

Reflection #2: Parental Mediation Strategies

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Communication 3554: Social Implications of Media

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We live in an era of rapid development of media technology, and we are exposed to diversified information every day. This information may contain content that is inappropriate for children or adolescents who do not have the information literacy and comprehension skills like adults, and undesirable content may hurt adolescents. For adolescents, parents need to adopt measures to minimize the potential risks associated with children's use of media. There are three main approaches that parents could take to protect children from the potential harms of the media, including active mediation, avoidant mediation, and passive mediation.

Parental regulation strategies that my parents used during my teenage years were primarily active mediation, supplemented by avoidant mediation. Active regulation, which includes both positive and negative mediation, primarily involves parents discussing what they see with their children during or outside of their child's media use, and pointing out misbehavior and inappropriate content as it appears in the media. Austin points out that this type of mediation facilitates children's ability to hone their critical thinking skills and improves their ability to use the media in a positive way (Austin & Kistler, 2015). Active Mediation enables parents and children to communicate better and have a proper worldview of the content that appears in the media. When I was younger, my parents would often watch movies with me that sometimes featured inappropriate situations, such as violent behaviors. My parents would make it clear to me while watching the movie that these behaviors were wrong. They show me how to distinguish reality from fiction in games or television that contained violence, taking these opportunities to teach me proper values. They had serious discussions with me about the fact that these behaviors were offensive and warned me not to imitate them.

In addition to this, avoidant mediation was one of the main methods used by my parents. Avoidant mediation is when parents put a certain time limit on children and prohibit the viewing

of certain content in the media. This is a one-way block that cuts off the possibility of exposure to misinformation right at the source. This approach can play a role in reducing children's exposure to misinformation in the media. When I was younger my parents would limit the amount of time I played video games in a day, usually half an hour to an hour. Because my parents were aware of the complexity of video games the content present in the and the fact that teenagers are very susceptible to media addiction, they would minimize the amount of time I spent using the media. They also sometimes pre-screened media content, which is like a filter, to select content that is objectionable to me. For example, some games that contain too much pornography and violence are banned by my parents to stop the philosophical content from influencing me.

These management strategies are useful and can somewhat minimize the negative effects of the media on adolescents. Parents need to actively intervene to prevent their children from being exposed to inappropriate content before they are fully cognizant. I believe that active mediation can give children the autonomy to better understand the messages in the media through communication with parents. When my parents communicated with me about what I see in the media, I was always able to understand it better and think about it in a way that fostered my information literacy. For example, after discussing the element of violence with my parents, I could understand that it appears in some movies for the aesthetics of violence, but it does not apply to real life. This kind of active intervention prevents me from wrongly imitating what I see in the media, and negative-active mediation can be more helpful in developing critical thinking to reduce misperceptions of media figures. Avoidant mediation is also helpful in that it may be most effective to limit children's viewing of content that they do not fully understand. In my younger years avoidant mediation makes it impossible for me to be exposed to the information, but over-restriction can cause negative reactions. For example, my mother was very strict for a while about

not letting me play certain games, so I would play them in secret with my classmates without telling my parents. I didn't understand what my parents were trying to do at the time. I just thought the games looked attractive, and over-restriction could have provoked me to go against the rules. This is why there needs to be positive and open communication between parents and the children rather than a harsh and authoritarian management approach to restricting children's behavior (Austin & Kistler, 2015). Parents need to be able to intervene in a positive way to minimize the media's influence on their children by communicating and giving proper autonomy.

(795 words)

## References

- Austin, E.W., & Kistler, M. (2015). Family mediation of children's media/internet Use. In C.R. Berger, M.E. Roloff, S.R. Wilson, J.P. Dillard, J. Caughlin, & D. Solomon (Eds.), *The international encyclopedia of interpersonal communication*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118540190.wbeic245>