BACKGROUND

- Television has a much greater impact than people believe.
- T.V. shapes perceptions of:
  - Affluence
  - Portrayal of social groups
  - Occupational Roles
- Two main affects:
  - Psychological
  - Sociological

ABSTRACT

This study will focus on the importance of television’s impact on people’s ideas of relationships with others and their ideas of success. The results will be measured by creating two surveys. The first survey will be distributed to viewers who watch Gossip Girl, Grey’s Anatomy, C.S.I., and House; it will define and distinguish the heavy viewers from the light viewers. The second survey will measure the level of distortions and perceptions caused by television through asking questions about products, interactions with others, and activities participated in the shows. The second survey will question expectations of others, and views of success. There will be a control group of light to moderate viewers and the experimental group will be the heavy viewers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to examine the perception of affluence television incorporates into our society, three studies will be compared to distinguish the overall impact television has sociologically and psychologically.

When watching television, people are introduced to massive amounts of information, most of which is not entirely true, but people may not distinguish the difference right away due to a “blurring” effect. According to O’Guinn and Shrum, “television’s representations are discrepant from so-called objective reality; however, they are not too discrepant. Viewers still recognize them as familiar” (O’Guinn and Shrum, 1998, p. 279). People become so exposed to these representations of consumption (activities and products represent socioeconomic class) that the effects start to become obscured (O’Guinn and Shrum, 1998). In twenty-six different network programs, 93% of characters had overrepresented status occupations. In the majority of television shows, the upper and middle classes are highly disproportional (Fox and Philliber, 1978). Not only are occupations misrepresented, even the behaviors of fictional characters are becoming obscured. The general public may engage in the belief of “backstage behaviors,” private moments of others which people do not get to observe directly but only through reading or dramatization (O’Guinn and Shrum, 1998). This sociological effect is much more significant than many individuals realize.

Television obviously has many social implications, but what most people are unaware of are the hidden psychological mechanisms used in the encoding of media information. As information is encoded into memory as truth, it becomes more difficult to distinguish fact from fiction. According to Shrum, Wyer and O’Guinn accessibility depends on the frequency and recency of television viewing. In a study done by Shrum, Wyer and O’Guinn the participants that were primed for the experiment estimated less of a disproportional relation concerning crime and occupation status (O’Guinn, Shrum and Wyer, 1998). They found that heavy viewers made higher and quicker judgments than the control group of light to moderate viewers and the experimental group will be the heavy viewers.

RESULTS:

Distinguishing HEAVY VIEWERS and LIGHT VIEWERS that Watch 4 Primetime Shows

Survey 1: Distinguishing DEGREE OF DISTORTION OF REALITY

Survey 2: Distinguishing IDEOLOGY OF RELATIONSHIPS and Success

BIBLIOGRAPHY


