

Parental Involvement and Four Types of Mediation:

A New Approach

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Abstract

The current study posits that family factors such as parental concerns about television and involvement with children and adolescents' activity should be considered as important predictors of positive instruction, negative instruction, restrictive mediation, and coveiewing. The data were collected from 184 parent-child dyads by asking parental mediation styles, children and adolescents' television viewing behaviors, and parental involvement. Results show that parents are less likely to use negative instruction in their children and adolescents' viewing of family programs. Parents who are highly involved in their child's home activity are the most active mediation users of all.

Statement of Problem

The present study considers four types of mediation: positive instruction, negative instruction, restrictive, and covieing. Past research on instructive or evaluative mediation dealt with both positive and negative types of discussion in a single mediation construct. Those approaches bear conceptual limitations because parents either endorse or condemn television information while watching and they perform these two types as separate mediation behaviors. The current study suggests that family factors such as parental concerns about television and engagement with children and adolescents' activity should be considered as important predictors of the four types of mediation. Hypotheses and research questions guiding this study are:

H1a: Parental concerns about television will be negatively associated with positive instruction and covieing.

H1b: Parental concerns about television will be positively associated with negative instruction and restrictive mediation.

H2a: Parents' accessibility will be positively associated with positive instruction, negative instruction, restrictive mediation, and covieing.

H2b: Parental engagement (i.e., leisure activity and domestic activity) will be positively associated with positive instruction, negative instruction, restrictive mediation, and covieing.

RQ1: How do parents' demographics (i.e., gender and education) predict positive instruction, negative instruction, restrictive mediation, and covieing?

RQ2: How does a child's age predict positive instruction, negative instruction, restrictive mediation, and covieing?

Method and Research Procedures

A survey was conducted from December 5 to 16, 2005 from two private schools in one Southern city and two public schools in three neighboring towns. Once permission from the school districts for public schools and principals for private schools was obtained, teachers distributed the surveys to the children and adolescents who were instructed to deliver them to their parents. Randomly selected families received a packet which included a cover letter, two consent forms for parents and a child and two questionnaires. The parents and children and adolescents who signed the consent form completed and returned it to schools. Of the 600 packets sent to homes of four schools, a total of 184 families (184 parents and 184 children and adolescents) completed and returned both questionnaires representing a 30.6% response rate. The original number of returned surveys was 192. However, eight surveys were not analyzable with rejection of participation (four), parent survey only (one), and consent forms only (three).

The resulting parent sample was predominantly female (85.9%, $n = 158$; male, 14.1%, $n = 26$). The sample was predominantly Caucasian (95.7%, $n = 176$). Marital status was made up of either two-parents (84.8%, $n = 156$) or one-parent (15.2%, $n = 28$). The modes of respondents' demographics were age: 30-40 (66.3%, $n = 122$), the number of child: two (43.5%, $n = 80$), education level: high school graduate (34.8%, $n = 64$), and household income: \$50,000+ (35.9%, $n = 66$). Children and adolescents completed the questionnaire at home. Children were asked to provide information about their television exposure and demographics. A total of 69.6% ($n = 129$) were female and 30.4% ($n = 55$) male ($N = 184$). Children's age ranged from 10 to 14 (fourth-eighth grades) ($M = 12.29$, $SD = 1.22$).

Summary of Findings

Hypothesis 1a predicted parental concerns about television would be negatively related to positive instruction and covieing. Parental concerns were negatively associated with positive instruction, whereas there was no significant relationship between parental concerns and covieing. As a result, H1a was partially supported for positive instruction showing that the more parents were concerned about television content shown in family programs, the less they were likely to discuss the programs positively.

H1b predicted that parental concerns about television would be positively related to negative instructive and restrictive mediation. Parental concerns only predicted restrictive mediation. However, negative instruction did not appear to have any significant relationship with parental concerns. Therefore, H1b was partially supported for restrictive mediation indicating that the more parents are concerned about their child's television viewing, the more they are restrictive in their child's viewing time and programs.

H2a dealt with the relationships between parents' accessibility and mediation. Parent's time spent with their children during weekdays and weekend overall was a negative predictor of positive instruction. Regardless of activities parents do with their child, parents who spend much time with their child are less likely to positively discuss family programs on television. Therefore, H2a received no support.

H2b predicted that parental engagement (i.e., leisure activity and domestic activity) would be positively associated with four types of mediation. The results demonstrate that parents' domestic activity with their child (e.g., helping with their child's homework, playing at home) positively predicted the four types of mediation. These results show that parents who help with their child's homework and have private conversations tend to more frequently use all four

types of mediation. H2b received partial support for the relationships between parents' domestic activity and all four types of mediation.

The research questions of this study included the influence of parents' (RQ1) and a child's demographics (RQ2) on parental mediation. Regression results show that only parent's education was a positive predictor of restrictive mediation. Highly educated parents were more likely than parents with low education to be restrictive in their children's television viewing. Child's age was positively related with positive instruction, negative instruction, and covieing. These results suggest that families with older children and adolescents are more likely to use instruction and covieing than are those with younger children.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study first examined how four types of parental mediation would be related to family communication. Specifically positive and negative instruction was respectively measured in order to clarify parent-child communication behaviors during television viewing. This study also focused on a specific program type, family programs, to more accurately directly measure and evaluate parents' practices of mediation on their children and adolescents.

An obvious message from this analysis is that parents are more likely to coview with children and adolescents and restrictive. They are less active in negative instruction in their child's family program viewing. Positive instruction is a more significant result of parent-child interaction than negative instruction of children and adolescents' television viewing. Parents who are highly interested in their child's home activity are the most active mediation users of all.

Student Talk Show

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Abstract

This project reports a useful class exercise in the field of mass communication. In this project, the author introduces an integration of a theoretical discussion of television programming with a practical class exercise. As an element of entire coursework for the class, students learn the electronic media industry, audiences, and rules and regulations. One of the chapters covers television programming, which deals with the process of selection, scheduling, and promotion of a television program. As a class exercise, students are required to create a talk show in the production studio. The outcomes of the exercise were positive. First, students felt responsible for the show because they were actual guests and production crews. Second, the selection of guests was successful as students enjoyed seeing another side of their classmates.

Statement of Problem

Introduction to Telecommunications—this course covers both theoretical and practical components of electronic media. Students learn a history, industry, business, rules, and ethics of electronic media from radio to television to the Internet. Students also experience hands-on practices of the media including radio production, television production, and digital story telling through Web site creation. The class is a core course for journalism majors offered as a lower division course. The class currently has 26 students.

As an element of entire coursework for the class, students learn the electronic media industry, audiences, and rules and regulations. One of the chapter covers television programming, which deals with the process of selection, scheduling, and promotion of a television program. As a class exercise, students are required to create a talk show using a school production studio.

Students find the connection between class discussion on television programming and its application to a real practice. Students realize the importance of each crew role in the production. For the purpose of an enjoyable learning atmosphere, student guests and hosts are designated. These guests and hosts have conversation chances with each other beforehand to plan their program segment (e.g., what are they going to talk about in the show). Guests and hosts are determined through class discussion. There are some students with talents and unforgettable personal memories and stories. These students have priority to be selected for the show. Through this practice, students first experience talk show production. Second they get into know more about their classmates' talents, interests, and personal stories.

Method

We first cover the chapter of television programming in class. Students learn first what television programming is, which consists of selection, scheduling, and promotion. Second, they are assigned to two groups to produce a talk show. In addition to the assigned guests and hosts, each student takes a role as a production crew. The studio has three cameras, a video tape rack for PSAs, a computer graphic generator for subtitles, an audio board, and a camera switcher board. For these roles, nine students are needed: two camera operators and one floor director with a third camera operator role, one tape rack operator, one CG operator, one audio board operator, one camera switcher board operator, and line producer for the entire direction of the show.

Under the direction of the line producer who has media production experience, the show is set and begins with rolling a show-intro clip. While they produce the show, the students new to television production are asked to stand next to the actual operator to learn how the production actually works. For another show with a new guest and a host, their roles are rotated as the first student with production experience helps the new student do the job.

The production is followed by a class discussion to review how the programming of a talk show is first set and it is actually produced.

Summary of Findings

The outcomes so far have been very positive. First, students feel responsible for the show because they are actual guests and production crews. Second, the selection of guests has been successful as students enjoy seeing another side of their classmates. We had a student this semester who called himself a political analyst. He, as a guest of the show, showed off his talents for political satire, his insight on the current American politics in a comic manner. In fact, until that point, he had been the quietest student in class. Nobody paid attention to him until the time of the show. All students got into know more about him and the production exercise created a positive class atmosphere. Students enjoyed the production with laughs and surprises.

Another student guest talked about her early marriage when she was a teen. She also talked about her struggles after she was diagnosed an unknown disease. Because of the disease, she had to go through back surgery which gave her pain, depression, and a struggling life as a young wife and mom. All class students got into know more about her which had not been shown from her at all before the talk show.

Not only did we learn about television programming and production, but also we came to know each other better through this production.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This project brought college professors' attention to how theory and practice can be integrated to facilitate student learning. There are also several suggestions. For a production exercise, technical preparation is needed such as the status of the studio first. Another, the exercise can be more effective when there are students with production experience. These students make the production go without or with less production mistakes. An electronic media class with the students with production experience and no experience makes a proper combination for this exercise.