
Media Influence

Does the Media have power?
How Much?
What form does this power take?

FORMS OF MEDIA

- **Newspapers - 1700's**
Need to be literate to access information
- **Cinema - Early 1900's**
Beginning of Mass Media, no need to read or write to access information
- **Radio - 1917 - after WWI**
Media moves into the home
- **TV - 1950's**
Moving images move into the home
- **Games - 1970's**
Computer and console games become available for people to play at home

QUESTIONS RAISED....

What effect does it have?

(All these people exposed to the same message)

Why is the media product created?

Do you believe it has an influence?

How do you support your point of view?

MEDIA THEORY

- We will study a few of the many theories that exist
- They are only ideas, no theory has been proven!
- You can apply different theories to the same situation
- You need to be flexible in this application
- A theory doesn't always fit all the time

TAKING NOTES

You will need to take notes under the following headings for each theory.
You might like to make a table.

- Theory name
- Time period theory was created or was popular
- Theory created by
- Nature of Audience
- Nature of Text
- Linear or Semiotic Model
- Explanation of theory

MEDIA INFLUENCE TERMS

Nature of Media Influence

How is the audience affected by the media? By what method?

Extent of Media Influence

How much is the audience affected by the media? To a large or small degree?

MEDIA INFLUENCE TERMS

Passive Audience

Audience accepts what is presented without question. They are susceptible to manipulation.

Active Audience

Audience interprets the media based on a number of factors including their own culture, experience, likes and dislikes, etc. They have power over how they are effected by the media they consume.

MEDIA INFLUENCE TERMS

Closed Text

A message is present in the text. The text can only be understood in the way it was intended to be read.

Open Text

The text can be read in multiple ways. Its reading depends not only on those who created the text but also on those who read and interpret the text.

MEDIA INFLUENCE TERMS

Linear Model

Meaning exists in a text and is waiting to be uncovered

Sender => Message => Receiver

Semiotic Model

Meaning arises from the interaction of a text with a reader



COMMUNICATION THEORIES

Cultural Effect Theories

Reception Studies



Cultural Effects Theories – What the media does to people
Reception Studies – What people do with the media

COMMUNICATION THEORIES



- | | |
|----------|---------------|
| • Names | • Application |
| • Dates | • Strengths |
| • Theory | • Weaknesses |

BULLET THEORY (HYPODERMIC NEEDLE)

DEVELOPED 1920'S-1940'S
FRANKFURT SCHOOL

- Everyone will get the message. Like being shot with a bullet or injected with a needle.
- Linear Model (Sender => Message => Receiver)
- Media is very powerful, has a lot of influence
- Audience is **passive**
- Text is **closed** - no room for interpretation
- Frankfurt school (Germany) developed this theory after observing Nazi Propaganda pre-WWII



The text of this 1940 poster reads: "Youth Serves the Führer. All 10-year-olds into the Hitler Youth." Membership in the Hitler Youth had become mandatory in 1936.



The caption: "The Jew: The inciter of war, the prolonger of war." This poster was released in late 1943 or early 1944. Courtesy of Dr. Robert D. Brooks.



This poster from the 1930's, promotes the Nazi monthly "New People" from the party's racial office. The text reads: "This genetically ill person will cost our people's community 60,000 marks over his lifetime. Citizens, that is your money. Read Neues Volk, the monthly of the racial policy office of the NSDAP!"

Text and images from

<http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/posters2.htm>

Accessed 20/06/2015

BULLET THEORY (HYPODERMIC NEEDLE)

DEVELOPED 1920'S-1940'S
FRANKFURT SCHOOL

- Frankfurt school left Germany and went to USA and witnessed War of the Worlds broadcast by Orson Welles. (1938)
- No real testing of this theory, based on observation and speculation.
- Theory is now dead - completely disproved.

However, still used in popular media by who?

AGENDA SETTING FUNCTION

DEVELOPED 1970'S
BIRMINGHAM SCHOOL - RAYMOND WILLIAMS, STUART HALL

- Media does have some power - radical shift from 1960's
- "The Media can't tell you what to think, only what to think **about**"
- Audience is **active**
- Text is **open**
- Semiotic model - as meaning arises from interaction with audience and the way they interpret "signs" used by the Media

AGENDA SETTING FUNCTION

DEVELOPED 1970'S
BIRMINGHAM SCHOOL - RAYMOND WILLIAMS, STUART HALL

- Using Selection and Omission (Gatekeeping) the media controls what is spoken about in the public forums it controls - eg TV (News & Current Affairs), Newspapers
- People learn to read the signs (eg Front page is most important story, smaller article is less important)
- Some issues get lots of coverage, others issues are rarely heard. Media is in control of this "amount" of coverage as they own the means of distribution - eg?
- 4 Levels of reading dependant on both text and audience:
 - 1st - Dominant Preferred - audience receive intended message
 - 2nd - Oppositional - audience views stop or block intended message
 - 3rd - Negotiated - audience see both sides (intended & oppositional) & debate within themselves
 - 4th - Absentist - Audience don't understand - no message received

POST MODERNISM

DEVELOPED 1980'S
FRENCH POST STRUCTURALISTS- JACQUES DERRIDA, ROLAND BARTHES

- Revolutionary stance – media may or may not cause influence
- There are multiple answers to any question
- There is no truth. Truth varies according to time and place
- All texts are open
- Recognises the audience as individuals
- Audience is active - even a single person's reading changes over time – audience is constantly in 'flux'
- Semiotic Constructivist Model

POST MODERNISM

DEVELOPED 1980'S
FRENCH POST STRUCTURALISTS- JACQUES DERRIDA, ROLAND BARTHES

- Media has little power - could be said to be neutral as texts are always open and interpretable by the audience
- No such things Dominant Preferred meaning. In fact no such things as truth, certainty, reality or knowledge
- All readings are negotiated. Audience is empowered to make their own meaning.
- Meaning reached by audience depends on things like: mood, culture, prior knowledge, time and place.

REINFORCEMENT

DEVELOPED 1960
JOSEPH KLAPPER

- Media works to reinforce that which the audience already believes.
- Other influences shape an individual's values more than the media:
 - Family
 - Peer Group
 - Religion
 - School
 - Social Class
 - Workplace
- Audiences are **active** - interpreting depending upon their socialising agents
- Texts are **open**

REINFORCEMENT

DEVELOPED 1960
JOSEPH KLAPPER

- Media has no influence EXCEPT in special conditions - when discussing a brand new issue.
- In this case the media can have some influence
- Semiotic model as meaning arises depending on interaction with reader and their particular set of socialising agents

USES AND GRATIFICATION

DEVELOPED LATE 1940'S - 1950'S
STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALIST SCHOOL

- Linear Model
but message not necessarily received
- Media has no power over audience
- Audience is **active**
choosing what and how they watch
- Text is **open** to interpretation
- Developed by sociologists. (Paul Lazarsfeld)
- They did research and surveys asking people if they acted due to media pressure. People responded "No".

USES AND GRATIFICATION

DEVELOPED LATE 1940'S - 1950'S
STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALIST SCHOOL

- Audiences are active and they determine media content (through ratings - a form of quantitative research)
- Media Industry argues "We give people what they want, if it doesn't rate it gets axed"
- Audience use media as entertainment, nothing more. They select their media according to what they like/don't like.
- Still linear, Sender => Receiver, but intended message not necessarily received due to audience exhibiting choice.

Two Step Flow

Paul Lazarsfeld 1940

- Lazarsfeld's suggests that audiences are more likely to be influenced by certain peers which he labeled 'opinion leaders' than by advertising slogans. Opinion leaders are more adept at interpreting media messages and passing on their interpretations to others.
- Question - If Oprah was not such a vocal supporter of Obama's presidential campaign, would he have won so many votes? Did her support help him get to the White House?



Two Step Flow

Paul Lazarsfeld 1940

- Some suggest that the Two Step follow has now progressed beyond just opinion leaders and could now explain how media becomes viral. Viral Marketing takes advantage of preexisting social networks and new media technologies and is consistent with the two step model.

Two Step Flow...

has evolved into the idea virus

- There are two types of 'sneezers': the 'promiscuous sneezers' and the 'powerful sneezers'. The promiscuous can be motivated by money and rewards to sell ideas to the hive. The powerful sneezers are typically those who have established authority by setting a trend and cannot be bought. A powerful sneezer can be worth many more times a promiscuous sneezer.
- Two effective ways of spreading an ideavirus are thus to reward promiscuous sneezers e.g. The Amazon affiliate program. Or make it easier for powerful sneezers to recommend your idea e.g. twitter hashtags. Another tactic is to go entirely viral in nature. The more a product is used the better it becomes and spreads. Fax machines, email and Polaroid did this

More at sethgodin.com

Idea Virus...

viral media (memes, videos)



UNDERSTANDING THEORIES

A common mistake that students make is referring to how a media producer has *used* a particular communication theory. For example –

“Orson Wells used the Hypodermic theory when he made War of the Worlds”

This is incorrect. Theories are used to try and explain *why* *and if* audiences respond to media. They are not ‘used’ or invented to prove case studies or experiments.

UNDERSTANDING THEORIES

- There is no 'right' theory, just as there is no 'wrong' theory.
- All evidence to suggest that the media is influential is UNSUBSTANTIATED and INCONCLUSIVE.

REGULATION OF MEDIA

- If media is influential then what do we do?
- Do people need protection from this?
- Who needs protection?
- How do we protect?
- How effective are these measures?

REGULATION OF MEDIA

What are these types of regulation?

- Government Regulation
- Self Regulation
- Code of Practice

Who is in charge of the policing of each?

What consequences exist for a breach of these different types of regulation?

NOW WHAT?

- Be able to describe, compare and contrast each theory in detail
- Describe key **viewpoints** about the nature and extent of media influence
- Analyse arguments and evaluate evidence about the nature and extent of media influence
- Discuss the relationship between audiences and a range of media forms and texts
- Analyse reasons for and effectiveness of regulation of media
- Discuss issues in assessing media influence