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Garth S. Jowett, Ian C. Jarvie, Kathryn H. Fuller. *Children and the Movies: Media Influence and the Payne Fund Controversy.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996. xxiii + 414pp. $59.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-521-48292-9.

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The introduction of every new communications technology–from radio serials and horror comics to video games and the Internet–has provoked controversy over its impact on youth and on the shifting distribution of cultural power. The Payne Fund Studies, eight volumes published between 1933 and 1935, were the most comprehensive early investigation of the social effects of the mass media on American youth. Virtually all the current arguments over the impact of media on children and youth and the nature of cultural power were first played out in debates over the Payne Fund Studies.

A generation ago, the Payne Fund Studies–which mark the beginning of large-scale mass communication research–were required reading for communication and film studies graduate students. Today, however, many scholars and students ignore these studies. *Children and the Movies*, co-authored by three leading historians of film, reconstructs the history and fate of the Payne Fund Studies and by publishing for the first time previously unpublished materials seeks to restore the studies to scholarly attention. The volume also historicizes the subject of mass communication research and demonstrates how the Payne Fund Studies helped to undermine the "hypodermic" theory of mass communications, the idea that media messages have a direct and immediate effect on viewers' consciousness.

Underscoring the link between Progressive reform and the emergence of modern social science and mass communication research, the authors locate the origins of the Payne Fund Studies in the convergence of two distinct social developments: the rise of the modern foundation and the drift toward science as an arbiter of moral questions. The key link between these two developments was the Rev. William H. Short, who helped found the Motion Picture Research Council, which was dedicated to stringent legal control over the motion picture industry.

Convinced that only scientific proof of the harmful influence of the movies would persuade the federal government to establish a national censorship office, Short turned to the University of Chicago sociology department, the largest and most prestigious sociology department in the country. Although the Payne Fund research was conducted at New York, Penn State, Ohio State, and Yale Universities, many of its key researchers were trained at Chicago.

Short, the moralist and reformer, was only partly able to control the Payne Fund Study research agenda, which focused on a series of empirical questions: how movies affected children's sleep, attitudes, and conduct and whether there was a link between movie attendance and delinquent behavior. To answer these questions, the Payne Fund researchers devised an extensive array of questionaires, standardized tests, open-ended interviews as well as physiological studies, including the use of psychogalvanometers.

In subsequent years, the Payne Fund Studies fell into eclipse for many reasons. In part, the studies' decline reflected the charge that they were atheoretical and unscientific. However methodologically innovative the Payne Fund Studies were at the time they were written, new developments in survey research, statistics, and sampling made the Payne Fund Studies seem methodologially primitive, while the structuralist functionalist theories of personality and social structure associated with Parsons and Merton at Harvard made the studies appear theoretically naive. Further, division among the researchers about whether the Payne Fund findings were a cause for alarm helped undermine the studies' influence. The publication in 1933 of a popular summary of the studies' results, *Our Movie Made Children*, a crude anti-movie polemic, contributed to the impression that the Payne Fund Studies were part of a moralizing crusade.

Historians are always desperate for sources that help us understand the attitudes of ordinary people in the past. As Professors Jowett, Jarvie, and Fuller show in this important and sophisticated study of the evolution of mass communication research, the Payne Fund Studies offer a

treasure trove of information about young peoples' attitudes, behavior, health, and perceptions, if used judiciously and imaginatively.

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