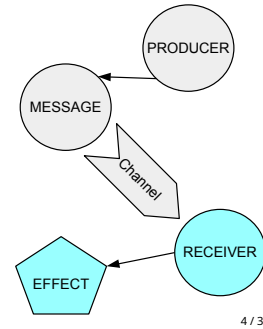## Media & Society: 5

Theories and Approaches 2: Audiences

Lasswell's model

- Who says what in what channel **to whom with what effect**?

- **Audiences (and 'media effects')**

PRODUCER
MESSAGE
Channel
RECEIVER
EFFECT

Outline

- The mass audience?
- Changing approaches to audiences in academia
- Knowing about audiences (who, how and why)
- Types of audience
- "Effects" on audiences

Classic communication model

What is a 'mass'?

Group: members know each other, share identity, stable relations over time

Crowd: shared locality, temporary, event- based

Public: larger, dispersed, enduring, issue-based

Mass: very large, widely dispersed, anonymous, passive, receptive, unstructured

H. Blumler, *The Mass Audience*, 1939

Mass audience?

- Is the idea of the mass audience still valid and useful?
- 'Fragmentation'
  - Source, location and temporal
  - Many more sources (how many tv channels !?!?!?)
  - Audience members can 'consume' anywhere (internet)
  - 'Time-shift' → freedom to choose content

Exceptions...

Maybe large scale **"Media Events"** are still relevant:

- Large sporting events (Rugby World Cup, Olympics etc) ideally 'consumed' live
- Elections (referendums etc)
- Anything else?

Development of Audience Research

- Earliest 'studies' (pre1940ish?) were primarily aimed at **quantifying** audiences

- Followed by **'hypodermic syringe'** model
  - Mass media 'injects' standardised messages into a passive, non-critical audience
- Lack of empirical work backing up this idea

The Frankfurt School

Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer
– *Dialectic of enlightenment: Philosophical fragments*

Herbert Marcuse
– *One-dimensional man: Studies in the ideology of advanced industrial society*

Walter Benjamin
– *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*

Erich Fromm, Jurgen Habermas (later)

Subsequent phases

1. All powerful media (until late 1930s)
2. Testing media power ('30s – early '60s)
   – "Minimal effects"
   – "Some kinds of communication on some kinds of issues, brought to the attention of some kinds of people under some kinds of conditions have some kinds of effects" (Berelson 1948)
3. Rediscovering 'powerful media'
4. 'Negotiated' influence (late-70s ~)

Development of Audience Research

Effects Research

Laboratory experiments often carried out by behavioural psychologists

"Behaviourism"

Stimulus → Response

Pavlov's dog's Pavlov

Bandura et al (1961, 1963) "Bobo Dolls"

Different forms of "violent" stimulus was provided to children by :

1. Adult in same room
2. Adult on TV
3. Adult dressed in 'cartoon style' cat costume in room

Results

After the 'stimulus' children were put in a room with various toys, including the 'bobo doll', and observed.

1. Levels of aggression for *all* groups were higher than control
2. 'Adult on TV' group: highest aggression
3. 'Cartoon cat' group: lowest aggression

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Problems and drawbacks

- "Post-test-only"
- "Pre-test-post-test"
  - Effects of 'pre-test' on subjects?
- Inconsistent results from similar studies ("catharsis")

Overall a correlation between "media violence and aggressive behaviour" (perhaps not to *criminal* violence) also "affect"(ˈafɛkt → feelings/emotions)

Phase 4. Negotiated influence

"Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past."

Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*

Cecilia Vicuña - https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/36126
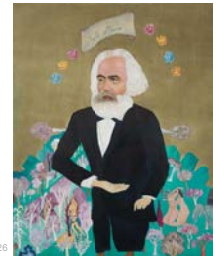
Anthony Giddens: 'Structuration'

"Structure" & "Agency"

– People have individual freedoms/choice within social structures that pre-exist them

People can construct their own meanings (interpret media texts) but they do so in situations which are not of their own making.

Changing concepts of the audience

Blumler: 'mass' (result of new technology, changes in society)

Audience as community / social group (Merton 1949, Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955)

Critical attitude - points out vulnerability of individual (Gitlin 1978)

Audience as 'Market': Ratings / Circulation

Weekday Publication	Total circ. July 2019	% change y-o-y
The Sun	1,265,990	-12%
Daily Mail	1,164,319	-8%
Daily Mirror	483,120	-13%
The Times	376,975	-12%
The Daily Telegraph	327,879	-12%
Daily Express	306,119	-10%
Daily Star	305,069	-14%
i	229,074	-6%
Financial Times	166,663	-7%
The Guardian	130,484	-5%

Circulation / Ratings

BARB — Broadcasters' Audience Research Board

一般社団法人 日本ABC協会 Japan Audit Bureau of Circulations

Video Research Ltd.

International Federation of ABCs

abc — Audit Bureau of Circulations

ifabc

Japan TV Ratings (21-27 Oct 2019)

https://www.videor.co.jp/tvrating/

Program Name	Channel	Day	Time	Rating %
News	ＮＨＫ総合	19/10/22(火)	13:00-60	22.8
NHK News 7	ＮＨＫ総合	19/10/22(火)	19:00-30	22.4
"Scarlet" Morning Drama	ＮＨＫ総合	19/10/25(金)	8:00-15	21.3
News 645	ＮＨＫ総合	19/10/26(土)	18:45-15	20
NHK News 7	ＮＨＫ総合	19/10/22(火)	19:30-30	19.2
TVAsahi60 - Doctor X	テレビ朝日	19/10/24(木)	21:00-69	19
News	ＮＨＫ総合	19/10/22(火)	9:00-60	18.8
News	ＮＨＫ総合	19/10/22(火)	12:00-30	18.7
News 645	ＮＨＫ総合	19/10/22(火)	18:45-15	16.3
News	ＮＨＫ総合	19/10/22(火)	12:45-15	16.2
News	ＮＨＫ総合	19/10/22(火)	10:00-60	15.9
News	ＮＨＫ総合	19/10/22(火)	8:00-60	15.3
Shin-jōhō 7 days Newscaster	ＴＢＳ	19/10/26(土)	22:00-84	13.8
Sunday Morning	ＴＢＳ	19/10/27(日)	8:00-114	13.2

Audience as 'Market'

- For commercial media this is (obviously) one of the most important conceptions of the audience.
- Emphasises the role of the individual as 'consumer' rather than as a group or public → **not** ideologically neutral.
- Dallas Smythe (1977): *audiences work for advertisers!*
  - Give free time to act as viewer, this is then packaged by media organisations and sold as 'ratings'/'audience' to advertisers.

Goals of Audience Research

Different groups have different reasons to try to get to 'know' audiences:

- **Media organisations -**
  - Advertising, sales, management
- **Audience-oriented -**
  - Responsibilities of media, performance
  - Media uses, satisfaction, 'effects'

Three 'traditions'

McQuail identifies **three** main streams of audience research

- **Structural** – size, spread, reach, identifying an audience
- **Behavioural** – what effects? What do audiences use media for? (stimulus → response)
- **Socio-cultural** – looks at audiences in the context of whole cultures/societies, with media use being just one aspect of people's lives (ethnographic)

Common Research Themes

How much media use is 'healthy'?

Are audiences passive/active? (engagement, participation, mindless/ful?)

'Politics': how 'critical' are audiences of presented content?

Representation: relations of producers, content and minority audiences

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Types and roles of media 'audience'?

Do media creators 'recruit' an audience for the content they have created?

OR

Do media creators respond to the needs of the audience, creating content for them?

Kinds of Audiences: 1

Audience as 'group': geographical, communal links such as local paper or news channel, or outlets with a specific political outlook

Audience as 'Gratification Set': group brought together by shared 'tastes' (rather than locality, class, etc)

Medium Audience: eg. 'the radio audience'

Kinds of Audiences: 2

Channel / Content Audience: readers of a certain newspaper, viewers of a certain channel/program, readers of a certain author etc

Degrees: followers, fans, obsessives! (Become more 'group'-like)

It is in **this** type of audience that media organisations are interested as it may also be a market!

https://www.grimsbytelegraph.co.uk/news/grimsby-area-fans-still-going-141963

The Media Organisation's Audience: 1

Reflected in simplifications like 'ratings'

How many people does the message actually **reach**?

Be careful to distinguish between different usages in this area…

1. 'Available' audience
2. 'Paying' audience…

The Media Organisation's Audience: 2

Be careful to distinguish between different usages in this area…

1. 'Attentive' audience
   a) 'Internal' audience (article in a paper etc)
2. 'Cumulative' audience (over a period of time)
3. 'Target' audience

Media Effects

Does media affect audiences ?

How does media affect audiences ?

Ultimately, how does the mass media affect our society?

Affect / effect

1. VERB - "The media af**fects** how people feel"
2. NOUN - "The media has an ef**fect** on how people feel"

3. ANOTHER NOUN! - "**Af**fect" = emotion or desire
4. ANOTHER VERB!! - "Af**fect**" = pretend to have / feel something
5. ANOTHER VERB 😱- "Ef**fect**" - make something happen

Effects Research

Academic studies: Potter (2012) estimated that there have been about 10,000 academic appears published which deal with 'media effects'.

However, there is little agreement amongst academics about many aspects of 'media effects'.

Potter, J. W. (2012). *Media Effects*. SAGE, London, Thousand Oaks, CA and New Delhi.

Aspects of Effects Research

Timing   when does the effect happen?
Duration   how long does the effect last?
Valence   is it a 'good' or 'bad' effect?
Change   does the effect…
   1. *change* something or,
   2. *maintain* or *reinforce* a current state?

Aspects of Effects Research

Intention - did the producer/distributor of the media *intend* the effect? (Does it matter?)

Level/Scope - exactly what is the *scope* of the effect; the individual? A certain group? The whole society?

In/direct - is the effect *direct* or *mediated* through other institutions?

Manifestation - can we *observe* the effect? How do we know that there aren't *other* effects that we *can't* see?

Causality?
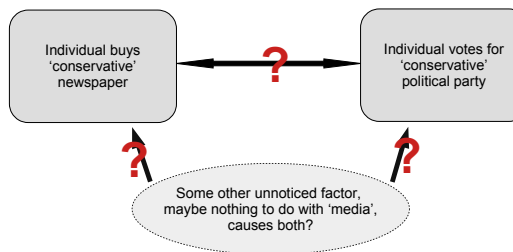
Summary: Media Effects

- Media effects' can come in many different and highly varied forms.

- Controlling for **non-media** effects is a fundamental methodological problem.

- How do we distinguish between 'correlation' and 'causation'?

- Wide variety of results obtained over the years, how do we distinguish between the various phenomena they have identified?

Summary: Audiences

- Characterisations of 'the audience' has changed over time

- Different groups connected to the mass media have different understanding of the nature and role of 'audiences'

- Studies of audiences can take a variety of stances towards these groups ('markets', 'communities'?)

- Often a primary concern with 'media effects'

Ends