

# **Streaming Media Literacy: A Theoretical Solution to a Practical Problem**

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# Introductions

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# Agenda

- A practical problem
- A theoretical solution
- Media effects research tradition
- Classroom assignment



Slides: <https://bit.ly/45Y48Y2>

## A practical problem

# Students need critical thinking skills for leisure media, not just academic content

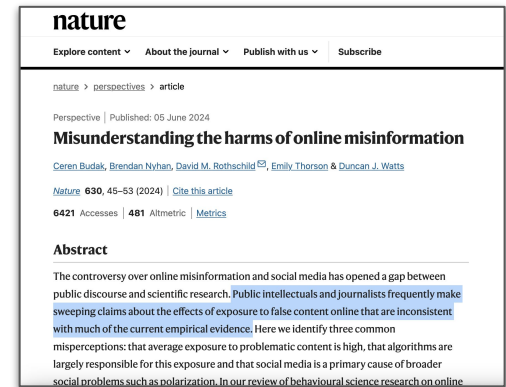
- Educators rightly focus on media literacy for citizenship and academics
- Students consume more media for leisure
  - Movies
  - TV series
  - Social media content
  - Video games
- Need for media literacy beyond citizenship and academics



## A practical problem

# Untrustworthy content forms minuscule part of media consumption

- Exposure to untrustworthy websites is minimal across multiple Western countries
- Web traffic to untrustworthy sites ranges from 0.1% to 4.4% in the USA, UK, France, and Germany
- When considering all media sources, including television, fake news makes up a tiny fraction of overall media consumption
- Only 0.1% of US citizens' total media diet consists of fake news websites

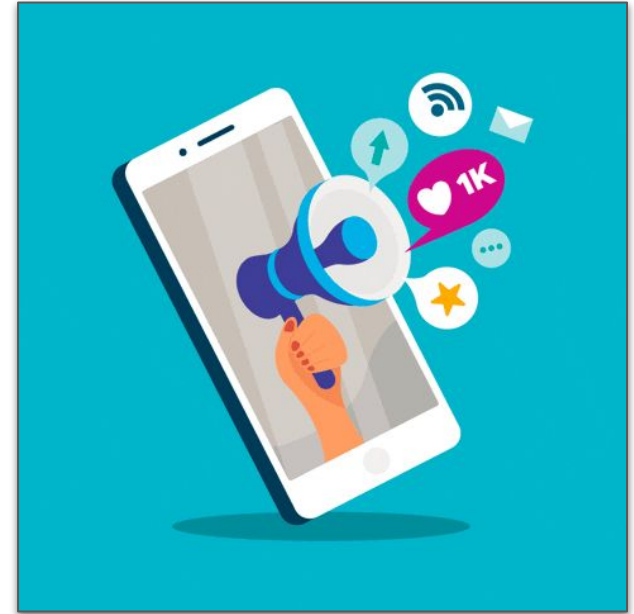


Budak, C., Nyhan, B., Rothschild, D. M., Thorson, E., & Watts, D. J. (2024). Misunderstanding the harms of online misinformation. *Nature*, 630(6), 45-53. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-024-07417-w>. See also: [Bernstein](#) (2021), [Grinberg et al.](#) (2019), [Guess et al.](#) (2020), [Lenoir & Anderson](#) (2023), [Moore et al.](#) (2022, February 16), [Nyhan](#) (2020).

## A practical problem

# Preparing students for thoughtful interaction with all forms of media

- Develop critical analysis skills for entertainment media to recognize subtle biases, stereotypes, and problematic narratives.
- Foster media literacy that extends beyond news and academics to include streaming content and social media entertainment.
- Encourage active, mindful consumption of entertainment media to mitigate potential negative effects of passive viewing.



# Exploring the link between TV habits and real-world perceptions

- Cultivation theory examines how TV shapes viewers' perceptions of reality
- More TV viewing associated with beliefs aligned with TV portrayals
- Effects seen for violence, occupations, affluence, and social attitudes
- Psychological processes like accessibility and online processing involved



# From TV violence to modern media impacts

- Developed by George Gerbner at University of Pennsylvania in late 1960s
- Cultural Indicators Project analyzed TV content from 1969-1995
- Theory faced criticism and challenges in 1980s, leading to refinements
- Expanded beyond TV violence to other media and topics over time

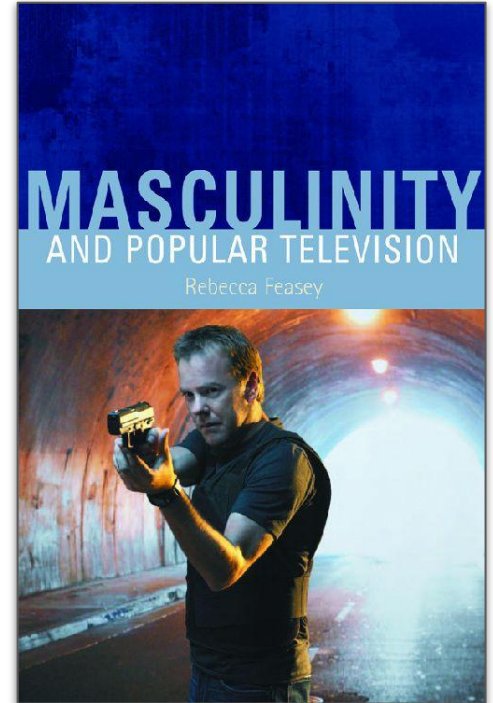




## A theoretical solution

# TV's role in reinforcing masculine stereotypes

- TV shows can shape how people think about masculinity
- Watching certain types of TV shows is linked to more traditional views of masculinity
- Sports and police shows are especially linked to traditional masculine ideals
- Men and women sometimes interpret TV's messages about masculinity differently



## A theoretical solution

# TV drama violence linked to public fear of crime, outweighing actual crime rates

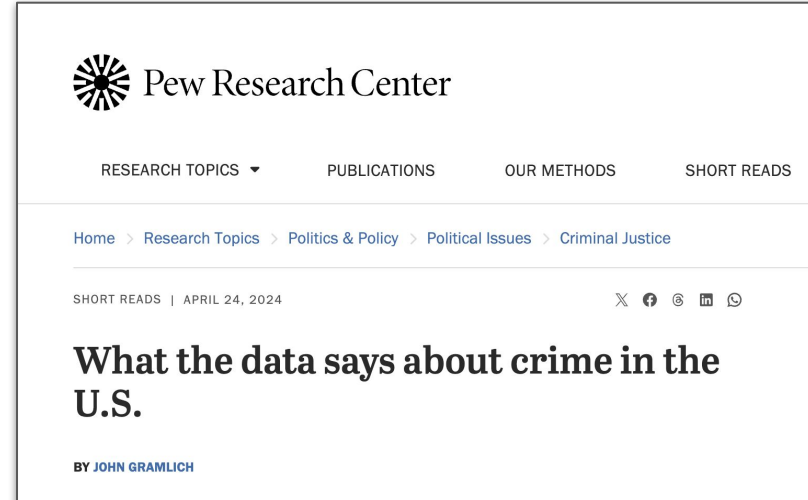
- Study analyzed violence in popular TV dramas from 1972 to 2010
- More TV violence correlated with increased public fear of crime
- TV violence affected fear directly, not through beliefs about crime rates



## A theoretical solution

# Evidence from the field

- Americans tend to believe crime is up, even when official data shows it is down.
- In [23 of 27 Gallup surveys conducted since 1993](#), at least 60% of U.S. adults have said there is more crime nationally than there was the year before, despite the downward trend in crime rates during most of that period.



A theoretical solution

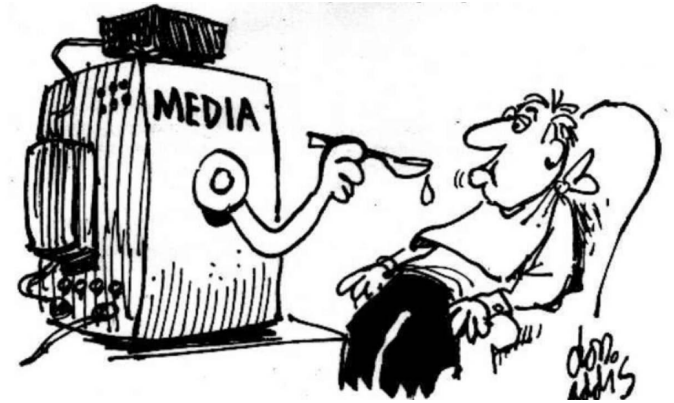
# Heavy television viewing linked to attitudes on poverty and working class

- Study examined if heavy TV viewing affects perceptions of the working class
- Analyzed survey data from 2,403 Swedish adults
- Heavy TV viewers more likely to blame poor people for their circumstances
- But heavy viewers did not underestimate size of working class as expected



# Unraveling the impact of media exposure

- Cultivation theory is a media effects theory that examines how exposure to media content shapes people's perceptions of social reality over time.
- Media effects are defined as deliberate and non-deliberate short- and long-term within-person changes resulting from media use.
- These changes can occur in cognitions (including beliefs), emotions, attitudes, and behaviors.
- Media effects theories examine how media use leads to changes in individuals over time.



Media effects research tradition

# How *Public Opinion* laid the foundation for understanding our mediated reality



Walter Lippmann's *Public Opinion* (1922): "The world outside and the pictures in our heads"

# From direct impacts to nuanced influences

- Media effects are short-term and long-term changes resulting from media use
- Effects can impact cognitions, emotions, attitudes, and behaviors of individuals or groups
- Modern theories recognize selectivity, transactionality, and conditionality of media effects
- Media effects research has evolved to address increasingly personalized and interactive media use



# A structured approach to dissecting media's impact on society and culture

- Content analysis is a research method used to systematically analyze and interpret various forms of communication.
- It involves examining texts, images, videos, or other media to identify patterns, themes, and meanings.
- Content analysis can be applied to movies, TV shows, social media posts, and video games to study their messages, representations, and cultural significance.
- This method allows researchers to quantify and categorize content, making it useful for studying trends and changes over time





# The impact of media on emotions, actions, and learning processes



## Affective

The formation of attitudes, positive or negative, about something.

- *Example:*

Advertising: Does this commercial make me feel good about a product?



## Behavioral

The observable actions that are linked to media exposure. Includes anti- or pro- social behavior.

- *Example:*

Video Games: Is there a connections between violent games and violent behavior?



## Cognitive

The acquisition of information— what people learn, how much do they learn, how are their information needs satisfied or not.

- *Example:*

Health Communication  
Political Communication

# How leading organizations are redefining media literacy for the 21st century

National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE)

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Aims to prepare students for a modern media and information ecosystem that addresses us “on a multi-sensory level, affecting the way we **think, feel, and behave**”

Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL)

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Discusses the need for metaliteracy which “demands **behavioral, affective, cognitive**, and metacognitive engagement with the information ecosystem”

# Recap

- Practical problem: Students consume more entertainment media than academic or civic content
- Theoretical solution: Cultivation theory explains how media shapes our perceptions of reality
- Media effects research: Examines how media exposure influences our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors
- Expanded media literacy: A classroom assignment to apply critical analysis skills to entertainment media, not just news and academics

Classroom assignment

# From passive viewing to active analysis

For slides navigate to:

<https://bit.ly/4eJxxce>

For instructor lesson plan navigate to:

<https://bit.ly/4eGB7nB>



## Cultivation + Content Analysis

IMS 202: Information studies and digital citizenship

# Thank you

Nate Floyd & Jaclyn Spraeztz