

Media Influence Case Studies

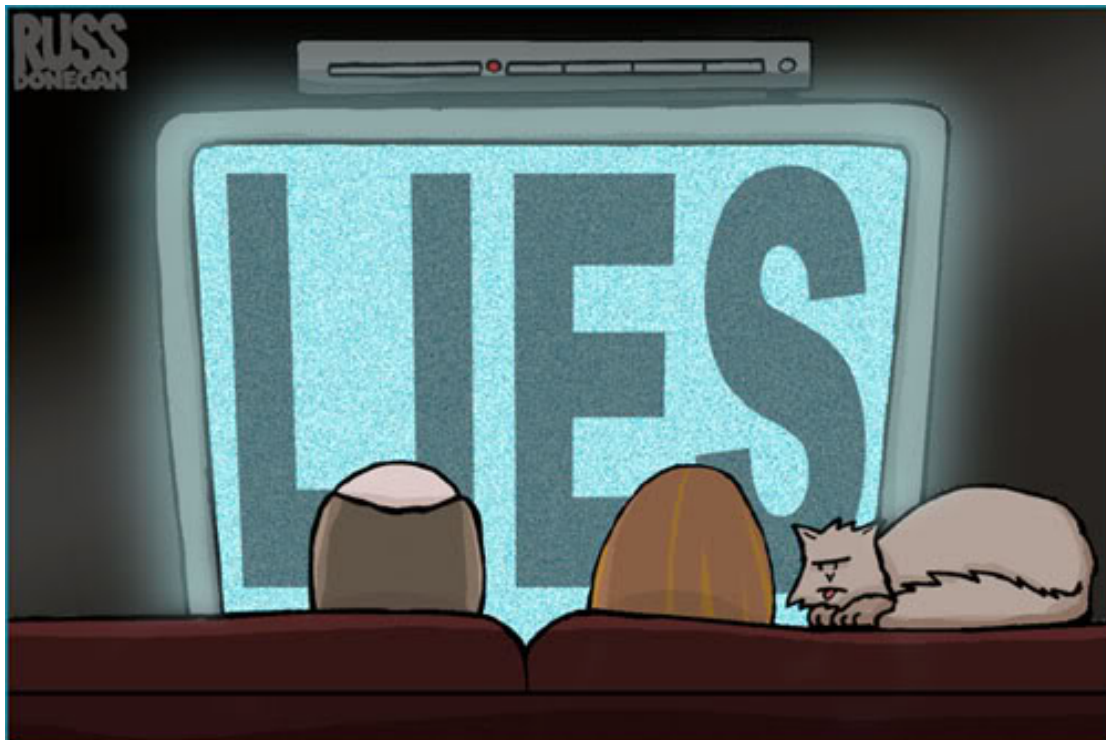


Name: _____

MEDIA INFLUENCE CASE STUDIES

Media Influence is a complex unit to study. There are different components that all media students need to understand before they sit their SAC and final Exam. This booklet has been put together to give students access to a variety of positive and negative case studies on how the media has influenced society and individuals.

There is almost always a question on your SAC and Exam about providing examples, evidence and case studies that reveal how audiences can be influenced in a positive or negative way. It is your job as a media student to understand a variety of case studies and know them well. Use this booklet as a guide for examples and if you like a particular case study then research it further.



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COPYCAT CRIMES

The issue of copycat crimes inspired by cinema is an ongoing one that has been with us for decades and it doesn't look as if it will go away any time soon. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for an individual to see an act take place in a film and to then emulate it in real life. Filmmakers don't set out to make films that are going to inspire people to commit awful and atrocious acts, but do they have a moral responsibility to their audience?

Copycat crimes relating to a particular film will usually damage the film heavily. The most obvious example of this is *A Clockwork Orange*, which was pulled from distribution in the UK after the film began to get heavily misinterpreted and crimes based on acts that took place in the film happened at a scary frequency. Sometimes, it is just the case of mentally unstable individuals seeing a particular film and acting upon a random event they see in it, but filmmakers do have a moral responsibility to their audience, particularly in the case of portraying violence as there is a fine line between examining violent behaviour and glamourising violence.

Scream



The character of Ghostface is one of the most famous creations of modern horror cinema and his mask has become one of the most popular and recognisable across the world. Even though the film is a satire of the slasher genre, Wes Craven's horror has inspired a series of grisly murders.

One of said murders involved a man who stabbed his neighbour over 30 times whilst dressed in full Ghostface attire. Another, more strange case was that of two teenage boys in England who believed that the film was sending a message to them, telling them to kill their friend. The boys lured their friend to a quiet area and subsequently attacked him and left him to die. He miraculously survived the ordeal, and is a stark reminder of the strange power films can hold over people.

Fightclub

David Fincher's fearsome adaptation of Chuck Palahniuk's insanely popular novel has spurred people to set up 'fight clubs' of their own, with many being founded across America. Fight Club also seemed to inspire a large number of teenagers to set up their own forms of fight club at school and have fights on the grounds, but these were quickly suppressed by the authorities.

On the more dangerous side of things, a lot of people were inspired by the anti-capitalist message of the film and went about imitating the acts of Tyler Durden. One such imitator was Kyle Shaw who set off a homemade bomb created from fireworks and set it off outside a Starbucks, an infamous symbol of corporate America.



Shaw was said to be planning his own Project Mayhem, the group set up in the film by Tyler Durden to bring down corporate America. Shaw plotted to mimic the events of the film and was a noted obsessive fan of both the book and film, making the association clear.



Clockwork Orange



The story of A Clockwork Orange is as infamous as any in film and the backlash was so fierce that Stanley Kubrick voluntarily withdrew it from distribution in the UK because of threats to him and his family. There are numerous cases of copycat crimes in regards to A Clockwork Orange such as a gang of young boys beating a homeless man to death, mirroring an early scene from the film.

More notoriously, a girl was gang-raped by a group of men who were singing "Singin' in the Rain" whilst committing the act, imitating the actions of Alex and his droogs in A Clockwork Orange's most infamous scene. The association to these crimes hurt the film and Kubrick massively and the film remained banned and locked away until the great director's death in 1999.

Child's Play



The premise of Child's Play was always going to cause a furore upon release as mixing children and violence is never the best idea, but I doubt the makers of the Child's Play series quite imagined just what a controversy they would end up in. Child's Play became particularly infamous in the UK for a couple of particularly shocking murders. In the case of Suzanne Capper, a 16 year-old girl who was kidnapped, tortured and murdered by six people, her tragic death was linked to Child's Play because during the horrific torture, the perpetrators played a recording of one of them saying "I'm Chucky, wanna play?" over and over again. This led to a huge crackdown on violent films and new legislation was put in place.



Creator Tom Holland was forced to defend his creation repeatedly and he only came under more fire when the tabloid press made links between Child's Play 3 and the horrific murder of James Bulger. The killers of James Bulger were said to have copied a scene from the film where Chucky splashes one of his victims with blue paint, though it was later found out that neither murderer had watched the film. Child's Play was also mentioned in association with the Port Arthur massacre, as the perpetrator was said to have been obsessed with the demonic doll.

Zodiac Copycat Eddie Seda

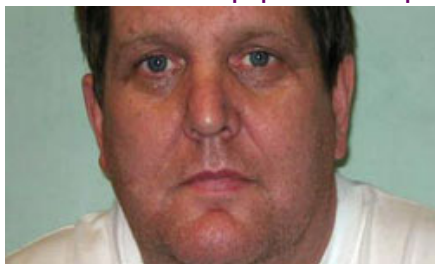


Eddie Seda, the Zodiac copycat killer, is arraigned in Brooklyn in 1996.

During a five-year period in the late 1960s in the San Francisco area, the self-described Zodiac Killer used a knife and a pistol to take the lives of at least seven strangers. He was perhaps the most famous serial killer to employ the media for attention, sending local newspaper offices cryptic and taunting letters aimed toward the police. The Zodiac Killer was never identified.

Twenty years later, a Zodiac copycat began his own attacks in New York City, taking a more literal interpretation of his predecessor by murdering victims based on their Zodiac sign. This copycat killer, however, was eventually named.

Jack the Ripper Copycat Derek Brown



Derek Brown, a Jack the Ripper copycat killer, murdered two women before he was caught.

Derek Brown, a 47-year-old-father of seven, followed in the grisly footsteps of Jack the Ripper 120 years after the original, infamous murders occurred. In 2008, Brown was convicted of murdering two women despite neither of the bodies being found. Brown picked his victims from the Whitechapel area of East London, where Jack the Ripper had carried out his five murders. In August, Brown murdered Xiao Mei Guo, a 29-year-old street vendor, who was videotaped entering a London subway with Brown the day she disappeared. The following month, Brown picked up 26-year-old prostitute Bonnie Barrett and murdered her.

Dexter Copycat: Mark Andrew Twitchell



Mark Andrew Twitchell, accused of killing a man after being inspired by the television show "Dexter."

Police believe that Canadian independent filmmaker Mark Andrew Twitchell was on his way to becoming a full-fledged serial killer. Fortunately, he was caught before he was able to commit the requisite three murders. Instead, he was discovered -- and stopped -- after his first killing and, in 2011, sentenced to life in prison.

Twitchell is said to have been inspired by the television show "Dexter," which portrays a forensic scientist who stalks and murders serial murderers. Twitchell created his own plot line, however, which he shot as a short film about a vigilante murder with the same sequence of events that he would follow shortly afterward.

Slenderman



A 12-year-old Wisconsin girl who was reportedly stabbed by two classmates in the woods as a tribute to a figure known as the 'Slender Man' was released from the hospital on Friday - and said she survived the attack because of her will to live. Her parents said in a statement 'While we have kept discussions about the events of May 31, 2014 with her short, we did ask how she found the strength to crawl out of the woods. 'Her response was simple: "I wanted to live."

Her parents said she was released from Waukesha Memorial Hospital and that 'she is excited to be out of the hospital, see her pets, and continue along the road to recovery.' 'Our family is extremely grateful for the outpouring of support and love from not only the local community, but from around the nation, and the world,' they said.

The two 12-year-old girls accused of stabbing her to honor Slender Man created code words so they could plan their crime on the school bus. When Morgan Geyser and Anissa Weier discussed the attack they would use the word, 'cracker' to describe a knife or killing. They believed the character they were trying to impress, Slender Man, lived in a mansion in the Nicolet National Park in northern Wisconsin.

School Shooting Copycats



Much was made of Eric Harris (left) and Dylan Klebold's favorite (violent) movies and video games after the shootings.

Starting in the 1990s, a spate of copycat school shootings cropped up across the United States. Most were given widespread media exposure, including a 1996 incident of classroom violence that killed three people. Shooter Barry Loukaitis, 14, burst into a Moses Lake, Wash., classroom wearing a black trench coat and volleyed shots from pistols and a rifle at his classmates. The scene was eerily similar to one in "The Basketball Diaries," a film in which a basketball player (Leonardo DiCaprio) develops a heroin addiction and dreams of shooting classmates in a classroom while wearing a black trench coat.

Another school shooting occurred on the same day, this time in Atlanta, when a 16-year-old student shot and killed a teacher. It was one of at least 50 school shootings that occurred from 1983 to 2008, including the killing spree at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colo. Students Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold shot and killed 13 people and wounded 23 others before killing themselves on their high school campus on April 20, 1999 [source: [Allender](#)]. News reporters rushed to the scene and much of the violent incident played out on live TV, leaving some to wonder whether the media attention that the shooting garnered would contribute to school-centered copycat crimes.

The Dark Knight Rises



Colorado awoke to its worst mass shooting since the Columbine massacre after at least 12 people were killed and 50 injured by a lone gunman wielding tear gas and firing randomly at cinema goers at the midnight premier of the Batman movie. One traumatised eyewitness caught on camera soon after the shooting said: "There was gunfire, there were babies, there were kids, there was blood everywhere." Among those caught up in the attack were a three-month-old baby who was treated in hospital and released, a child aged six and people aged 16 to 31 who were treated for exposure to noxious chemicals. The gunman, named by law enforcement officials speaking on condition of anonymity as James Holmes, 24, entered one of the three cinemas showing *The Dark Knight Rises* at the multiplex cinema in Aurora, a suburb of Denver, at about 12.30am. He came in through a side exit, dressed in black and wearing a flack jacket and mask, and carrying a rifle and hand guns.

Several eyewitnesses said they had assumed he was a special effects installation arranged by the cinema to mark the international premier of the Batman film, which by that time had reached a dramatic action sequence with Anne Hathaway in a shoot-out on screen. Even when he flung a gas canister into the air above the audience, and fumes spread through auditorium after a loud bang, people thought it was a clever stunt. Then he started shooting, first to the back of the room and then randomly at individuals as they tried to make a get-away down the aisles. Chandler Brannon, 25, who had been watching the movie with his girlfriend, said that around 20 minutes into the movie he saw a smoke bomb go off and heard what sounded like fireworks. He then realised that the noises he was hearing were gunshots. "I told my girlfriend to just play dead," he said, adding that he never got a full view of the gunman. "All I could see was a silhouette."

Arguments & Evidence

When forming an understanding about the nature and extent of media influence, it is important to evaluate the credibility of different studies. Research can be divided into a number of different types, all of which have their own strengths and weaknesses.

- **Case studies.** Often described as 'moral panics', case studies include events like the Columbine High School massacre or the murder of James Bulger. When tragic events like these occur, people are keen to find something to blame. In these cases, commentators were quick to blame violent media texts when it was quite evident that the violent behaviour was the product of a number of factors. Case studies are not considered credible evidence of media influence.
- **Laboratory research.** Conducted in a laboratory setting, this form of research means experiments can be replicated again and again and variables measured precisely. The controlled setting of laboratory research ignores the fact that media consumption occurs in the real world. Examples of laboratory research include Albert Bandura's Bobo doll experiment.
- **Longitudinal research.** Longitudinal research occurs over a long period of time. Researchers return to the same subjects and look at the long term effect of media.
- **Correlation studies.** Any research that finds a correlation between two sets of data. Just because there is a correlation between two sets of data, it does not necessarily mean that one thing *caused* the other. As noted in The Economist: "There is a correlation in Germany between the decline of the stork population and the falling human birth rate. That does not prove that storks bring babies."
- **Qualitative research.** Qualitative research involves asking people about their media use. It involves long questionnaires and detailed responses about media use. Regarded as an extremely credible way of measuring media influence.
- **Quantitative research.** Includes the results of surveys and statistics, any research that can easily be reduced to numbers. Although raw data like this can be useful, it does not necessarily take into account the complex relationship between audiences and texts.
- **Meta-analysis.** A meta-analysis is when researchers look at a number of studies and draw conclusions from the collective results of this research.

Case study: Bobo doll experiment



As part of a series of experiments during the 1960s, Bandura and colleagues (Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1961; Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1963) investigated the notion that children imitate the behaviours they see on television, particularly when enacted by admired role models or when the behaviours viewed are rewarded. Four to five year old children were shown a five minute film in the researcher's office and then taken to a toy room and observed for twenty minutes through a one-way mirror. Children had been randomly assigned to watch one of three films, each involving a boy picking a fight with another boy and attacking some toys. In the first, the attacker won the fight and was rewarded by getting all the toys to play with; in the second, the attacker is beaten by his opponent and is punished; in the third, the two children play together with no aggression. In addition, a fourth group of children was observed with no prior exposure to a film. The results showed that those children, especially the boys, who had seen the rewarded aggressive model spontaneously performed twice as much imitative aggression as all other groups (including kicking a large 'Bobo' doll), but no more non-imitative aggression. When interviewed afterwards, these children were found to disapprove of the model's behaviour and yet they were influenced to imitate him because his aggression led to success. Turner, Hesse and Peterson-Lewis (1986) argue that there are significant parallels between the situation in Bandura's experiment and that of the domestic viewing situation: children may and often do identify with characters who are rewarded for their aggression in television programmes. More aggressive children are more likely to watch violent television (Huesmann & Eron, 1986), thus enhancing the likelihood of an effect. Being arbitrarily provoked before viewing also enhances the effect. Borden (1975) argues that such findings are an artefact of the demand characteristics of the experiment (that children sense what is expected of them and try to please), for children are more likely to imitate the aggressive behaviour if an adult in the test situation is seen to approve. Yet arguably, in the context of the playground, and sometimes in the home, aggressive behaviour is indeed approved by others, especially by and for boys. Does it make sense to suggest that the 'real' child has been taken over by one influenced by social desirability if such influences also occur elsewhere?

Case study: Grand Theft Auto drives 8yr old to murder grandmother



There are five major medical and psychological associations that agree violent video games cause an increase in aggressive behavior and violence. Those five associations are The American Psychological Association, The American Medical Association, The American Academy of Pediatrics, The American Psychiatric Association and The American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry. These associations issued a joint statement to Congress back in 2000 after 30 plus years of research and two giant meta-analysis proved a causal link between video games and violence. The statement explains that the link between violent video games and aggression is well-established. In fact, psychologists are now begging for the debate to move beyond the question of whether or not there is a link between violent video games and aggression and onto the question of why people continue to ignore the evidence of this fact. Last month, the game Grand Theft Auto drove an 8 year old boy straight to murder his own grandmother, and yet, some members of the public continue to deny that violent video games cause violence.

An 8 year old boy from Louisiana had been playing Grand Theft Auto while his grandmother, Marie Smothers, 87, looked on. The sheriff's department concluded that the boy "intentionally shot Mrs. Smothers in the back of the head as she sat in her living room watching television." They further concluded that the game directly contributed to the boys' murderous actions, saying "...investigators have learned that the juvenile suspect was playing a video game on the Play Station III 'Grand Theft Auto IV,' a realistic game that has been associated with encouraging violence and awards points to players for killing people, just minutes before the homicide occurred."

Doctors, psychologists and credentialed experts all agree that there is a direct causal link between video games and violence, and not only that, now experts are saying that violent video games may enable mass shooters to do a better job in carrying out

their killings by teaching them to be better shooters. In speaking about Washington Navy Yard shooter Aaron Alexis, psychologist Brad Bushman says "it is possible that Alexis was a more accurate shooter because of the time he spent playing video games. That's an inconvenient fact that you don't often hear defenders of the games talk about."

Speaking of "defenders of the games," they are a very difficult group of people to engage in discussion about this issue. They become enraged when presented with the facts about video games, throw out insults at the observer and ignore the huge body of research that proves them wrong. The culprit behind their outrage is a scientist named Christopher Ferguson. He is the person responsible for clouding the discussion about video games and violence. He's conducted his own studies and concluded that he has found no link between video games and an increase in aggressive behavior. He is *extremely* outspoken in the media, and there are thousands of news articles that report his findings. He has managed to dupe millions of people into believing his studies despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

Now, an 8 year old has been driven straight to murder; the murder of his own 87 year old grandmother, by the game Grand Theft Auto, a game which awards players points for killing people. But it's not just this one little boy who has been directly inspired to murder because of the game; all around the world there are multiple reports of Grand Theft Auto-inspired murders. Devin Thompson, 18, of Alabama, killed a dispatcher and two police officers in an attempt to re-create a real life version of the game. He later admitted this to investigators, saying "Life is a video game. You've got to die sometime." The problem is not confined to the United States, though, in Thailand, teenager Polwat Chino admitted to police that he committed the murder of a taxi driver because of the game, saying "killing seemed easy in the game."

In Georgia, three teenagers said they "learned how to do it" from the game when referring to multiple car bombings they carried out. In Hyde Park, NY, a group of teens went on a crime spree they claimed was directly inspired by the game.

Despite 30 years of evidence, an 8 year old boy murdering his own grandmother, and teens freely admitting that they committed violence *because* of the game Grand Theft Auto, people still refuse to believe there is any link between violent video games and violence. If 87 year old Marie Smothers were alive today, she would probably set them straight.

Case study: Angelina Jolie Effect

'Angelina Jolie effect' IS real: Actress' double mastectomy and reconstruction has raised awareness of cancer treatment

- **Awareness of breast removal and reconstruction ops increased after Angelina Jolie's experiences were reported in the media**
- **Womens' awareness that reconstruction using a patient's own tissue is possible and that it can take place at the same time as removal, increased**
- **Actress discovered she carries a mutation of the BRCA1 gene**
- **It increases the risk of breast cancer by 87% and ovarian cancer by 50%**

By LIZZIE PARRY FOR DAILYMAIL.COM

PUBLISHED: 06:50 EST, 29 September 2015 | UPDATED: 08:14 EST, 29 September 2015

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-3252402/Angelina-Jolie-effect-real-Actress-double-mastectomy-reconstruction-raised-awareness-cancer-treatment.html#ixzz40ZgebAju>

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The '**Angelina Jolie** effect' is a real phenomenon, and has increased awareness of breast cancer treatment and surgery, a study has found. The actress's decision to undergo a double mastectomy and reconstructive surgery has improved the public's understanding of the operations, experts in Austria found. They said the media coverage of a celebrity's treatment can serve as a tipping point for furthering knowledge about a particular health topic.

In May 2013, Angelina Jolie had both breasts surgically removed after discovering she carries a genetic mutation that dramatically increases the chance of being diagnosed with potentially fatal breast cancer. The mutation in her BRCA1 gene, left the mother-of-six with an estimated 87 per cent risk of breast cancer and 50 per cent risk of ovarian cancer. The Unbroken director lost her mother, grandmother and aunt to cancer.

According to Jolie, she had been planning to undergo surgery to remove her ovaries and Fallopian tubes since her mastectomy, but a call from her doctor in March made the procedure more urgent. A blood test detected potential anomalies linked to the protein CA-125, which is used to monitor ovarian cancer, Jolie's doctor told her, urging the actress to see her surgeon, who also had treated her late mother.

In a piece she wrote for the New York Times, Jolie said: 'I went through what I imagine thousands of other women have felt.'

Case study 3: The Ice Bucket Challenge

Last summer's viral phenomenon raised well over \$100 million.

One year ago, icy water inundated the Internet in what may have been the online equivalent of the largest chain letter ever—the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge. In endless autoplaying Facebook videos, people hoisted buckets filled with ice water, announced their philanthropic intentions, and upended the buckets over their heads. Breathless, they would nominate a few friends, demanding that they do the same upon penalty of a charitable donation to ALS.

The Ice Bucket Challenge was immensely successful—a break-the-Internet phenomenon that spread all the way up to President Obama. But with this barnstorming success came an undercurrent of critical skepticism. Were people actually following through with donations? Was the campaign saying it was better to be cold and wet than a charitable giver? Was the stunt overshadowing the actual disease? Was the whole thing actually raising meaningful awareness?

Twelve months down the road, here's where things stand.

How much money did the campaign bring in?

According to the national chapter of the ALS Association (ALSA), the challenge brought in a staggering \$115 million. Participants also donated an additional \$13 million to the association's regional branches. As you might expect, these kind of numbers were unheard of for the ALSA—the charity's Form 990 filings show they brought in \$23.5 million in 2013.

How much has been spent so far, and on what?

The ALSA reports it has spent around \$47 million of the \$115 million raised thus far, with two-thirds allocated toward research in five different areas: gene discovery, disease model development, identification of biomarkers, clinical trials, and drug development. Some 20% of the money has been spent on patient and community services; the remaining 11% has gone to education, fundraising, and processing fees.

According to Charity Navigator's Acting COO Tim Gamory, the ALSA has been very forthcoming about its spending, which it put into an easy-to-read infographic as well as an exhaustive, detailed list. "We commend them for making information really transparent on their site," he told *Money* in a phone interview.

Is it bad that only \$47 million of the \$115 has been spent so far?

Charity Navigator gives a firm no. While the intensity of the Ice Bucket Challenge had the trendy spike of a disaster-relief effort, Gamory notes that it's important to remember there wasn't actually a disaster that brought ALS to the public consciousness, but rather an independent viral sensation. "[The ALSA isn't] a disaster organization; they're trying to solve a problem that isn't going to take a year or two," he said. "It's good to be thoughtful to determine the greatest impact."

Since ALS is a disease with no known cure, the fight against ALS is largely focused on research. Eradication is more of a priority than palliative care, seeing as the disease is 100% fatal. In interviews with Charity Navigator, multiple chapters of the ALSA described spending plans of up to three years, because research often gets paid out over multiple years. And since one study frequently begets another, smart spending is even more important.

What concrete accomplishments can ALSA point to?

Direct patient and community services have produced most measurable results, since patient care is immediate and concrete. For example, the *Palm Beach Post* reported that the ALS Association Florida Chapter was able to hire a bilingual regional care manager.

Some progress has been made thanks partly to Ice Bucket Challenge research funding. Working with Ice Bucket money, researchers from Johns Hopkins University identified a protein that fails in the cells of most ALS patients, and showed that if they repair the protein, the damaged cell can heal.

"I remember reading a lot of stories about people complaining that the ice bucket challenge was a waste and that scientists weren't using the money to do research," said lead researcher Jonathan Ling in a Reddit AMA interview. "I assure you that this is absolutely false. All of your donations have been amazingly helpful and we have been working tirelessly to find a cure."

It can take years or even decades for researchers to find scientifically proven treatments, let alone cures for deadly diseases, so donors may have to be patient to see what other results the ALSA-funded research yields. As Gamory stressed, "The key

is following up with them year after year to see how this money isn't just spent but the outcomes from the spending."

Lots of money was raised, but what about awareness?

During the campaign, various people raised concerns that participants were more more caught up in the viral sensation than the cause, giving less money than a typical donor and often without even knowing much about the disease. "Some people didn't even know about ALS—it just became Ice Bucket Challenge," said Gamory. "So it would be interesting to see data as far as what people actually know. I can tell you from our site, the searches for ALS went up a ridiculous amount, from around 500 to 68,000 in August. And then it went right back down."

According to Gamory, there are two kind of donors, those who are deeply engaged in the cause, giving over many years, and those who respond to the social media wave. "As far as any longer term impact on those donor people who were exposed, it's questionable," said Gamory. "Many of the donors were flash-in-the-pan."

Even if most donors don't know what the letters "ALS" stand for or anything about the illness, it's hard to look a \$115 million gift horse in the mouth.

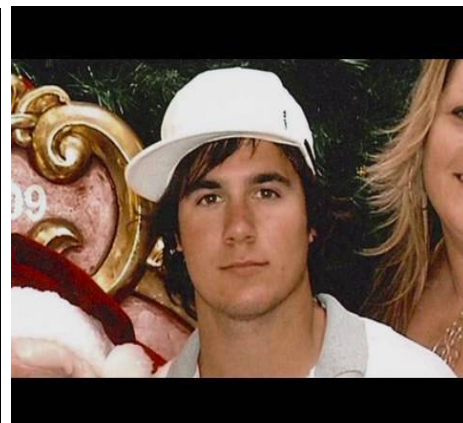
Case study: The Ripple Effect - TAC

In July 2010, the *Ripple Effect* campaign was launched to highlight the far reaching effects of road trauma. A series of short advertisements will be aired across metropolitan and regional TV to tell the true story of the tragic death of 19 year old Luke Robinson who was killed in a speed-related crash in March 2010.

Luke was speeding in his car in the early hours of the morning with three passengers, who were all injured but miraculously survived the crash. The *Ripple Effect* tells the individual stories of those affected by his death. Each story is a true and heartfelt account of the affect that this one single incident has had on a wide range of people; from Luke's family and friends through to the emergency service workers and others in the small tight-knit community of Bannockburn.

A series of 23 individual edits form the basis of the campaign, on air from July 13 they highlight just how far reaching the effect of one road trauma incident can be. These advertisements will appear up until July 24, when all the single stories culminate into one powerful 3 minute version being shown on July 25. The campaign will run across all regional and metropolitan media including TV, radio, outdoor billboards and online.

The *Ripple Effect* campaign aims to make speeding as socially unacceptable as drink driving and shows in a powerful way that everybody hurts when you speed.



Media Influence: Evaluating evidence Title:

Type of evidence:

- Case study
- Laboratory
- Moral panic
- Longitudinal
- Correlation
- Quantitative
- Qualitative
- Meta-analysis

What were the findings of this study or the conclusions drawn from this event?

[illegible]

What are the strengths and weaknesses of this evidence?

[illegible]