Effects of Parental Media Involvement and Emotional Responsiveness on Child’s Television Consumption
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Introduction
- Media use is increasing among children. Time that parents spend fostering children’s social and cognitive development is now instead spent watching television (Haughton, Aiken, & Cheevers, 2015).
- Mothers are less responsive to their children if television is on in the background, even if they are not directly engaged with the program (Schmidt et al., 2008; Haughton, Aiken, and Cheevers, 2015).
- A parent’s emotional responses model to the child how to appropriately communicate their own emotions.
- When parents engage in media intervention practices, children become more critical of the media they consume and are therefore less prone to its negative messages (Singer & Singer, 1985; Nathanson, 1999).

Aims
- Research Aim 1: Investigate the effects of parental media involvement practices on children’s average weekly media consumption.
- Research Aim 2: Examine whether parents who are more responsive to children’s socioemotional needs are also more likely to supervise media consumption, therefore resulting in fewer minutes spent watching television.
- We expect to find negative correlations between parental emotional responsiveness and child media consumption as well as parental media involvement and media consumption.

Design & Sample
- Synergetic Theory and Research on Obesity and Nutrition Group (STRONG) Kids Program: 3-wave panel survey of parents and children designed to assess transdisciplinary predictors of child health and weight trajectories.
- Sample (n=200) consisted of self-reported survey from parents.
- Wave 1 was taken when children were 37 months (SD=8.3) and 57 months (SD=8.3) old.

Measures
- Child media consumption: STRONG Kids self-report survey
- Responses to children’s negative emotions: Coping with Children’s Negative Emotions Scale (Faves et al., 1990)
- Parent media involvement: Parent Median Scale (Warren et al., 2002)

Analyses
- Independent variable and moderator were standardized and centered
- Correlation analyses between child media consumption and parental emotional responses, and parental involvement in media consumption
- Regression analyses
  - Covariates: Change in TV consumption from W1 to W2, household income, parent education, and child gender
  - IV: Coviewing at W1 and Distress responses at W2
  - DV: Television consumption at W2

Results

Discussion
- Supportive responses to children’s negative emotions were not correlated with children’s media consumption, but there were significant associations between unsupportive responses and media consumption.
- Coviewing is the only parental media involvement practice that is associated with more television consumption.
- Coviewing and Distress responses have significant, direct effects on child media consumption.
- Coviewing had a larger effect on child media consumption than Distress responses; this could be due to the nature of the mediation practice.

Conclusions
- Parents’ unsupportive emotional responses to children’s negative emotions, as well as Coviewing media with children, were strongly correlated with more child media consumption.
- Future research should explore the longitudinal impact of different parenting behaviors on emotional responses and child media consumption.
- Future interventions can include education on the importance of sensitive emotion responsiveness in facilitating responsible and effective media viewing so that children can understand beneficial messages from programming.

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Table 3: Distress responses at Wave 1 and Coviewing at Wave 2 were both significantly correlated to children’s television consumption. Instructive Mediation was the only parental media involvement item significantly associated with parental responses to children’s negative emotions.

Table 4: Distress responses, Coviewing, and Parental Involvement in Media consumption were both significantly correlated with children’s negative emotions, as well as Coviewing media with children, and were strongly correlated with more child media consumption.

Table 5: Coviewing had a larger effect on child media consumption than Distress responses; this could be due to the nature of the mediation practice.