WAC II: Mass Media in Society

Basic Theoretical Framework:
Part One

Mass Media in Society

- Assignment: Independent Analysis - 100 Points
- Purpose: To determine your ability to analyze and briefly apply three theories of media effects.
- Knowledge: You will need to engage with a total of three issues media effects theories as discussed in our mini-lecture, PDF files and in the power point presentation.
- Procedure: Within this assignment you are to:
  - Watch a brief presentation
  - Answer two related questions
  - Be prepared to briefly discuss your answers and perceptions

Basic Theoretical Framework

- Objectives:
  - To understand three basic theories that drive media effects hypotheses
  - To consider examples of these theories in modern media

Basic Theoretical Framework

- Mass Society Theory
- Minimal Effects Theory
- Cultivation theory

Basic Theoretical Framework

- Mass Society Theory

This theory discusses a direct and powerful influence upon society, particularly in Post World War II.

The essential argument was that society was characterized by a growing homogenization of thought, opinion and desire through media.
Mass Society Theory

- One of the best known examples was the War of the World's broadcast and its effect upon listeners.
- On October 30th, 1938 Orson Welles and the Mercury Theater on CBS radio presented an adaptation of H.G. Wells' famed science fiction story "War of the Worlds."
- In this story, Martians invade the Earth and kill millions with poison gas. Though many listeners were deeply frightened by realistic effects and the show's impact, people who turned on the broadcast midway through the show did not understand that it was merely fiction.
- [Link](http://waroftheworlds.com/)

Basic Theoretical Framework

**The Minimal Effect Theory**

This theory argues that the media's impact upon the populace is weak and short-lived. The media only reinforces already existing notions rather than changing public opinion.

Minimal Effect Theory: Traits

- Issues like:
  - Class
  - Religion
  - "Race"
  - Political Affiliations
  - Occupation
  - Community
- Were considered more powerful than media in shaping the behavior of citizens

Basic Theoretical Framework

- Cultivation theory

Cultivation theory addresses the cumulative effects of media imagery upon audiences and society at large

Exposure to television programs over a long period of time can, often created the cultivation effect.
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<th>Cultivation theory: Traits</th>
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<td><strong>Through cultivation:</strong></td>
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<td>• Trust of others is diminished</td>
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<td>• Heavy viewers believe that most of society is self-indulgent</td>
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<td>• The unknown is &quot;learned&quot; about in media</td>
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<td>• Representations can be skewed and unbalanced, reinforcing stereotypes and static notions of &quot;difference&quot;</td>
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<td>• Fear and paranoia increase</td>
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<td><strong>A distortion of the actual world occurs through media exposure:</strong></td>
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<td>• These images and ideas are often skewed and inaccurate</td>
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<td>• These images then affect the social and political realities of daily life.</td>
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<td>• This creates a &quot;mainstreaming&quot; of ideology in which an audience’s differing opinion is muted in comparison to heavy viewers.</td>
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