

# Media: Roles and Messages

Thomas Hollihan

Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism

University of Southern California

# Objectives

- To Discuss:
  - Media use
  - How people reason through the media
  - The importance of visual images
    - Exercise—Image interpretations
  - Working with the media
  - Media messages that stick
  - Media systems
    - Key national and regional differences

# Media Use

- Dependency Theory research (Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur, 1976) says:
  - People attend to issues of personal, cultural and social concern
  - When social change and conflict are high, reliance on the media increases and during stable times may decrease
  - People do not depend on all media equally--the more alternatives, the less dependent they become on an single medium
  - Choices are limited by access, the availability of non-media alternatives, and other outside factors

# Interests Play a Role in Media Use

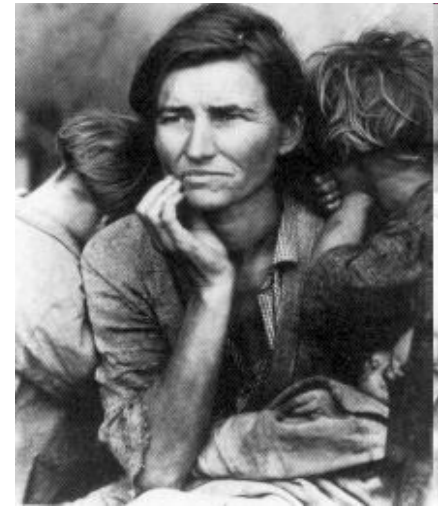
Uses and Gratifications Theory research tells us that:

- **A person follows his/her interests**
- **People choose media content according to needs**
- **Synthesize content to satisfy needs**
- **Media use is utilitarian, intentional (motivated), and originates from a person's needs, socio-cultural background and current situation**



# Media shapes decisions: Words Matter!

- Are the poor:
  - Lazy? Shiftless? Sick?  
Childlike? Ignorant?  
Proud? Humble?  
Victimized?  
Unfortunate? Un-  
educated?
  - How we name the poor  
largely determines how  
we characterize the  
problem of poverty



# People Reason Through Stories

- Narrative Theory research says:
  - People reason through Stories
  - Language choice has meaning
  - The choice of terms embodies attitudes



# The Structure of Stories



Stories have:

- Beginnings, middles, and ends
- A sense of history, view of the present, and a vision of the future
- Heroes, villains, dupes, and victims

Stories are:

- Grounded in moral views and compel and justify actions

# Stories Give Meaning to Experience

- Tested by events both observed and reported in the news
- Direct our behaviors for the future
- Are embedded in our values and our political ideologies





# Tests of Stories

- Narrative fidelity – does this story seem internally consistent?
- Narrative probability – does this story seem likely based on our experience with other similar stories we accept as true?
- Characterological coherence – do the actors in the story behave as expected?
  - Walt Fisher's work on the “narrative paradigm”

## “Stock” Narratives Provide Reasoning Shortcuts



- We hold to notions of our own character
- We likewise have established notions regarding the character of others
  - **For example, the nature of defining people as terrorists or dictators when they may be described by some groups as liberators or martyrs**

## Emotion and Rationality Guide Decisions

- We attend to arguments that catch our interest, or spark enthusiasm, fear, anger, or contempt
- Emotions are rational
- Feeling and thinking evolved together; for example fear and anxiety and the rational ability to discern danger
- The same person can be a hero to some and a villain to others



How are these actors cast in stories?



# Neurobiological Theories

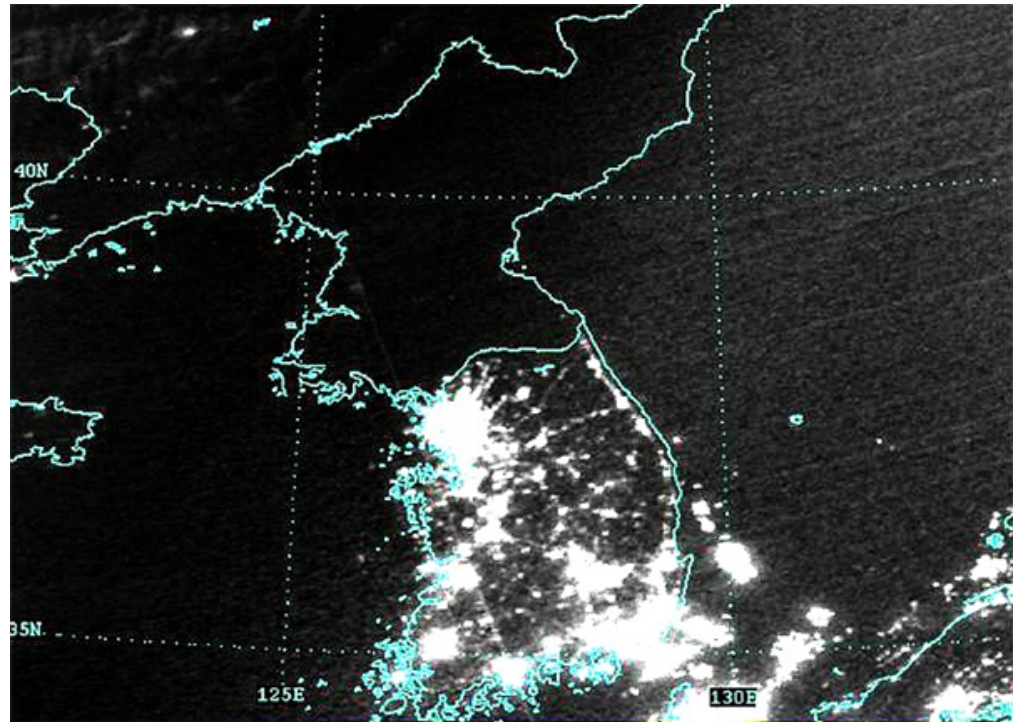


- Different parts of the brain seem to light up in brain scans when viewers see images of persons whom they like and respect than when they see images of those whom they fear or oppose
- Images of people you like spark feelings of identification; those of people you oppose activate feelings of disgust
- Word-strings can create similar synaptic activities
- Subliminal messages can influence attitudes
  - Example of the “bureaucrats” vs “rats” ad

Drew Westen, *The Political Brain*, 2007

# Framing

- Focuses on the context for the issue
- Asks who is responsible for the problem?
- Who is cast as an expert to produce solution?
- How is the situation named?



# Framing Impacts the Construction & Uses of Social Problems

- Poverty, unemployment & discrimination are now accepted as problems to be solved; this was not always the case
- Explanations can blame social institutions, social classes, those who suffer, those who benefit, etc.
- To evoke a problem's origin is to assign blame & praise  
Edelman, 1988
- Are these photos images of success or failure?



# Competing Story Frames of Pakistan's General Musharraf's Resignation



- Indicator of the increased instability and danger that Pakistan and the world now faces
- A sign of the failure of the Bush administration's foreign policy
- The triumph of political democracy over totalitarianism in Pakistan



# Exercise

- You will be presented with 4 images, for each one answer:
  - Name it \_\_\_\_\_
  - What, if any emotion does it evoke?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - What might be its relationship to good governance?  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Image 1



- Image 2



- Image 3



- Image 4



# Exercise Continued

- Pair off with a learning partner as instructed
- Compare responses and discuss:
  - Framing differences
  - National, regional or cultural differences
  - Implications for communicating in multicultural/global environments
- Group debrief

# Visual Images Matter

- More instantly “grabbing” than the written word
- Create a strong emotional response
- People believe their own eyes
- Are likely to be better remembered
- Are subject to manipulation and distortion in the digital age



# Visual Images Persist Over Time



# Guantanamo Today



# Summary: How to Use the Power of Images for Governance

- Consciously select images with an idea of creating a convincing visual argument
- Closely examine images for potential backlash consequences
- Recognize that different audiences may respond to visual images very differently
- Use images responsibly; do not mislead or distort





Break

# Understanding the Media

- The press creates a “Conversational Commons”
  - Transforms raw information and makes it usable
  - Constructs vivid news narratives
  - Some stories acquire “legs” and thus get more exposure
  - Some stories are rarely told—e.g., the stories of those without power or influence in societies



# Research Findings

- Agenda Setting Theory says:
  - Press does not tell us what to think but does tell us what to think about
  - Print has less “stickiness” in issue formation than does TV
  - Frequency of issue “mentions” is more significant than length or substance of stories
  - News magazines shape agenda for other print media
  - Newspapers shape agenda for local radio and TV
- This research is mostly conducted in the West. Does it hold true in the developing world? Why or why not?

# Priming Theories (e.g., cultivation and activation) say:

- Loosely constructed stories shape a person's views
- Media stories are related to personal experiences
- Can diminish confidence in individuals or institutions
- People need to be exposed repeatedly for messages to have impact



# Interdependent Agenda Setting Effects

- Government officials and politicians are not immune from media influence
  - E.g., NPR uniquely impacts elite listeners in the US
- Herd mentality of press shapes media interest
- The media must compete with each other creating a “CNN or Al Jazeera Effect”
- Relationship building with reporters and media leaders is critical
  - Personal—know by name, know their work
  - Organizational—e.g., embedding; ride-alongs



# African Media Systems Differ Country-by-Country

- Few nations have fully developed and integrated systems
- Many nations have very low literacy rates
- Print media if they exist may be accessible only by elites
- Even TV access is limited in many nations
- Radio is often most important form of media



# Media Systems in Selected Nations

- Algeria: Multiple newspapers (both government owned and private); government owned TV and radio
- Cameroon: Private radio, state owned TV, only small newspaper circulation
- Chad: Government owned radio, TV, and print; small circulation private newspapers
- Egypt: Many newspapers & magazines, many owned by government or political parties; mix of government & private radio and TV
- Kenya: Complex; only government radio and TV stations have national reach, many private alternatives exist, broadcasting in many languages, multiple newspapers are published
- Liberia: State owned radio, little access to TV
- Libya: All government owned media until 2006; now some private media
- Malawi: Radio and TV government owned
- Rwanda: Radio is primary form of media; radio and TV are government owned
- Sierra Leone: Little print media, little TV outside of capital, radio is key media
- Somalia: Radio is key media
- South Africa: Media center for sub-Saharan Africa, complex, radio, TV, & newspapers in multiple languages, most developed Internet society

# Media Systems in Nations

- Turkey—competitive print, TV, radio, Internet. Large private companies dominate.
- Afghanistan—print, radio, TV. Little censorship but dangerous for reporters.
- Iraq—print, radio, TV, Blogs now especially important due to distrust of media.
- Ghana—one of the most free systems in Africa. Vigorous broadcasting dominates.
- Panama—modeled after US. Active and adversarial, broadcasting dominates.
- Nigeria—complex system. Among the most free in Africa but periods of censorship. Satellite TV key.



## Media Systems (continued):

- Philippines—US model, print, broadcast, and online. Intermittent gvt. censorship, dangerous for reporters.
- Haiti—radio most important. Very small newspaper sector. Majority of companies are small and undercapitalized.
- Kuwait—healthy print sector, radio and TV. Increasing Internet penetration. Some gvt. censorship.
- India—vibrant media culture. Expanding newspaper sector. TV, films, increasing online. Watchdog press.

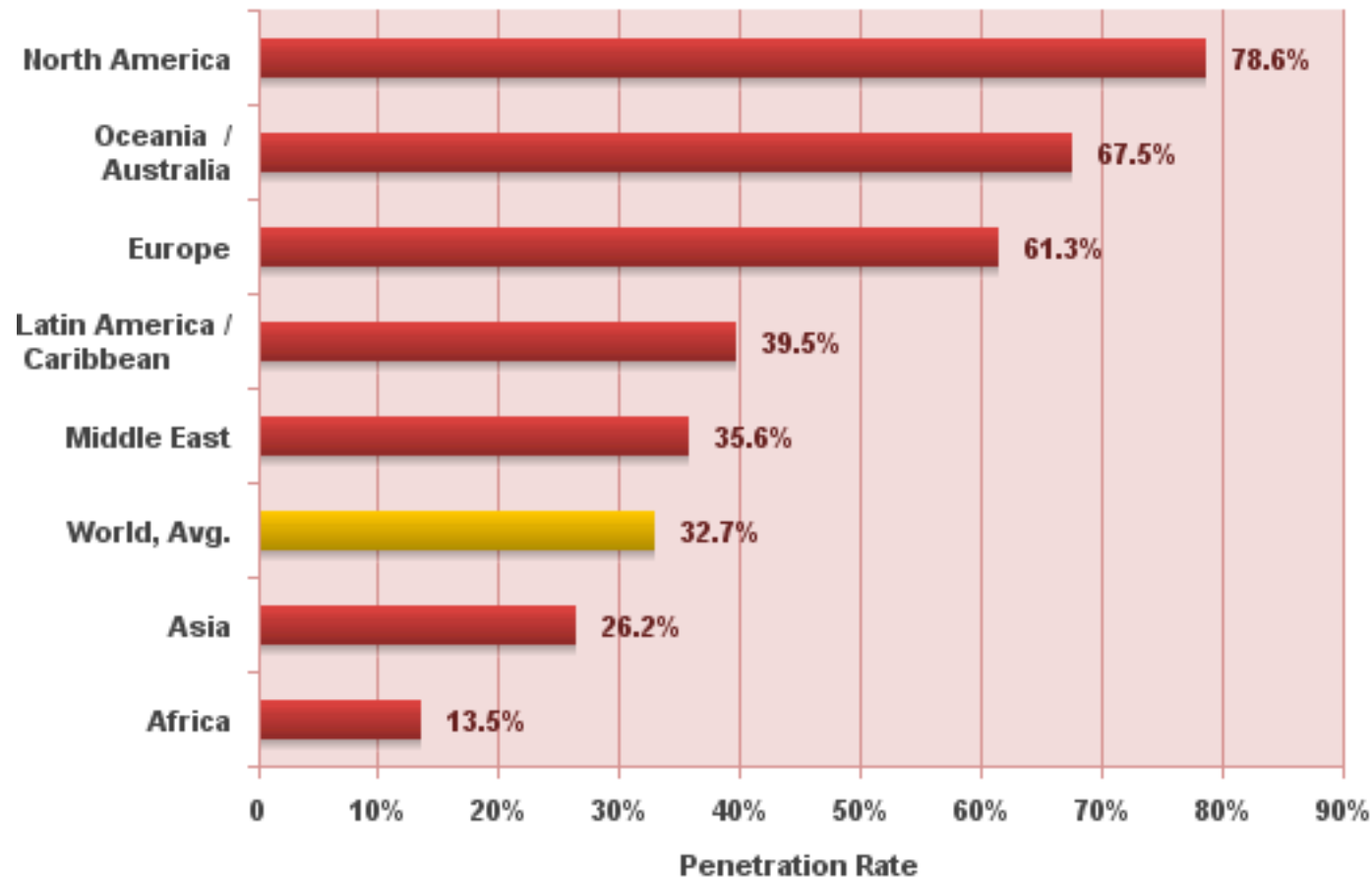
## Media Systems (continued):

- Brazil—Low levels of newspaper readership. Radio and TV are important. History of censorship until 1990s, rapidly evolving free media culture since. Internet is increasingly important.
- Uganda—Radio is most important. Newspaper readership is low. TV is expanding. History of censorship but not significant now. Constitution calls for free expression

# Discussion

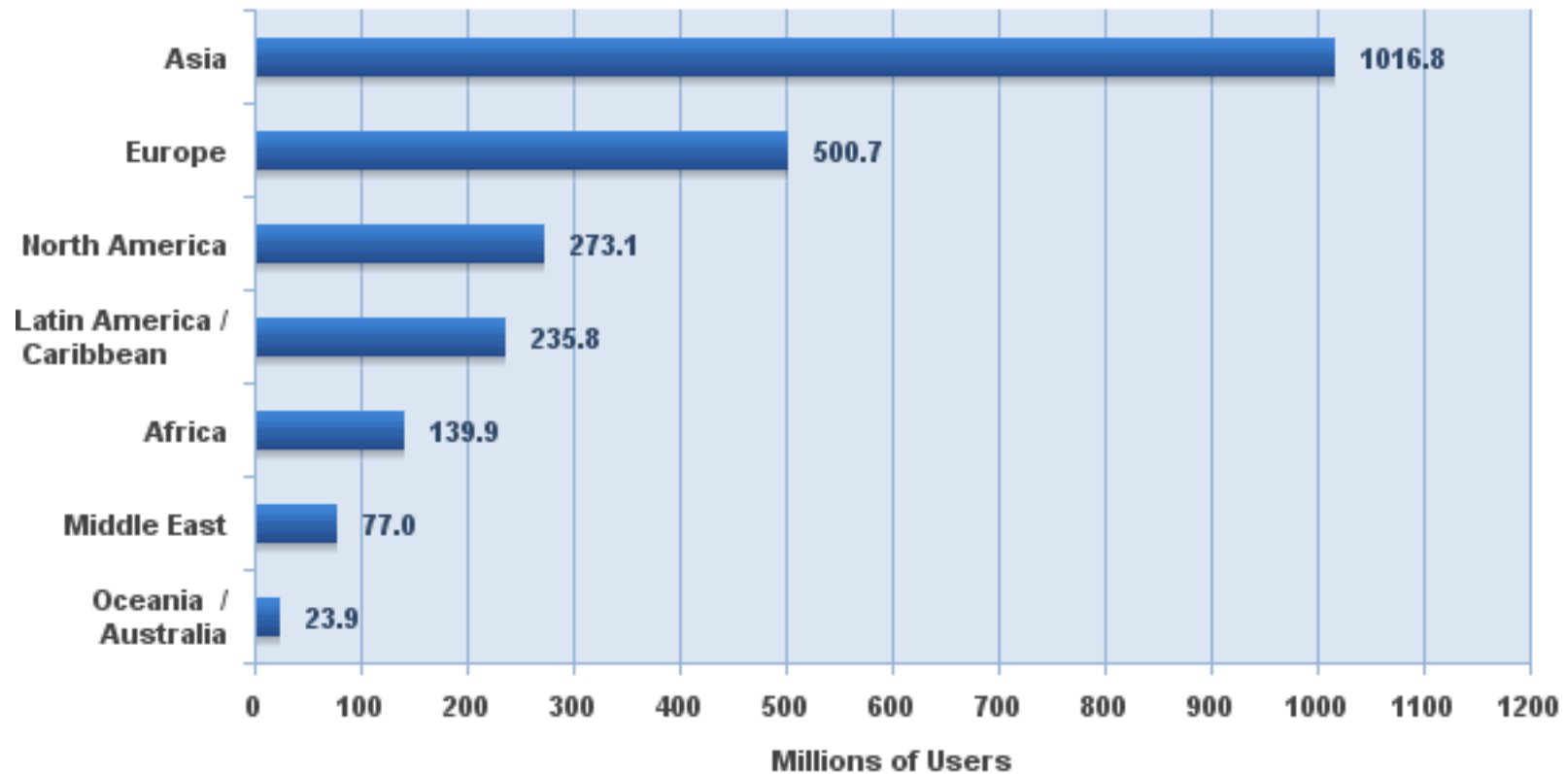
- Do you agree with these descriptions?
- How would you describe the media system(s) in your country/region?
- What one or two things should we all know about your media from your experience?
  - Place these on the post-it notes along with the name of the country and it will be posted on the wall

## World Internet Penetration Rates by Geographic Regions - 2011



Source: Internet World Stats - [www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm](http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm)  
Penetration Rates are based on a world population of 6,930,055,154  
and 2,267,233,742 estimated Internet users on December 31, 2011.  
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# African Internet Access Poorly Distributed

- Countries with more than 25% online:  
Cape Verde, Morocco, Nigeria, Seychelles, Tunisia
- Countries with 10 to 25% online:  
Algeria, Mauritius, South Africa, Uganda, Zimbabwe
- Countries with less than 2% of public online:  
Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad,  
Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Guinea, Liberia,  
Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Tanzania

# Lack of Internet Infrastructure

- Internet connections in the poorest nations of Africa are slow yet can cost 100 times more than in the US
- World Bank has promised to loan \$31 million to Sierra Leone and \$25.6 million to Liberia for cyber connectivity infrastructure
- Yet problem is not just Internet cables—cities outside Freetown and Monrovia rarely have electricity, home computers are unknown, and Internet cafes too expensive for most citizens

# Censorship is Pervasive Problem

- Low literacy rates mean people depend on radio and TV for news
- Many governments control broadcasting and exercise direct and indirect control over content
- Police and security personnel frequently abuse journalists
- Drug cartels, religious fundamentalists, political insurgents all threaten journalists
- <http://www.cpj.org/killed/2012/>



# Opinions Evolve Over Time

- Messages are interpreted in light of historical understanding, current situation, and view of the future
- Single shot exposures seldom change minds
- Effective message campaigns “tinker” with strategies and tactics in response to poll results
- Band wagon effects are strong, especially when people lack confidence in their personal opinions

# Think about Media Strategically

- Rethink practices in light of environmental changes
- Don't expend critical resources on legacy media unless research shows it is warranted

# Lessons from Health Campaigns and Entertainment

- Vividness of language is important
- Each message should constitute a clear argument
- Need to utilize multiple messages over time
- Can embed messages in entertainment (e.g., soap operas)
  - Best if messages are built within a story arc to keep people's attention over time
- Have to test every message—"boomerang" effects are possible

# How to Better Use Media to Improve Governance

- Making Messages Stick\*--SUCCEsS
  - Simple
  - Unexpected
  - Concrete
  - Credible
  - Emotional
  - Stories
- Think strategically, like a political campaign consultant and create a “drumbeat”
  - Heath & Heath, 2007

