

Conceptualizing Media Enjoyment as Attitude: Implications for Mass Media Effects Research

Despite its popularity in mass media effects research, the concept of media enjoyment has yet to be clearly explicated or theoretically integrated into media effects theories. In this analysis, the authors begin to address these limitations by first reviewing terms that have been used to capture the concept of media enjoyment, considering their underlying common features. The authors then introduce a tripartite model of media enjoyment-as-attitude and examine how past research meshes with this perspective. Finally, they consider how enjoyment-as-attitude predicts volitional and spontaneous behavioral outcomes in terms of both media exposure and content-influenced action (e.g., imitation) from 3 theoretical perspectives (uses and gratifications, social cognitive theory, and cultivation). In this way, the article sheds light on how the concept of enjoyment might help to elaborate the understanding of those theoretical processes and, conversely, how extant theoretical perspectives might inform the study of media enjoyment.

The notion of enjoyment seems, on its face, so clear, so obvious that it appears to need no further explanation. As such, it has become a mainstay of mass media research with both practical and theoretical importance. From a production standpoint, understanding what audiences might enjoy can increase viewer ratings. Therefore, media enjoyment may serve as an indicator of consumption and potential profit. Enjoyment is also likely to be a key variable from an effects perspective. For example, the relationship between enjoyment and consumption may leave viewers susceptible to potentially negative effects (e.g., aggression). Yet, with the exception of disposition theory (e.g., Raney & Bryant, 2002; Zillmann & Bryant, 1994), and more implicitly, theories of entertainment (e.g., Grodal, 2000; Vorderer, 2000) and uses and gratifications (e.g., Rubin, 1984), the notion of enjoyment is not well integrated into mass media effects theory. Indeed, the term itself is not clearly conceptu-

alized in the extant literature. As Raney (2003) pointed out, "much like entertainment, scholars have yet to conclusively define enjoyment" (p. 76). Further, despite attention to the psychographic variables (e.g., traits) that associate with programming preference, the link between enjoyment and subsequent effects remains relatively unexplored.

The goal of this analysis is to offer a theoretically grounded conceptualization of enjoyment in terms of its implicitly understood function, that is, as an attitude. By linking research on media enjoyment to the extensive literature on attitude and its effects, we will be well positioned to systematically consider both the likely precursors to enjoyment as well as how enjoyment might moderate media exposure's effects on subsequent behaviors. The study of media enjoyment may then be poised to move in directions that will be both theoretically and practically fruitful.

What Is Media Enjoyment?

Media enjoyment has purportedly been examined across a broad range of genres and content categories, including sports (e.g., Bryant, Comisky, & Zillmann, 1981; Gantz & Wenner, 1995), violent entertainment (e.g., Krcmar & Greene, 1999; Slater, 2003), horror films (e.g., Johnston, 1995), tearjerkers (e.g., Oliver, 1993b; Oliver, Sargent, & Weaver, 1998), children's programs (e.g., Valkenburg & Cantor, 2000), and many others. Most typically, such research has examined the construct of media liking as a dependent variable, assuming that various stable personality traits (Conway & Rubin, 1991; Krcmar & Greene, 1999; Slater, 2003), transient moods (Knobloch & Zillmann, 2002; Zillmann, 1988b), program characteristics (Vorderer & Knobloch, 2000; Wakshlag, Reitz, & Zillmann, 1982), or some combination of these (Zillmann & Bryant, 1975) predict how much audiences like or enjoy a particular form of media.

Although this research enhances our understanding of the psychology of the appeal of entertainment media (see Zillmann & Vorderer, 2000, for an extensive review), we know little about what it actually means to enjoy media programming, despite several scholars having wrestled with the concept from affectively driven (e.g., Zillmann, 2003) to more blended, cognitively based perspectives (Bosshart & Macconi, 1998; Grodal, 2000; Raney, 2003; Vorderer, 2000). Indeed, the range of terms, including liking, enjoyment, appreciation, attraction, and preference, used across studies to capture the notion of enjoyment both reflects and reinforces the murky conceptual terrain. In the following section, we consider existing definitions and past measures of enjoyment. With this as a foundation, we then attempt to explicate the concept of enjoyment through the broader lens offered by the attitude literature.

Definitions and Terms Relating to Media Enjoyment

The term *enjoyment* has been suggested by Zillmann and others (e.g., Oliver, 1993a; Raney, 2003; Zillmann, 1988b; Zillmann & Bryant, 1994) to indicate a general positive disposition toward and liking of media content. Perhaps because enjoyment is defined in part as liking of media content, the term *liking* is frequently used to assess positive evaluation of a program or character (e.g., Hoffner, 1996; Krcmar & Kean, 2004; Valkenburg & Cantor, 2000). However, enjoyment and liking are often used interchangeably, and both suggest a global reaction to media content, enjoyment seems intended (or at least better suited) to capture also the more experiential nature of the viewing dynamic. That is, whereas liking reflects reactions (cognitive, affective, or both) to a media message, enjoyment can reflect reaction to both the message as well as the fuller media experience, including situational and contextual elements. Thus, although it would be reasonable to assume that one would both like and enjoy a media message per se (e.g., *The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King*), it is possible for one to like a media message, but not enjoy the experience of viewing it (e.g., if the volume were too high or others talked during important scenes).

Other terms, like *attraction* (e.g., Cantor, 1998; Krcmar & Greene, 1999; Sparks & Sparks, 2000), *appreciation* (Tamborini & Stiff, 1987), and *preference* (e.g., Litle & Zuckerman, 1986; Tamborini, Stiff, & Zillmann, 1987; Weaver, 1991), are also used in the entertainment literature more or less synonymously with enjoyment. However, though all three suggest that media content holds some appeal (particularly appreciation, which refers to one's "hedonic response to media fare"; Raney, 2003, p. 76), they each appear to have different meanings such that it is not clear that they capture the experiential nature connoted by enjoyment. Indeed, attraction and preference suggest assessments made prior to, rather than during, the viewing experience whereas appreciation connotes a detached evaluation of a particular genre or message. Moreover, it is easy to imagine scenarios in which attraction, appreciation, and preference occur independent of enjoyment. That is, one could enjoy programming to which one is not necessarily attracted (e.g., when attempting to alleviate boredom). Similarly, one could appreciate programming that one does not necessarily enjoy (e.g., a well-written, well-conceived story that unfolds too slowly). Similarly, we might prefer period dramas and yet not enjoy a particular program within that genre. Thus, in using these terms, we run the risk of inferring enjoyment when such experience may not have occurred in response to a particular message.

Of note, *entertainment*, both as a construct and as an area of study, is often used to imply enjoyment. Like enjoyment, entertainment, which

may include psychological relaxation, change and diversion, stimulation, fun, and a positive experiential atmosphere (Bosshart & Macconi, 1998), may include both the evaluative and experiential components of a media experience. Both terms also suggest a positive outcome that can result from both positive and negative emotional experiences (as Zillmann, 2003, noted, entertainment is an "emotional roller-coaster ride"; p. 557). However, one can imagine enjoying media fare that is not, nor intended to be, entertaining (e.g., an educational documentary or some other media offering consumed to fulfill viewing motives other than diversion). However, it is more difficult, as Vorderer et al. in this volume suggest, to imagine entertainment occurring without enjoyment. Still, we leave open the possibility that one can be entertained without enjoying the program itself as a result, for example, of social or contextual factors in the viewing environment (e.g., watching the Super Bowl with avid fans, amused by the spectacle without particularly enjoying the game). Thus, despite their overlapping features, these terms do appear to represent unique constructs, with entertainment perhaps emphasizing the experiential element.

Measures and Possible Dimensions of Media Enjoyment

Given the generally underdeveloped conceptualization of media enjoyment, it is not surprising that most measures of the construct are somewhat unsatisfying. Enjoyment is often assessed with single-item measures in which the participant is asked to rate how much they enjoyed or liked the media at hand (e.g., Greeson, 1991; Knobloch & Zillmann, 2002; Krcmar & Kean, 2004; Zillmann, 1989). A similar approach, but one that may provide more reliable and stable measurement, includes the use of several questions about enjoyment (e.g., enjoyable, entertaining, likeable) that then load on a single dimension (e.g., Gan, Tuggle, Mitrook, Coussement, & Zillmann, 1997; Krcmar & Albada, 2000). Although this approach may offer greater statistical reliability, the construct itself is not inherently better understood.

As we reflect on the various terms used interchangeably with enjoyment and the items used to assess it, we see the following: First, the terms reflect two underlying sources of valence. These might broadly be referred to as *message-related* (the extent to which the content was evaluated positively or negatively, based on cognitive and affective assessments) and *experience-related* (the extent to which the consumption experience is itself pleasurable, based a broader range of information, including social or environmental factors). Second, the issue of enjoyment *specificity* must be directly addressed. That is, we must distinguish between enjoyment of a genre (e.g., situation comedy), a specific program (e.g., *Seinfeld*), a particular episode ("The Contest"), and elements

within the program (e.g., the different story lines). With this dimension, we may account for our enjoyment of, say, *Pulp Fiction*, despite our dislike of violent movies (Sparks & Sparks, 2000) or our ambivalent enjoyment of *ER* given its informative and dramatic, but at times gruesome, story lines. Finally, as referenced above, the terms seem to envelop both affective as well as cognitive components. These insights, small though they may seem, suggest that media enjoyment is, in fact, an instantiation of the broader, more powerful construct of attitude, which is also defined by valence, sensitivity to measurement specificity, and affective and cognitive components. By conceptualizing media enjoyment as an attitude, we are well positioned to broaden our understanding not only of the precursors of enjoyment but its behavioral outcomes as well.

Attitude and Media Enjoyment

According to Eagly and Chaiken (1993), an attitude is "a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor" (p. 1). Eagly and Chaiken indeed argue that evaluation is the "critical feature of attitudes" in that they "express approval or disapproval, favor or disfavor, liking or disliking, approach or avoidance, attraction or aversion" (p. 3). They further note the importance of valence (positivity or negativity) and intensity of attitudes as well as the object to which the evaluation is directed. In this way, it is clear that the various terms used to assess media enjoyment revolve around the key feature of attitudes.

Although conceptualizations of attitudes may focus on associations in memory between attitude objects and evaluations (e.g., Fazio, 1989) or on simply the cognitive categorization of objects (e.g., Zanna & Rempel, 1988), there is general agreement that attitudes themselves are multidimensional features, based on varying combinations of cognitive, affective, and behavioral information (Zanna & Rempel, 1988). Cognitively, one may develop beliefs about an attitude object through direct or indirect experience with it. The extent to which those beliefs are favorable or unfavorable will inform the related attitude. In addition, positive and negative affective experiences based on interactions with the attitude object and the extent to which one has acted or intends to act with regard to an attitude object will influence the attitude's underlying structure.

These three antecedent components to attitude are matched by the tripartite model of responses attributed to attitudes. That is, attitudes are expected to influence cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses regarding attitude objects (see Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). If media enjoyment is indeed an attitude, the tripartite model allows us to consider

how various combinations of cognitive, affective, and behavioral information contribute to enjoyment and how such enjoyment, in turn, impacts cognitive, affective, and behavioral reactions not only to media messages themselves but to their subject matter as well. The latter, in particular, has meaningful consequences for media effects research.

In looking at the extant literature, it is clear that scholars have considered the affective, cognitive, and less directly, the behavioral components that might underlie media enjoyment. For example, in their attempt to explain enjoyment of suspense and conflict, Vorderer and Knobloch (2000) suggested that "exposure to drama provides readers with cognitive and emotional states" (p. 69). Similarly, Raney and Bryant (2002) made this implication when they argued that "audience inputs . . . can be categorized as either affective (e.g., empathy towards the victim) or cognitive" (p. 405). Whereas these approaches appear to be guided more by instinct than theory, the tripartite perspective may help to gain more systematic insight into the assessment of the enjoyment construct. Thus, we address each component in turn as related to the extant media enjoyment literature.

Affect and Media Enjoyment

According to Raney and Bryant (2002), the vast majority of media enjoyment research has focused on affective processes. However, they are quick to point out that although researchers tend to rely on affect, they do not always link measurement to theory, leaving the affective interpretation vague and ill defined. For example, early work on disposition theory (Zillmann & Bryant, 1975) discussed enjoyment in terms of emotional responses to characters in a program (e.g., was the character friendly, likeable?), and later work by Zillmann (1991) equated enjoyment with having empathy for the main character. Although empathy itself has been conceptualized along affective and cognitive dimensions (Hoffman, 2000), media researchers often focus on the affective component relative to enjoyment. Further, both positive and negative emotional experiences have been identified as contributing to enjoyment (see Oliver, 1993b), but such research is not linked to broader conceptualizations and processes of emotional arousal and outcomes. In other words, affective terms are used; however, the terms are rarely linked to theories of emotion or affective response (e.g., circumplex models or cognitive appraisal theories; Lazarus, 1991, Plutchik, 1980). Most recently, however, Zillmann (2003) in his theory of affective dynamics, has pulled together elements of physiological theory (using excitation transfer), dimensional views of emotion (focusing on the three-factor theory that combines disposition, arousal, and experience), and mood theory to argue that, enjoyment can be understood as "having been placed in a lingering, highly desirable mood state" (p. 559).

To the extent that enjoyment is affectively driven, particularly with its experiential level in mind, general measures of enjoyment may reflect the affective component. However, without a stronger foundation in theories of emotion and affect, such measures may be limited. Further, were we to draw from that relevant theoretical base, we might gain greater insight into the specific processes underlying the affective component. Finally, we note that particular focus on affect may obscure the very important role cognitive responses play not only in affective processes but enjoyment as well.

Cognition and Media Enjoyment

Although affect is clearly an important component of enjoyment, more recent research has either directly or by implication included cognition in the experience of media enjoyment. For example, Raney and Bryant (2002) suggested that enjoyment of a crime drama typically occurs when we like a character or her behavior, having cognitively judged her to be ethical, interesting, or intelligent. Raney (2003) further argued that enjoyment stems from the particular moral judgments of drama characters that allow for emotional side-taking (though see Raney, this volume, for an update on this view). Relatedly, Mares and Cantor (1992) demonstrated that elderly viewers' responses to a clip about an elderly man shown to be either happy or downcast about his life were based on affective experience as well as social comparison judgments (or cognitions) relative to the character. Thus, as appraisal theories of emotion would suggest (e.g., Lazarus, 1991), it appears that cognitive judgments are somehow intertwined with the affective processes associated with enjoyment (see also Palmgreen, 1984), though a more complete set of cognitions beyond social comparison or moral judgment remains open to exploration.

Behavior and Media Enjoyment

When discussing the behavioral component underlying enjoyment-as-attitude, there are several relevant forms of behavior to consider: (a) past or ongoing viewing experience, (b) past behaviors related to the message's content (e.g., surfers may be drawn to movies on that topic), (c) behavioral intentions regarding the content held by the viewer (e.g., those who intend to learn to surf may be similarly drawn to surf-related programming), and perhaps most directly related to the attitude paradigm, (d) behaviors during viewing (e.g., sitting on the edge of one's seat vs. looking at one's watch). To our knowledge, behavior has not been clearly identified as an underlying component of the enjoyment construct, though enjoyment has been associated with past or ongoing viewing behavior. For example, in the selective exposure paradigm, the act of media choice is equated with enjoyment, or at least with preference (e.g., Knobloch & Zillmann, 2002). Indeed, Bente and Feist (2003) reported a study (Feist, Bente, & Hudgen, as cited in Bente & Feist, 2000) in which various

dimensions of talk shows (e.g., engaging, relevant) predicted behavioral intentions such as likelihood to continue viewing. Thus, we infer that the cognitive and affective reactions to past viewing associated with enjoyment, which in turn could predict later viewing.

Perhaps most on target is the research on parasocial interaction (e.g., Rubin, Perse, & Powell, 1985). That is, when an audience member develops a parasocial relationship (PSR) with a media character, enjoyment of a particular program or content increases, in part because of viewers' behaviors, such as talking to, or imagining and discussing the lives of, the media character. Indeed, the development of PSRs can influence not only behaviors underlying enjoyment, but the affective and cognitive components as well via engagement or identification with the characters. Therefore, though it has not been clearly stated, researchers have recognized that behavior, in its various forms, plays some part in influencing media enjoyment.

Points of Clarification

A few points of clarification are important here. First, it may initially appear that enjoyment is more process-oriented compared to attitude. That is, one's enjoyment reflects a process likely to fluctuate during message exposure whereas one's attitude suggests a more stable end-state. To this, we would encourage the reader to consider that attitudes fluctuate in response to new affective, cognitive, and behavioral input. Thus, it is not inconsistent with the concept of attitude to note that a receiver, when flooded with such information during message exposure (e.g., anxiety during a suspense film, thoughts of what terrifying event might occur, covering one's eyes), experiences fluctuations in enjoyment. Once the message has concluded, the weighting of the three general sources of information (and their subparts) represents the final assessment of enjoyment, or the final attitude. Thus the enjoyment-as-attitude perspective accounts for both the process of enjoyment as well as more end-state assessments. Indeed, as the receiver reflects on the message long after exposure, expressions of enjoyment, like attitudes, can change even still (again, likely a function of changes in the weighting of the underlying components). In sum, a positive or negative attitude toward a media offering is largely synonymous with indications of having enjoyed or not enjoyed it. One small discrepancy is that the term enjoyment is itself positively valenced. However, this does not mean it cannot suggest negativity (as in "did not enjoy"). We further note that use of the word "enjoyment" is perhaps a better match to "attitude" as an end-state whereas the verb forms (e.g., "to enjoy" or "enjoying") reflect the moment-to-moment expression of the attitude as it is being shaped.

Second, as we argued above, enjoyment has an experiential component that does not, at first, appear to be well captured by the notion of

attitude. That is, though one may have a favorable or unfavorable attitude toward an object, there is no implication that this is a summary of a broader experience. However, we can consider that enjoyment may reference one of two attitude objects—the media message (specific) and the media experience (global). In either case, the same three underlying components—affect, cognition, and behavior—may be at play. Thus, in distinguishing and recognizing one's attitude or enjoyment of the message and one's attitude or enjoyment of the experience, we can still capture the experiential element so important to the understanding of enjoyment.

The astute reader may also note that attitude, as defined above, is a function of liking (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). How can we justify drawing a distinction between liking and enjoyment such that we may say one likes a program that one does not enjoy? To this, we reply that the very nature of such a comment suggests an ambivalent response to the message. For example, perhaps there are message elements that are appreciated cognitively (e.g., a clever plot) but the experiential element was undermined (e.g., by a lack of a desired emotional response). In other words, perhaps the cognitive and affective components are at odds, and this state is expressed by indicating a liking or appreciation (cognitive assessment) without a sense of enjoyment (positive affective experience). By considering attitudinal structure and the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions underlying enjoyment, we can also understand other apparent paradoxes. For example, those who like sad films may either (a) have more positive affect than negative during viewing, resulting in a positive contribution of the affective component to enjoyment, (b) evaluate feeling sad positively, or if they do not enjoy feeling sad, (c) weigh the cognitive or behavioral components more heavily in their overall assessment.

Summary of the Tripartite Perspective on Media Enjoyment

Based on the extant literature, it appears reasonable to conceive of media enjoyment as a three-dimensional construct comprised of affective, cognitive, and behavioral information that mutually exert influence on one another (see Figure 1). To this point, the underlying affective dimension has focused largely on empathy, though positive and negative moods and specific affective states (e.g., horror, sadness, suspense) could surely be considered to feed this component. Indeed, measures based on discrete emotion perspectives would likely enhance our understanding of the enjoyment construct. We might also note that the experiential element of enjoyment may be largely a function of the affective component. The cognitive component appears to have focused primarily on judgments of characters' actions, though other judgments, like general

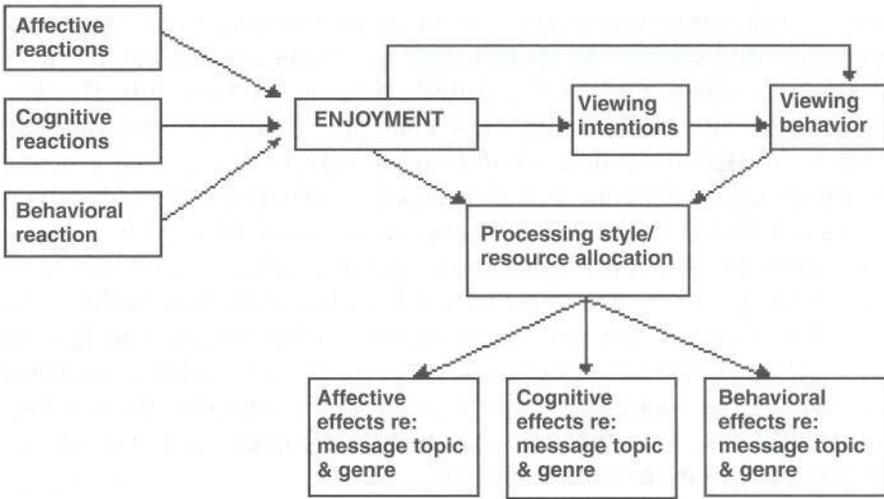


Figure 1. A Tripartite Model of Media Enjoyment's Effects on Viewing and Content-Related Behavior

story assessments (e.g., perceived realism, story coherence, message quality) or more personal evaluations (e.g., relevance, similarity) could be included in this category. Finally, the behavioral component has been most overlooked, though it is logically connected to selective exposure in terms of viewing intent as well as behaviors during viewing, including the act of viewing itself. Of note, each of the affective, cognitive, and behavioral reactions that underlie attitude or enjoyment is influenced by a number of other factors, like prior knowledge, direct experience, personality traits, current mood, and so on. However, these factors are expected to operate by influencing the three components, which, in turn, serve to inform perceptions of enjoyment. By more carefully conceptualizing and measuring the three underlying attitude components, greater construct and predictive validity of media enjoyment may result and, in turn, we may gain a richer understanding of this construct and its role in media effects—a subject to which we now turn.

Media Enjoyment and Related Behaviors

The Attitude-Behavior Relationship

As attitudes are deemed important for their presumed association with related behaviors (see Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977), and if media enjoyment is indeed an attitude, it is logical to explore the behavioral associations connected to that construct. This is particularly relevant as most media effects theories are ultimately concerned with the media's impact on behavioral outcomes. Thus, the goal of this section is to explore the mod-

erating role enjoyment might play in the connection between message exposure and effects. We turn first to the social psychology literature and its insights regarding the attitude-behavior relationship. We then infer how enjoyment acts in these contexts. Finally, we discuss three popular media effects theories and suggest how each might inform, and be informed by, the conceptualization of enjoyment as attitude.

Two different forms of behavioral choice are dominant in the attitude-behavior literature: volitional or planned behavior and spontaneous behavior. There are also two levels of behavior that might be affected by media enjoyment: media viewing and subsequent content-related action. We begin with a discussion of each form of behavior and how each connects to media enjoyment and message exposure. We will then explore the connection between enjoyment and content-related effects.

Volitional Behavior and Message

Exposure

In an attempt to salvage the beleaguered reputation of the attitude construct (see Wicker, 1969), Ajzen and Fishbein (1977) explored the conditions under which attitudes are likely to predict behavior. The results are best captured by the theory of reasoned action (TRA; Fishbein, 1979; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and its later extension, the theory of planned behavior (TPB; Ajzen, 1985), which suggest behaviors are well predicted by behavioral intentions if those behaviors are under volitional control. Behavioral intentions, in turn, are based on two types of cognitive antecedents, attitudes toward performing a particular behavior and perceptions of the social norm surrounding that behavior. Under this conceptualization, other variables affect behavior only insofar as they affect the individual's attitudes, subjective norms concerning that behavior, or both. A meta-analysis of TRA-based research supports the model's propositions that attitudes and subjective norms accurately predict behavior (Sheppard, Hartwick, & Warshaw, 1988). However, it is critical to note that the strength of the attitude-behavior relationship is impacted by the extent to which measures of attitudes, intentions, and behavior correspond in terms of their specificity; the stability of one's intention from the point of measurement to the actual performance of the behavior; and the extent to which the actual translation of an intention into behavior is under volitional control. In fact, a number of situational barriers have been identified as having a significant impact on the translation of intention into behavior (Ajzen, 1985; Triandis, 1977), including time, money, and the cooperation of other people (Ajzen & Madden, 1986).

From this perspective, media enjoyment will predict exposure to particular media messages or categories of media messages if certain conditions are met. First, methodologically, measures of media enjoyment,

viewing intentions, and viewing behaviors should be matched in terms of specificity. For example, enjoyment of situation comedies generally may not be a good predictor of viewing a particular series or program. Conversely, enjoyment of one violent movie may not generalize to enjoyment of the horror genre. Second, behavioral intentions must be stable and based primarily on attitudes rather than subjective norm. For example, if movie or TV viewing is motivated by the perceived norms of one's social group (e.g., one might be left out of conversation if her or she had not seen the most recent episode of *Friends* or *The Apprentice*), attitude (i.e., enjoyment) may prove to be a poor predictor of behavior. Finally, no situational constraints (e.g., not having access to cable programming, a family member controlling the remote) must impede viewing. Thus, as we contemplate the role enjoyment plays in predicting viewing, we may want to consider measuring subjective norms and potential environmental constraints. Certainly doing so would serve to better illuminate the link between enjoyment and viewing.

Spontaneous Behavior and Message Exposure

In contrast to the planned behaviors addressed above, attitudes can also be associated with more spontaneous behavior. Indeed the MODE (Motivation and Opportunity as DEterminants) model (Fazio, 1990; Fazio & Towles-Schwen, 1999) captures the spontaneous behavior type well. According to the model, attitudes may serve as one source of information when consciously deliberating among behavioral alternatives, or they may be associated with more spontaneous decision-making, perhaps without the actor's awareness. This more spontaneous influence occurs when a person encounters an environmental trigger (e.g., a television program) and some action is required in that moment (e.g., deciding to watch or change the channel). If the attitude object triggers the accessibility of related attitudes (e.g., I usually enjoy situation comedies), this attitude may influence both interpretation of the situation (e.g., this show looks good) and subsequent action (e.g., put down the remote and attend to the program). This may all occur with little or no awareness, intent, or control on the part of the individual. Of course, if no related attitudes are readily accessible, action will be based on immediate perceptions of the stimulus (see Roskos-Ewoldsen, 1987, for a review of attitude accessibility influences).

This more automatic influence of attitudes on behaviors offers some idea of how enjoyment, though perhaps not actively or consciously considered, might impact media exposure in the moment of decision making, assuming motivation or opportunity to select is limited. For example, as we scroll through the cable circuit, perhaps looking for distraction (i.e., low motivation) and we hear the introduction to *Law &*

Order, this environmental trigger makes accessible our attitude toward this series. Our expectation of enjoyment would then predict if we stay tuned or move on. If we have no preexisting sense of enjoyment, then we may be influenced by our enjoyment of this genre to the extent that attitude is made accessible, or we watch enough to decide, based on the message cues and our subsequent affective and cognitive reactions, if this is a program we would like to watch. In this regard, prior viewing experiences and the related attitudes formed are critical to predicting casual, unplanned media exposure. Of course, if motivation and opportunity are high, selection will be influenced by viewing motivations, including those outlined by the uses and gratifications perspective.

Media Enjoyment and Content-Related Behavioral Effects

To consider the relationship between enjoyment and content-related effects, we need to take a somewhat different tack. Rather than considering volitional and spontaneous decision-making, it would make sense to consider how mindful¹ audiences are while watching the programs that they enjoy, and how that state, in turn, impacts actions taken in response to the content viewed. For this exercise, we have selected one theory that connotes greater audience mindfulness (uses and gratifications; U&G) theory, one that incorporates both more or less mindful states (social cognitive theory), as well as one that suggests a less mindful audience (cultivation theory). After briefly outlining each theory, we indicate how enjoyment may play a role in moderating the content-related effects predicted and, in turn, how our understanding of media enjoyment may be enhanced.

U&G and Enjoyment. The uses and gratifications approach attempts to understand audiences' motivations for media use, assuming that motivations for use may ultimately moderate the effects of mass media messages (Perloff, Quarles, & Drutz, 1983). In their now classic precis, Katz, Blumberg, & Gurevitch (1974) argued that the "social and psychological origins of needs . . . lead to differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities) resulting in needs gratifications and other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones" (p. 20). Such needs include those related to diversion (e.g., escapism), personal relationships (e.g., social utility), personal identity (e.g., reality exploration), and surveillance (e.g., news gathering). Since Katz et al., newer models in the uses and gratifications tradition have distinguished between gratifications sought and those obtained (Rubin, 2002), distinguished between ritualized and instrumental motivations (Levy & Windahl, 1984), and extended the model to include personality (Finn, 1997; Krackmar & Greene, 1999; Weaver, 1991) as well as social factors (Finn, 1997).

Although U&G research implies the importance of enjoyment in the very idea of gratification as well as in the concept of entertainment, this research has, in essence, overlooked direct inclusion of the construct. That is, to the extent that it can be argued that enjoyment is incorporated into U&G research, it is treated as an inferred cognitive outcome rather than a multifaceted component of the dynamic process of gratification seeking.² However, it is easy to imagine how enjoyment might serve as a moderator of gratifications sought and obtained. For example, if one seeks gratifications associated with diversion, the extent to which the viewing experience is enjoyed may enhance the likelihood of diversion being obtained. The process can, of course, become more sophisticated in that different components underlying enjoyment might be affected in different ways by the same media message. For example, one might watch the news for information (cognition), but the nature of the news might lead to negative emotional arousal. Thus, despite the gratification of surveillance being obtained, resulting in positive contribution of the cognitive component to enjoyment, the negative contribution of the affective component may dampen overall enjoyment. This might then affect future motivations for information gathering or the sources sought out to fulfill that particular need.

We might also consider how the selection and processing of media content could impact content-related behavior. For example, if we enjoy watching *Dr. Phil* for any one of several possible gratifications (e.g., diversion, parasocial relationship), we might, as a result of our engaged viewing, gain insight into our own relationships, body image issues, and so on. This, in turn, could impact the actions we take in how we treat our loved ones, what we purchase, what we eat, and so forth. Were the programming less enjoyable and thus less involving, we would be less likely to integrate the information to which we are exposed (even if for other motives) into our behavioral repertoire. So, though U&G models suggest that viewing motives themselves may moderate effects, it may be interesting to explore the role of enjoyment in this process. Incorporating a tripartite model of enjoyment into the uses and gratifications framework may, then, strengthen the theoretical model and tighten its predictive power regarding behavioral outcomes both in terms of media use and content-related action.

Finally, just as enjoyment may help to elaborate the U&G paradigm, elements from that paradigm can inform our understanding of enjoyment. Specifically, enjoyment can be enhanced by noting the many cognitive motivations or gratifications captured by the U&G perspective and integrating them into measurement of the cognitive dimension of enjoyment. This is not to say that every potential gratification should be included, but rather that we can use U&G research as a source to

elaborate on the cognitive, and perhaps affective, dimension of enjoyment.

Social Cognitive Theory and Enjoyment. Bandura's social cognitive theory revolves primarily around the functions and processes of observational learning (Bandura, 1986, 2002). By observing others' behaviors, including media figures, one may develop rules to guide his or her own subsequent actions or be prompted to engage in previously learned behavior, or both. Although this theory is not explicitly one of a mindful audience, the theory's focus on issues of audience attentional and retentional processes suggest an engaged audience aware, at times, of their goals.

Although moderated by observers' cognitive development and skills, observational learning is guided by four processes. First, *attention* to certain models and their behavior is affected by source and contextual features, like attractiveness, relevance, functional need, and affective valence. Second, *retention* processes focus on the ability to symbolically represent the behavior observed and its consequences along with any rehearsal of that sequence. *Production* focuses on translating the symbolic representations into action, reproducing the behavior in seemingly appropriate contexts and correcting for any errors based on the feedback received. Finally, *motivational* processes impact which symbolically represented behaviors are enacted based on positive or negative reinforcement. Such reinforcement may come from positive and negative feedback based on one's own behavior, the observed feedback given to others, and internal incentives (e.g., self-standards). As the effects of observational learning occur via symbolic learning, the effects are believed to be relatively long-lasting.

Social cognitive theory and its antecedent, social learning theory, have been used to guide investigations of media effects (e.g., Bandura, 1991, 1992), though enjoyment per se is not considered in the theoretical model. The connections, however, are clear. For example, the message elements that may predict attentional processes also appear to associate with enjoyment (e.g., affective valence, source attractiveness or similarity, personal relevance). Further, positive and negative reinforcement of behaviors performed by media characters not only may increase or decrease the likelihood of imitation, respectively, but may also increase the likelihood of an audience member enjoying the media presentation. Thus, we can imagine how media enjoyment can serve as a potential moderator of modeling behavior in that enjoyment—and even anticipated enjoyment—should associate with closer attention and greater retention of modeled behaviors. Further, and perhaps most central to the social learning process, enjoyment may be taken as an internal cue of positive reinforcement for the modeled behavior. Conversely, the lack of enjoyment may

be read as a negative cue, and thus minimize the likelihood of modeling taking place. In this way, we would expect an association between degree of enjoyment and likelihood of modeled behaviors. If this were found, enjoyment as an experience might serve as a useful predictor of messages likely to promote modeling, above and beyond other affective and cognitive factors related to attentional and motivational processes.

In sum, by understanding how attentional, retentional, and motivational processes are enhanced and strengthened through enjoyment, we can further tighten (or loosen) the link between media exposure and behavior under the guidance of social cognitive theory. As well, our understanding of media enjoyment could be enhanced by considering the cognitive and affective processes involved in social cognitive theory.

Cultivation. Cultivation theory addresses the relationship between television content and viewers' beliefs about social reality (Gerbner, 1969). More specifically, cultivation theory asserts that common conceptions of reality are cultivated by the overall pattern of television programming to which communities are exposed regularly over long periods of time (Gerbner, 1969; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 2002). Gerbner and his colleagues further proposed that compared to light television viewers, heavy television viewers are more likely to perceive the world in ways that more closely mirror reality as presented on television than more objective measures of social reality, regardless of the specific programs or genres viewed (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). Although the complete range of cultivation indicators has yet to be specified (Potter, 1993), individual researchers have tested the cultivation hypothesis in a variety of contexts including violence (Gerbner & Gross, 1976), occupational roles (Shrum, 1996), marital discord (Shrum, 1996), sex-role stereotypes (Morgan, 1982), and racism (Volgy & Schwarz, 1980). According to recent research, cultivation effects may be genre-specific (e.g., Segrin & Nabi, 2002) and appear to be a function of accessibility processes in that heavy exposure to television causes the content at hand to be more accessible from memory because television exposure promotes that information's recency and frequency of activation (e.g., Shrum, 1995; Shrum, Wyer, & O'Guinn, 1998). Shrum (2001) has further demonstrated that when viewers are reminded that sometimes their estimates come from many places, including television, the cultivation effect is mitigated.

To our knowledge, cultivation and enjoyment have yet to be linked in the extant literature. As we contemplate a connection between the two, it seems evident that, first, to the extent viewers enjoy a genre or type of programming, they may be more likely to expose themselves to it and, thus, as heavy consumers, be more susceptible to the cultivation of beliefs consistent with that programming. Second, factoring in the perhaps active but less mindful state presumed by cultivation theorists (see Shrum,

Burroughs, & Rindfleisch, 2004, for evidence on this point), it is possible that when audiences enjoy material, they have fewer cognitive resources available for more critical processing, thus perhaps enhancing the likelihood of cultivation effects occurring. Indeed, literature on transportation (i.e., narrative absorption) and entertainment-education (see Green & Brock, 2000; Slater, 2002) suggests that absorption into an entertaining text reduces message counterargument and increases story-consistent beliefs. Thus, enjoyment may serve to moderate the strength of cultivation effects and related decision-making, not only through increased exposure but through quality of message processing. Finally, the notion of enjoyment is informed by cultivation theory in the very idea of accessibility. That is, given the three underlying components we have identified as informing enjoyment, it is possible that the accessibility of certain thoughts or feelings at a particular time might impact the extent to which each component influences the overall assessment of enjoyment. For example, if one is primed or put in the frame of mind to focus on the cognitive components of a "whodunit" movie, one's enjoyment might be a function of the extent to which the twists are easily predicted or not. If one is geared to focus on the suspense, the feelings of suspense or boredom may be more predictive of enjoyment. By considering the accessibility of the underlying components of enjoyment, we may be well poised to understand how those components may differentially predict enjoyment in different circumstances.

Summary

Above, we briefly described three prominent theories of media effects and explored how the inclusion of enjoyment could strengthen these models' prediction of effects, both in terms of media choice and content-related outcomes. For U&G theory, enjoyment may help illuminate the gratifications sought-gratifications obtained dynamic as well as the effects that might arise as a result of more active, mindful attention to media information. Enjoyment might further help to illuminate which behaviors displayed in the media are more or less likely to be modeled based on attentional, retentional, and motivational processes. Moreover, enjoyment may offer insight not only into why some genres might be particularly likely to evince cultivation effects in some audience but also the cognitive process through which such effects likely occur. Conversely, our understanding and assessment of the enjoyment construct itself can be informed by elements of these three theories. Gratifications sought and underlying processes of social learning can inform both the cognitive and affective components of enjoyment, whereas accessibility of information or feelings from media messages may impact the weighting of each of the three components identified in the tripartite view of enjoyment.

Attitude Literature and Understanding Enjoyment

To this point we have considered how enjoyment could enhance media theories and *visa versa*. However, we would be remiss were we not to consider how the attitude literature might inform our understanding of enjoyment itself. For example, research on self-perception theory (e.g., Bern, 1972) suggests we may infer, under certain circumstances, our attitudes from observing our own behavior. If, as we have argued, behavior contributes to enjoyment, the possibility is open to explore how simple exposure may contribute to enjoyment and its subsequent effects. For example, if we were to laugh aloud during a tasteless or offensive comedy segment, might we report enjoying it more? If, as suggested earlier, we were to look away or leave the room during a particularly suspenseful film, might we infer that we did not enjoy it? Indeed, the very act of watching the program might serve as input when assessing enjoyment from a self-perception perspective.

We might also consider how schema development might impact enjoyment. If we are connoisseurs of romantic comedies, are we particularly critical of those who take liberties with the standard formula? Conversely, how difficult might it be to enjoy media fare without a mental template for what to expect (e.g., reality-based programming when it first appeared on the scene)? Further, what role does vested interest (Sivacek & Crano, 1982) or direct experience (Regan & Fazio, 1977) have on affective, cognitive, and behavioral reactions? Indeed, what impact might mere thought (Tesser, 1978) or introspection (Wilson & Dunn, 1986) have on enjoyment? Research stimulated from these latter two perspectives would surely include multiple time measures—a novelty in enjoyment research. These are but a few thoughts supportive of the larger point: Our understanding of enjoyment could surely be enriched by integrating concepts from the social psychological/attitude literature.

Final Thoughts and Future Considerations

In our review of the literature, it appeared that enjoyment was not clearly conceptualized or carefully measured in the extant literature nor was it well integrated into theories of media effects. To begin to address some of these concerns, we chose to conceptualize enjoyment as an attitude with affective, cognitive, and behavioral antecedents and consequences. As such, we argued that enjoyment might contribute to our understanding of not only media exposure behavior (both planned and spontaneous) but also the effects predicted by existing theories of media effects, such as those related to observational learning or cultivation. Conversely, the construct of enjoyment can be elaborated by considering the theo-

retical components, like gratifications sought, source similarity, and emotions, derived from existing models of media effects as well as the attitude literature more generally.

Although we believe the tripartite model offers a helpful framework for understanding media enjoyment, we recognize that this is merely the beginning of a potentially long road in elaborating this construct. For example, it seems clear that many methodological issues remain. We must ask, as researchers, how to measure enjoyment in all three of its dimensions. We can then ask if we expect the three dimensions to correlate consistently from genre to genre and from situation to situation. We must also keep in mind that media enjoyment is a catchall term that can refer to enjoyment of a genre, or a program, or just one particular episode. Further, it can refer to media content as well as media experience. Thus, as the attitude literature suggests, we must be sensitive to issues of measurement specificity.

Once the conceptualization of enjoyment is more complete, we will be poised to explore additionally important questions raised by this analysis. For example, how does enjoyment affect cognitive processing or availability of cognitive resources? Might enjoyment allow one to allot more resources, thus allowing greater cognitive and affective benefit? Or perhaps enjoyment might take up resources, thus paving the way for unintended effects? How does the weighting of the three underlying components differ in different situations and to what effect? In the same way the structure of attitudes offers insight into attitude change regarding related behaviors, the tripartite model of enjoyment may indeed offer some practical suggestions related to media effects. For example, if one wanted to dampen enjoyment of violent media or enhance enjoyment of educational programming, an analysis of the underlying influences of enjoyment may give insight into how interventions might proceed. If one has strong pleasurable affective reactions to violent programming, perhaps approaching the cognitive dimension of enjoyment might help mitigate that enjoyment, as suggested by media literacy interventions that emphasize realism of portrayals (Potter, 1998). However, affective interventions (e.g., displaying gruesome consequences) or behavioral interventions (e.g., talking to real victims of violence) might also prove effective, depending on the underlying structure of enjoyment for that particular type of programming. Finally, would such interventions alter, as they theoretically should, the degree of enjoyment and, thus, the likelihood of social learning?

Ultimately, we hope this approach to enjoyment will encourage media scholars to consider enjoyment as a dynamic construct with affective, cognitive, and behavioral components exerting mutual influence on one another. We further hope this conceptualization will help us bet-

ter understand the factors that might predict media exposure, processing, and effects. However, only with a clear explication of enjoyment and well-constructed enjoyment measures that have yet to be designed and validated, can we consider carefully the role of enjoyment as a moderating or mediating variable. We hope these thoughts will contribute to the discussion that will surely continue regarding the understanding of media enjoyment, both theoretically and practically, and its potentially important role in media effects.

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¹ As we use the term, *mindful* is not fully equated with active processing. Active processing refers to effortful message consumption whereas mindfulness suggests the degree of audience awareness of the message and its potential effects.

Notes

A similar argument can be made for mood management (Zillmann, 1988), which in essence suggests that individuals will generally attempt to maximize or maintain positive moods and minimize negative ones, in part through their use of the mass media (Zillmann, 1988). Though a more affective focus than most U&Gs, mood management implies that one would enjoy a media message if it helped to regulate one's mood as desired.

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