Mass media effects

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4iFnce-4e74&feature=related

Powerful effects theory

> Formulated right after World War I
> Magic bullet theory
  message goes directly from sender to receiver
  message interpreted exactly as sender wants
  it interpreted
> media have powerful effect on people
> media can easily shape public opinion

Orson Welles’

“War of the Worlds”
The night that panicked America
Oct. 30, 1938

More than 1 million people believed that Martians had invaded New Jersey

Another example of powerful effects theory
People said they believed the program because
> They trusted what they heard on the radio
> The story referred to real locations
> The “experts” interviewed seemed real and gave the report credibility

Study found that people who did believe there was an invasion had, in general,
● less critical thinking ability
● less self-confidence
● less emotional security

Belief in the powerful effects of the media and their ability to influence people led to a legacy of fear
> Widespread belief that movies were dangerous
> Effects of media messages might pervert and upset proper social order
> Belief that film makers should exercise a greater sense of social responsibility

People’s Choice study
“How the voter makes up his mind in a presidential election”
> Looked at how and why people chose to vote in 1940 presidential election
  - Franklyn Roosevelt (D) vs. Wendell Wilkie (R)
  - Research innovations:
    Use of control groups
    Use of longitudinal design as a viable way to study change
Findings:
> People in high socioeconomic level more likely to vote Republican
> Blue collar more likely to vote Democratic; white collar more likely vote Republican
> Self-identification makes a difference; business class tend to vote Republican. Self-identified blue collar, regardless of occupation, favored Roosevelt
> Religious category influenced voting decision. Catholics more Democratic; Protestants more Republican.
> Democrats younger in both categories of Christians.
> Rural more Republican

“Why We Fight”
U.S.-produced anti-German propaganda

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=830EisI9S4s&feature=related

The films were intended to instill
> a firm belief in cause for which we fight
> a realization that it was going to be a tough job
> a determined confidence in our ability to get the job done
> a confidence in the ability and integrity of our allies
> a resentment, based on knowledge gained from the films, against our enemies for starting this war
> a belief that through a military victory, we could achieve a better world order (bring democracy to the world)
Methodology:
> Two groups: one group saw the films and a control group didn’t see the films
> Anonymous checklist questionnaires of both groups before and after one group saw the films

Results: Little change in attitude
> "Why We Fight" had limited effects on viewers
> Study found no powerful effect by the media
> This study was the first sophisticated set of experiments in media history

Minimalist effects theory
> 1940s: better research tools
> Found that media has limited effects
> The message is received through a two-step flow process
> We rely on opinion leaders for our information
  message ——— opinion leader ——— receiver
> Multi-step flow
  multiple social relationships affect opinions
Minimalist effects theory

> Status conferral
  - media create prominence to issues
  - agenda setting
    media tell people what to think about

Agenda setting

> Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw – first to test the theory in the 1968 presidential campaign based on newspapers and television news
> Found that media agenda and public agenda tended to correspond just as the theory had predicted
> They established a possible case that some people look to print and broadcast news for guidance on which issues are really important
**Findings:**

> People have very little first-hand knowledge of political issues; they rely on the news media.
> The media have influence on both voters and politicians.
> More research is needed on the influence of information gatekeepers.
> They need to consider the impact of family and friends in an individual’s salience.
> The perceived relevance of an issue combined with the degree of uncertainty about it creates a “need for orientation.”

**Minimalist effects theory**

> Agenda setting
  - The media are gatekeepers. Gate-keeping process colors all news. Gatekeepers embellish, delete and improve messages.
  - Reporters decide what information to share with others.
  - Editors and producers decide what information should be included, combined or deleted from the final product, how long the story should be, and where it should be placed in the paper and on the page or in a 30-minute broadcast.
PUMPED UP
Jamie, Summer, Chip and Steve of the Carl’s Jr. Clipper Fan Patrol, demonstrate their athletic ability for the crowd during the Carl’s Jr. 15th anniversary celebration.

Framing

> Framing is defined as the central organizing idea for news content that supplies a context and suggests what the issue is through the use of selection, exclusion and elaboration

> Framing: the media is telling us what to think (not just what to think about)
Coverage of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina on Aug. 30, 2005, in New Orleans

Two residents wade through chest-deep water after finding bread and soda at a local grocery store.

A woman walks through chest-deep flood water after looting a grocery store in New Orleans on Tuesday.
**Minimalist effects theory**
- Narcoticizing dysfunction
  - Lulling the public into inaction

**Cumulative effects theory**
- Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann
  - Repeated exposure to media message do affect people
- Spiral of Silence

**Cumulative effects theory**
- Spiral of Silence
  - People believe they know the prevailing public opinion
  - People fear isolation and know what behaviors will increase isolation
  - People don’t express what they think are minority views because they fear it will lead to isolation
Cumulative effects theory

- Spiral of Silence
  Study conducted by William Eveland, Douglas McLeod and Nancy Signorielli:
  - Surveyed attitudes toward the Gulf War in 1991
  - Contrary to strong consensus of the war, survey revealed that very few people actually supported strong support towards the war
  - Close link between how people perceive public opinion and attitudes they are willing to express is a fundamental prediction of this theory

Lifestyle effects

- Socialization
  An 18-year-old has spent more time watching TV than any other waking activity
- Prosocial
- Living patterns
- Intergenerational eavesdropping

Attitude effects

- Role models
Attitude effects
> Stereotypes
  - Role schema
    Expectations of other people based on their sex, race/ethnicity, education etc.
    How we stereotype people
  - Stereotype threat
    People living up to (or down to) their stereotype

Attitude effects
> Agenda-setting and status conferral
Cultural effects

> Values
  - Historical transmission
    Paley Center For Media
    Library for Communication and Graphic Arts
    Vanderbilt Television News Archive

Cultural effects

> Contemporary transmission
  - Diffusion of innovations
    Awareness

Cultural effects

> Contemporary transmission
  - Diffusion of innovations
    - diffusion of innovation process
      1. Knowledge
      2. Persuasion
      3. Decision
      4. Implementation
      5. Confirmation
Cultural effects

- Cultural imperialism
  - Herbert Schiller
  - Post-Schiller revisionism
  - Transcultural enrichment
Media-depicted violence

> Learning about violence
  - Observational learning

Media-depicted violence

> Media violence as positive
  - Cathartic effect
  - Seymour Feshbach
    - Viewing TV violence could be therapeutic for a person filled with anger
    - Catharsis – To cleanse or purge; to get rid of
  - Media violence was actually a positive thing
  > Prodding socially positive action

Media-depicted violence

> Media Violence as Negative
  - Aggressive stimulation theory
Media-depicted violence

> Media Violence as Negative
- Bobo Doll Studies
  Albert Bandura
  Emphasized the importance of rewards and punishments

Media-depicted violence

> Catalytic theory
- Other influences:
  Whether violence portrayed in the media is rewarded
  Whether media exposure is heavy
  Whether a violent person fits other profiles
- Screen-triggered violence increased if aggression:
  Is realistic and exciting
  Succeeds in righting a wrong
  Includes familiar situations or characters
Media-depicted violence
> Societally debilitating effects
  - George Gerbner
    On TV: 1 in 10 characters per week involved in violence
    In reality: 1 in 100 people per year involved in violence

Media-depicted violence
> Societally debilitating effects
  - Tolerance of violence
    Desensitizing theory

Evidence of desensitization:
> Anecdotal – movie sequels have more violence than original movie
> Research – observe children’s reactions after they watched either violent or non-violent programming
> Research – observe adults’ reactions after they watched either violent or non-violent programming
Behavioral effects

> Motivational messages
  - Ernest Dichter
    Motivational research

Behavioral effects

> Subliminal messages
  - Embedded message designed to pass below the normal limits of perception.
  - Indiscernible to the conscious mind, but are alleged to be perceptible to the subconscious mind.
  - An image transmitted so briefly that it is only perceived subconsciously, otherwise unnoticed.

Behavioral effects

> Subliminal messages
  - Subception: behavior trigger by subliminal messages
    Audio (back masking)
    Sight
    Smell
    Touch and taste
Behavioral effects
> Subliminal messages
  - James Vicary – marketing expert
    Slogans "Drink Coca-Cola" and "Eat popcorn" were flashed during a movie for 1/3 of a millisecond at five-second intervals
    Vicary claimed that sales for both Coca Cola and popcorn sales increased by 57.5% and 18.1% respectively
    Vicary coined the term subliminal advertising

Subliminal persuasion as urban legend
> 1962: “Manchurian Candidate” featured a war hero brain washed into killing a presidential candidate
> 1973: “Columbo” episode featured a motivational research specialist who used subliminal persuasion to lure his victim to his death
> 1978: Wichita, Kan., TV station used subliminal message to try to get a serial killer to turn himself in; it didn’t work

Subliminal persuasion in advertising
> Advertising community not particularly interested in confessing to the use of subliminal messages
> No documented proof of its prevalence
> Statistically, about 10% of all ads use some form of subliminal technique