學術對談

媒體效果和育人效益：學術研究的作用

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「新生代的媒介信息消費和傳播行為並非如此。相反，他們創造簡潔、短暫，而且往往是非正式的，甚至是古怪的信息，在 TikTok、Instagram 或類似的非機構化『把關』的平台上發布，這些信息可能會被一個人、少數人或數百萬『粉絲』接收和消費。這些信息可能對用戶沒有任何影響，也有可能對人們的聲譽、自我認知、自尊或類似的東西產生巨大影響，而我們才剛剛開始將這些因素納入考量。」

周樹華，美國密蘇里大學新聞學院 Leonard H. Goldenson 講席教授。研究興趣：媒介信息認知、媒介心理、媒介內容、形式和效應。電郵：zhoushuh@missouri.edu

Media Effects and People Effects: How Scholarship Matters

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Abstract

This dialogue features Dr. Jennings Bryant, an authority on many of communication's prominent research areas. The discussions center around two main themes: how scholarship empowers media and empowers people. Dr. Bryant offers his candid and insightful assessments on research in media effects, entertainment, media psychology, sports communication, and media pornography. While the pictures are not always rosy, meaningful and significant research has a lot to offer to shape the media landscape in flux, and to empower the scholar as a person.

Shuhua ZHOU (Leonard H. Goldenson Professor of Radio and Television). Missouri School of Journalism. Research interests: media psychology, media form, processes and effects.

詹寧斯 · 布萊恩特教授簡介

　　詹寧斯 · 布萊恩特 (Jennings Bryant) 是大眾傳播學領域最受認可和最負盛名的學者之一，他是媒體效果和媒介心理學的代名詞，同時也是娛樂理論、兒童與媒體、體育傳播等學術領域的指路明燈。在其輝煌的職業生涯中，他取得了許多成就，包括 CIS 傑出研究教授、Ronald Reagan 講席教授、擔任研究生院副院長、阿拉巴馬大學 Blackmon-Moody 傑出教授獎、美國 Burnam 傑出學者獎和廣播教育學會傑出學者獎。他在 2002 至 2003 年間任國際傳播協會主席，並獲選為國際傳播學會會士，並於 2018 年入選阿拉巴馬傳播學界名人堂。

　　加州大學聖塔芭芭拉分校教授和國際傳播協會前主席 (2006–2007) 羅納德 · 萊斯 (Ronald Rice) 對布萊恩特博士作出了最好的評價：「坦白地說，布萊恩特博士的成就，他的學術研究範圍、研究數量和影響力 (或其中任何一項) 在傳播學研究史上都是令人矚目的。」喜歡數字的讀者可細細品味：布萊恩特博士出版了 27 本書，比有些教授發表的論文還多。為相關的協會、公司、政府、教育機構、非營利性的媒體機構、商業媒體、大學、雜誌和教會等撰寫了 129 篇報告，提交了 250 篇會議論文，並且在 20 多個學術期刊編輯委員會任職，同時擔任兩本學術期刊的編輯及 400 多本學術書籍和系列教材的主編，並完成了 100 多項課題研究。他的成就是空前的和無與倫比的。有一次我在大會上質疑他到底有沒有睡覺的時間：他每天確實只睡四個小時！布萊恩特博士是一位傑出的學者，也是教授和學生們的良師益友。此次學術對談圍繞兩個方面展開：如何通過研究為媒介賦權；如何教書育人，為人賦權。

JB：詹寧斯 · 布萊恩特
SZ：周樹華

SZ：　媒介效果的核心問題是媒體會對人們產生什麼影響。您是兒童和媒體研究領域的開拓者，你怎樣進入這個重要研究領域的？理論研究又是如何轉化為指導業界實踐知識的呢？

JB： 1960 年代後期和 1970 年代早期，我在印第安納大學 (Indiana University) 唸博士。兒童電視工作室 (現芝麻卡通工作室) 邀請我和當時印第安納大學電訊系主任 Keith Mielke 博士暑假到紐約開發新的研究方法，來測試其開創性的兒童節目《芝麻街》和《電力公司》的每一集對小觀眾的吸引力、理解的程度和注意力。這種類型的課題是一種形成性研究，所以我們對這類問題的總結性研究非常感興趣，比如這種節目對兒童教育的影響。也就是說，對比那些沒有收看過這個卡通節目的兒童，看了這個節目的孩子學到了什麼東西。還有很多類似的問題，比如和同伴一起看以及和父母一起看又會對兒童造成什麼樣的影響，等等很多引申出來的問題。經過多年的研究和完善，我們建立了一些關於教育類電視節目如何影響學習的新模型。當我回到印第安納大學後，我與傳播研究所的負責人道爾夫 · 茲爾曼博士 (Dolf Zillmann) 進行了全面研究。我們得到了國家科學基金會的撥款，用於研究教育性電視節目中幽默等娛樂信息對於兒童學習的影響。自此以後，我便開始了我事業中媒介效果領域的研究。至於如何將研究應用到媒體實踐中，我和茲爾曼博士的一些論文有幸引起了一些記者、製作人和節目導演的興趣。而我則尤其有幸成為了兒童電視工作室、尼克國際兒童頻道、迪士尼以及其他兒童節目製作的專業顧問和研究人員，負責探究如何最好地製作兒童節目，使其對受眾產生最大的影響。

SZ： 如果資本主義出版商們公平地對待您的話，您僅僅依靠《媒介效果：理論與研究的發展》這本發行了多個版本和翻譯成多種語言的暢銷書就足夠讓您過上優渥的生活了。它成為暢銷書的原因是什麼？當時您寫這本書時，有什麼設想或計劃來涵蓋所有的效果呢？

JB： 其實《媒介效果》的第一版有一個不同的標題。1986 年，我和茲爾曼博士編輯了《媒介效果思考》一書。而 1994 年的下一版書應出版商的要求修改了書名。最近的版本 (第 4 版，實際上是第 5 版) 於 2019 年出版。

　　為什麼它會成為暢銷書？在創作第一版時，當時的出版商勞倫斯·埃爾鮑姆聯合出版社 (LEA) 資助了一項對多所大學的媒介效果課程內容和結構的研究，總結成長達四百多頁的報告。我們也分析了一百多所大學媒介效果的課程大綱，以確保這本書涵蓋最常見的媒介效果的主題和內容。此外，LEA還對媒介效果課程的五十名教授進行了深入的訪問調查，詢問他們對於目前媒介效果課程的意見和未來的計劃，以及他們在教授媒介效果時最依賴的研究。我們匯總和分析了這些數據。得到結果以後，邀請了媒介效果研究每個領域中最頂尖的學者來寫作本書對應研究領域的章節。幸運的是，在這些書冊陸續出版的近四十年裡，很少有受邀者拒絕我們的邀請。因此，它之所以能成為暢銷書，原因之一就是它廣泛涵蓋了媒介效果研究的各個領域。

　　此外，各版的編輯，包括布萊恩特、茲爾曼、瑪麗·貝茲·奧利弗和亞瑟· A ·拉尼，他們都曾經是傳播學和心理學學術期刊的編輯或編委，而且經常在這些學術期刊發表論文，因此他們一直站在不斷變化的媒介效果研究和理論的前沿，對每版書中最熱點的問題有很好的掌控力。此外，出版商 (Erlbaum 和後來的 Routledge) 為我們提供了持續的課程研究、教師調查以及優秀的書評。這是一個很長的答案。關於這本書能長期暢銷的簡單答案是，大多數設有大眾傳播專業的學術機構都開設了媒介效果課程，而且這些課程是針對大量的學生的，他們是這本書的忠實採用者，我們很感謝這些學術機構，使得這本書不僅獲得了經濟效益，並且在本學科影響深遠。

SZ： **說到媒介效果，它經歷了從強大效果、有限效果、適度效果，到對特定人群產生一定效果的不同概念化階段。到目前為止，您認為我們已經取得了哪些成就，哪些方面是最需要關注的？**

JB： 就個人而言，我對既有的媒介效果的總體或一般模型是不滿意的，也不被那些試圖整合使用和效果的模型所驚嘆，特別是那些針對更新的、更具交互性的媒體的效果模型。大多數媒介效果研究都沒有產生較大的效果值，這表明我們認為的「個體差異」因素

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並沒有被全面徹底地納入考慮。這些因素包括周邊或環境因素，以及個人成長和個性因素。雖然這些年來，我們已經取得了相當大的進展，但在理解媒體對個人、文化和社會的影響方面，我們仍然有很多問題需要解決。

SZ：鑒於媒體技術的飛速發展，以及我們與媒體的關係，在未來的五年、十年、五十年，我們應該關注哪些方向？

JB：大多數傳統的媒介效果模型都起源於這樣一種思路：一些媒體機構和信息來源（如報紙、電視台）創造出標準化或公式化的信息，然後傳播給大量的受眾，受眾接收並消費這些信息，然後信息在受眾中產生一些效果和影響。總的來說，新生代的媒介信息消費和傳播行為並非如此。相反，他們創造簡潔、短暫，而且往往是非正式的，甚至是古怪的信息，在 TikTok、Instagram 或類似的非機構化「把關」的平台上發布，這些信息可能會被一個人、少數人或數百萬「粉絲」接收和消費。這些信息可能對用戶沒有任何影響，也有可能對人們的聲譽、自我認知、自尊或類似的東西產生巨大影響，而我們才剛剛開始將這些因素納入考量。此外，許多信息源現在有意地被隱藏起來，有些信息來自人工智能或者匿名，但它們也會對個人和社會產生巨大的影響，比如損害聲譽、影響選民行為等等。在媒體上具有影響力的個人可能只被某一個年齡層的人知道，而別的年齡層卻懵然不知，大眾媒體上充滿了這些現象，而我們的研究、模型和理論在這方面遠遠落後。這個時代，唯一不變的是變化，而且變化的速度隨著時間日益增長，創造新的研究範式以探究新的傳播規範和媒介化傳播是一個日益困難的挑戰，不過那是多麼有趣啊！

SZ：說到創新研究，讓我們來談談您的另一個研究領域：娛樂理論。由於你們的開創性成果，娛樂研究這已經成為當今媒介研究中最活躍、最令人興奮的領域之一。那麼，娛樂研究最初是由於一些迫切的問題開始的嗎？還是在積累了一定的相關知識之後，它才逐漸成為您的一個研究領域？

JB：我從 1960 年代開始學習傳播學以來，每學年開始我都會問自己，如果有其他行星的訪客來到地球，地球上的媒介化傳播行為中最

令他們印象深刻的會是什麼？隨著時間的推移，新一代的媒體用戶都有不同於上一代的信息傳播和媒介使用的規範和模式。70年代末，我開始注意到人們花費大量的時間和金錢使用媒體來娛樂自己，然而除了收集規範性的使用行為的數據之外，對於為什麼某些形式的媒體比其他的更受歡迎，為什麼我們花這麼多的休閑時間在標準化的媒體上，媒體從業者能否更好地創建娛樂信息系統滿足受眾的需求，以滿足我們不斷變化的需求等等這些問題，現代的傳播學者知之甚少。幾乎沒有理論可以解釋娛樂信息的吸引力。幸運的是，夏天的時候，我和道爾夫·茲爾曼博士在北卡山上花了很多時間開始討論這些與娛樂有關的問題，並提出了研究假設和課題。我們兩個都認為理論和實證研究必須齊頭並進，而且我們有幸擁有一批來自世界各地的傑出和充滿夢想的同事和研究生，所以在相對較短的時間內我們以一批理論和研究成果「湧入」了娛樂研究這個新興的的研究領域。

SZ： **您認為娛樂理論的一些核心概念是什麼？還有哪些概念需要考慮？**

JB： 我認為歷代偉大的思想家，如柏拉圖、亞里士多德、弗洛伊德、西塞羅、洛克、霍布斯、休謨等等，都正確地理解了很多關鍵概念；他們只是沒有研究工具來系統地檢測他們的概念。但他們認識到我們是如何利用娛樂信息來彰顯自己的優越性，克服社會禁忌，掩蓋侵略和敵意等等。這些都構成了娛樂理論的基礎，包括優越感理論，傾向性幽默的錯誤歸因理論、移情理論、情感理論等等。隨著生理心理學的發展，引入了興奮轉移等理論；隨著心理平衡理論的發展，公平競爭等附屬娛樂理論相繼出現。近年來，傳播學者開始將這些成果整合到娛樂的三因素理論中，這個趨勢正在繼續。就受眾需求而言，我們真的需要回到社會學和社會心理學，考慮同伴、群體、家庭在娛樂消費和享受中的影響。就娛樂理論而言，交互性和虛擬現實還處於起步階段，但這兩個概念對於我們對如何優化娛樂體驗的研究有很大的價值。到目前為止，我們在整合信息因素、受眾因素和環境因素方面做得很少。然而，娛樂體驗是這些因素共同作用的結果。音樂是一個

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龐大的娛樂產業,但我們只觸及了關於音樂享受的表面。新一代的電子遊戲帶來了新的維度,研究者們必須將其納入我們的新一代娛樂理論中。

SZ: 您是傳播學領域最重要、最具影響力的學術期刊《媒介心理學》的創始人之一,您如何產生創辦這個期刊的想法?從事心理學研究的媒體學者與進行媒體研究的心理學家有什麼區別?

JB: 幾十年來,對媒介使用、傳播過程和媒介效果的研究已經出現在許多學科的期刊上 —— 傳播學、心理學、社會學、新聞學、政治學、體育研究等等。但隨著媒介心理學作為一門子學科出現,並且越來越突出,大量相關學者都開始從事媒介心理學的研究。因此,創辦這樣一本專注於媒介心理學,包括新興的娛樂理論的學術期刊,從邏輯和經濟上來說都是可行的。我和拉里·阿爾巴姆(Larry Erlbaum)以及他的編輯、製作和營銷人員進行了討論,他們讓我為這樣一份學術期刊起草一份簡章。大衛·伊爾森(David Ewoldsen)是阿拉巴馬大學的傳播學院的一名教授,同時也在阿拉巴馬大學的心理系任職,我們的研究興趣正好互補,所以當我為 LEA 準備簡章時,我邀請了伊爾森博士加入。LEA 十分欣賞我們的計劃和編輯團隊,決定在出版和經濟上都給予支持,並付出了極大努力成功地發行了這本學術期刊。基於《媒介心理學》的成功,我們可以知道推出它的時機肯定是合適的。我和伊爾森博士在這個「新生兒」剛問世的九年裡一直陪伴著它,並在這個過程中也獲得了大量「免費」的學習。

就心理學家和傳播學家在進行媒體研究方面的區別而言,主要的區別曾經是心理學家傾向於將媒體信息和信息系統具體化,傳播學家傾向於簡化甚至誤解基本的心理學概念。坦白地說,我再也沒看到這種情況。我們中的許多學者都接受了傳播學和心理學科的交叉訓練,所以現在通常很難對媒介心理學的研究嚴格劃分出心理學和傳播學的界限。

SZ: 體育傳播在過去十年中得到了迅速發展,因為大量體育賽事通過媒體進行傳播,因此體育賽事也成為了媒介事件。體育和媒體似

乎總是交織在一起。運動員的形象是由媒體塑造的，反過來他們也在學習如何應對媒體和經營社交媒體。您從很多年前就開始研究體育報道的影響，這是因為您個人對體育運動很感興趣，還是因為體育運動太普遍了以至於無法再被傳播學者所忽視呢？

JB： 我的一些家人和學生都認為我開始研究體育傳播是為了給我在電視上花過多時間看體育比賽找理由，我不能完全否認這一點，我是個體育迷。然而，因為我有觀看或參加一些體育運動或賽事，我更深刻地感受到觀眾從收音機、電視或者其他媒體平台上收看體育賽事和在體育館，運動場現場觀看體育賽事是完全不同的經歷和感受，特別是體育賽事的娛樂方面——比如戲劇性的、幽默的、獨特的特點等等——被媒體大肆宣傳，而技術和團隊合作方面往往被弱化。同樣的，某些球員或某個位置的球員（例如，四分衛）所扮演的角色在媒體報道中被強調得更多。而在賽場上，球隊中每個位置的重要性通常是平衡對待的。媒體報道改變了體育比賽的本質，這種現象讓我著迷，所以我開始系統地研究評論、鏡頭選擇等媒體報道中的元素。體育傳播這一領域近年來確實迅速發展起來，我也很高興看到它的發展。

SZ： 我們現在並沒有看到很多關於色情內容的研究，原因有很多，包括倫理、道德、社會期望和有限的發行渠道，但是網絡色情正處於空前的高潮。其實這一現象跟您的研究貢獻是非常相關的。當我第一次來到阿拉巴馬州的時候，有傳言說某處有很多色情錄像帶，我當時想去尋找並研究，但我沒有去，也沒有找到。也許我應該進行那些具有挑戰性的研究，這些研究對人類社會其實非常重要。

JB： 那些色情錄像帶是真的存在，包括一些我們為了研究目的而製作的「原件」，但是在我退休後就被銷毀了，因為我擔心它們會被用於研究之外的目的。

　　我認為現在許多成年人不知道自己孩子的「性教育」是由網絡色情所提供的，即使你不是專家，也能知道網絡色情作品的典型信息並不是服務於青少年的性教育或社會公益的。在這個時代進

行色情作品的研究尤其困難，主要是因為20世紀的色情研究發現了色情信息消費可能導致各種形式的傷害。基於這些研究發現，大多數學術研究審查委員會基於風險考慮不會批准關於色情信息的研究。儘管如此，我仍然認為有必要記錄年輕人能接觸到多少色情內容，以及這些內容所傳達的信息，不同年齡段和性別的人的色情信息消費量和類型的不同等等，這些規範性數據將對政府和政策制定者以及社會中的倫理和實踐問題產生重大影響。

SZ： **讓我們談談您如何做研究以及指導教師和學生的問題，從您作為一個全能學者開始聊起吧。您的教育背景豐富，取得了歷史學、神學和大眾傳播學的學位。這些不同的學科知識是如何影響您開展研究的方式以及對科學研究的哲學和認識論方面的看法呢？**

JB： 如果看我的教育經歷的話，很像一個怪胎。我的本科學位是歷史學，我上過法學院和醫學院，但沒有取得學位。我的碩士學位是神學、傳播和心理輔導，我的大眾傳播博士學習其實更多的是心理學和科學哲學課程，而非傳播學課程；我還為一百多家媒體公司做過顧問。因此，我不像其他人一樣認為人文科學、社會科學、生物科學和媒體專業之間存在明顯分歧。就我個人而言，我認為它們的共同點就是我們學科面臨的一些最重要問題的所在，也是批判性思維的連結。我有幸在我所有就讀過的大學學習過，但我認為最能代表我的是我的本科院校戴維森大學授予我的「人文學榮譽博士」學位。我認為傳播學是一門重要的人文學科，而這個榮譽學位就很好地體現了這一點。

SZ： **與一些高度重合只是有微小差別的研究不同，您的每一篇論文都對該學術領域做出了重要而獨特的貢獻。您的研究始終致力於為媒體提供信息，不斷鞏固媒體在當今社會的中心地位，增強傳播學在學術界的中心地位，以及提高我們對傳播過程和效果的理解。當我們面臨學術評審、終身教職和規定期限的壓力時，我們應該如何應對呢？**

JB： 我當年面臨許多博士項目一些有趣的選擇，包括神學、聖經語言學和傳播學。我選擇傳播學的主要原因是，這是一門新興學科，

其中許多最重要的問題不僅沒有得到回答，甚至沒有被提出。到今天，這門學科也有很多重要的問題還需要被提出和回答。在為職業發展選擇研究主題和方法時，我建議大家問自己這樣一些問題：「這是一個真正重要的研究問題嗎？」「問和答這個問題真的能增進我們這個領域的知識體系嗎？」「什麼方法能提供最令人信服的答案？」「這種方法會產生可複製的結果嗎？」「這項研究會對理論的進步做出貢獻嗎？」以及「我的方法是從正確的認識論角度得來的嗎？」如果你能肯定地回答所有這些問題，你的努力應該是有回報的。

SZ： **很多研究生會問一些關於研究想法和思路的問題。我知道你們的故事：在早些年，由道爾夫·茲爾曼、喬安妮·坎特（Joanne Cantor）和詹寧斯·布萊恩特組成的高效率團隊常在Kirkwood街上的咖啡館裡坐上幾個小時。幾個月後，幾篇論文就發表了。這是怎麼發生的？**

JB： 您提到的我們那個研究團隊每周都要在魯迪餐館見幾次面。魯迪餐館是位於布魯明頓的一家道家餐館，那裡的食物非常棒，價格也很合理。道爾夫·茲爾曼是我所見過的真正有獨創性的思想家之一，他擁有一系列令人難以置信的研究工具，而喬安妮·坎特是一位傑出的教師和研究者，儘管她當時還是一名博士生，她對我們的研究做出了巨大貢獻。事實上，她給我提供了最好的同伴教育。我們的談話範圍很廣，但經常集中在媒介效果或娛樂理論上。無論主題是什麼，我們總是試圖將討論落實到一個可行的計劃上，從而獲得富有成效的研究。在很多情況下我們的節奏是，周一進行理論探討，周二至周四開展實證調查，周五進行數據分析，周末用來評審和修改。我不是在開玩笑，也不是在誇張。當然，一些研究項目需要更多的時間來完成，但是一些在傳播、教育或心理學領域的知名期刊上發表的論文就是通過這種快速或緊湊的方法產生的。我們都在業界的研究所工作過，在那裡，速度是很重要的——道爾夫·茲爾曼在蘇黎世研究所；喬安妮·坎特在巴黎的福克斯國際；我在紐約兒童電視工作室。所以我們習

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慣了制定計劃時間表，不會浪費時間。此外，我們都知道自己可以像在讀博期間如此高效工作的「黃金時代」並不會永遠持續下去，所以我們在這種緊迫感之下每天都在工作。

SZ： **我覺得自己很幸運能夠成為一名阿拉巴馬大學教職人員，因為我有機會跟我心目中學術嚴謹、個性謙和、正直無私的榜樣面對面地交流。請您分享一些如何影響這個研究領域，並幫助同僚共同進步的感想。**

JB： 我認為指導是一種強大的過程，它能激勵所有參與者，而且不會產生負面影響。但這是一項艱苦而耗時的工作，最需要的以及最主要的精神就是各方開放的心態，並且每一方都願意向對方學習。傳播學研究的未來似乎是合作，部分原因是因為我們的研究方法和要求的理論和方法的技能越來越複雜，很少人能完全具備這些能力。還有一部分原因是由於我們這個領域的知識和理論的擴張和更新的速度是如此之快，幾乎沒有人能夠獨自跟上這種趨勢。幸運的是，先進的通訊技術使跨時間和地域的指導和協作成為可能，我們不再局限於在辦公室討論，儘管我承認這仍然是我最喜歡的指導和協作的方式。最新版的《媒介效果：理論和研究進展》（第四版，2019）就體現了利用現代通訊技術進行的學術合作。在這本書的創作過程中，三位合作編輯從未面對面地溝通過。相反，我們利用網絡進行交流，分享和修改，為每一章和整本書設計初稿，討論潛在的作者。幾個月中每天都公開討論我們的立場，利用各種為分享而設計的媒體平台進行合作。我們都從這個過程中學到了很多。

SZ： **研究生們常常好奇，一個學術明星竟然如此平易近人、腳踏實地、謙和有禮。請與我們分享一些您指導畢業生的獨家秘訣。**

JB： 首先感謝您的誇獎並且邀請我參加這次訪談。如果我確實體現了你所說的性格，那無疑是因為我媽媽常常在我耳邊說：「詹寧斯，不要太自大噢！」我深深相信，不同的人擁有不同的天賦，沒有人能夠超越他們擁有的天賦，關鍵是如何發揮這些天賦。如果我有什麼與眾不同的天賦的話，那可能是有感染力的寫作能力，這歸功於我受到的文科教育，以及我對不同人的愛。這是我

思想開放、平易近人的父母教會我的，他們是我的榜樣。此外，我有幸參與傳播學博士教育長達四十年之久，在這個過程中，我遇到了許多不可思議的人，他們比我聰明得多，擁有更強大的能力。在研究型大學當一名教師是一種榮譽和幸運，因為你經常會接觸到有雄心壯志、風度出眾、才華橫溢的人。如果你過度沉湎於自我推銷，或者你總是試圖迎合自己的自尊心，你就會錯過很多難得的，向你周圍的人學習的機會。我們每個人都有東西可以教別人，要意識到這一過程的益處，不要讓你的自我意識妨礙你向他人學習。這是我們作為教授能夠最大限度地讓自己受益於這個美好工作的唯一途徑。

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Academic Dialogue with **Jennings BRYANT**

Media Effects and People Effects:
How Scholarship Matters

JB: Jennings BRYANT
SZ: Shuhua ZHOU

SZ: **The central question of media effects is what media can do to people. There is no better place to start than children and media, where you blazed the trail. What got you into this important area of research, and how did research translate into knowledge and media practices?**

JB: In the late 1960s and early 1970s, when I was a doctoral student at Indiana University (IU), the Children's Television Workshop (now Sesame Workshop), invited Dr. Keith Mielke, then Chair of the IU Department of Telecommunication, and me to spend summers in New York City, developing new research methods to test the effectiveness of their groundbreaking new children's programs, *Sesame Street* and *The Electric Company*, to determine how appealing, comprehensible, and attention-getting each new segment produced was for their young audiences. While conducting formative research of this type, we became very interested in summative research issues like what the educational impacts of their programs were; that is, what did the children who watched these segments learn that their peers who did not watch them did not learn, along with numerous cognate questions such as what were the effects of peer co-viewing, of watching with parents, and the like. We developed several fledgling models of the impact of educational television on learning that we employed and refined over the years. When I returned to IU during the academic years, I worked extensively with Dr. Dolf Zillmann, who directed the Institute for Communication Research. We received a National Science Foundation grant to study the effects of using entertainment features such as humor in the cause of learning via educational television, and the portion of my career that focused on media effects

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was launched. In terms of translating to media practices, Dr. Zillmann and I were fortunate to be able to write several articles about what we learned that were targeted to media writers, producers, and directors, and I was particularly blessed to become a regular consultant to and contract researcher for Children's Television Workshop, Nickelodeon, Disney and several other producers of children's media about how best to create children's programming that would yield maximal impact.

SZ: **If capitalistic book publishers treat you right, you could probably live a comfortable life just living on loyalty of a single book,** *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research***, in many editions and languages. What makes it a best seller? When you designed the book, what was the plan to cover effects of all kinds?**

JB: The first edition of *Media Effects* initially had a different title. In 1986, Dolf Zillmann and I edited *Perspectives on Media Effects*, the title of which was changed in the next edition (1994) at the publisher's request to *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research* in the edition published 1994. The most recent edition (fourth edition, but really the fifth) was published in 2019.

Why a best seller? For the first edition, the then publisher, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates (LEA), commissioned an extensive curriculum study of college and university courses in media effects, the report of which was more than 400 pages long. We examined more than 100 syllabi of college and university courses in media effects, and we made sure that we included the most commonly covered topics in media effects from these courses in our volume. LEA also conducted an extensive survey of 50 teachers of those courses, asking about their current and future plans for courses in media effects as well as their opinions about whose research they relied upon most heavily in each topic of media effects they covered. After we had aggregated and analyzed the resulting data, we invited a leading scholar in each area to contribute a chapter. We have been blessed that across the nearly four decades during which these volumes have been published, very few invitees turned us down. So one reason the book has been a best-seller is because it was researched extensively.

Moreover, the various editors (Bryant, Zillmann, Mary Beth Oliver, and Arthur A. Raney) have edited journals or served on a

number of editorial boards of journals in communication and in psychology that regularly publish articles on media effects, so the editorial teams have been on top of evolving issues and theories of media effects, which has kept the various editions current on trends in the area. Moreover, the publishers (Erlbaum and later Routledge) provided us with continued curriculum research and instructor surveys as well as excellent reviewers. That is the long answer. The short answer as to why the book has been a perennial best seller is that most academic institutions that teach mass communication courses offer a course in media effects, and these courses typically are taught to large number of students. We are grateful to our many loyal adopters who have made each edition successful financially as well as in terms of the impact the book has had on the discipline.

SZ: **Speaking of media effects, it has gone through different phases of conceptualization, from powerful effects, limited effects, moderate effects, to certain effects on certain people. What do you think we have accomplished so far, what areas need the most attention?**

JB: Personally, I have not been satisfied with the overarching or *general* models of media effects that have been posited, nor have I been wowed by the models that have attempted to integrate uses and effects, especially for the newer, more interactive media. With most media-effects research we have not generated large effect sizes, which suggests that factors that we consider "individual differences" have not been thoroughly examined. These include ambient or environmental factors as well as developmental and personality factors. Considerable progress has been made over the years, but we still have a lot of issues to accommodate and problems to solve in our understanding of media effects on individuals, culture, and society.

SZ: **In light of the rapid changes in media technology, and our relationship with media, what are some directions we should focus on in the next five years, ten years, 50 years?**

JB: Most traditional media-effects models begin with the idea that some institutional source (e.g., newspaper, television network) creates stylized or formulaic messages that are distributed to large audiences who consume these messages with certain resultant effects. By and

large, the mediated communication behavior of Generation Z is not like that. Rather, individuals create brief, ephemeral, often informal, even quirky messages that are distributed without institutional gatekeeping on TikTok, Instagram, or the like that may be consumed by only an individual, a handful of people, or millions of "followers." These messages may have little or no impact or they may have enormous impact on a user's prestige, self-concept, reputation, or the like. We are only beginning to account for such processes. Moreover, many message sources are now intentionally veiled, come from Bots, or have anonymous sources, yet they can have monumental effects on individuals and societies, including swaying reputations, voter behavior, and many other effects. Social "influencers" exist among some generations that other generations never know exist. Our general interest publications are full of stories about these phenomena, but our research, models, and theories have fallen way behind in this regard. In this era in which the only constant is change and the rate of change of change increases markedly over time, it will be an ever-growing challenge to create new research protocols and paradigms to keep up with new normative forms of mediated communication. But what fun it will be!

SZ: **Speaking of breaking new paths, let's switch to your other research area: entertainment. Thanks to your pioneering work, this has become one of the most vibrant, exciting areas of media scholarship today. Did it start with some burning questions? Or did it gradually come to become an area of study after you have accumulated some research knowledge?**

JB: Ever since I began to study communication in the 1960s, at the start of each academic year I have asked myself, what if visitors from other planets came to earth, what would be their most striking observations about earthlings' mediated communication behavior? Over time it became obvious that each new generation of media users featured normative communication usage patterns that differed from those of their elders. In the late 1970s, I began to notice the inordinate amount of time and money earthlings were spending entertaining themselves with media, yet other than gathering normative data, contemporary communication scholars knew very little about why certain forms of

media were being consumed more than others, why we were spending so much of our leisure time with formulaic media, and whether those involved in the media business could do a better job creating entertaining message systems to serve our evolving needs. Theories to explain the appeal of entertaining messages were virtually nonexistent. Fortunately, Dolf Zillmann and I were able to spend a great deal of time together during the summers in the mountains of North Carolina, and we began discussing these entertainment-related questions and developing research questions and programs addressing them. Both of us believed that theory and empirical research must go hand in hand, and we were blessed with a cadre of brilliant and ambitious colleagues and graduate students throughout the world, so in a relatively short time we were able to "flood the market" with a number of theories and research findings in this fledgling area of entertainment theory.

SZ: **What do you consider to be some core concepts of entertainment, what other concepts need to be considered?**

JB: I think great thinkers through the ages, like Plato, Aristotle, Freud, Cicero, Locke, Hobbes, Hume, and other one-name wonders got a lot of the key concepts right; they just didn't have the research tools to examine their concepts systematically. But they recognized how we use entertaining messages to assert our own superiority, to overcome societal inhibitions, to mask aggression and hostility and the like. These have formed the basis for essential entertainment theories like superiority theory, misattribution theory of tendentious humor, empathy theory, disposition or affective disposition theory, et cetera. With the development of physiological psychology, theories like excitation-transfer could be added, and with the development of psychological balance theories, subsidiary entertainment theories like equity theory came into play. More recently, communication scholars have begun to integrate these constructs into three-factor theories of entertainment, and the beat goes on. In terms of what is needed, we really need to return to sociology and social psychology and look at the place of peer, cohort, group, and family in entertainment consumption and enjoyment. Interactivity and virtual reality are in their infancy as far as entertainment theory is concerned but potentially could add much to our understanding of how to optimize

the entertainment experience. So far we have done little to integrate message factors, audience factors, and environmental factors; yet this is how entertainment takes place in situ. Music is a massive entertainment business, but we have only scratched the surface on factors involved in the enjoyment of music. And each new generation of video games brings new dimensions into play that must be incorporated into our next generation entertainment theory.

SZ: You co-founded one of the most important, high-impact journals in communication, *Media Psychology*, how did the idea come about? What is the difference between media scholars conducting psychological research in contrast to psychologists doing media research?

JB: For several decades, research into the uses, processes, and effects of media communication had appeared in the journals of a huge number of disciplines—in communication, psychology, sociology, journalism, political science, sports studies, and many other sources. That was well and good, but as the micro-discipline of media psychology began to emerge and gain prominence, it seemed logical in terms of a critical mass of kindred scholars, as well as economically feasible, to launch a journal that focused exclusively on the topics of media psychology, including the emerging area of entertainment theory. I talked to Larry Erlbaum and his editorial, production, and marketing staffs, and they asked me to put together a prospectus for such a journal. David Ewoldsen was on our communication faculty at The University of Alabama, and he also held an appointment on the UA psychology faculty, and we had complementary interests. When I prepared the prospectus for LEA, I asked Dr. Ewoldsen to join me, and he did. LEA liked the proposal and the co-editorial team. They decided to support it editorially and financially, and LEA and Alabama worked extremely hard to launch the journal successfully. Based on the journal's success, the time must have been right for the launch, and Dr. Ewoldsen and I shepherded this new baby for its first nine years, getting a great deal of "free" continuing education in the process.

In terms of the differences between psychologists and communicologists conducting media research, the major difference used to be that psychologists tended to reify media messages and message systems

and communicologists tended to simplify or even misinterpret essential psychological constructs. Quite frankly, I no longer see this happening. So many of us are cross-trained in communication and psychology that typically today it is difficult to determine the departmental locus of journal articles dealing with media psychology.

SZ: **Sports Communication has been gaining steam in the last decade as sports are communicated through media and sports events have become media events. Sports and media seem forever intertwined. Athletes' images are shaped by media, they in turn are learning how to handle media and social media. You started to do research on effects of sports coverage many years ago. Did it start because you were personally interested in sports, or because sports were so prevalent its communication problems couldn't be ignored?**

JB: Many of my students as well as certain of my family members have argued that I started to study sports and media in order to justify the inordinate time I spent watching sports on television, and I cannot totally deny that. I am a sports fan. However, because I have played and/or coached a number of sports, I also realized that when sports were presented on radio, television, or the like, the nature of the experience for the fan was dramatically different than it was if the sporting event was experienced in the stadium, arena, or whatever. In particular, the entertainment aspect of the sporting event—the dramatic, humorous, quirky characteristics of the athletes, etc.— were hyped extensively to the media audience, whereas the skill and teamwork aspects often were deemphasized. Likewise, certain players and player positions (e.g., quarterbacks) were emphasized much more than they were on the playing field, where the importance of each and every position on the team was more typically treated with some balance. This sort of evolution that changed the nature of the games, which so obviously had been brought on by media coverage fascinated me, so I begin to systematically study elements like commentary, shot selection, and the like. This area of sports communication truly has burgeoned in recent years, and I have thoroughly enjoyed watching its progress.

SZ: **We don't see a lot of pornography research these days for a number of reasons related to IRB, social desirability, and limited publication outlets. But internet porn is at an all time high. The knowledge your research has generated in this area is still very relevant. When I first came to Alabama, rumors had it that a stack of porn tapes were stored somewhere. I was tempted to hunt for those, but I never did and never found them. Maybe I should, and should have conducted those difficult and challenging research, which are still so relevant, if not more relevant.**

JB: The porn tapes were real, including some "originals" we created for research purposes, but they were destroyed when I retired out of fear that they might be utilized for purposes other than research.

I think many adults today do not realize how much of their children's sex "education" is provided by internet pornography, and you don't have to be much of a expert to know that pornography's typical messages are not necessarily those that serve the sexual socialization of youth or the best interest of society. It is exceptionally hard to conduct pornography research today, primarily because much of the best pornography research of the 20th century demonstrated that pornography consumption could result in various forms of harm, and with that evidence in hand, most Institutional Review Boards for the Protection of Human Subjects are not willing to risk its approval. Nonetheless, I think it is essential to document how much porn is available to young people, just what messages it promulgates, how much various age groups and genders consume of what types of porn, and the like. These normative data should have major implications for policy makers and for ethical and practical issues.

SZ: **Let's turn to questions of how you do research and how you mentor faculty and students. Starting with Jennings the complete scholar. You had a diverse educational background, with degrees in history, theology, and mass communication. How does that shape your approaches to research and knowledge in terms of philosophy and epistemology?**

JB: In terms of my own education, I am a bit of a freak. My undergraduate degree is an AB (not BA) degree in history; I attended but left sans

degree law school and medical school; my master's degree is a M.Div. in theology, communication, and counseling; my Ph.D. in mass communication included more psychology and philosophy of science courses than communication courses; and I have served as a paid consultant to more than 100 media companies. So I do not see the schism between the humanities, the social sciences, the biological sciences, and the media professions that many scholars do. Personally, I think that their interface is the locus of some of the most important questions our discipline faces, and it is the nexus of critical thinking. I have been blessed to be honored by all the colleges and universities I attended, but the award that I think represents me best is an honorary "Doctor of Humane Letters" degree that I was award by my undergraduate institution, Davidson College. I consider communication to be an essential liberal art, and I think this honorary degree signifies that it can serve one well in communication.

SZ: **Unlike some scholars who do heavily overlapping minor variations on the same theme, each of your papers makes significant and unique contribution to the scholarship in the field. Your research is always about generating knowledge that helps inform media, ultimately enhancing the centrality of media in today's society, the centrality of communication in academe and our understanding of communication processes and effects. What kind of research should we do when we are under annual reviews, tenure pressure, and grant deadlines?**

JB: When it was time for me to select a doctoral program, I had some interesting options. Among other choices were programs in Biblical languages, theology, and communication. One of the primary reasons I chose communication was that this was an emerging discipline in which many of the most important questions not only had not been answered, they had not even been asked. Our discipline still has many important questions that need to be asked and answered. When selecting research topics and approaches for career advancement, I recommend asking the question, "Is this a genuinely important topic?" "Will asking and answering it truly advance the body of knowledge in our field?" "What methodology will provide the most compelling answers?" "Will this approach produce results that are replicable?"

"Will this research contribute true theoretical advancement?" And "Is my approach derived from epistemologically sound perspectives?" If you can answer all these questions affirmatively, your efforts should be rewarding.

SZ: **Many graduate students ask questions about generating research ideas. The story goes that in the early years, the highly productive team of Dolf Zillmann, Joanne Cantor and Jennings Bryant would sit at a coffee shop at Kirkwood for hours, and a few months later, a few papers would be published. How did that happen?**

JB: The research team you mentioned met several times each week at Rudy's, a Taoist restaurant in Bloomington, IN that had marvelous food at reasonable prices. Dolf Zillmann is one of the truly original thinkers I have ever met who has an incredible range of research tools at his disposal, and Joanne Cantor, although a fellow doctoral student at the time, was and is a brilliant teacher and researcher who contributed greatly to my education. In fact, she provided peer education at its finest. Our conversations were wide ranging but often focused on media effects or entertainment theory. Whatever the topic, we always tried to move the discussion onto an action plan that would lead to productive research. On more than one occasion, what began as a theoretical discussion on, say, a Monday, would lead to an empirical investigation on Tuesday through Thursday, followed by data analysis on Friday, and write-up of an article over the weekend. I am not joking or exaggerating. Of course, some research projects required much more time to complete, but several articles published in highly regarded journals in communication, education, or psychology were generated by this accelerated or compacted approach. We had each worked in industry research settings where speed mattered—Zillmann in his own Institute in Zurich; Cantor with Fox International in Paris; and Bryant with Children's Television Workshop in New York City. So we were used to working on industry timetables and did not mess around. Moreover, we knew that the "Golden Age" in which we were working would not last in the form we were experiencing beyond the time in which Joanne and I received our doctoral degrees, so we were highly motivated to be productive, and we worked every day with a genuine sense of urgency.

SZ: **I consider myself truly fortunate when I got a job in Alabama, because I can get close and personal with my role model in scholarly rigor, in gentleness of character, and in impeccable integrity. Please share some tips on how to influence the field, and empower your colleagues.**

JB: I truly believe that mentoring is a powerful process that stimulates all parties involved and has no real downside. But it is hard work and time consuming. The primary things it requires is openness on the part of all parties, and each must be willing to learn from the other. The future of research in communication appears to be in collaboration, in part because our research methodologies have become increasingly sophisticated and require the sorts of theoretical and methodological skill sets that few individuals have on their own, and in part because the body of knowledge in the field is expanding so rapidly that it is almost impossible to keep up in an inquiry area by oneself. Fortunately, advanced telecommunications technologies make mentorship and collaboration possible across time and distance, so we are no longer limited to office discussions, although I confess that this is still my favorite approach to mentoring and collaborative research. As an example of how to use technology in collaboration, in creating the latest edition of *Media Effects: Advances in Theory and Research* (4th ed., 2019), the three co-editors never met face to face. Rather we shared ideas online, created spreadsheets and questionnaires that we shared and critiqued, drafted models of various chapters and the overall book, shared insights on potential contributors, and openly argued our positions almost daily for several months, utilizing a wide variety of media platforms designed for sharing. I think we all learned a great deal from this process; I know I did.

SZ: **Graduate students often wonder how a rock star can also be so approachable, down to earth, and full of humility. Please share with us a few secrets of graduate mentoring.**

JB: First, thank you for the compliment and for allowing me to participate in this interview. If I do embody the characteristics you mention, it is undoubtedly because my mother sits on my shoulder and is constantly saying, "Now Jennings Jr., don't get too big for your britches." I truly believe that different people are given different gifts, and no one has

more than his or her share; how you use them is the critical difference. If I have distinguishing gifts, they probably include the ability to write with impact, which I attribute to my liberal arts education, and my love for diverse people, which I attribute to my open-minded and accepting parents who modeled such behavior. Moreover, I have been privileged to be actively involved in doctoral education in communication for 40 years, and in this process I have met so many incredible people who are much more intelligent than I am and have much larger and well-honed skill sets than I do. Being a teacher at a research university is an incredible gift and honor, because you are constantly coming into contact with ambitious, personable, incredibly gifted individuals. If you are too sold on yourself, if you are always trying to stroke your own ego, you miss so many rare opportunities to learn from those who surround you. Each of us has things to teach others. Recognizing the potential of this process and not letting your ego get in the way of learning from others is the only way to maximize the wonderful opportunities we, as professors, are given.

Selected Works by Jennings Bryant

Please refer to the end of the Chinese version of the dialogue for Jennings Bryant's selected works.