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COME317A

Research on Media Effects

Summary

The first article discussed how the media typically depicts certain stereotypes and how this then affects how white people see people of other races or ethnicities. There is evidence in priming theories to suggest media consumption allows people to quickly create judgement and opinions on various social groups and issues. It has also been proven that exposure to certain stereotypes can also lead to negative attitudes towards specific groups. For instance, the “Black criminal” stereotype can lead people to harshley assume Black people are going to be criminal suspects even if there is no evidence to suggest so (Dixon, 2019). Other topics mentioned in the article include cultivation of stereotypes, social identity theory and social categorization theory, and the role that social and traditional media play in reducing stereotypes.

The second article discusses the connection between media and how we perceive and understand gender. Past studies have shown a direct correlation between the frequency of when people consume television and possessing stereotypical beliefs. One main topic of gender roles discussed in the article is sexist attitudes and the traditional gender roles. People who watch television at certain times, and watch certain programs, are more or less likely to support traditional gender roles than people who watch different programs at different times (Ward and Grower, 2020). For example, those who watch more day-time talk shows show greater support for traditional gender roles. Another example of people who strongly support traditional gender roles is Black teenagers who consume large amounts of music videos and sports programming.

Other studies mentioned within this article show there is evidence to support that the programs people consume affect their beliefs, values and opinions. People tend to consume media related to their already existing beliefs, in order to affirm what they believe and strengthen their viewpoint.

Most Important Findings

The three most important findings in these three articles, in my opinion, relate to long-term effects of media cultivation, social identity theory and social categorization theory, and toy and play behavior.

The short term effects of media cultivation were also discussed in the first article, however, I found the long term effects to be more interesting. Seeing certain stereotypes multiple times can lead people to associate certain groups with certain traits. The example given in the article is “the Muslim terrorist” stereotype. If people see this stereotype more than once, they will conclude that all Muslim people are terrorists. Media cultivation can lead to strengthened stereotypes which eventually turn into strong views and associations. It is important not to give into these stereotypes so as to not jump to conclusions about things that are not true. This topic was interesting to me because it reminded me of the phrase correlation does not imply causation. This is a common phrase meaning that just because two things are related, does not mean that one is the result of the other (Dixon, 2019). In this case, the people in both situations may belong to the same race, however, that does not mean that everyone in this one race is going to have the same traits.

Another interesting theory that caught my eye is social identity theory and social categorization theory. In relation to media, this theory states that the media we consume can be

influenced by our group identity. If a person identifies more strongly with their group, they will be more influenced to act in similar ways as them. In terms of media, this could mean people gravitate towards certain television programs that relate to their group identity, whether this be their race, background, gender, or profession. Because people identify with their similar groups, they have similar views and interests. Many people in these similar groups will want to view the same media to feel an even stronger sense of community with their group. If these groups are consuming the same or similar media, over time their views will become even more similar as the media is reaffirming their same views (Dixon, 2019.). I find this interesting because it shows how some groups tend to polarize themselves even more than before. They tend to stick to what they know which strengthens their group identity if people are consuming the same media together.

The next interesting point was regarding toy and play behavior. While toy and play behavior does not directly relate to media, I still think it is an important issue to focus on. From a young age, children are given toys specific to their gender. But what makes a toy gender-specific? Because of this, children learn there are certain things that are only for girls and certain things that are only for boys. In a similar way, children learn there is certain media that only girls should watch or only boys should watch. For instance, many people say princess movies are only for girls and superhero movies are for boys. This stereotype is clouding young children's perspectives of gender stereotypes and forcing children to learn things that are not necessarily true. This is a hard stereotype to break, especially when enforced at such a young age. Children should be able to play with whichever toy they decide, and they should have the freedom to consume media freely, rather than being restricted based on their gender (Ward and Grower, 2020). I found this particularly intriguing because there is so much that children learn

regarding gender. I believe many of these things are pushed on children too early, and it is starting to get worse now with the media. It will be interesting to see if the media continues to separate the things that are historically “for girls” or “for boys”, or if the media will disrupt this past belief and decrease the differences in media that is “for boys” or “for girls”.

Effects of Stereotypes

One way in which stereotypes may affect Netflix viewers is in what they choose to watch. If people have views about certain groups of people, for instance white adolescents viewing African American adults negatively because of stereotypes, they will be less likely to gravitate towards a show telling a story of African American adults. From a production standpoint, producers may cast people based on what they believe will get the most views. They may cast people for roles based on past stereotypes. For instance, in *Ginny & Georgia*, there is a mayor of a predominantly white town in the New England area. This role was given to a middle aged white man, which is someone who would stereotypically have this role. In a similar way, scripts may include certain dialects depending on the stereotypical ways people from certain races or ethnicities speak and act. Producers may also cast people for roles in certain genres based on racial or gender stereotypes. Stereotypes affect the way content is viewed and produced. While the world has come very far in the past few decades in terms of decreasing stereotypes, there is still a long way to go in the coming decades in order to completely reduce these stereotypes and many others.

References

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