

How Effects Research Moved

Communications & Media

A century of asking what media do to people, and what survived the asking.

Four phases, each correcting the last.

1

Powerful direct effects

1920s-40s. Messages assumed to inject belief. Little evidence ever supported it.

2

Limited effects

1940s-60s. Selective exposure, groups and opinion leaders blunt the message.

3

Cognitive effects

1970s-90s. Media shape what we think about, and how it is framed.

4

Conditional effects

Now. Size depends on person, message, context and how long you look.

Educational reference. The honest summary: media reliably shape salience and interpretation; they rarely convert settled opinions on the