

Social Psychology Section Annual Conference  
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# Media discourse research with adolescents: A case of isomorphism or non-isomorphism?

## An example of sexuality research

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# The 'problem': Background

- A lot of research, including discourse research, on the influence of media on sexuality and sexual health
- This usually falls into two camps
  - media analyses to identify a potentially (negative) influence on adolescent sexuality development (e.g. Durham, 1998)
  - discourse research based on self-report where adolescents cite media discourses and images as a potentially (negative) influence (e.g. Jackson & Cram, 2003).

# The 'problem': The case of isomorphism

- However, HOW exactly do discourses used by adolescents parallel the discourses in the media, i.e. are cultural level (media) discourses and individual-level discourses isomorphic (Van de Vijver et al., 2008, Berry et al., 2011)
- Important to know if we can make inferences from one level to the other

# Isomorphism explained

- Aggregation: Individual-level data are used to define a cultural level score, e.g. individualism/ collectivism dimension based on individual people's scores of sociability
- Disaggregation: the reverse
- If there is hardly any variation within a country, cultural level data and individual level data can be used interchangeably: e.g. most British people will understand English because Britain is an English-speaking area (disaggregation)
- Non-isomorphism occurs when aggregation or disaggregation implies a shift in meaning, i.e. when a variable means different things for individuals and at the cultural level

(Berry et al., 2011, Van de Vijver et al., 2008)

# The gap

- Not everybody interprets media content in the same way (e.g. Brown, 2001) suggesting that the link between culture and individual is not linear
- Isomorphism might not be the case in the area of sexual messages or discourses
- Research so far does not seem to have explicitly explored how isomorphic cultural level and individual level discourses are

# The research

- Are media discourses around adolescent sexuality and discourses that adolescents draw on isomorphic or non-isomorphic, i.e. in what way are cultural level (media) discourses are taken up by young people?
- I want to combine media analysis with Q methodology to explore cultural and individual level discourses on sexuality as represented by media and young people
- Findings from both data sets will be integrated to identify if and how media discourses are represented in individual accounts.

# The value: Questions answered

- How media discourse research and other media psychological research is done and what can be inferred from it
- How media helps or hinders adolescents' positive sexuality development

# Feedback, please ...

Some of the questions I ask myself:

- Is there a reason why I could not find any research looking at this? I.e. have I missed a flaw that makes this research invaluable, impossible, etc.?
- Did I miss any research looking at this?

Any other thoughts and pointers, please!



# References

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# The end



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