

Moschis, G.P. & Moore, R.L. (1982, December). A Longitudinal Study of Television Advertising Effects. Journal Of Consumer Research, 9, 279-286.

OVERVIEW

By surveying the same group of adolescents twice during a 14-month lag period, researchers study the cumulative, or "longitudinal," effects of television advertising.

BACKGROUND

Does advertising produce direct audience effects or merely reinforce predispositions? A longitudinal study is necessary to study this question, and the researchers designed a study to measure both short- and long-term advertising effects. The study also aimed to discover the parental and peer roles in regulating the effects of advertising.

DESIGN

This longitudinal study surveyed 211 junior and senior high school students with a 14-month lag period between studies. The researchers measured the same group of kids over a period of time, to study variance in four measures:

- Consumer Role Perception (how they saw themselves as consumers).
- Consumer Activity (ability to buy products in a rational way).
- Materialism ("An orientation emphasizing possessions and money for personal happiness and social progress").
- Sex-Role Conceptions (general influence of the spouse in family decisions).

FINDINGS

The two findings most pertinent to youth work suggest:

- There is a correlation between kids' attitudes and the number of commercials they view, but the correlation becomes insignificant when their previous levels of materialism and

- attitudes of sex roles are considered.
- The text shows no direct long-term effects (the kids studied did not change much within 14 months), yet the researchers point out, "Early exposure to television ads may be associated with later development of materialism and traditional sex roles, depending upon previous levels of such predispositions." (p. 283)

CONCLUSION

The most important research finding indicates a difference between the attitudes of adolescents depending on their interaction with their parents and peer group. By examining the mediating effect of parents and peers, the researchers discover that both parents and peers mediate the effects of TV advertising, especially in materialism and sex role attitudes.

Fewer harmful effects are found in teens whose families spent time talking about consumption habits. "...TV advertising appears to affect the development of materialism and traditional sex roles when parents do not discuss consumption matters with their children, perhaps placing the adolescent child at the mercy of advertising, a finding consistent with previous research." (p. 285)

IMPLICATIONS

- The study indicates that "families discussing consumption are likely to neutralize (negative) effects." Therefore, parents are encouraged to talk with their kids about how to be wise consumers. Positive behaviors and attitudes need to be modeled to younger consumers, or they will be at the mercy of the product companies and the influence of the peer group. Kids also need to learn to be good stewards of what is given to them.
- Youth workers need to foster good discussions in youth meetings in order to influence the peer group. If each individual in the group adopts healthier attitudes concerning materialism and sex roles, then peer interaction within the youth group will begin to have more positive effects on the individuals.

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