

SUGGESTED POSTER: Three Tests of Affluenza: TV Viewing and Materialism

The researcher conducts secondary analyses of three polls now available from the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research. These polls add to the cross-cultural body of research connecting hours of television viewing and symptoms of “affluenza,” materialism and the accompanying financial dissatisfaction and distress. The three polls are: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Data Archive 8th and 10th grade surveys 2008, a 1994 Survey of Men Employed in Civilian Occupations, and a 1999 survey of Family Life in Urban China.

The 1999 survey of Family Life in Urban China (ICPSR 28143) included samples from three large Chinese cities: Shanghai, Wuhan, and Xi'an. The study covered social and economic aspects of family life, particularly the effects of economic reform on cultural practices, and civic values. The daily hours of TV viewing variable allowed for regressions against scaled answers regarding happiness, foreign values, and financial satisfaction (Xie and Pan, 1999).

Schooler's 1994 data (ICPSR 22413) are actually the third wave of a project that began in 1964 surveying men employed in U. S. civilian occupations. In 1974 subjects were re-interviewed, the research then adding interviews with their wives. The sample thus included men between 46 and 85 years of age who had been working in 1964 in civilian occupations, and their wives. The Daily TV hours variable could be compared to responses about happiness, outlook, and response to financial stress.

A more recent youth poll, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Data Archive 8th and 10th grade surveys 2008 (Johnston, Bachman, O'Malley, and Schulenberg, 2008,

ICPSR 25422) also let respondents indicate whether they were not happy, pretty happy, or very happy. The researcher combined scores for weekday and weekend viewing hours and found a strong relationship. The 769 who were Not Happy had a mean viewing score of 9.13, compared to 8.94 for the Pretty Happy, and the 8.46 for the Very Happy (ANOVA Sum of Squares 250.857, df=2, Mean Square 125.429, F=14.462, p<.0001).

The 1994 “Third Wave” Survey also demonstrated a relationship between increased TV viewing hours and feeling unhappy (Table 1). Secondary analysis of the China survey is still underway.

Table 1. 1994 ‘Third Wave’ Survey: Regressions Increasing TV Viewing and Happiness, Increased TV Viewing and Response to Financial Distress

Variable	Sum of Squares	F	Beta	t	p
Feel Unhappy	10.116	5.432	.097	2.331	.020
Feel Anxious	10.755	5.317	.096	2.306	.021
Feel Pleased	13.342	4.199	-.086	-2.049	.041
Wish I Could Be as Happy as Others	30.799	12.463	.134	3.530	.000
I Am Quite a Happy Person	10.513	11.838	-.130	-3.441	.001
Feel Downcast	4.513	3.319	.069	1.822	.069
Feel Like No Purpose to Being Alive	8.353	7.339	.102	2.709	.007
Feel as if I’m Going to Pieces	11.057	8.080	.107	2.843	.005
Feel I can’t get going	54.260	41.296	.237	6.426	.000

References

Johnston, LD., JG Bachman, PM O'Malley, and JE. Schulenberg. Monitoring the Future: A Continuing Study of American Youth (8th- and 10th-Grade Surveys), 2008 [Computer file]. ICPSR25422-v2. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2009-11-23. doi:10.3886/ICPSR25422.

Schooler, C. 1994. Third-Wave 1994 Survey of a Representative Sample of Men Employed in Civilian Occupations in the United States in 1964 and Re-Interviewed in 1974, and Second-Wave Survey of Their Wives First Interviewed in 1974 [Computer file]. ICPSR22413-v1. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2008-12-18. doi:10.3886/ICPSR22413 .

Xie, Y, and Zhongdang P. 1999. Study of Family Life in Urban China, 1999 [Computer file]. ICPSR28143-v1. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2010-05-26. doi:10.3886/ICPSR28143.