

How Does Mass Media Impact Different Cultural Perceptions

Yiting Jian

COM 252

University of Kentucky

### Abstract

The following paper explores many articles based on the topic of Mass media and cultural perceptions. There are four articles have been discussed in this research paper. These four articles provide different factors of how the mass media impact different cultural perceptions. Specifically, there are four factors have been discussed in this research article, they are: images and pictures, cultural differences, stereotype, and media literacy intervention. Each article conducted a research study on one of the four factors. There are many things can contribute to help shape our perceptions. And perception is the key element of our existence. By studying those research project, we will have a better understanding of mass media and its impact on different cultural perceptions.

*Keywords:* Perceptions, Mass media, Different Culture, stereotype

## How Does Mass Media Impact Different Cultural Perceptions

### Introduction

In the past few decades, the technology has developed tremendously, and mass media is closely connected with our daily life. Mass media can reach individual's life in many different ways such as TVs, magazines, poster, newspaper, flyers and etc. It would be difficult to imagine that an individual can go by a day without having any contacts with any kind of mass media. How much effect the mass media can have on our lives and the impact on our perceptions will be an interesting subject to study. Especially as these days communications become more globalized, studying how the mass media could impact different cultural perceptions turn to become significant.

To start with perception, our textbook's author Adler interpreted perception as "What you see is what you get" (Adler, 2007). Everyone has different points of view of the environment and the world around us. Why do different people view the world differently? Let's begin with a discussion of perception process. According to the textbook, there are four steps of perception process, they are: Selection, Organization, Interpretation, and Negotiation. The whole perception process is highly related to individual's ability to perceive, organize and understand the world around us, as well as a key component of the ability to function. By researching the factors that can shape our perceptions in the different ways, and furthermore discussing the different cultural perceptions that may be impacted by the mass media, we will have a better understanding of the significance of the mass media and the important role that mass media played on cultural perceptions, stereotyping and the influences on certain people's reactions or behaviors under different circumstances.

### **Literature Review**

Many studies have been done on perception, it has been widely concluded that our perception is influenced by many things. One study showed that images can dramatically effect people's perceptions. Visual materials are playing a significant role in shaping people's perspective. Tiggermann and Polivy published an article on September 2010 in Psychology of Women Quarterly. They did a research study on how the mass media affects the development of body dissatisfaction. This research study was focusing on the role played of social comparison processing in women's responses to thin idealized images. The researchers concluded that the comparison with the images on the basis of appearance has less positive outcomes than the comparison based on the intelligence.

Although this study has some potential limitations, it can still provide tremendous statistical data on how the mass media can have an impact on individuals' perceptions and mentally dissatisfactions by showing idealized images.

Further research on this topic has shown not only the images or pictures are playing a role in shaping individuals' perceptions. The amount of the media literacy intervention along with the images or pictures also had a significant impact on people's perceptions specifically the awareness of body dissatisfaction.

We can't just assume it is images in the media that is influencing perception; there are also other factors involved. Cultural background differences will also lead to different perception on the same situation or same objective. A study that had been done by McCabe in 2011 found that the media, peers, parents and religious groups impact the type of body image valued by each cultural-ethnic group as well as an impact on their body satisfaction. The results found these

influences also related to the volume of food being consumed. It is concluded that societal and environmental factors impact these perceptions.

A final influence on perception is stereotypes. Zhang, Q studied this factor in 2010. This study's aim was to investigate the associated relationship between people's racial-ethnic stereotypes on Asian Americans and if they are influenced by the media and the way the media's portrayal of Asian Americans. This study showed that the media can influence the stereotype in people's perceptions of different cultures tremendously.

### **Potential Limitations**

Limitations, as often found in most research, can also be found in these studies. In the Tiggerman and Polivy study, researchers used a sample of 114 women who were shown fashion magazine advertisements with "skinny", "attractive" models and their reactions were recorded by the researchers. First of all this is a rather small sample size, and only focuses on women. However, in their conclusions they seemed to make much broader assumptions about society as a whole rather than just on women. Also we are unaware of the age, cultural background, etc. of these women. In the Watson study, the study was performed on 54 traditional-age female college undergraduates. Of the 54 participants; 25.9% were assigned to a control condition, 22.4% were assigned to a video only condition, 22.4% were assigned to a short-term single session and 29.3% were assigned to long-term multi-session intervention condition (Watson, 2006). Again, we find a relatively small sample size in this research used to make some very precise, broad conclusions, and once again the study focuses on women. In the McCabe study, he looked in particular at the messages that were being received by adolescents as far as body image, physical activity and eating. The study was done using male and female adolescent volunteers from Fiji consist of two cultural groups. These cultural groups were the New Zealand Tongans and the

European Australians. This study is interesting for a few reasons. One, it was done on adolescents from different countries and cultures from the United States, and as it focuses on adolescents, certain psychological characteristics of adolescents such as lower self-esteem than adults were not taken into consideration. These limitations are fairly significant, but as mentioned above, limitations can typically be seen in most studies. The findings themselves seem conclusive and relevant. There is most definitely an impact on perception by these researched factors.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, cultural perceptions are shaped by mass media in several different ways. These are: the impact of the media on perception. Cultural background differences can greatly affect people's perception. Stereotypes as often presented in the media and as perceived by individuals also impact cultural perception. The amount of the media literacy intervention along with the images or pictures also has a significant impact on people's perceptions specifically the awareness of body dissatisfaction. However, these four factors are critical but they are not the only factors can influence individuals' perceptions.

Perception is a key element of our existence, it decides how we see and interpret our world. As technology and society have changed so much for the past few decades, so too has our perceptions of the world around us and based on this research and life experience this is no coincidence. Understanding the cultural differences and the different perceptions will help us to better work with different people in the work places.

Last but not the least, there are some future research questions can be asked:

RQ1: What are the effects of mass media shaping individuals' perceptions in senior populations? Is it true that the mass media has a bigger influence on older people's perceptions?

RQ2: Female demographics are much easier to influence by mass media. Generally speaking, Is this sentence true?

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