

Shaping News – 1 Theories of Media Power and Environment

Course Description:

The focus in these six lectures is on how some facts are selected, shaped, and by whom, for daily internet, television, and print media global, national, regional, and local dissemination to world audiences. Agenda-setting, priming, framing, propaganda and persuasion are major tools to supplement basic news factors in various media environments.

Course Goals and Student Learning Objectives:

The overall goal is to increase student awareness that media filter reality rather than reflect it, and those selected bits of reality are shaped to be understood. Student learning objectives are:

1. Demonstrate how media environments and media structures determine what information is selected for dissemination;
2. Demonstrate how and why different media disseminate different information on the same situation or event;
3. Demonstrate how information is framed, and by whom, to access the media agenda.

Required Texts/Readings:

Read random essays and research online that focus on media news factors, agenda-setting and framing

Assignments and Grading Policy:

Two quizzes on course content plus a 20-page paper on a related, student-selected and faculty-approved research paper.

Shaping News – 1 Media Environments and Media Power

This is the first of six lectures on the shaping of news. It will focus on the theories of media environments based on the assumption that media are chameleons and reflect the governmental/societal system in which they exist. The remaining five lectures are on: (2) elements of news; (3) agenda-setting and framing; (4) propaganda; (5) attitude formation; and (6) cognitive dissonance.

Two philosophical assumptions underlying the scholarly examination of mass media are that (1) the media are chameleons, reflecting their environment, and (2) their power is filtered and uneven.

The first assumption suggests that the degree of state control is a primary consideration and results in four theories of the press: authoritarian, communist, libertarian, and social responsibility. Scholars began examining whether media had any ability to influence people in the early 20th century. To date this has resulted in five sometimes overlapping theories of media power (1) hypodermic, (2) null effects, (3) limited effects, (4) moderate effects, and (5) powerful effects. (Note: Instructor provides examples and requires replies from students.)

The first theory of the media environment, the Authoritarian model, looks at the historical development of the press although some elements of this model still exist today. The original examination had the seat of media control resting on three legs: the divine right of kings, the church's position as shepherd of the flock, and political philosophy dating back to Plato. This theory essentially assumes that individuals can only achieve

their potential through the state which therefore must be supreme. The general view at the time is best summarized by Samuel Johnson, who said:

“Every society has a right to preserve public peace and order, and therefore has a good right to prohibit the propagation of opinions which have a dangerous tendency. If nothing may be published but what civil authority shall have previously approved, power must always be the standard of truth. If every dreamer of innovations may propagate “; if every murmur at government may diffuse discontent, there can be no peace; and if every skeptic in theology may teach his follies, there can be no religion.”

The Authoritarian theory has a 20th century offspring in the Communist theory which adds two elements: the press is state-owned, that is it is a part of the government and second, the view of the press is of a caretaker supporting the government.

Another three elements, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and Capitalism set the stage for the development of the Libertarian theory of the media. When Martin Luther publicly rebelled against church excesses, other people concluded they too could forcefully object. Five individuals introduced elements that gave birth to or helped shape the new theory:

1. John Locke developed the political concept of political sovereignty that stipulates man was born free in a state of nature and only delegates his power to the development and who can withdraw that power when necessary.
2. John Milton, the poet, who developed the marketplace of ideas concept with the assumption that truth ultimately prevails is all views may be uttered.
3. John Erskine furthered the right of free speech noting that all may address the nation even if their position is wrong.
4. President Thomas Jefferson who said American democracy was predicated on the idea that an educated and informed public will invariably make the right decision.
5. John Stuart Mill, who is best known for his logic in support of a free press, such as in this statement:

“If all mankind minus one were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.”

Mill also developed four propositions in favor of free speech:

1. Even if the commonly accepted opinion is the whole truth, the public tends to hold it not on rational grounds but as a prejudice unless it is forced to defend itself.
2. Unless the commonly held opinion is contested from time to time, it loses its vitality and its effect on conduct and character.
3. Even if the commonly accepted opinion is the whole truth, the public tends to hold it not on rational grounds but as a prejudice unless it is forced to defend itself.
4. Unless the commonly held opinion is contested from time to time, it loses its vitality and its effect on conduct and character.

The elements of the new theory are:

1. Reliance on reason to discriminate between truth and error.
2. Need for free marketplace of ideas in order that reason may work.
3. Press serves as a check on government

Authoritarianism said people are dependent, able to be fulfilled only under state guidance which, therefore, must outweigh and be superior to the individual.

Libertarianism said people are independent, rational, and able to choose between right and wrong. and the state that fails to enable people to develop their potential should be modified or abolished.

After the end of World War II, media critics concluded that the Libertarian theory did not also work and cited seven defects. They said the media . . .

1. often wielded power for their own ends
2. were subservient to business
3. resisted change
4. focused on superficial rather than significant
5. endangered public morals
6. invaded privacy without cause
7. under the control of one class, business

The critics noted that the Libertarian theory was too romanticized, that while people might have a duty to be self-informed, they did not always do so, and that the media did not provide what was necessary. These critics essentially created the Social Responsibility theory of the media which claims that the media could be self-regulating by adhering to the following precepts:

1. Media has obligations to fulfill to a democratic society in order to preserve freedom.
2. Media should be self-regulated.
3. Media should have high standards for professionalism and objectivity, as well as truth and accuracy.
4. Media should reflect the diversity of the cultures they represent.
5. The public has a right to expect professional performance. (The proponents of this theory had strong faith in the public's ability to determine right and wrong, and take action to preserve the public good when necessary.)

Part of the reason these critics began focusing on the media impact was because of earlier and ongoing research findings about the ability of the media to influence. Since the early 20th century beginnings of this research, five major theories of media power have been developed: hypodermic needle; null effects; limited effects; moderate effects; and powerful effects.

After the sinking of the battleship Maine in Havana, Cuba, the yellow press in the United States guided by William Randolph Hearst's New York Journal and Joseph Pulitzer's World engaged in a circulation battle using a strong focus on the need for the United States to declare war on Spain, which claimed territorial rights over Cuba. Eventually, partially because of this prodding, a U.S. government which was more focused to westward expansion, declared war which was short-lived and ended with

Spain ceding both Cuba and the Philippines to the United States. But the question was to what extent was the press, basically newspapers since radio and television were not yet in any developmental state, responsible for entry into the war and also the larger question, how powerful is the press. The examination resulted in the development of the Hypodermic Needle theory of press impacts. This stimulus-response theory viewed communication systems as able to:

1. Shape opinion and belief
2. Change habits of life
3. Mold behavior according to the will of those controlling the system

Mass communications had this power because:

1. People were gullible and easily swayed
2. Messages were "injected" into the mind where they changed attitudes, feelings, and ultimately the behavior
3. Impact was immediate and beyond the control of the individual

Two findings of the 1940 Erie County (Ohio) voter study, and others, examined media attention, personal discussions and voting behavior and said this research denied the premises of the Hypodermic Needle theory because:

1. Information is not direct to the consumer but is filtered by opinion leaders who shape and transmit it
2. People choose or select that which they wish to find out about.

A researcher named Joseph Klapper examined hundreds of media effects stories and concluded, as had many advertisers, that the media are not impotent but messages reinforce existing attitudes through four-fold process of:

1. Interpreted through five filters:
 - A. Interpersonal communications
 - B. Group memberships and norms
 - C. Opinion leadership

- D. Selectivity
- E. Predispositions

2. Media are contributors to, not sole cause of, attitudes and beliefs. If media cause change, filters suggest same thing or are not considering the topic. Media can have direct effect when:
3. A. No conflicting messages from other media
B. Messages are repeated over and over

Researchers in the 1970s found flaws in some of the criteria used to evaluate media power because it:

1. Focused on political attitudes
2. Did not consider awareness/knowledge gain
3. Excluded what people do with media
4. Excluded long-term effects

These researchers said the media did have moderate effects but suggested a re-orientation of focus to include these three effects models:

1. Uses and gratifications
2. Agenda setting
3. Cultural norms

In the 1980's, Elizabeth Noelle Neumann, a media researcher in Germany, concluded that the media can have power if media messages are:

1. Tailored to objectives
2. Targeted to specific audiences
3. Repeated over and over and over again

That brings the power of media full circle, except that the power varies according to conditions and attempts to influence it, a subject for future lectures.

Theories of Media Power

1. Hypodermic Needle (early 1900s)
2. Null Effects (1940s)
3. Limited Effects (1960s)
4. Moderate Effects (1970s)
5. Powerful Effects (1980s)

Hypodermic Needle (Early 1900s)

This stimulus-response theory viewed communication systems as able to:

1. Shape opinion and belief
2. Change habits of life
3. Mold behavior according to the will of those controlling the system

Hypodermic needle (early 1900s)

Mass communications had this power because:

1. People were gullible and easily swayed
2. Messages were “injected” into the mind where they changed attitudes, feelings, and ultimately the behavior
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Null Effects (1940s)

Two findings of the 1940 Erie County (Ohio) voter study, and others, denied the premises of the Hypodermic Needle theory because:

1. Information is not direct to the consumer but is filtered by opinion leaders who shape and transmit it
2. People choose or select that which they wish to find out about.

Limited Effects (1960s)

Media are not impotent. Messages reinforce existing attitudes through four-fold process of:

1. Interpreted through five filters:

- A. Interpersonal communications
- B. Group memberships and norms
- C. Opinion leadership
- D. Selectivity
- E. Predispositions

Limited Effects (1960s)

2. Media are contributors to, not sole cause of, attitudes and beliefs
3. If media cause change, filters suggest same thing or are not considering the topic
4. Media can have direct effect when:
 - A. No conflicting messages from other media
 - B. Messages are repeated over and over

Moderate Effects (1970s)

It found prior research flawed because it:

1. Focused on political attitudes
2. Did not consider awareness/knowledge gain
3. Excluded what people do with media
4. Excluded long-term effects

Moderate Effects (1970s)

Researchers suggested three effects models:

1. Uses and gratifications
2. Agenda setting
3. Cultural norms

Powerful Effects (1980s)

Research found that media can have powerful effects if messages are:

1. Tailored to objectives
2. Targeted to specific audiences
3. Repeated over and over and over again

Shaping News - 2 Elements of News (Gans)

Two American journalism academics, Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel in 2006 wrote a book entitled the Elements of Journalism. In it, they wrote:

1. Journalism's first obligation is to the truth.
2. Its first loyalty is to citizens.
3. Its essence is a discipline of verification.
4. Its practitioners must maintain an independence from those they cover.
5. It must serve as an independent monitor of power.
6. It must provide a forum for public criticism and compromise.
7. It must strive to make the significant interesting and relevant.
8. It must keep the news comprehensive and proportional.
9. Its practitioners must be allowed to exercise their personal conscience.

They also listed many of the elements of news that are drilled into all beginning journalism students, such as SIPS: Significance (Importance), Immediacy (Timeliness), Proximity (Nearness), and Size (Magnitude). They also list other elements, such as:

- (1) relationship to something else in the news;
- (2). Conflict, war, elections, sports
- (3) Consequence
- (4). Prominence
- (5). Human Interest
- (6). Oddity Weird stuff

All of these combine to help journalists fulfill their three main goals: to inform, to educate, and to entertain.

In western journalism, the information aspect is supposed to be an unbiased account, one free of reporter perspective. Simply put, it is an objective telling of an event. However, an examination of many newscasts over a period of time will indicate

that the unbiased account, this objective telling of an event is quite often built on a foundation that is subjective rather than objective.

Objectivity is usually impossible. At least it is for reporters. For example, during a trial in a courtroom, a stenographer records every utterance in sequence, without regard to grammar, sentence structure, clarity, accuracy, context or relevance.

A reporter attending the trial, even one who hears every word, immediately classifies what he or she hears into one of three categories: (1) not to be used; (2) To be paraphrased, condensed, combined; or (3) to be used verbatim.

The first question is where do journalists begin. What precedes the classification of what reporters see and/or hear. Something happens: a train accident, a presidential speech, a football game, etc. In each event are facts, the countless number of things that cause, create and impact from something.

Objectivity would require the reporter to be like the stenographer, to list everything about the particular event, a train derailment for example, including even such things as the clothing that people were wearing, the temperature, where the passengers and crew were, what they were doing, in other words, everything.

That would take an extraordinarily long time and totally confuse the importance in the overwhelming mass of detail, most of it generally irrelevant.

Objectivity is not for the reporter. The reporter is selective, choosing only the facts that explain, or interpret the wreck, in such a way as to make it understandable and therefore meaningful to the reporter's audience.

In other words, out of perhaps 10,000 facts concerning a train wreck, perhaps only 1,000, or maybe only 100 are used by the reporter to shape into a news story.

Facts themselves are not news. News is the grouping of certain facts to make sense. Thus, news is created. And created by someone. Actually by several someones. The people who were involved in and/or witnessed the derailment, the train officials and police who are preparing reports

The reporter distils, synthesizes, and shapes those facts into news.

The reporter is not objective but rather is subjective, analyzing, weighing the value of each nuance.

Perhaps selective is a better descriptive than subjective. It implies that the decision is based more on the reporter's training than on personal background, although obviously the latter may also affect the reporter's decision to include, exclude or weigh the elements of news.

Herbert J. Gans, an American sociologist, examined that issue by spending time in the newsrooms of four major American news organizations, CBS News, NBC Nightly News, and the two major news magazines, Time and Newsweek. By observing and talking with reporters and reading what they wrote, Gans determined that much of their reporting was filtered through eight what he called "enduring values," perspectives that were part of how the reporters interpreted their surroundings.

The most important one, the one that affected news coverage both of the U.S. and other countries is ethnocentrism. This was the belief that the United States was

valued more highly than other nations and that other nations were judged on how well they emulated, or imitated, the United States

A second very important value was what Gans labeled "altruistic democracy," the belief that democracy is the best form of government and that officials should base their governing on altruistic principles and everyday citizens should be involved in grassroots democracy, that is at the local, or community, level.

Gans also found two other major viewpoints, that of "small-town pastoralism" and "responsible capitalism." The first is a nostalgic longing for America's rural and more simplistic lifestyle and the second favors business as the way to succeed in achieving the American dream and is also essentially anti-government.

Two other values are sometimes contradictory, those of "individualism" and of "moderatism." The individualism point of view cherishes the rags-to-riches dream that it is possible to achieve if one works hard enough and thus honors the self-made man. However, moderatism also views negatively individuals and ideas that stray too far from the center and advocate extremes.

The remaining two perspectives were that society does and should in an orderly fashion according to established principles and that of leadership, that duly elected individuals should implement the proper policies for effective governmental operations.

Gans' classification of much of American news as being interpreted through these perspectives, or filters, raises at least the following two questions:

1. To what extent, if any, does the interpretation of facts through one or more of these values hinder, if not prevent, proper use of the information?

2. Do the media in other countries have the same, similar, or different “enduring values?”
3. How can the effect of the “enduring values” be removed from information without reducing an accurate understanding of the information and any likely consequences of it?

In other words, is accuracy, bias and truth like beauty – in the eye of the beholder?

Six Enduring Values

- **Ethnocentrism**
Americans value their own nation above all others.
- **Altruistic Democracy**
Democracy is the best form of government. Government officials should behave altruistically . Citizens should be involved at the grassroots level.
- **Responsible Capitalism**
Unions and consumer organizations are accepted as countervailing pressures on business and are judged negatively.
Economic growth is a positive phenomenon. Government regulation is bad.

Six Enduring Values

- Small-town Pastoralism

The rural and anti-industrial value of Jefferson are found in the news. Nature and smallness are desirable—environmentalism.

- Individualism

Preservation of the freedom of the individual, “rugged individualism” and self-made people are admired.

- Moderatism

Discourages excess or extremism.

Bias

- If there is bias in the news, it is probably toward these six values as much as it is liberal or conservative.
 - With the exception of Fox News and MSNBC
 - And most blogs and blog aggregators such as The Huffington Post

Shaping News – 3 Agenda-Setting

The media do not tell us what is going on in the world – not even in countries with the equivalent of the American First Amendment!

And even if they could, we would not read, hear, nor see it.

The media cannot. And we cannot.

The media filter the news. And we filter the news that the media provide us.

The media select a few sets of facts from among many, package those facts and then print or broadcast them for us. We in turn select the items most often presented, given the most space or time. We judge them to be the most important. And we perceive them according to who we are, background and beliefs.

The process is called agenda-setting.

It works two ways:

- (1). If something is important, the media will tell us.
- (2). if something is in the media, then it must be important.

Thus, the first two assumptions of the agenda-setting of communications, and thus instruments that propagandists need to know are:

- (1). Media do not reflect reality; they filter it.
- (2). Media concentration of selected items leads the public to perceive those items as more important than other items.

There are other ways of looking at this process that are very important, the information that is on, or not on the agenda, how the information is selected.

The amount of time on a television newscast is limited to 15 to 20 minutes and the front page of a newspaper has fewer than 100 column inches of type to present the news of the day. It could never be enough for all the news that is, or could be, of importance so the media must evaluate, choose, package and present a limited selection. Thus, it is a contest, which pits one vested-interest group against all others.

Depending on the perceived importance of the topic by the media, the information and its problems and solutions either gains the public and elite attention by being on the agenda, or it loses their attention.

How do items get on the agenda? What are some of the ways?

- (1). Crises and Events. Earthquakes, floods and hurricanes resulting in large loss of life and property damage as well wars and other man-made interruptions of life's normal routines.
- (2). Political changes. Peaceful changes in the rulers, such as elections, or less-than-peaceful, such as military coups, are large, affecting many citizens personally as well as many foreign governments in terms of international relations.
- (3). Other indicators of changes. Fashion, culinary, educational, medical and other developments that alter the way we live are major changes in how we live and our attitudes other people and situations.
- (4). Media coverage. Once something is on the media agenda, it will tend to stay there until all aspects of it have been reported and there is nothing news left to say.
- (5). Group Conflict. The media focus more on conflict than on consensus, so whenever two or more groups disagree on something, the media will explore the personalities, issues, problems, and possible solutions.
- (6) Protests. Groups of previously voiceless or ignored citizens unite under a common goal and through actions and words try to access the media agenda so as to reach the public and the leadership.

- (7). Leadership activity. Individuals who are at the top in government, in business, in sports for example have the ability by virtue of their ability to do things and to speak for others, can command or at least attract media attention.

The above list of how things get on the agenda begin to hint at is able to influence or control the agenda.

There is the element of reciprocity. Each group, the public, the media, business, and government all pay attention to each other -- and influence each other.

The media influence each other. The Associated Press gathers news from its members across the world and disseminates it, often preparing a list, or agenda, of the major developments and stories in many categories. The New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, the networks and their counterparts in other countries are watched to see what they think is important, what they are covering. Generally, if they think something is important, others will also.

Political elites can influence the agenda to the extent that have political power. The more power an individual has, the more influence he, or she, wields.

One of the questions that affect how and why individuals and groups attempt to influence media is the inclusion now of the latest medium – the Internet.

It is thought that the Internet may increase the agenda-setting function of the media, but it is also thought that the Internet may reduce the power, and therefore the attractiveness, of the media agenda.

Strengthening the media' agenda-setting capability might occur through blogs that provide opinion to interested publics based on media news and information, thus increasing the importance of the media agenda.

On the other hand, the media agenda power may be reduced because there are more content distributors, and thus more content, and individuals now have more selection over the content they will be exposed to.

To summarize, agenda-setting:

- (1). tells us what to think about.
- (2). emphasizes how media shape attention and opinions about issues.
- (3). The previous two are done by the media indicators of attention (frequency and length), placement (lead story, above the fold), content cues (headlines, photos, time, tone), and sources (names, numbers, and their authority).

Framing is the structuring of parts of reality by:

1. News sources – politicians, business leaders, etc.
2. The news media
3. The audience

In mass media communication, a frame is the packaging of language and visuals in such a way as to encourage certain interpretations and to discourage other interpretations.

People use frames as filters to make sense of the world. People make choices because they are influenced by the creation of a frame.

Some researchers say people are "cognitive misers," that is that they do as little thinking as possible. Instead, frames are a quick and easy way to process information.

In mass communication, framing is how the news media shapes audience attitude and behavior.

Three areas, journalistic norms, political actors, and cultural context are the bases from which frame building begins. The assumption is that several different frames may be used to describe an event and the one that finally is selected is the one that: (1) resonates with popular culture; (2) is approved by elites, or (3) works well with media practices.

Five elements of journalism determine which frame is used for a given situation:

- (1) Societal norms and values
- (2) Organizational pressures and constraints
- (3) External interest group and policymakers pressures
- (4) Professional routines
- (5) Ideological or political orientation of journalists.

Elites influence the making of frames as does the context of the situation. Frames are generally more effective when the audience has pre-existing interpretations and are more knowledgeable about an issue.

Framing has been described as "a way of seeing things," but it has also been noted that it is "a way of not seeing things" because all other views are excluded.

Frames operate in four ways:

- (1) They define problems
- (2) They diagnose causes
- (3) They make moral judgments
- (4) They suggest remedies

When certain values or facts are given prominence, they automatically are assumed to be more important than facts that are dismissed or downplayed.

Positive effects result from presentation of options as sure or absolute gains.

Negative framing effects result from options presented as the relative likelihood of losses.

Explain framing in terms of fears and wishes....negative emotions evoked by potential losses usually out-weight emotions evoked by hypothetical gains.

For example, when George W. Bush took office, the White House started using the phrase "tax relief" instead of "tax burden" or "tax responsibilities," as part of the plan to shift the emphasis

Examples:

Sept. 11, 2001 --- The initial White House response was to frame these acts of terror as crime, but within hours it was replaced by a war metaphor, the War on Terror.

The difference is you bring criminals to justice, putting them on trial and then sentencing them. War implies enemy, military action, and war power for government.

The taxpayer's money frame rather than public or government funds. The first implies that individual taxpayers have a claim or right to set government policy based upon their payment of tax rather than their status as citizens or voters.

It has been said that the justification within liberal democracies for the war in Iraq entails a framing of them as pre-modern, primitive and ultimately not human in the same way as citizens within the liberal order.

- (3) External interest group and policy makers pressures
- (4) Professional routines
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"Framing is a process whereby communicators, consciously or unconsciously, act to construct a point of view that encourages the facts of a given situation to be interpreted by others in a particular manner," Jim A. Kuypers in 2009 *Rhetorical Criticism: Perspectives in Action*.

The New York Times wrote a story entitled *Framing Wars* in which Frank Luntz urged conservatism to use the New American Lexicon. Never advocate drilling for oil. Use exploring for energy. Never criticize the government which cleans our streets and pays our firemen. Instead, attack Washington with its ceaseless thirst for taxes and

regulations. Never use the word outsourcing because you will have to defend or end the practice of allowing companies to ship American jobs overseas.

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Agenda Setting

Agenda Setting is . . .

1. ...the process by which problems/solutions gain or lose public and elite attention.
2. ...a competition because public and elite capacity is not large enough to consider every issue.

Agenda Setting's Importance

1. Defining the alternatives is the supreme instrument of power.
3. Control over agenda means control over outcomes.
3. Agenda setting is about getting some things on the agenda and keeping other things off the agenda.

Agenda Setting. . .

1. ...tells us what to think about.
2. ...emphasizes how media shape attention opinion concerning relative importance of issues.
3. ...indicators of media emphasis:
 - Attention (frequency and length)
 - Placement (lead story; above the fold)
 - Content cues (headlines/photos/time/tone)
 - Sources (named/number/authority)
 - Others???

How Issues Reach the Agenda

- Group conflict
- Leadership activity
- Protest movements
- Media coverage or activity
- Changes in indicators
- Political changes
- Crises and Focusing on events

Setting Media Agenda

1. Intermediate media agenda – influence that different media agenda have on each other
3. Political elites (and political advertising) drive agendas of all news organizations
5. National news agencies drive agenda of local news organizations
4. National newspapers drive the agenda of TV networks and digital outlets

Setting the Media Agenda

1. Reciprocal causation between journalists and policy makers – both have influence
3. Media coverage shapes policy-maker agendas
3. Elites pay attention to public agenda that media help establish

Agenda-Setting Functions

The agenda-setting function has multiple parts:

1. Media agenda: discussed in and by the media
3. Public agenda: discussed by and about the public
5. Policy agenda: items considered important by policy makers
4. Corporate agenda: items considered important by Big Business.

Agenda Setting: Two Assumptions

1. Media do not reflect reality; they filter it
3. Media concentration on selected items leads public to perceive those items as more important than other items

Framing

Journalist and others may use these frames:

1. Metaphor: to give an idea meaning by comparing it to something else
3. Stories: myths and legends—by anecdote in a vivid and memorable way
5. Traditions: rites, rituals, ceremonies—to reinforce values
7. Slogans: jargon and catchphrases

Framing

5. Artifacts: illuminate corporate values through physical vestiges
6. Contrasts: describing a subject in terms of what it is not.
7. Spin: Using words with positive or negative connotations

i

Shaping News – 4 Propaganda and Persuasion

Propaganda is a technique rather than a science, but it is a modern technique that is based on several branches of science. Modern propaganda is based on scientific analyses of psychology and sociology. A modern propagandist builds his or her techniques on knowledge of people, their tendencies, desires, needs, conditioning. Without the scientific research, propaganda would be in the primitive stages of 2000 years ago.

Propaganda is scientific in that it sets rules that are rigorous, precise, and tested.

Propaganda has been described as a manipulation for the purpose of changing ideas or opinions, dealing with beliefs. But the aim of modern propaganda is not just to modify ideas, but to provoke action.

Propaganda tries first of all to create conditioned reflexes in people by training them so that certain words, signs, symbols, provoke unfailing reactions.

Propaganda that is directly diametric to the fundamental and accepted structures in society has no chance. Effective propaganda is familiar, attaches itself to what already exists in people and in society, expressing the basic currents and broad ideologies.

The most generally held view of propaganda is that it is a series of tall stories and lies, which are necessary for effective propaganda. Hitler believed this and said, "The bigger the lie, the more its chances of being believed."

This concept leads to two attitudes among the public. The first is that we won't believe the propaganda because we can distinguish truth from falsehood. People who believe this are extremely susceptible to propaganda because when propagandists do tell the truth, people are convinced that it is not propaganda and the resulting self-confidence makes them vulnerable to propaganda attacks which they are unaware of.

The second attitude is that we don't believe anything the propagandist says because everything he says is necessarily untrue. But, if the propagandist can demonstrate that something he said is in fact true, people tend then to believe that all he says is true. Even Goebbels, the head of Nazi propaganda, believed that propaganda has to be accurate.

Are both Hitler and Goebbels right? Yes, but how can that be. The truth pays off in the area of facts. Falsehoods are accepted in the area of intentions and interpretations.

We must also distinguish between political and sociological propaganda. The first has clearly defined goals which are precise, usually narrow or limited and which are practiced by a government, party, administration, pressure group, etc. It is clearly distinguished from advertising. Advertising has economic goals; political propaganda has political goals.

Propaganda is systematically constructed with a specific point of view tailored to achieve a result desired by an individual or group with a vested interest. The content may be true, but generally is not true, or is at least twisted in some ways.

Research dating from the 1930s listed seven categories of propaganda techniques: name calling, glittering generalities, testimonials transfer, band wagon, plain folks, and card stacking.

The first two are opposites. Name calling uses pejorative, or negative languages asking the receiver to condemn and reject while glittering generalities uses positive words and images asking the receiver to accept and approve.

The common point of both techniques is that both want the receiver to act without logical consideration of the situation or individual.

Testimonial and transfer also have a common point. Both wrap the propaganda point in something else. For example, testimonial uses the voice and image of a respected or authoritative individual to sway the message receiver to the desired intent of the message. Transfer uses the image itself, such as using a nationalistic or religious icon with the image of the desired message.

It can be argued that plain folks and bandwagon also have a common starting point, other people, the population or group membership. Plain folks is a technique that attempts to have the receiver evaluate an individual as quite similar to the receiver's group when it is obvious the individual is not. Bandwagon occurs when the propagandist tries to assure the message receiver that everybody else already agrees with the message intent and the message receiver should not want to be left out of some favorable result.

All of the above techniques generally attempt to reshape the truth or at least focus only on certain aspects. The last technique does not. Card-stack is generally a

lie, or a twisting of the truth to render it unrecognizable. Card stacking presents whatever image or words supports its intent without regard to the truthfulness of the image or information.

Propaganda is often found in pseudo news. Natural news, such as earthquakes, Train wrecks, and other things that just happen rarely contain propaganda in and of themselves. They are not created nor controlled by man nor he gain anything from them.

But pseudo news are created by people, usually to be disseminated to the media. When they occur, where they occur and who participates in them are controlled by someone. Protest movements, sporting events, political rallies are examples.

Pseudo news generally makes more sense than natural news because they are constructed to make more sense. But they are created for a reason and therefore often utilize propaganda to achieve that end.

Propaganda Foundation

Influencing behavior is based on three principles:

1. It is easier to get people to do something they want to do, than something they don't.
2. Inconsistent messages will be rejected, distorted or accepted based on force of appeal.
3. Behavior changes only if the action is seen as the easiest path to a personal goal.

Propaganda

Propaganda is a **SYSTEMATIC** attempt by an **INTERESTED** individual or group to **SHAPE** the **ATTITUDES** of others through **SUGGESTIONS** and consequently to **CONTROL** their **ACTIONS**.

Propaganda 's Seven Types

- Name calling
- Glittering generality
- Transfer
- Testimonial
- Plain folks
- Bandwagon
- Card stacking

Propaganda

The guidelines for effective propaganda are:

1. First, attract favorable attention to the idea.
2. Give the idea/object a favorable setting.
3. Use clear and simple language.
4. Repeat slogans and catchwords.
5. Never argue, simply assert, and re-assert

Pseudo Events

Pseudo events overshadow reality because:

1. They are more dramatic.
2. They are easier to disseminate.
3. They can be reinforced through repetition.
4. They cost money to create.
5. They are more reassuring
6. They are planned for convenience.

Pseudo Events and Propaganda

1. A pseudo event is an ambiguous truth. propaganda is an appealing falsehood.
2. A pseudo event thrives on our desire to be informed. Propaganda feeds on our willingness to be inflamed.
3. A pseudo event appeals to our duty to be educated. Propaganda appeals to our desire to be aroused.

Shaping News – 5 Attitudes Formation

When we hear something, it is not the same message heard by others. Each of us filters the message according to what we already know and what we already believe. Whether we accept, modify, or reject a new piece of information is dependent on how it fits with our attitude and belief structure.

Most individuals attitudes and beliefs will be in balance with each other. That is they will be consistent – an individual who is liberal in some beliefs will be liberal in most other beliefs. To reach an individual's attitude/belief structure, one needs to know how the attitude/belief s system operates.

The first step in the structure is activation. If a message contains information that is completely new to an individual, he or she has no prior attitude toward it. However, a person will surround the information with positive or negative feelings depending on how the information agrees or disagrees with other attitudes and beliefs of the individual . The greater, the more intense, and the more important the prior attitudes are, the more likely the new information will be accepted, modified, or rejected. That is, it will be consistent in attitude direction and intensity.

The assigning positive or negative feelings toward the information is the accretion state, the building of the feeling's directional (positive or negative) strength.

The attitude can change depending of what messages, information, images, the individual receives from friends, family, media, entertainment, etc. The strongest ability that the media is that of reinforcement. When the individual is subject to messages that conflict with his or her attitude, that person can go to the media for information that reinforces the opinion.

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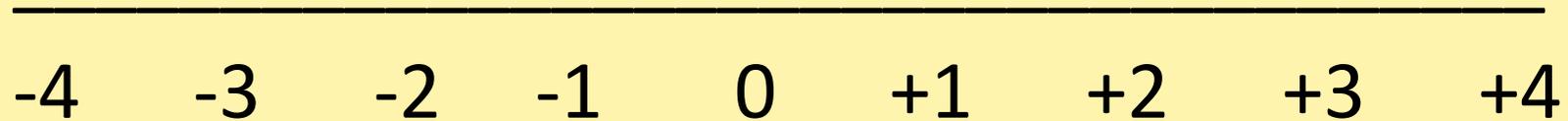
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However, if the new information is insufficient to counter the contrary information, the result may be erosion, a lessening of the attitude's intensity. Continued attacking information may result in a lessening of attitude to the point of no attitude (called neutralization) and possibly to conversion, shaping of opinion to the opposite view. The latter is called conversion and takes time, effort and many

messages to achieve.

Attitude Formation and Change



Attitudinal Predispositions

0 = no attitude and/or no knowledge

+ = degree of intensity of positive attitude

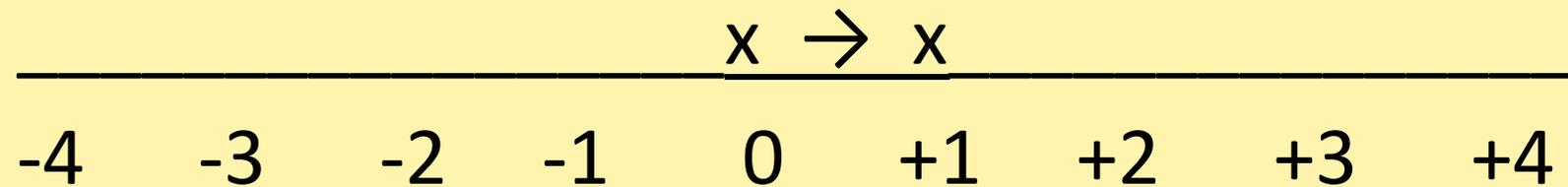
- = degree of intensity of negative attitude

Attitude Shifts

1. Activation
3. Accretion
5. Reinforcement
7. Erosion
9. Neutralization
6. Conversion

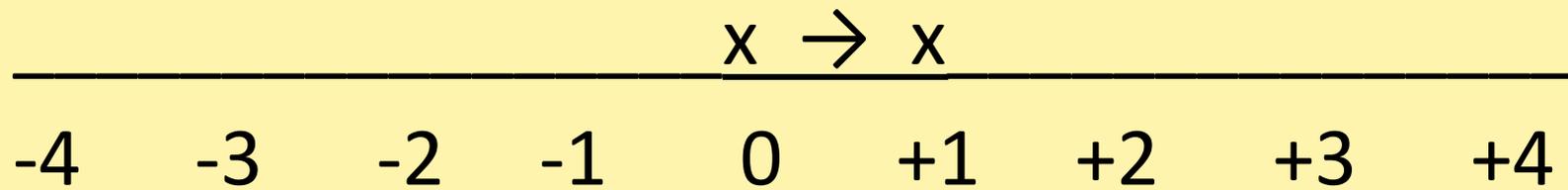
Activation

Activation establishes direction



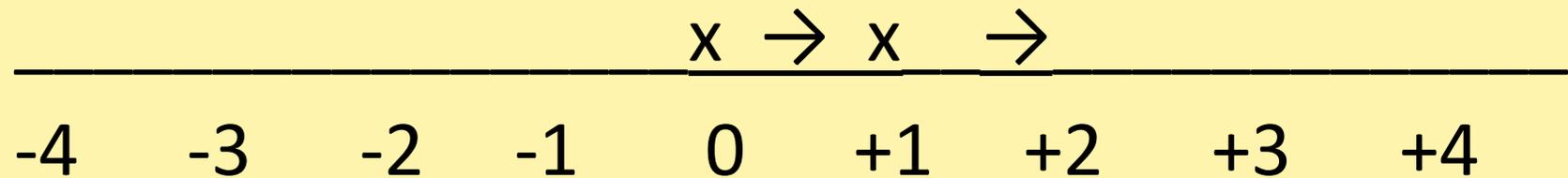
Attitude Activation

Mild positive activation



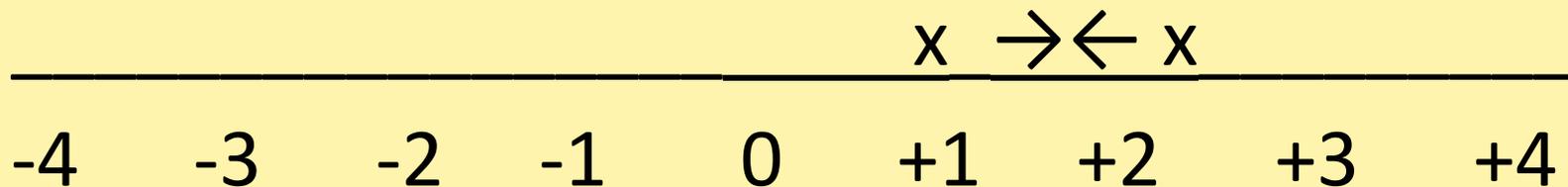
Accretion

Accretion increases intensity in same direction



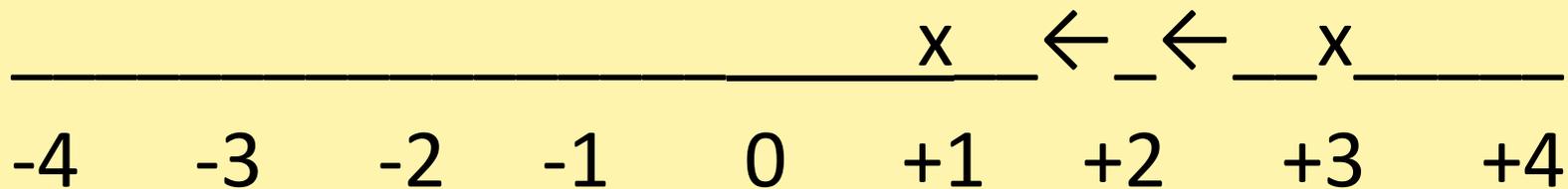
Reinforcement

Reinforcement: No change in intensity, no change in direction from contrary information



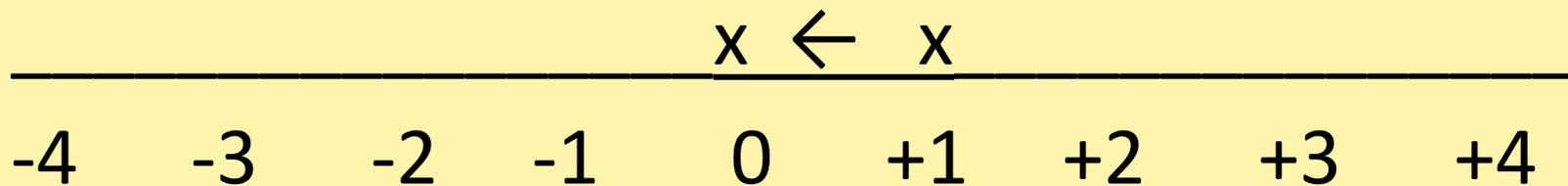
Erosion

Erosion: No change in direction, but change in intensity



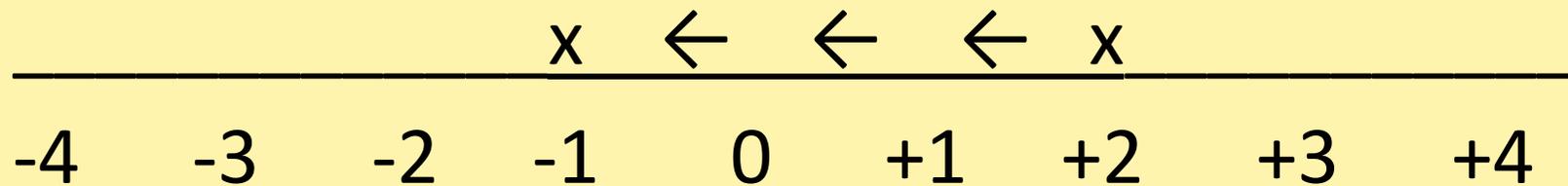
Neutralization

Neutralization: Decrease in intensity, loss of direction



Conversion

Conversion: Change in direction



Shaping News – 6 Cognitive Dissonance

Everybody changes their mind now and then. The situation changes. We get new information. We re-think our original position.

Sometimes, new information is in disagreement with what we already know or believe. The two, the new and the old information, are inconsistent. Or another way of looking at it is that they are not in balance with each other.

Social scientists may subscribe to balance theories of beliefs, that our beliefs are consistent with each other. If I am conservative, or liberal, with one set of items, I will be conservative, or liberal with other ideas.

An earlier lecture discussed the filter system, of how a new idea is evaluated in light of prior knowledge and beliefs.

If I am raised as a Catholic, or as a Muslim, many of my ideas will be examined in light of my religious beliefs as opposed to how a Protestant, Buddhist or an Agnostic might view the same concept.

Normally, a new idea must be consistent with prior beliefs before it can be accepted.

When new information is received, an individual can accept it if it agrees with prior knowledge. But suppose it is not. Suppose the new information contradicts or somehow challenges existing beliefs. This creates an imbalance which is cognitively unacceptable, because it can leave an individual trying to believe contrary information, which is cognitively painful. The individual can do any one or more of four things: or can do one of four other tactics:

1. Reinforce. An individual seeks supporting information to strengthen the original belief.
2. Re-evaluate. Especially, if supporting information is unavailable, a person will add additional weight to elements of the existing belief so as to counteract the new information.
3. Revoke. If neither reinforcement nor re-evaluation is possible, the individual can decide to simply revoke or disavow the original belief entirely.
4. Reverse. However, revoking may leave an empty spot or unacceptable element in the belief structure and the new information may then lead to a reversal of the original position and acceptance of the new information.

Suppose I decide to buy a camera, a fairly good and therefore expensive camera. I know little about cameras so I talk to the sales person at the camera shop (opinion leadership) and the sales person

recommends a particular brand because it is easy to use and cheaper than more comparable cameras.

The next day I show the camera to a friend of mine who works as a professional photographer. He asks what kind of pictures do I want to take. I say action pictures of sports. My friend says my new camera is good for taking still shots of nature but not of moving targets.

I am in a mental quandary.

I read more information about my camera's qualities to help reinforce my decision to buy it. Maybe that is enough.

If that is not enough, I downplay my original desire to shot action and focus more on re-evaluating the ability of the camera to shot nature.

If the reinforcement and the re-evaluation are not enough, I may revoke my decision by taking the camera back to the store.

But, that means I now have no camera.

So, I now accept the information that was opposed to my original believe and reverse that belief to buy a different camera.

Obviously, the purchase of a camera is not nearly as complex as beliefs in religion, or of political or social beliefs of how the world exists, or how it should exist.

Whether it be a question concerning abortion's possibilities of pro-life or pro-choice (framing words), or that of various means of gun control, or whether the question of climate change is a product of man or of nature, all have proponents and opponents. And each has its propagandist using the techniques of media power, propaganda, and pseudo news, agenda-setting and framing to structure an attitude or seek to create or prevent cognitive dissonance.

Each medium has differing abilities in the process of disseminating information and propaganda. Print must be mentally processed and is therefore more agreeable to fact and less to propaganda. Film appeals better to emotion and is less likely to utilize logic.

Finally, as someone or many someone's have noted is that it is virtually impossible to reason someone out of a position that he or she did not reason themselves into.

Thus information structuring to a vested point of interest is probably always present.

Cognitive Dissonance

Cognitive Dissonance theory asserts that it is psychologically uncomfortable to hold contradictory ideas. The four ways of dealing with dissonance are:

1. Reinforce, obtain more support information
2. Re-evaluate, change importance of priorities
3. Revoke
4. Reverse

Cognitive Dissonance

The underlying assumption is that people have a motivational drive to reduce dissonance by:

1. Changing attitudes, beliefs, actions.
2. Justifying, blaming, denying

Cognitive Dissonance

Despite knowing that smoking can cause lung cancer, some people continue to smoke and reduce dissonance by:

1. Quitting
2. Denying the evidence
3. Rationalizing that only a few smokers will become ill, only heavy smokers will, or that something else will kill them anyway.

NAME _____

Shaping News – Quiz 1

- TRUE FALSE 1. Authoritarianism said people are dependent, able to be fulfilled only under the guidance of the state, which, therefore, must outweigh and be superior to the individual.
- TRUE FALSE 2. Authoritarianism said the state that fails to enable people to develop their potential should be modified or abolished.
- TRUE FALSE 3. The Social Responsibility theory developed in the 19th Century as a result of corporate excess and media sensationalism.
- TRUE FALSE 4. Libertarian theorists criticized the new Social Responsibility theory as being too romanticized because of its view that people were inherently rational.
5. Who said: "If all mankind minus one were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind."
- A. Thomas Jefferson B. Plato C. John Locke
D. John Stuart Mill E. John Milton
6. The Libertarian theory of media environment is founded on three elements: reliance on reason to discriminate between truth and error, the need for a free marketplace of ideas in order that reason may work and(which one of the following) . . .
- A. Laws guaranteeing individual access to all information
B. Press serving as a check on government
C. Public education so that information might be utilized
D. Strong centralized national and state governments
E. None of the above
- TRUE FALSE 7. The first and fifth theories of media power both assert that the media can be all-powerful.
- TRUE FALSE 8. One criticism of the Null Effects theory was that it focused on media not being able to influence how people voted instead of whether media provided information.
- TRUE FALSE 9. Two findings of the Null Effects theory were opinion leadership and the selectivity process.

10. The four main elements of news can be remembered through using the first letter of each to form a word, in this case, SIPS or MINT. What are the four elements?

11. The sociologist Gans examined the mind-set of journalists and concluded there were eight "enduring values" that helped shape how news was presented. Of the five listed below, which one was said to be the greatest?

- A. Ethnocentrism
- B. small-town pastoralism
- C. individualism
- D. moderatism
- E. altruistic democracy

12. Of the same five, which were said to be opposites of each other?

- A. Ethnocentrism
- B. small-town pastoralism
- C. individualism
- D. moderatism
- E. altruistic democracy

TRUE FALSE 13. Framing is the process of describing an event or situation with images and/or words so that the presentation depicts a particular point of view.

TRUE FALSE 14. Agenda-setting is the method of telling a reader/viewer what to think about a topic.

TRUE FALSE 15. Agenda-setting is a competition for limited space, thus depriving some issues of public/private consideration.

Answers to Quiz 1

1. True
2. False
3. False
4. False
5. D
6. B
7. True
8. True
9. True
10. Size-Importance-Proximity-Significance and Magnitude-Importance-Nearness
-Timeliness
11. A
12. C and D
13. True
14. False
15. True

NAME _____
Shaping News – Quiz #2

- TRUE FALSE 1. Propaganda is associated with all messages and images.
- TRUE FALSE 2. Pseudo news is more likely to contain propaganda than natural news because it is created by someone with a vested interest.
- TRUE FALSE 3. Pseudo news appeals to the intellect while natural news events appeal to the emotions.

Match the type of propaganda in the column at right with the example or description at left.

4. _____ The American flag at a parade or beside the president in the Oval office A. plain folks
B. glittering generality
5. _____ A movie star extolling the virtues of an automobile in a TV commercial C. transfer
D. testimonial
6. _____ Introductory speech recounting the virtues of the keynote speaker
7. _____ Candidate posing with wife and children at a fund-raising picnic

8. Circle the letters of the two propaganda techniques that are opposite of each other.

- A. plain folks B. testimonial C. card stacking
D. name-calling E. glittering generality

- TRUE FALSE 9. Attitudes are usually considered to be consistent, that is in agreement ideologically or “in balance.”
- TRUE FALSE 10. Attitudes are composed of three parts, direction, volume, and intensity.
- TRUE FALSE 11. Erosion of an attitude likely occurs when reinforcement fails to provide sufficient support for the original position.
- TRUE FALSE 12. When incoming information is contrary to existing beliefs, the result may be cognitive dissonance.

An individual can revise, revoke, re-evaluate or reverse a decision in order to reduce or eliminate cognitive dissonance. Which one in the right-hand column fits the description at left.

13. _____ returns a purchase goes home. A. revise
14. _____ returns the purchase and buys a different one. B. re-evaluate
15. _____ adds weight to reasons for original purchase. C. reverse
D. revoke

Answers to Quiz 2

1. False
2. True
3. False
4. C
5. D
6. B
7. A
8. D and E
9. True
10. False
11. True
12. True
13. D
14. C
15. B