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**Working Title:** *The use of mass media in the lives of juvenile delinquents*

**Project Purpose:**

The proposed research is designed to look at the use of mass media in the lives of juvenile delinquents. Four areas of mass media are to be investigated in the proposed research: social media, television, video games and publications.

Gathering information regarding the mass media consumption of juvenile delinquents is meant to shed light on how mass media consumption (in particular areas and across the board) has impacted individuals who are now no longer subject to its influence, but have been for years.

**Project Importance:**

In the world of mass media, the old book of social constructs has been thrown out. The fast-paced world of media calls for an understanding of demographics, a firm grasp of morals and ethics and accuracy coupled with immediacy. In light of recent media criticism, the necessity for an understanding of the importance of media as the fourth estate, as well as its impact on our world, is critical.

Looking at how juveniles use and understand media in the categories of social media, television, video games and publications touches on a much larger issue of why we use media and how mass media can evolve to fill the needs of individuals. It draws attention to why society needs media, how they use it and how it can be better utilized to further the greater good.

**Project Overview:**

The modern world is governed by a constantly evolving set of social constructs and social morality that has come about, in large part, because of mass media.<sup>1</sup> Research suggests that mass media has a much broader impact than we can currently comprehend.<sup>2</sup> This influence can be narrowed down into four main categories that relate to juveniles: social media, television, video games, and publications. The proposed research is intended to study how social media is used and viewed by juvenile delinquents. This particular group of individuals does not know a world other than one that is governed by these new, unfamiliar rules set by mass media. Their juvenile delinquency means they have likewise been separated from constant exposure to social media, television, video games and publications that cannot be replicated in any other way.

An understanding of how mass media has been used in the lives of these individuals will shed light on how mass media consumption has impacted these individuals and others like them.<sup>3</sup> My proposed research is a study in how mass media is used, the frequency of its use and the purpose it serves in the lives of young Americans. The proposed research cannot be conducted

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<sup>1</sup> Miroslaw Filiciak, Michal Danielewicz, Mateusz Halawa, Pawel Mazurek, and Agata Nowotny, Youth and Media: New Media and Cultural Participation (PL Academic Research, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> René Weber, Allison Eden, Richard Huskey, J. Michael Mangus, and Emily Falk, "Bridging Media Psychology And Cognitive Neuroscience: Challenges And Opportunities" (Journal of Media Psychology: Theories, Methods, and Applications, 2015) 146-156.

<sup>3</sup> Victor Strasburger, Barbara Wilson, and Amy Jordan, Children, Adolescents, and the Media (SAGE Publications, 2014).

with any group other than juveniles who are incarcerated. They can not only speak to their experience growing up as part of the first generation to have constant exposure to mass media, they can also speak to their experience with its absence in their lives. This is a revolutionary way to look at the use of mass media and its impact on juveniles. Typically, exposure to mass media is based on the decision of parents of juveniles who may choose to limit or abstain from some areas. However, juvenile delinquents are the only group of people who have no control over their exposure to mass media.

The proposed research is intended to show how between five and ten juveniles have used social media, television, video games and publications. Interview questions are formatted to gather information regarding amount of use, type of use, what they miss about use, and reasoning behind the use of each of the four platforms. Data analysis will take a comprehensive look at literature regarding the cultural, sociological, physiological, and physiological influences of media on people of all ages, but with a focus (when relevant and available) on juveniles.<sup>4</sup> Analysis will utilize information gathered in tandem with research to draw conclusions about how juvenile delinquents have used and feel about social media, television, video games and publications.

The first step in the proposed research is getting a letter of support from the Division of the Department of the Utah Department of Human Services. The second is obtaining a letter of support from a non-DHS facility administrator. I must also attach a research agreement and research proposal, as well as a cover sheet.

When all of this is put together it will be submitted to the DHS IRB committee. The committee typically meets the second Wednesday of every month. Applications for IRB approval must be submitted no later than the 15th of each month. After the initial review of my proposal, I will work through any concerns outlined by the divine representative for the next interview. Updated copies must be given to the committee by the 30th of the month for review at the next month's meeting. Researchers are expected to receive a letter with the DHS IRB findings within two weeks of the meeting.

Upon receipt of the DHS IRB findings, the researcher will contact juvenile detention center administrators about conducting interviews. These administrators will be given permission slips to obtain permission to interview each human subject. Each waiver of consent is intended for detention center administrators to sign as a guardian for each of the participating subjects. As juveniles, each individual in the detention center is considered a ward of the state, thereby transferring their guardianship and altering the necessary signatures required for interviewing minors.

Once the permission slips have been signed and picked up by the researcher, appointments to conduct each interview will be scheduled. Each interview will be conducted in keeping with Utah state policy. In this instance, any audio recordings created for academic purposes must be review by the faculty researcher (Dr. Kris Boyle) and destroyed. The recordings in the proposed research will be used for minutes and to record the findings of the interview. Requirements as to whether another individual will be present during the interview is to be determined by the IRB committee, however, for the sake of this proposal I would imagine that at least one person will be present during the interview.

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<sup>4</sup> Brad Bushman, Mario Gollwitzer, and Carlos Cruz, "There Is Broad Consensus: Media Researchers Agree That Violent Media Increase Aggression In Children, And Pediatricians And Parents Concur" (Psychology of Popular Media Culture, 2015) 200-214.

There will not be any interaction with the human subjects following each individual interview. Research and writing will continue until my thesis is completed, submitted and defended. If the DHS requires any follow-up information or copies of minutes, research, or the thesis it will be provided.

**Thesis Advisors:**

Dr. Kristoffer Boyle is serving as the faculty advisor for the proposed research. He earned his bachelor's degree in Print Journalism and his master's degree in Mass Communication from Brigham Young University. As an undergraduate, Dr. Boyle spent several semesters working as a student editor for the award-winning publication, the Daily Universe, including one semester spent as managing editor. Boyle spent several years working as a reporter for the Idaho Falls Post Register before pursuing a graduate degree. He earned his Ph.D. in Mass Communication from Texas Tech University in 2008. Dr. Boyle spent six years working as assistant professor of journalism at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska before returning to BYU.

Dr. Boyle's interests include the use of journalism's new media technology, including social media. He is a member of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication. He has published articles in several peer-reviewed journals, including the Journal of Media & Religion, Computers in Human Behavior and Newspaper Research Journal.

I have worked with Dr. Boyle a handful of times in preparation for submission of my thesis proposal.

Brother Robert Walz is serving as the faculty reader for the proposed research. He is a former broadcaster and associate teaching professor in the School of Communications. Under his tutelage in COMMS 308, 'Research Methods for Journalism,' I completed a semester-long research project that required 30 interviews, as well as scholarly and journalistic articles related to my topic.

Brother Walz is passionate about journalism and has gone above and beyond in all aspects of his career, striving for journalistic excellence and integrity. He has covered everything from distribution of relief supplies by the LDS Church to the impact of a humanitarian group in Peru. Brother Walz's enthusiastic approach to journalistic endeavors of all sorts makes him an invaluable asset to my thesis committee.

**Thesis Timeline:**

Bolded dates are deadlines set by Honors Board. All other dates are a timeline set by the researcher.

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| <b>1 March</b> | <b>Thesis proposal submitted</b>                        |
| 15 March       | Submit proposal to Utah DHS IRB review board            |
| 30 March       | Submit necessary changes to Utah DHS IRB review board   |
| 12 April       | Final Utah DHS IRB decision                             |
| 12-28 April    | Conduct human subject interviews                        |
| 22 May         | Submit thesis pdf, schedule defense, submit thesis form |
| <b>2 June</b>  | <b>Thesis defense information form</b>                  |
| 12 June        | Thesis defense  |
| <b>30 June</b> | <b>Thesis submission form</b>                           |

3 July  
7 July

Submit thesis final, thesis uploaded for binding  
**Thesis final, thesis uploaded for binding**

**IRB Approval:**

This project is pending IRB approval. The reference number for this IRB application is 17069.

**Funding Request:**

I am requesting \$100 for travel and research material expenses from the Honors Program. In addition to any Honors funding received, I will also be using internal funding to pay for travel expenses and research materials.

**Conclusion:**

Though the initial thought of interviewing juvenile delinquents might raise eyebrows, I urge the committee to consider the groundbreaking possibilities of the proposed research. The world of mass media is terra incognita. Conducting research that looks at how people who, for the first time in history, have been raised with it, then separated from it almost entirely, is an opportunity to address the influence of a force that will sway the course of our lives for the foreseeable future. Basic research on the use of social media, television, video games and publications will also provide information for future projects.

While studies have been conducted and papers have been written regarding the fact that media is important, what the scholarly community lacks is data on how this keystone demographic has made use of and feels about mass media.

The proposed research will also fulfill Brigham Young University's School of Communications requirements for a senior capstone project. The findings of the proposed research can be used by individuals within and outside of the field as the foundation for future research and insight into media usage as we attempt to understand the vast influence of mass media on today's world.