

Audio Essay Transcript: featuring Professor Brent Malin

Jennifer Shaheen:

The issue or question that I have been searching answers for is: how does the media really affect people? Especially in regards to body image in females.

Professor Malin:

Alright, so you want to hear about media effects?

Well, let me say first that there are lots of theories about how media affect people. And there are even lots of theories about how we should think about how media affects people.

Jennifer Shaheen:

Dr. Malin currently teaches undergraduate and graduate communication courses at the University of Pittsburgh. He has taught at University of Iowa, St. Olaf College, Allegheny College and San Francisco State University. He is also an author of multiple books on the study of media communication.

Professor Malin:

This guy Joseph Clapper created sort of the definite statement about media effects in the 1960s when he said, "Some media affects some people some of the time." And in some ways that's the best that we can say for sure about those direct behavioral effects.

If we think of media as part of the culture, does media influence culture or culture influence media? I would say media is culture. So that question doesn't make sense really. It's like saying does culture influence culture. It's all one thing. If we think about it like that, then we can think of all kind of ways that media influences how we think about our selves and each other. Or not just about whether or not you develop an eating disorder, which may happen, it's not easy to say there is a direct relationship between that and what's seen advertisement, but if media is a part of the culture, that, with other things, places the stress on things like appearance and being thin and these sorts of things it makes sense that these things are playing a role, and a very important role in creating ideas like that, like what women should look like.

It's a kind of culture effect and ideological effect. If you want to talk about Ideology, and those sorts of things, which are not just about individual behaviors, but which are about culture values. Then I think yeah, I think media has to be seen as a really intrinsic part of that.

Jennifer Shaheen:

How does technology fit in with media effects? Can using the famous quote "the medium is the message" be helpful?

Professor Malin:

That idea, that "the medium is the message". That's McLuhan. That's a famous quote from Marshall McLuhan and what he's saying is that, when you think about media, the technology is the most important thing, the technology itself. So for him, that fact of

whether you have advertisements or not would not be the important question, the important question would be where are you seeing these things? So is there some thing about Facebook or about YouTube?

If you look at the most popular videos on YouTube, most of them are commercial media. So they're music videos for famous artist. And so that maybe their just reproducing the same ideological values that are there in mainstream media.

Jennifer Shaheen:

What does media really show us?

Professor Malin:

If we talk about mainstream media I think we know, we can predict, what that woman is going to look like. We know she's going to be thin and young and attractive, high percentage of the chance she's going to be white, all of those things.

And for me it is about the advertising. And that's it. You have an influence of advertisers and advertisers want you to buy products. Advertisers want you to feel bad about yourself; I mean that's just a fact. They want you to feel bad about yourself because they want you to need something that they have. Especially we're talking about body image, so were talking about things-- make up, clothing, things like this. Advertisers want you to feel bad about yourselves that's their whole goal. And so, and they want you to feel good about the people you see on on television. And that's the whole thing with celebrities too, you're going to see quote on quote beautiful people they want you to want to be like so that you buy these products.

Jennifer Shaheen:

Thank you Dr. Malin for the interview, and to check out more information about media effects, and body image in the media, check out my blog at www.thinkhealthybehealthy.wordpress.com