrence in daily life. Therefore, violence transforms into the underlying societal principle and a fundamental rule of existence. Murder is as natural as eating bread and weapons are more ordinary than umbrellas. Young one start to foster pride in using force and violence while feeling embarrassed of natural compassion. This makes them forget that humanity exists in a mental state.

However, there are modern studies that demonstrate the more insightful facets to movies' effect on society. A researcher at the University of Essex in the UK explained the way the

⁵ Victor B, Cline, "How Do Movies and TV Influence Behavior? - Ensign Oct. 1972 – Ensign," The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, September 11, 2016, <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1972/10/how-do-movies-and-tv-influence-behavior?lang=eng>, paragraph 4.

⁶ Ibid., paragraph 5.

figurative and narrative features of film make it an entirely distinct type of art. Additionally, the shared experience of movies as art makes it an exclusively unique form of leisure. The distinctive aspects of going to the cinema could have definitively beneficial impacts on mental health. Cinema attendance can have individualistic and strong influences on mental health since visual stimulation can bring up a variety of sensations and the shared experience of these emotions through the cinema offers a secure context where one can experience responsibilities and emotions that would be otherwise inaccessible to them.⁷ The shared characteristic of visual and narrative stimulation make the experience pleasurable and organized, therefore providing benefits that transcend mere visual stimulation.

What is more, the cinema is exceptional in that it is a very accessible form of social art, the involvement in which usually cuts across financial statuses. Simultaneously, going to the cinema provides opportunity for the training of the human need for uniqueness and personal inclinations. Succinctly, theater attendance can become a therapeutic session, a chance for good fun, and an individually artistic experience. Pioneering research has demonstrated that those who frequently attend the cinema have exceptionally reduced mortality risks while those that have never done so had mortality rates almost four times higher than those that go to the theater at least rarely. These studies show that social engagement, particularly in an artistic environment, is essential for human survival.⁸

Incidentally, there are a couple of films that are known to have had an impact on the political opinions of Americans. Indeed, these movie inspired audiences to have interest on certain issues affecting the country. For instance, in a study that analyzed the psychological outcomes of watching the particularly contentious 1991 conspiracy drama movie *JFK*, it was revealed that viewing *JFK* heightened the level of rage in the observers. Moreover, the film seemed to have influenced their political plans. Watching the movie was connected to a substantial reduction in viewers' stated plans to be involved in politics or vote.⁹ The study credited this reaction to a broad feebleness effect stimulated by watching the film. The massive conspiracy that purportedly involved powerful people in government, the CIA, the mafia, AND the military-industrial complex engulfed the viewers in hopelessness.

There are also movies such as *Malcolm X* that motivated audiences to be more worried about race relations and racial discrimination. There is a study conducted in 1991 that assessed the impact of the 1992 movie on African-Americans living in Houston. The analysis revealed that the flick was very influential in changing political opinions among those that participated in

⁷ Joshua, Reid, "Cinema and Movies Play Formative Role in Society," The Reflector, October 17, 2014, http://www.reflector-online.com/opinion/article_f2561142-5587-11e4-9627-001a4bcf6878.html, paragraph 7.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Asawin, Suebsaeng, and Mooney, Chris, "Seven Movies That Changed People's Political Views," Slate Magazine, January 7, 2014, <http://www.slate.com/arts/2017/07/arcade-fires-new-album-everything-now-reviewed.html>, paragraph 4.

the study. More specifically, people that watched the movie and a biopic on Malcolm had an increased attentiveness on issues about prejudice.¹⁰ Again, there were more alarmed about the significance of race relations as a political issue.

The Cider House Rules is a 1999 movie that was directed by Lasse Hallstrom. In the film, Michael Caine plays the role of an alcoholic abortionist, Dr. Wilbur Larch. The setting of the movie is based on Maine during World War II, a period in which the state experienced a tremendously restraining abortion prohibition. The compassionate Dr. Larch performed abortions for young females in stressful situations. Research conducted in 2001 by Philip Habel and Kenneth Mulligan from the Southern Illinois University demonstrated that the fictional formulation of the abortion issue in the film led people to have more support for safe and legal abortion.¹¹ The subjects of the study that were unsystematically consigned to see the movie were more supportive of legal abortion in instances of incest than those that did not watch it. *The Cider House Rules* has a great impact regardless of the fact that perceptions on abortion seem to be profoundly ingrained.

Another film that had the ability to change the views of the audience was *The Day After Tomorrow*. According to a Yale researcher, the movie was able to make people care more about climate change. National surveys were conducted three weeks after the film was released and the results revealed that 83% of those that watched it stated that they were to some extent worried about global warming, contrasted with 72% of those that did not watch it.¹² Additionally, cinema attendees were more probable to trust in the probability that a range of climate-associated effects, extending from very extreme weather to the flooding of the main coastal cities would happen in the next 50 years. Even though the analysis utilized a sample of 520 individuals, the film generated more than \$500 million globally.¹³ Therefore, it would be accurate to suggest that the movie had a profound impact on global public perception.

There is also an investigation that shows that the negative impact of Disney films on young girls. Many preschool girls are fans of fictional princesses. From the time Disney introduced the princess concept, Disney princesses have become universal, symbolized in almost every merchandise (dresses, dolls, grapes, and seed packers). Consequently, these young girls firmly connect with Disney's princess culture while adults usually suppose that these young girls inherently adore princesses.

However, the princess culture portrayed in Disney films is not that innocent. This Disney concept proposes that a girl's most treasured strength is her beauty and this supports a detrimental obsession with physical appearance. Moreover, the Disney brand infers that young girls should be subservient and sweet, and should wait for a man to save them in the act of love at first sight. Even though there are Disney characters such as Rapunzel, Anna, Merida, and Elsa that are portrayed in a way that completely rectifies these ideologies, the Disney brand still does not conform to contemporary notions on nurturing girls.

¹⁰ Ibid., paragraph 8.

¹¹ Ibid., paragraph 6.

¹² Ibid., paragraph 5.

¹³ Ibid.

This study on child development that has revealed the adverse influences of the princess culture on girls. Coyne shared her worries concerning the things princess-driven advertising was doing. As a result, Coyne together with her team devised and conducted an analysis of 198 kindergarten- and preschool-aged girls and boys. Her results underpinned some critical fears regarding the princess culture. For example, the more the girls associated themselves with the princess culture, the more they tended to behave in conventionally feminine ways. Girls that had a lower body at the beginning of the study were more fascinated by the princess culture after a year.¹⁴ Still, there was no proof that the girl's involvement with the princess culture permanently influenced their behavior. Therefore, the princesses' capability to become positive role models was little.

The research did provide some cautious, beneficial news to guardians. To begin with, associating with princess culture seemed to have beneficial impacts on boys, offsetting some of the conventionally belligerent messages in the media that target boys. Furthermore, the study revealed that watching princess movies did not seem to damage girls' body image during the one-year follow-up. Instead, it was discovered the girls had positive body images at the analysis' initiation and end.¹⁵ This might have been a reprieve for parents concerned about the hugely unachievable, romanticized, and homogenous body shapes of Disney princesses.

Centering on earlier literature concerning the beginning of body image problems in adolescent and pre-adolescent girls, the researcher warned that if they could have observed the girls for a longer duration, she may have found adverse influences. Because of this, Coyne stated that she would prefer performing a follow-up analysis with the subject in five years.

Moreover, it was puzzling when the results of the investigation revealed that girls were more conventionally feminine in their behavior when their parents discussed the issue of media with them. This was baffling since the study on parental intercession showed that children gain when they talk about media with their parents. However, the researchers did not request the parents to disclose the things they discussed concerning the media with their children.¹⁶ Coyne assumed that the guardians that were involved in the investigation might have supported problematic messages such as admiring the physical appearances of the Disney characters.

In a nutshell, the study efficiently utilized social science techniques. It authenticates long-standing fears regarding princess culture while proposing some constructive impacts for boys. What is more, it creates necessary attention to the significance of judiciously discussing with kids concerning the media they love. If the parents are imprudent in their methods, they may unintentionally support the films' detrimental messages. However, if the parents are more cautious, they can aid their young ones to become irrepressible.

All in all, it is hard to deny that the films that are watched have a definitive social impact on people. They have the ability to shape opinions, cultural norms, and religious beliefs. Although there are negative aspects of this activity on the social aspects of people's lives, there

¹⁴ Kirsten, Salyer, "New Study on the Potential Problem with Disney Princesses," TIME, June 22, 2016, <http://time.com/4378119/disney-princess-effect-on-girls/>, paragraph 3.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., paragraph 7.

should be an increase in efforts in ensuring that films prioritize positively influencing social standards.

Work Cited

- Cline, Victor B. "How Do Movies and TV Influence Behavior? - Ensign Oct. 1972 - Ensign." The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Last modified September 11, 2016. <https://www.lds.org/ensign/1972/10/how-do-movies-and-tv-influence-behavior?lang=eng>.
- Davignon, Phil. "The Effects of R-Rated Movies on Adolescent and Young Adult Religiosity: Media as Self-Socialization." *Review of Religious Research* 55, no. 4 (December 2013), 615-628. doi:10.1007/s13644-013-0124-3.
- Fearing, Franklin. "Influence of the Movies on Attitudes and Behavior." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 254, no. 1 (November 1947), 70-79. doi:10.1177/000271624725400112.
- Melanson, Jeff. "The Medium Is The Message." HuffPost Canada. Last modified January 18, 2017. http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/jeff-melanson/the-medium-is-the-message_b_14230182.html.
- Reid, Joshua. "Cinema and Movies Play Formative Role in Society." The Reflector. Last modified October 17, 2014. http://www.reflector-online.com/opinion/article_f2561142-5587-11e4-9627-001a4bcf6878.html.
- Salyer, Kirsten. "New Study on the Potential Problem with Disney Princesses." TIME. Last modified June 22, 2016. <http://time.com/4378119/disney-princess-effect-on-girls/>.
- Suebsaeng, Asawin, and Chris Mooney. "Seven Movies That Changed People's Political Views." Slate Magazine. Last modified January 7, 2014. <http://www.slate.com/arts/2017/07/arcade-fires-new-album-everything-now-reviewed.html>.