The Portrayal of Counselling on Television and YouTube: Implications for Professional Counsellors

*Brett Furlonger, PhD, Alexandra Papadopoulos, Andrea Ping Chow, and Yusi Zhu

Institute of Human Development and Counselling, Faculty of Education, Monash University, Australia

Western visual entertainment media's preference for entertainment over accuracy has produced distorted portrayals of counselling and counsellors. Therefore, the main objective of the present study was to identify whether it was possible for portrayals of counselling in the entertainment media to be realistic while also being entertaining; entertainment being imperative to the entertainment industry. It was hypothesized that if television series were realistic then the counsellor would be shown as using a positive, ethical contemporary counselling approach to dealing with typical client problems. It was also hypothesized that YouTube videos would be more closely representative of actual counselling than television. Two visual entertainment forms were sampled for analyses, a 43 episode television series focussed on a counsellor and 80 counselling videos from *YouTube*. The study utilised a quantitative exploratory archival survey design that analysed and categorised existing data. Based on set evaluation criteria, analysis indicated that the tendency for television producers to lapse into inaccuracies for dramatic effect appeared irresistible. In contrast, *YouTube* allowed counsellors to post an unlimited number of accurate representations of counselling videos online, although the entertainment value and popularity was more difficult to assess.

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