

Media: Roles and Messages

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Topics & Objectives

- 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

- 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 a single medium
- Choices are limited by access, the availability of non-media alternatives, and other outside factors

Media Dependency Theory: Ball-Rokeach, 1976

Interests Play a Role in Media Use

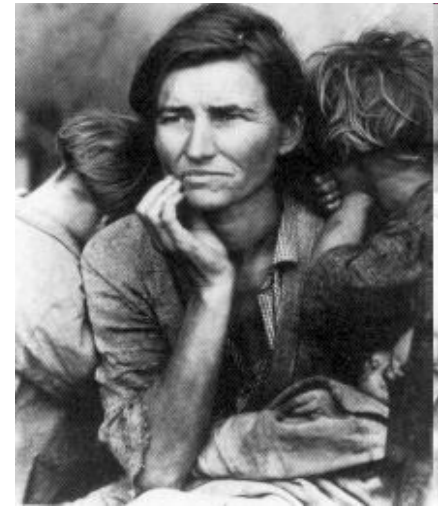
Uses and Gratifications Theory:

- A person follows his/her interests
- People choose media content according to needs
- Media use is utilitarian, intentional (motivated), and originates from a person's 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:

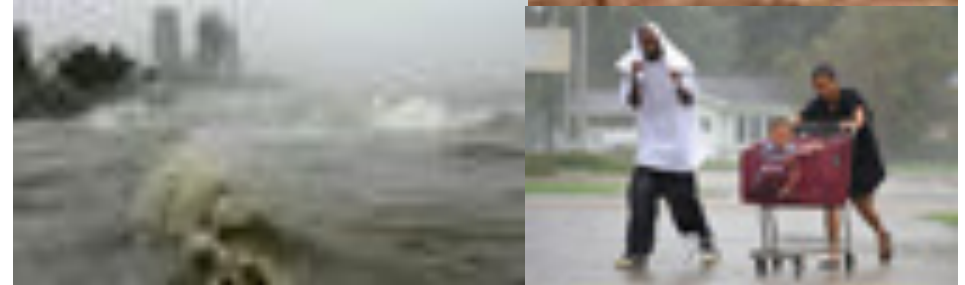
- Beginnings, middles, and ends
- A sense of history, view of the present, and a vision of the future
- Heroes, villains, dupes, and victims

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



“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?



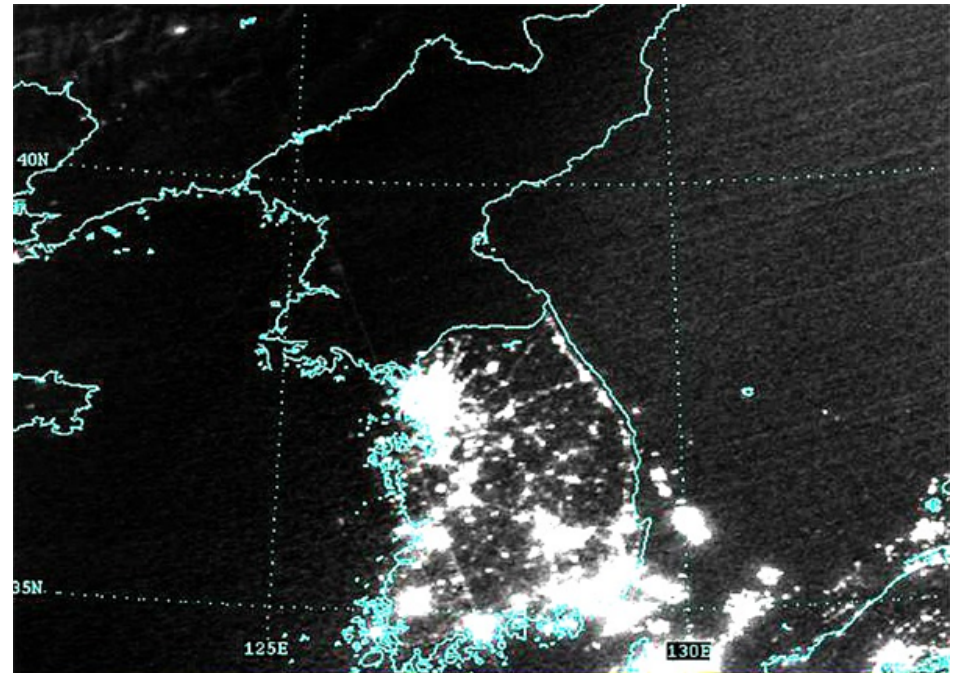
Neurobiological Theories



- 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

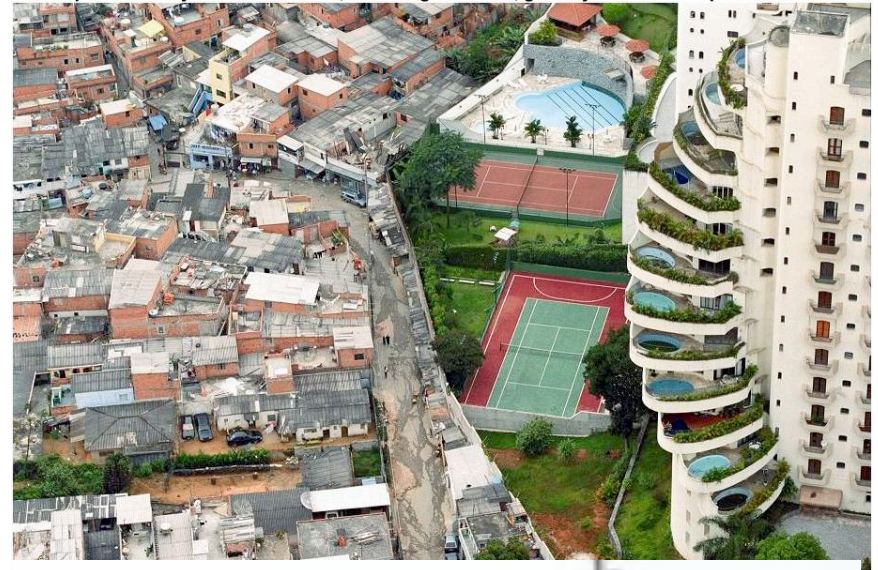
Framing

- 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?



Egyptian Military Takeover



- Rejection of religion in politics?
- Or thwarting the democratic will of the people?
- General Sisi: Competent technocrat who can restore political order?
- Or a return to Egyptian strongman political culture and demise of democracy?

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 reform?

- 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 Reform

- 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



Understanding the Media

- The press creates a “Conversational Commons”
 - Transforms a great deal of information to make it easily 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 can tell us what to think about
 - People need to be exposed repeatedly for messages to have impact
 - Print has less “stickiness” in issue formation than does TV
 - Frequency of issue “mentions” is more significant than length or substance of stories
 - Newspapers shape agenda for local radio and TV



This research is mostly conducted in the West. Does it hold true globally? Why or why not?

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



Media Systems Differ Country-by-Country

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



Media Systems in Selected Nations

- Kenya: Complex; only government radio and TV stations have national reach, many private alternatives exist, broadcasting in many languages, multiple newspapers are published
- China: CCTV and Xinhua News net are key government influenced media outlets. CCTV also has English-language channel that is China's way to communicate to the world. Many provincial networks and they may have more freedom depending on province. Healthy newspaper publications abound, with more press freedom the further you go from Beijing. Millions of people accessing information online and on mobile phones. Sina-Weibo and WeChat are key networks.
- Zambia: many different newspapers with large readership but literacy affects access. Government controls one TV network. Periodically relations between government and press have been poor.
- Sierra Leone: Newspapers exist but have very low circulation and readership. One TV for every 17 citizens, little TV outside of capital, radio is key media. Government influence on media content is significant.

Media Systems in Nations

- Peru—well developed media system with vibrant newspaper, TV and radio.
- Vietnam—integrate media system of newspapers, TV and radio. Heavy government influence in news but Western entertainment programming is accessible.
- Ghana—one of the most free systems in Africa. Vigorous 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.
- Bangladesh—privately held newspapers, TV is dominant means for communicating news, government-press relations vary. Recent estimates say 600,000 are accessing online.
- 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. *Increasing* newspaper circulation; strong and free press, diverse array of national and international TV stations, rapidly increasing Internet access.

Media Systems (continued):

- Cote d' Ivoire—newspapers with very poor circulation. Radio is dominant mode of communication. Approximately 1 TV set for every 17 people.
- Kazakhstan—Newspapers, radio, and TV but all subject to extensive government control and censorship.
- Brazil—complex media system, poor newspaper circulation. Now enjoys press freedom.
- Madagascar—significant government control of press. Radio is the most effective way to reach people.
- South Africa—well developed media system with many newspapers, radio & TV stations, Internet use rapidly increasing. Some press-gvt. tensions in past.

Discussion

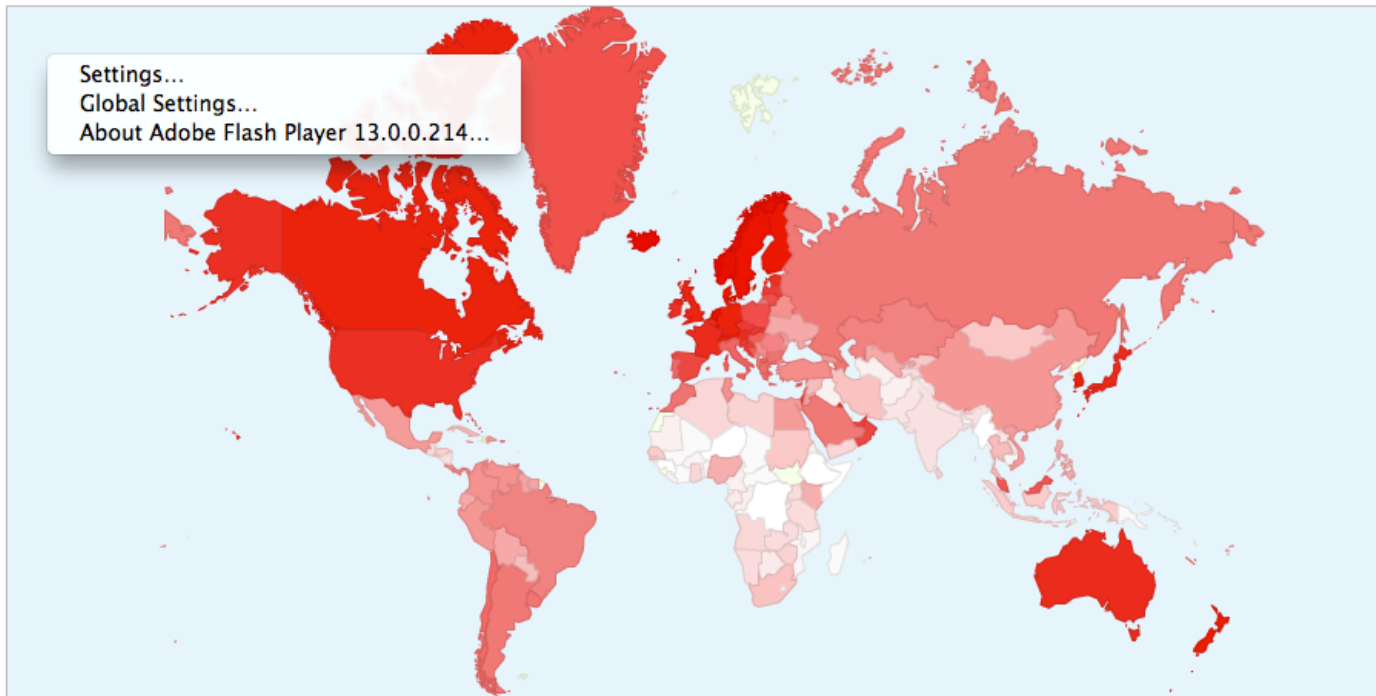
- Do you agree with these descriptions?
- How would you describe the media system(s) in your country/region?
- What one or two things should we all know about your media from your experience?
 - Place these on the post-it notes along with the name of the country and it will be posted on the wall

World Internet Penetration Rates

- <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>

Data is from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU,) June 2012.

% Individuals Using The Internet, 2001-2011



Darkest red: Highest % of Internet users

Dark red: Medium-to-high % of Internet users

Medium red: Medium % of Internet users

Light red: Medium-to-low % of Internet users

<http://www.gfmag.com/global-data/non-economic-data/internet-users>

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



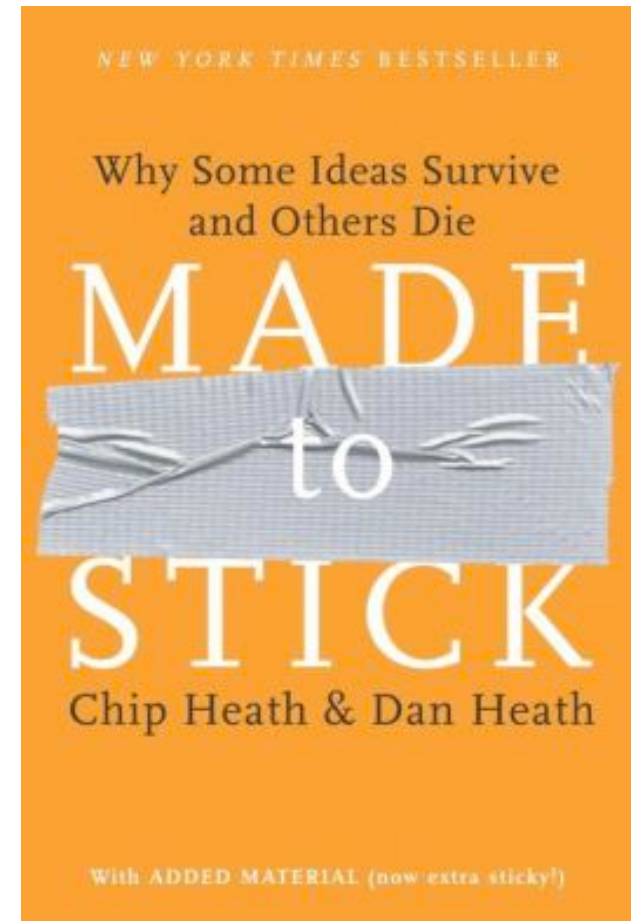
Via Sweden



Hum Log

How to Better Use Media in Reforms

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



Think about Media Strategically: 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
- Rethink practices in light of environmental changes
- Don’ t expend critical resources on legacy media unless research shows it is warranted

