Media Influence on Risky Driving Behaviors among Adolescents and Emerging Adults

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Background

In today's generation there has been an exceeding increase in the amount of violent video games, television shows, and movies that have been viewed by a vast amount of the population. A decent amount of the mass media encompasses car chases or extremely reckless driving behavior. With an abundant of irresponsible driving habits viewed within the media, adolescents and emerging adults are most likely to interpret these behaviors as the norm for driving within today's generation. The purpose of this study was to examine the effects the media has on influencing risky driving behaviors among adolescents and emerging adults. It was hypothesized that adolescents and emerging adults who are exposed to reckless driving habits within the mass media would be more prone to recreate these customs themselves. For the purpose of this study, risky driving behaviors includes anything that entails unsafe driving habits such as speeding, racing, and running red lights.

Table 1. *Regression Coefficients for Driving Risk Perception*

	Risk Perception
Age	.10*
Gender	.04
Videogame Exposure	.03
Movie Exposure	.22*
R^2	.06
F	17.23*

*p< .01

Table 2. *Regression Coefficients for Risky Driving Activities*

	Risk Activities
Age	.11
Gender	-.01
Videogame Exposure	.08
Movie Exposure	.23
R^2	.06
F	19.44*

*p< .01, **p<.05

Methodology

Participants

The data consisted of 1,356 participants. This study aimed to compare late adolescents (ages 17-19, *n* = 716, 60.8%) and emerging adults (ages 20-25, *n* = 462, 39.2%). The majority of participants were female (62.5%, *n* = 736) and Caucasian (58.7%, *n* = 692).

Measures

Participants answered a total of 28 questions modified from Harbeck and Glendon (2013) that pertain to their driving behaviors and attitudes on the road. These questions exemplify the certain risky driving behaviors that the driver does on the road and how well the participant is aware of the consequences of such actions.

Participants also answered a total of 33 questions derived from Brown and Copeman (1975) and Colbourn, Brown, and Bopeman (1981) that relate to both covert and overt driving related offenses.

Participants were also asked how often they have watched a total of 24 movies, on a scale of 1 (*0*) to 5 (*16 or more times*), and played a total of 10 video games, on a scale of 1 (*never*) to 4 (*more than once a week*).

Table 3.*Regression Coefficients for Driving Safety Habits*

	Safety Habits
Age	.08*
Gender	.02
Videogame Exposure	.07**
Movie Exposure	.17*
R^2	.05
F	14.93*

*p< .01, **p<.05

Results

A series of linear regression analyses were conducted to determine how media exposure to risky driving behaviors predicted participant driving behaviors. Gender, age, videogame exposure, and movie exposure were included as predictors. Dependent variables included driving risk perception, risky driving activities, and participant driving safety habits.

The overall regression model was significant for driving risk perception, F (4, 1167) = 17.23, p < .001, R^2 = .06, risky driving activities, F (4, 1167) = 19.44, p < .001, R^2 = .06, and driving safety habits, F (4, 1167) = 14.93, p < .001, R^2 = .05. Results indicated that age was a good predictor of risk perception and driving safety habits. Exposure to risky driving habits through videogame exposure was a good predictor of driving safety habits. Results also indicated that exposure to risky driving behaviors through movie exposure was a good predictor of driving risk perception and driving safety habits. Results can be found in Tables 1, 2, and 3.

Discussion

The current study demonstrated how the media influences risky driving behaviors among adolescents and emerging adults. The hypothesis of the current study was supported in that results demonstrated a positive correlation between risky driving behaviors and the participant's exposure to dangerous driving occurrences in media. Overall, participants who were more exposed to movies and videogames of risky driving habits experienced more dangerous habits while on the road.