Psychology of Communication

KOM 5213 (Unit 1-13/13)

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MODUL PEMBELAJARAN : KOM 5213 PSYCHOLOGY OF COMMUNICATION disediakan dalam bentuk bahan pengajaran dan pembelajaran kendiri di bawah program Pendidikan Jarak Jauh, Universiti Putra Malaysia. Sebarang pertanyaan dan cadangan untuk memperbaiki gaya penyampaian dan isi kandungan modul ini bolehlah dikemukakan kepada penulis dengan menggunakan alamat Pusat Pendidikan Luar.

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About the Course and the Module

Introduction and Course Overview

Welcome to Psychology of Communication Course. This course module introduces you to the subject matter and at the same time serves as a study guide for Psychology of Communication Course (KOM 5213).

Many people take communication for granted. This probably explains why many people could not communicate and relate with others effectively. Effective communication requires communicator to learn and apply the psychology of communication. This course is designed to provide an understanding of the relationship between the theories and principles of psychology and communication process. Elements of psychology that are related to communication which will be discussed include self-concept, defense mechanism, self-justification, interpersonal attraction, prejudice, stereotype, persuasion, psychological factors in group communication, psychology of group discussion, psychology of public addressed, and psychology of mass communication. Some of the social psychological theories that will be discussed include perceptual selectivity, foot-in-the-door, cognitive scheme, attribution theory, and implicit theories.

If you have any difficulties with your studies, contact your course lecturer. Your feedback on the course module is welcome.

About the Module Writer and Course Lecturer

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About the Module Co-Writer

Name: Hamissah Hassan
Academic qualification: M. S. (Corporate Communication)
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Academic interest: Advertising and Broadcasting

Course Aim

This course is about communication psychology. The aim of this course is to equip you with knowledge and understanding of psychology in communication so that you can apply principles of psychology in your communication. In doing so you will increase your communication effective in dealing with others at individual and group levels.

Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of the course you will be able to:

- identify and explain the role of psychology in communication
- define the key psychological concepts and principles and their relationship to communication process
- apply psychological principles in communication

Course Contents and Module Structure

The key topics covered in this course are presented in 13 units. Each unit consists of unit introduction, unit learning outcomes, unit subtopic, and summary of unit. The learning outcomes are statements telling you what knowledge and skills you should have when you have worked through the unit of the module. Additionally, the are review questions at the end of a unit to help you review the materials covered in the course.

The course module is designed in a way that provides you with reflective and experiential learning. The activities and questions are part of a planned distance education program. It is vital that you take time to complete the activities and questions as they occur in the module. Your reading of the required texts as instructed in the module is a must in order to grasp the concepts, principles, and theories related to the key topic addressed in each unit of the module.

The key topics covered by the course include:
○ What is psychology of communication?
○ Understanding self and others
○ Communication, attribution and defense mechanisms
○ Stereotype and prejudice
○ Interpersonal attraction and relationships
○ Social influence process
○ Group influence
○ Message structure and appeals
○ Psychology and media
○ Psychology in advertising
○ Psychology in political communication
○ Gender portrayal in media
○ Violence in media

Required Texts

This module must be used together with the following texts book.


In addition to the texts book, there are also essential reading from selected book chapters. You are encouraged to refer to other materials including Internet to enhance your understanding of the subject matter.

Course Evaluation

You will be assessed through four (3) assignments and a final examination. The assignments will allow you to consolidate all of your reading so that you get a clear understanding of the materials in this course. The grading system for the are as follows:

   Assignment 1     (10%)
   Assignment 2     (20%)
   Assignment 3     (15%)
   Assignment 4     (20%)
   Final examination (35%)

Academic Conduct

Some words about honesty. It is your responsibility to do the required reading and to complete your work as best as possible. Cheating, plagiarism and falsification in course requirements are serious offences. Anyone found guilty of academic misconduct should expect to fail the entire course and have a record of the matter forwarded to the Academic
Course Assignment

Assignment 1

Due date: 
Value: 10%
Length: About five pages.

Question: Identify and select a scholarly article that specifically discussed any of the issues covered in this course. You can get such article from a communication journal or from the Internet. Read and digest this article and answer the following questions:
  a) Identify the relevant psychological and communication concepts found in the article?
  b) Summarize the article by highlighting the main points or the main idea/themes of the article.

Assignment 2

Due date: 
Value: 25%
Length: Not more than 15 pages double space and type written.

Question: Suppose that you, a government officer who is responsible for planning development project in a district, are schedule to participate in a dialogue with members of opposing parties. You expect that the this group of people reject you and would be offensive towards you. In this situation what would you do? Develop a specific communication strategy to handle the situation and the crowd.

Assignment 3

Due date: 
Value: 20%
Length: Not more than 10 pages double space and type written

Question: You are invited as one of the panelists in the On-Stage show, a talk show, to be aired by TV Putra. Identify the strategies you would use to increase your credibility.
Assignment 4

Due date: 
Value: 20"
Length: Not more than 10 pages double space and type written

Question: You're a paid political consultant working with an incumbent candidate for the general election. Create a memorable re-election ad campaign for your client. Outline your strategy by including the kinds of appeals used & why?, the medium used & why?, the kind of image of your client that you'd portray, etc.

OR

You are required to read, review and include critical commentary of an article taken either from Journal of Communication, Journal of Advertising Research, Communication Monographs or any other communication journals (printed or on-line) related to ONE of the issues:

---- gender portrayal in the media
---- violence in the media
---- advertising and the media
---- politics and the media

Based on your readings answer the following questions:
a) What is the contribution of the article to psychology and the media?
b) What are related theories?
c) How do you relate the theories to psychology of communication?
Study Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Unit 1. What is Psychology of Communication?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Unit 2. Understanding Self and Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading: The Nervous Mechanism and Speech by Eisenson, Auer &amp; Irwin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Affective Behavior (Emotion) and Speech by Eisenson, Auer, and Irwin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concept of Personality by Eisenson, Auer and Irwin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Verbal Behavior of Not-so-Well Adjusted Personalities by Eisenson, Auer and Irwin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Unit 3. Communication, Attribution and Defense Mechanisms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading: The Fundamental Attribution Error by Myer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A New Look at Pride by Myers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assignment 1 Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Unit 4. Stereotype and Prejudice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading: The Dislike of Diversity by Myers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Roots of Prejudice by Myers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Unit 5. Interpersonal Attraction and Relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading: Who Likes Whom by Myers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Ups and Downs of Loves by Myers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Unit 6. Social Influence Processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading: How Nice People Get Corrupted by Myers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two Routes to Persuasion by Myers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indoctrination and Inoculation by Myers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assignment 2 Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Unit 7. Group Influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading: The Mere Presence of Others by Myers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doing Together What We Would Never Do Alone by Myers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How Groups Intensify Decisions by Myers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Unit 8. Message Structure and Appeal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assignment 3 Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Unit 9. Psychology and Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading: Research and Theory in Mass Communication by Harris.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Unit 10. Communication Psychology in Advertising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading: Advertising: Do the Messages Go By or Do We Go Buy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Unit 11. Communication Psychology in Political</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading: Politics: Using News and Advertising to Win Elections:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Unit 12. Gender Portrayal in Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading: Portrayals of Group: Learning About People by Harris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Values: Rights and Wrongs in the Media by Harris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Unit 13. Violence in the Media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading: Violence: Does All That Mayhem Matter?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assignment 4 Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Review of Course Material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Final examination</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unit 1
What Is Psychology of Communication?

Unit Introduction

Unit 1 introduces the notion of psychology as it relates to communication. How is communication related to psychology? The theme of this unit is the domain of psychology of communication as a field of inquiry and a field practice. What do we mean when we say we use psychology in our everyday communication with various people face-to-face or mediated by a communication technology? What are the reasons?

Communication is definitely a social process. Hence, this unit will also explore the notion of social psychology, and its relations to communication.

Persuasive and effective communication necessitate application of principles of psychology and social psychology. This introductory unit provides you with the foundation to understand the application of psychology of communication.

Unit Learning Outcomes

After successful completion of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the meaning of psychology of communication
- describe the usefulness of applying psychology to communication
- describe psychological approach to communication
- explain the term social psychology, and how it is related to communication

Psychology at a Glance

What is on your mind?
Why do you react favorable towards someone you like or love?
Why are you easily persuaded?

Nothing fascinates us more than ourselves. This fascination can be traced to an age-old human urge to satisfy our curiosity about who we are as a communicator, what makes us tick, and why others behave as they do. Whatever we think and feel, and how and why we think or feel it, are the provinces of psychology. Psychology deals with mind and behavior, how and why mind works. It is a science of uncovering and understanding many of the physiological and psychological process that underlie our behavior, thought, and
feeling. Psychology is about us— you, me, we everyone—and what happens to us, why we think what we do, feel what we do, and do what we do. The American Heritage Dictionary defines psychology as (1) the science of mental process and behavior, and (2) the emotional and behavioral characteristics of an individual, group or activity. Psychologists define psychology as the scientific study of behavior and experience.

We may be amazed (perhaps confused) by the many terms come together with psychology: abnormal psychology, biological psychology, clinical psychology, cognitive psychology, developmental psychology, physiological psychology, experimental psychology and others. Indeed, psychology is a broad discipline, and work on psychology can be traced back to as early as Aristotle’s era. Psychology has been useful to many domains of our life: in business, job, family, recreations, relationships as well as communication. Research in the various field of psychology has contributed significantly in providing insights on the psychological processes and principles that governs our behaviors.

We are all psychologists in the sense that we inevitable try to make sense of our own behavior and other people’s behavior. We seek to uncover the psychological processes and principles that govern our communication behavior, and at the same time putting these knowledge into practices. Psychology has helped improve and continues to improve many facets of our life. The subsequent section will elaborate on the idea of psychological approach to communication.

**Psychological Approach to Communication**

**Activity**

Collect about ten different definitions of communication.

Studied and comments on the definitions in terms of its perspective. Compare your notes with others.

The most important agency through which we learns to be human is communication, and communication is essential for our well being. Communication as a field of study is not new. Research on communication can be traced back before the world war II. If we scrutinize the literature on the history of communication field, we will discover that psychologists have contributed a lot to the development of the field particularly at its early-period of growth. Many of the founders of communication field are psychologists, in fact. Kurt Lewin, Paul Lazarsfeld, Carl I. Hovland were trained in psychology.

Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that communication is not a sub-field of psychology. It is a legitimate discipline by itself. Of course, as an academic discipline it has its history, heroes, theories, methodologies, and jargon. While communication as been the subject of inquiry among the communication scholars, communication continues to attract not only psychologists but also sociologists.

If we examine the various definition of communication, we will notice that many of the definitions have psychological bent. Examine these two definitions: (1) communication as
the process by which an individual (the communicator) transmits stimuli (verbal or nonverbal) to modify the behavior of other individuals (the audience), (2) communication as a transactional process involving cognitive sorting, selecting, and sharing of symbol in such a way as to help another elicit from his own experiences a meaning or responses similar to that intended by the source. These are two of the many definitions of communication that adopts a behavioral psychology framework. From this perspective, communication is seen as efforts to elicit responses through verbal and nonverbal symbols.

The psychology dictionary, Dictionary of Behavioral Science, defines communication as follows: (1) the transmission of energy charge from one place to another as in the nervous system or transmission of sound waves, (2) the transmission or reception of signals or messages by organism, (3) the transmitted message, and (4) the process whereby system influence another system through regulation of the transmitted signals. Hence, from a psychological point of view, it is clear that the meaning of communication is broad, and it entails transmission of energy, sound, and signals. More importantly the term communication is used as referring to process, message and effect.

Psychologists treat communication as a transmission of energy in the brain, an activity of receiving, processing, and sending of information, as a process in which subsystems of a system influence each others as well as a system the affect and is affected by other system. As you read this unit, your retinas receive and reacts to the light and transmit impulse from the optic nerve to the brain. The impulse stimulates the neurons resulting in neurotransmission. Neurotransmitters are chemicals which are released into the synaptic space whenever a neuron conducts an action potential to the axon terminals. There are perhaps 100 or so different neurotransmitter varieties in the brain. Each neurotransmitter plays some role in most behaviors. Psychologists refer the process of transmission of energy as communication.

But a psychologist does not limit communication to communication between neurons. Psychologists also studied the communicator and the process that are involved in the communication process. Psychology examines the attributes of communicator and the internal as well as the external factors that influence or shape communicator behavior. Psychologist are also interested in understanding what happen to individuals as they interact and relate with each other, either in interpersonal, group and mass settings. The fundamental question posed by psychologists as well as communicologists is: Why are some communicators effective in their communication and others are not? From psychological point of view, what are the differences between interpersonal communication, group communication, and mass communication?

**Activity**

You are familiar with the term communication and persuasion. How are these terms similar and different?

Now ask a few others the same questions. What are the similarities and differences between your answer and that of the others?

Communication is use to inform, entertain and influence or persuade. The later is
closely related to psychology, and it is known as persuasive communication. Not all communication are persuasive, but all persuasive communication are communication. Persuasion may be defined as the process of influencing other and managing behavior of other using psychological approach. As such the terms psychology of communication mean using psychology when communicating so as to make communication persuasive and effective.

How does psychology relate to communication? Psychology deals with the mind and behavior of individual communicator. According to Rakhmat (1980), Fisher proposed four characteristics of psychological approach to communication: (1) sensory of stimuli, (2) internal mediation of stimuli, (3) prediction of responses, and (4) reinforcement of responses. Communication begin with sensory organs receiving or registering stimuli. The mind then process the stimuli. While we do not have the exact knowledge of “what happened in the black-box”, we make inferences about it based on observed responses. It is also important to note that previous or past responses influence present or future responses. Here the concepts of memory and reinforcement are relevant in attributing human behaviors. From Fisher’s point of view, it is obvious that psychologists are not only interested in the observable behavior (the responses), but they are also interested in the mental process (the internal mediation process). Fisher’s view is consistent with the view of Miller who states that psychology is the science that attempts to describe, predict, and control mental behavioral events. Accordingly, communication psychology is a discipline that seek to understand, to predict, and to manage mental as well as behavioral communication activities.

Communication is not only a psychological process. Communication is also a social process and social events. Making friends and enemies, forming groups, the way groups work, the way they affect us, the way we interact with them, and the way they conflict and cooperate with others are examples of social events. Understanding social events from psychological perspective is called as social psychology.

What is social psychology? According to Kaufmann (1973), social psychology is an attempt to understand, explain, and predict how the thought, feelings and actions of individuals are influenced by the perceived thoughts, feelings, and actions of others (whose presence may be actual, imagined, or implied). Myers, likewise, says that social psychology is the scientific study of how people think about, influence, and relate to one another. Similarly, Argyle and Colman (1995), assert that social psychology is the study of social behavior and the mental experience of people in social contexts. Many authorities view it as occupying the area between sociology on the one hand and individual psychology on the other hand. It includes the study of social interaction and communication, both verbal and nonverbal behavior, attribution and social cognition, self-presentation and impression management, interpersonal attraction and social relationships, behavior in-groups, conformity and social influence processes, and group decision making and performance, prejudice and stereotyping, social learning and socialization.

In understanding the social events, communicologists apply psychological principle and theories. A psychological principle is a statement of an underlying cause for a psychological event. Psychological principle describe the basic processes by which human think, feel and act. A theory is an integrated set of principles that describes, explains, and predict observed
behavior or events. This is how psychology, sociology, and communication are interrelated. Some scholars have argued that psychology is part of social psychology. As such social psychology is very relevant and an important subject matter for those who want to study psychology of communication. That is why one of the required text books for this course is the book entitled Social Psychology by Myers.

Finally, a psychological approach to social events focuses on three core processes. When people interact and influence each other, three things occur: (1) cognitive and affective learning, (2) transmission and reception, and (3) self-adaptation such as role playing, socialization, identification, projection to mention a few.

How and why do we apply psychology in communication? This will be addressed in the subsequent section.

Application of Communication Psychology

Infants express their need and emotion through cries, smiles, and body movements. As they grow and interact with others, they develop their personality. How one interprets a message and transmits a message shape his or her personality. Human is shaped not by his environment but by the way he interprets and responses to messages from his environment. As such communication plays a vital role in ones personal growth and well being. It is through communication that we discover and develop ourselves, understand and established relationship with others and environments. Our relationship with others to a large degree determine our quality of lives. If others fail to understand our messages, or would not cooperate with us, or is not move by our messages, then we fail to communicate effectively.

As said earlier, communicators should use psychology to increase communication effectiveness. What is effective communication? What are the index of effective communication? Effective communication entails the following:

Understanding. That is a message is interpreted as intended by the source. A failure to correctly interpret a message is known as primary breakdown in communication. To avoid or minimize primary communication breakdown, communicators need to understand psychology of message and psychology of communicator.

Change in attitude. Communication that change attitude is a persuasive communication. Persuasive communication requires knowledge on message effect and understanding of factors which affect receiver.

Social relations. Effective communication enhances social relations. A failure to establish and enhance social relations is known as secondary breakdown in communication. In order to live and work effectively with other, communicators should understand the factors that influence social relations such as interpersonal perception, image impression, interpersonal attraction and etc.
Change in behavior. Persuasive communication results in a change in behavior as intended. To bring about the desired changes in behavior, receivers need to understand the message, have favorable attitude towards the message and the communicator.

All in all, to establish persuasive communication one needs to understand the psychological mechanism that are involved in communication, and the external factors that influence people behavior.

Summary of Unit

Psychology is a very important field to us. We do not have to be psychologists, but we have to understand some basic psychology and apply it to our everyday communication. This unit has discussed the idea of psychological approach to communication and underscored the relevance of psychological principles that govern communication process. It has provided initial frameworks in understanding ours and others' mind and communication behavior. The unit has underscored that understanding the psychology of communication is not limited to overt behavior, but it also entails knowledge of communications among neurons. Communication and persuasion is not the same. Communication does not automatically involve persuasion. But all persuasion are communication. Persuasive communication requires application of principles of human psychology.

Review Questions

1. Briefly what is psychology and social psychology?
2. How would you describe the domain of psychology of communication?
3. What are the reasons for understanding psychology of communication?
4. What do you understand from the concept of psychological approach to communication?

References


Unit 2.
Understanding Self and Others

Unit Introduction

Unit 2 will explore and discuss the nature of human beings as information processors. The theme of this unit is understanding self and others as complex, sensitive, and adaptive human beings. The unit starts with a discussion on the role of nervous system with emphasis on the brain. The nature of brain will be described in some detail. Next the unit will discuss the power of senses. Human sensing ability and habit are related to neuron patterns in the brain. The discussion on the nature of human will cover human needs and emotions. Finally the unit will address the role of self-concept in communication process and behavior.

Unit Learning Outcomes

After successful completion of this unit, you should be able to:

○ describe how communication is related to nervous system and the brain
○ describe the nature of communicators as human beings in terms of their affective dimensions
○ describe the role of self-concept to communicators and their communication

Our Nervous System and the Brain

Many parts of our nervous system make special contribution to speech and communication. The principal parts of the nervous central system are the brain, the spinal cord, and the cerebrospinal nerves. Communication is nervous activity, and the basic unit of nervous activity is the nerve cell, or neuron. The brain is incredibly complex and has the potential to handle huge information and thinking demands. It contains millions of cells, about 100 billion of them are neurons. These neurons are the single cell messengers that carry out the responses which comprises of our movement activities and thinking. Each neuron in the brain has between 1,000 and 10,000 connections to other neurons. The brain cortex alone contains more than 10 billion neurons. It is here that all higher intellectual processes take place. The rest of the brain is responsible for “lower” functions, such as sex, emotion, and basic life-sustaining processes, even these are influenced by input from our cortex. Brain is the controlling neurological mechanism that allows one to communicate. The size of human brain is about the size and shape of a ripe cantaloupe.
The most important part of the brain is not the cells, but the gaps between them, called synapses. What takes place in our synapses determines an enormous amount about us: personality, memory, mood, mental and physical health, intelligence, and even ability to love and mate. The gaps between cells are the critical junctures where many of the fundamental decisions in our brains are made. When our brain cells originate or pass a signal, they send an electrical charge to the edge of the cell where it triggers the release of a chemical messenger known as a neurotransmitter. The neurotransmitter crosses the gap to the next cell, where it releases an electrical charge that carries the message inward. In other words, the brain neurons do not touch, but they communicate by sending molecules of hormone, the neurotransmitter across the synapses. More than 30 different types of neurotransmitter have been discovered so far. The balance between these hormones is rather delicate. A glass of wine, a strong cup of coffee, a poor night’s sleep or an aspirin can affect it.

Many things can happen to a neurotransmitter when it crosses the synapses. A crossing signal or chemical fluctuation can break or inhibit the voyage to the next cell. The other cell may even refuse to accept the signal. When a message successfully passes the synapses, a thought may be generated, a muscle contracted, a mood-altering hormone secreted, or the functioning of our nervous system or organs affected. Any chemistry changes in the brain will affect the way we perceive, feel, think and act. Ultimately, every aspect of who we are and what we do is determined by what transpires in these gaps. Many neurologists believe that the source of personality and behavior lies here, the holes in our heads. Patton (1986) asserted that neuron patterns in the brain can be programmed. New brain pattern of confidence thinking, feeling and acting can be formed or practiced through mind programming. The chapter on The Nervous Mechanism and Speech by Eisenson, Auer & Irwin (1965) provides an overview of the anatomy of the nervous system and the functioning of the parts of the nervous system.

**Reading**

Read the chapter on the Nervous Mechanism and Speech by Eisenson, Auer & Irwin.

**Think About It**

Can you think of variables that can impact the brain in a way that affect our perception, thought, emotion, thinking and behavior?

What does our mind do? There are five basic functions of brain: (1) perception, (2) emotion, (3) thought, (4) communication, (5) memory. It is to these five faculties that we owe everything. Let’s look at some facts about the brain.

- The human brain is about the size and shape of a ripe cantaloupe, and weight about 3-pound.
- Our brain are capable of retaining about 100 billion bits of information (equivalent of 500 encyclopedias). As we think, the brain undergoes 100,000 chemical interactions
per second (no wonder we are tired).
- Each part of the brain (brainstem, cerebellum, limbic system, and cortex) has its functions.
- Brain never sleep. Whether we are awake or asleep, at any given moment millions of our brain cells are at work. Every second information is being fed into the cerebrum and signals are sent back to the body.
- The brain needs oxygen. In directing our thinking, sensing, and movements, the brain consume more than a quarter of the body's oxygen. Our brain wants a breather particularly when involve in intense mental concentration and physical exercise.
- Exercise can increase the amount of oxygen reaching our brains by as much as 30 percent. Jogging, a brisk walk or any other exercise can restore our mental edge.
- It takes just as much energy to scribble mindlessly or goof off as it does to paint a masterpiece. We might as well just paint a masterpiece.
- Brain vital neurotransmitter levels are determine by what we eat. Eggs, livers, and soybeans are rich in the neurotransmitter acetylcholine. Proteins contain amino acids, tyrosine and tryptophan all involve in the building of norepinephrine, one of the brain's primary booster. Memory, mood and mental function are influence by what we eat.
- The two lobes of brain each process and response to different types of information in different ways.
- Our brain filters. The brain's filter prevents overload by determining the most important signals to send straight to conscious awareness, shunting the rest for storage into subconscious.
- The building blocks of personality are determine by the way we respond to stimuli. This perhaps explains two of the most basic types of personality: the extrovert and the introvert. The extrovert is simply someone whose brain is less easily aroused and requires constant sensory input to keep it active. The brain of introverts may be too easily aroused, even by normal amount of stimuli, sending them fleeing in search of quiet environments that offer minimal sensory input.

Our Senses

Think About It

There is nothing in the mind unless it is first in the senses.

If we reflect for a moment about our perceptions and experiences, we realize that we have only five senses that feed our brain the information we use to think. Our ability to communicate, to relate, and to response to the environment is to a great extent is influence by our ability to sense, and our sensing habit. Our senses act as lenses, amplifiers and detectors. Generally, human sensors are acutely sensitive: our hearing reacts to sound vibrating at a frequency as high as 20,000 cycles/second and to a multitude of timbers that allow us to recognize different human voices. Our sight can detect a candle flame on a dark, clear night 10 miles away. Our sense of smell can detect a single molecule of coffee out of five billion molecules. Our senses feed our brain much as food feeds our body. Without their input, our brain would be empty. Communication and thinking begin in our

OM 5213 Psychology of Communication  Unit 2: Understanding Self and Others
senses.

Human beings as an information processor rely on information. How does human gain information? What senses do they rely most? Human beings get information through four senses: 80% through visual, 7% through sound, 7% through touch, 3.5% through smell, and another 2.5% through taste. Eye, strikingly, plays a very important role in our communication activities. Humans are predominantly visual minded. Now, let us look at another related question: What sort of information would people rely on when responding to others. It is reported that in responding and reacting to others, 55% is based on the facial expression and body language of the speaker, 38% is based on voice intonation of the speaker, and only 7% is based on what the speaker said. This statistic clearly emphasizes the important role of visual sensory to communicators.

Adults continually rely and return to senses to seek new data, refresh data, to fortify and to validate thinking. As such sensing and thinking occurs concurrently. Hence, sharpening our sensing is crucial to deliver better data to our brains. We need accurate as well as enough information in order to function effectively. But it must be remembered that while our senses can provide us with accurate and enough data (our senses do not always provide this), our senses can also deceive us. Our senses do not operate effectively when we are sick, drowsy or tired. Our sensual perceptions can deceive our brain in three major ways: (1) limited biologically, (2) corralled by custom, and (3) blinded by language. In short, our senses are fallible. Our powerful senses both enlighten as well as deceive our minds.

Think About It

What things appear safe but are dangerous, soft but hard, fragrant but are poisonous, beautiful but rotten, and true but false? Can we be particularly aware of our own biases and strong interests that block, focus and distort our sense impression?

Our Needs and Fears

All communicators, being human beings, have values, needs, and fears. People, nevertheless, differ in the values they hold, the needs they strive for and in the things they fear. Values and needs are deep-seated forces that influence perception, thinking, and behavior. Our values and needs probably explain a lot and are the root element behind the positions we hold and our reaction to various stimulus. As human beings, we work towards fulfilling our biological, psychological, social and economic needs. Our values and needs are very much related to our drive and motivation.

Think About It

What motivates or move you and others? What are your values and needs? What do you feel and what would you do if you are deprived of your basic needs,
or when your values are being violated?

Our ability to persuade our audience depends upon a fairly accurate assessment of their needs and values. Therefore as persuaders, we should be sensitive to and should acknowledge our audience’s values and needs. Our communication and messages should be tailored to their values and needs. It is a well established psychological principles that people will attend to things that directly related to them, or the things that directly affect them either positively or negatively. Additionally, it is said that people are easily convinced on matters that are relevant to or consistent with their values and needs. Thus identifying and understanding one own and others values and needs are important in order to deal and relate with others effectively. What are ours and others values and needs?

Activity

Identify your values and needs. Write them down on a piece of paper.

Now rate those values and needs on a 10-point scale, from 1= least importance to 10= high importance.

Ask a few significant others to identify and rate their values and needs.

Compare your answers with the answers of your significant others.

Have you heard of Maslow theory of needs? While Maslow’s theory is culturally biased, it provided a general understanding on the different types of needs that people strive for. Do your answers in activity 2.1 matched with the needs suggested by Maslow. Does your list include the following values and needs, and where do you stand on these values and needs?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To help</td>
<td>Enjoys helping others; often in social or community work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>Likes reading; broad interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Material things</td>
<td>Like to own, save, collect things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>Likes to make decisions, run things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newness</td>
<td>Likes change, adventure, creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>Needs security at work, at workplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance</td>
<td>Looks: clothes, house, car.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural function</td>
<td>Health concerns: enough meals, exercise, and sleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dollars</td>
<td>Need to save, preoccupied with money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number one!</td>
<td>Likes to win, beat the competition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to values and needs as motivating forces of human behavior, fear is also a factor that influences behavior. Different individuals are vulnerable to different types of fears, real or imagined. Many psychologists believe fear is a strong motivator. Fear is what a person feels when confronted by a real or an assumed danger, as defined by Anthony (1988). People typically react to danger and the fear it produces by fighting, or fleeing, in order to survive. Fear, of either a physical or a psychological nature, will be the major reason why people refuse to cooperate with others, even when it is in their best interest, as argued by Anthony (1988). Among the things or situations that people fear, fear of change, fear of failure, fear of injury, fear of death, fear of controversy, fear of embarrassment, fear of rejection, fear of abandonment, fear loss of power, and fear of public speaking, to mention a few. Appeal to fear is often used in persuasive communication.

In understanding the nature of human beings in terms of basic human drives, Eisenson, Auer and Irwin (1963), in their classic book entitled Psychology of Communication, have provided valuable insights on the topic. They pointed out that human behavior is motivated. The following are basic, unlearned drives, universally present in all human beings, as identified by Eisenson, Auer and Irwin.

- **Human beings direct their activities toward the satisfaction of physical wants and general well-being. They avoid situations that bring about physical deprivation.** They, nevertheless, can stand temporary deprivation.
- **Human beings normally behave in ways that will lead them towards success, mastery, and achievement. They try to avoid situations that frustrate or disappoint them, and they can also accept temporary disappointment.**
- **Human beings tend to behave in ways that will help them to gain recognition, admiration, respect and approval.** They avoid action or behavior that may result in being ignored, looked down upon or merely tolerated.
- **Human beings generally act in ways that will lead toward their being loved, and the realization of a feeling being wanted.**
- **Human beings usually act in ways that will bring about peace of mind, security, and a feeling of release from worry and anxiety. They try to avoid involvement in situations that create fear, anxiety or insecurity. Sometimes, in some circumstances, they may accept temporary worry, or choosing the lesser of two evils.**
- **Human beings indicate by their behavior that they seek some adventure, new experiences, and zestful living.**

Another important concept in understanding the nature of human beings is the concept of psychological position. Psychological positions are highly conditioned verbal...
opinions that reside in our mind, often without our being aware of their existence, as define by Anthony (1988). They are absolute prejudicial statements or highly organized propositions that influence what we see, what we hear, what we think, and what we do. Here are some examples of psychological position: people cannot be trusted; change is dangerous; compromise is weak; confrontation is dangerous. Psychological positions are difficult to dismiss because people have strong tendency to look for evidence that prove, support, validate or consistent with their position. Anthony pointed out that not knowing about our positions or how to spot their existence in others reduces the probability of effective communication.

Our needs and fears are parts of our emotion. Our emotion has profound influence on our thought and behavior. Similarly our cognitive influence our affective state. Feelings are forces behind our thinking. Feelings can block and bias or empower our thought. The forces of our feeling (express nonverbally) can override the content of our message. Our feeling can be constructive energy to generate our thought and to deliver them eloquently. Positive feeling toward topic and audience is crucial in communication.

**Think About It**

If someone you despised approached you, what would you start thinking? Would those thought be driven by your feeling toward that person?

Can you remember times when your body has gone rigid with fear? Can you recall the times when you have blanked while taking a test or giving a speech or were at a loss for words because of the pressure? If similar situation occurs, what would you do to manage the emotion?

Being in a positive or a negative mood influences the way we think. It was found that affective states influence perception, memory and creativity. It was observed that stimulus are perceived favorable when individuals are experiencing positive affect, information consistent with our mood is easier to remember than information inconsistent to it, and people in good mood are creative. Similarly cognition influences our affective states. It was observed that the emotion or feeling we experience are strongly determined by the interpretation or cognitive labels we select, our thought can influence our reaction to emotion-provoking events by causings us to interpret in various ways, and if we expect to like or dislike some stimulus or event; our affective reactions to it will be consistent with such expectation. The chapter by Eisenson, Auer, and Irwin (1963) on Affective Behavior (Emotion) and Speech provides a good introductory reading on the concept of emotion and how emotion and communication are interrelated.

**Reading**

Read the article on Affective Behavior (Emotion) and Speech by Eisenson, Auer, and Irwin.
Our Self-Concept

Our self-concept is the way we view our self. It may be unhealthy if we see ourselves rather negatively, such as someone who is incompetent, or not intelligent; it may be positive and healthy, as when we believe ourselves to be competent, attractive person. Self-concept is commonly defined as a relatively stable set of perception a person have of himself or herself. It not only includes physical features but also other aspects of our self, such as emotional states, talents, likes, dislike, values, roles and so on. Not every element of our self-concept is equally important. Additionally, people vary in the degree to which they use these contingent things to define themselves and form their self-concept. To some people these things are central to the notion of self, such that they defend it as though they were defending themselves. Although the self may evolve over time, the self-concept resists change.

Eisenson, Auer and Irwin (1963), in their classic book entitle Psychology of Communication, described two underlying aspects of personality: (1) a personality is as the person does, and (2) a personality is in large measure what the individual thinks of himself. The later aspect emphasizes the self-concept of the individual. They emphasize that a person's self-concept is the product of the collective thoughts he entertains about himself. In relating self-concept to personality, Eisenson, Auer and Irwin (1963) described the well adjusted personality and not so well adjusted personality.

Reading

Read chapter on Concept of Personality, and chapter Verbal Behavior of Not-so-Well Adjusted Personalities by Eisenson, Auer and Irwin.

Summary of Unit

This unit has described the basic processes that are involved in communication. The role of synapses and neurotransmitter has been highlighted. Neuron patterns formed in our brain influence our communication habits, and our communication habits, further reinforce the neuron patterns. The neuron patterns can be changed through mind programming. Our abilities to communicate well depend on the power of our senses. Each of us, as an information seeker, processor and giver, is unique and different, and our values, needs, fears can enlighten or blind us of the multiple realities. Finally, the unit underscored the idea of how we see our self influence our communication behavior and effectiveness.

Review Questions

1. How is brain related to communication?
2. How would you describe the roles of human senses?
3. What does feeling have to do with thinking and behavior?

4. What are the factors that influence human behaviors?

5. What is a self-concept, and how is self-concept related to communication?

6. How would you describe the behavior of not-so-well adjusted personalities?

7. How is central nervous system particularly the brain connected to communication?

References


Unit 3.
Communication, Attribution and Defense Mechanisms

Unit Introduction

In this unit you will further study the nature of human beings. We will learn about the forces that influence our communication processes. Understanding our self and others involves attribution process. As you work through this unit, you will examine how the process of attribution work. You will be introduced to concept of attribution errors, and self-serving bias.

Our self is very important to us. We protect our self-concept and self-esteem for valid reasons. As such ego defense mechanisms will be described in some detail in this unit. You will identify the things that trigger defense responses, the ways people defend their self, and the consequences for this natural tendency.

Unit Learning Outcomes

After successful completion of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain attribution and attribution error
- identify and describe the reasons why communicators commit attribution error
- describe the strategy people use to defend their ego and self-concept.

Communication and Attribution

Attribution occurs as one interacts and relates with others. Attribution is the process through which we attempt to understand the behavior of others as well as our own, particularly the reason or motivation for these behavior. At any moment, what we feel, say and do depend on the situation as well as what we bring into the situation. The attempt to account for our own behavior is known as self-attribution. We use internal (predisposition) or external (situational or environmental) factor in explaining our behavior. Similarly, in discovering the causes of another’s behavior, the first step is to determine if the individual is responsible for the behavior (due to the person’s personality trait) or if some outside factors (due to the situation) is responsible. Internal and external are the two kinds of causality with which attribution theory is concerned.
There are three principles people use in making judgement on whether to attribute a person’s behavior to internal or external cause: (1) consensus, (2) consistency, and (3) distinctiveness. Low consensus, high consistency and low distinctiveness lead us to attribute a person’s behavior to internal causes. High consensus, low consistency and high distinctiveness lead us to attribute a person’s behavior to external causes. In self-attribution, we follow the same principle but with two main differences: (1) there is a general tendency to see the behavior of others as internally caused but our behavior as externally caused, and (2) self-attribution involves what has been called the self-serving bias. This self-serving bias lead us to take credit for the positive and to deny responsibility for the negative. Hence, we are more apt to attribute situational or environmental factor for our negative behavior, failure or mistake; we are more apt to attribute internal factor for our positive behavior, success and achievement.

As human beings we are prone to making error in attributing another’s behavior. Myers (1994) said that attribution error occur in everyday life. We do it intentionally or unconsciously. Sometimes we do it consciously. When we discounted the situational factor in attributing another’s behavior (and overestimate the internal factor), we are committing fundamental attribution error. Myers provides an excellent explanation on the nature of attribution process.

Reading

Read chapter on The Fundamental Attribution Error by Myers.

As pointed in the chapter, there are two main reasons why we tend to underestimate the situational factor to determines others’ behavior but not our own: (1) differences in perspective, and (2) differences in cultural values. In the different in perspective argument, attribution error occurs because when observing another person act, that person become the center of attention. When we act, the environment become the center of attention. In the cultural differences perspective, the cultural world view explains for the error. For instance, Americans world view predispose them to assume that people, not situation, cause events.

In addition to the differences argument explanation, attribution error also occurs because of our bias towards ourselves.

Think About It

What do think about these statements? Just grammatical mistakes!
1. A pedestrian hit me and went under my car.
2. To avoid hitting the car in front of me, I struck the pedestrian.
3. The pedestrian had no idea which direction to run, so I ran over him.
4. The indirect cause of this accident was a little guy in a small car with a big mouth.
5. My car was legally parked as it backed into the other vehicle.


The above statements are clear examples of self-serving bias. Self-serving bias has
been defined as biases in our thinking and perception that serve to protect us from threat to our self-concept.

Reading

Read chapter on A New Look at Pride by Myers.

Myers (1994) defined self-serving bias a tendency to perceive oneself favorable. We do not always think about and perceive things as they are, for that would often mean looking at our self in an unpleasant light. Our attribution about our own and other's behavior are often wrong because they are biased by our need to protect our self-concept and self-esteem. Self-serving bias occurs not only in problematic, defensive or unpleasant situations, but it also appears when people compare themselves with others (social comparison process). Consequently, most people tend to see (hear) what they need to see (hear) and want to hear (see) in order to maintain or strengthen positive feeling about ourselves. As pointed out by Kirby and Goodpaster (19) self-serving bias are cognitive distortions that put us in a favorable position. The three main reasons why people do self-serving bias are: (1) as an effort to present a positive image, (2) as a by-product of how we process information, and (3) as motivated by our desire to protect and enhance our self-esteem.

Myers (1994) also described other self-serving tendencies that occur in everyday life. These include self-justification, false consensus effect, false uniqueness effect, self-disparagement and self-handicapping. One important question to ask about these cognitive distortions is under what situation or condition they operative? People engage in these cognitive distortion when they are blamed, intimidated, criticized, rejected, humiliated, or caught unprepared. One's tendencies to engage in self-serving biases and other self-serving tendencies is related one's strength of self-concept and level of psychological health. One's tendencies to engage in cognitive distortion probably decrease as one's self-concept and psychological health increase. It is also important to note that self-serving bias is not always adaptive. People who blame other for their social difficulties are often unhappier than people who can acknowledge and admit their mistakes.

Activity

Have you ever made an erroneous attribution for some else's behavior?
Have you ever been the victim of such an attribution?

Compare notes with your friends.

Ego-Defense Mechanisms

Our upbringing shapes our fears, which keep us from facing thought; our upbringing shapes our self-concept, which forces us to defend our thought and emotion. It is natural and expected that human beings have the tendency to distort or hide their thought and emotion. In addition to self-serving bias, human beings also engage in other ego-defense
mechanisms to ensure that the selves that they identify with—that is, what we think we are—is good. Ego defenses are psychological coping strategies that distort reality in order to protect ourselves from anxiety, guilt, and other bad feelings. Kirby and Goodpaster (1995) described three ego-defense mechanisms that affect our thinking, which are (1) denial, (2) projection, and (3) rationalization.

We are using denial when we simply refuse to accept an unpleasant reality. By keeping these unpleasant realities from conscious awareness, we protect our self-concept from a reality that is unpleasant. This process at the same time inhibit our ability to think objectively about the situation, about ourselves and others and to make wise decision for our own as well as others' interest. Examples of denial are university students may deny that they are doing poorly in school, or that they are lazy.

Think About It

Sometimes the people we hate or dislike most are those who have the trait we hate most in ourselves. Who do you hate most? Why? Could that trait characterize you as well?

Projection is the defense mechanism by which we see in others a part of ourselves that we cannot accept and do not recognize. We see and believe that others are hostile or aggressive toward us when it is we who are hostile, aggressive or intimidating toward them. We see in others our own incompetence and deceitfulness, which are unable to accept in ourselves. In short, we see others not as they are, but as we are. When we engage in projection, we grossly distort our thinking about ourselves and others.

Rationalization is distorted thinking that attempts to justify behavior motivated by self-interest or unacceptable drives. It serve to protect ourselves from bad feeling. Rationalization is a kind of self-justification. It is lying to ourselves about the real reasons for our behavior and bad feeling. We believe this lie for it to protect us, and if we knew we were lying, it would do us no good. Of all the defense mechanisms, rationalization is perhaps the greatest inhibitor of clear thinking, as argued by Kirby and Goodpaster (1995). One example is the captain of a sink ship rationalize his action of leaving the ship while hundred of passengers were still on board by the statement “When I order to abandon the ship, it does matter what time I leave. Abandon is for every body I left so I could control rescue operations from shore.”

Think About It

When the last time you rationalized? It’s easier to look back and see it than to identify it at the time it is happening.

Summary of Unit

This unit has covered attribution theory and ego defense mechanisms. As you have seen communication entails self attribution and social attributions. And the attribution is
References

1. How is attribution related to communication? What are the factors we need to consider when making attribution?
2. What suggestion would you give for preventing self-serving bias and other biases?
3. Why do people commit attribution errors?

Review Questions

1. Explain the relationships between culture and communication. Are they different in different cultures?
2. Explain the role of cognitive dissonance. What are the main psychological consequences of dissonance in human nature?
Unit 4.
Stereotype and Prejudice

Unit Introduction

What are the role of stereotype and prejudice in communication process? Stereotype and prejudice are important psychological attributes that affect the way human process information. It has been recognized that among the common sources of misattribution and poor interpersonal relations are negative and faulty stereotypes and negative attitude toward communicators. Hence, this unit will describe the psychology of stereotype and prejudice and its consequences.

Unit Learning Outcomes

After successful completion of this unit, you should be able to:

- Define stereotype and prejudice
- Explain how stereotype and prejudice affect communication
- Identify and describe the sources of stereotype and prejudice
- Describe the consequences of stereotyping and prejudice

Defining Stereotype and Prejudice

Stereotype and prejudice are fact of life. Although stereotype and prejudice are pervasive, they can be avoided. Communicators have to be sensitive to these two psychological attributes as they affect social relations and communication effectiveness.

In communication, stereotype refers to a fixed impression of a group of people through which we then perceived specific individual. A stereotype is a fixed idea or opinion based on limited or false evidence. Stereotype are most often negative but may also be positive. Prejudice refers to negative attitude toward some particular group of people. Prejudices often start with a shared “we-they” contrast. They are always wrong and that makes “us” better. Myers (1994) asserts that prejudice is an unjustifiable negative attitude toward a group and its individual. It is a bias prejudgement. The derogatory attitude could lead to discriminatory behavior. A prejudice is an attitude; discrimination, on the other hand, is behavior. Discrimination can be defined as a subordination of person or groups on criteria that are irrelevant to the situation, and which may offend moral criteria as well. Myers further notes that the negative evaluations that mark prejudice can stem...
from negative stereotypes.

Think About It

What stereotypes do you tend to believe? Do you know people who do not fit these stereotypes? If you cannot find exceptions, ask others.

We tend to perceive and think about others and situation in terms of the ideas we have already formed about them. These ideas are called schema. Stereotypes are specific schemas that influence the way we perceive and think. Stereotypes are a form of generalization. When we generalize, we group or class people, places, or things according to the traits they have in common. They are fixed, unbending generalization about people, places and things. It is a form of categorization of people which involves accentuating similarity and minimizing dissimilarity. Stereotypes are simplistic and bias view about members of a certain group. For example, we may say most Malay, unlike Chinese, cannot become good, successful businessmen. This is an example of stereotype and prejudice. In the case of racial stereotype such as this, thinking is based on incomplete, one-sided or simplified facts. It is important to realize that stereotypes are simplistic and inaccurate. In the case of racial prejudice, the opinion about the cultural is rigid. We should not be trapped by the perspective that when it comes to our group we see the richness and diversity, but when it comes to our perception of other groups, we assume that their members are all alike. People who think in terms of stereotypes tend to be selective in their perception. They reject conditions that challenge their preformed judgement and retain those that reinforce, as pointed out by Ruggiero (1990).

We learn stereotypes from a variety of sources. Our sources of stereotypes are from our experience, our parents, our peers, and the media. When a stereotype is challenged, the person who hold it is unlikely to modify or discard it, because it is based on a distortion of perception. The most common kinds of stereotyping are ethnic, religions, politics and gender. Myers (1994) describe in detail two kinds of prejudice, which are racial prejudice and gender prejudice. It is pleasant to assume that when the facts are known, stereotypes disappear. This is seldom the case, however.

Reading

Read chapter on The Dislike of Diversity by Myers

Nature of Stereotype and Prejudice

As stereotype and prejudice are facts of life which have consequences on social relations and interactions, we should understand the root of stereotype and prejudice. Such knowledge would enable us to effectively manage our interpersonal and inter-group relations as well as our communication.

Why do people need stereotypes and prejudice? Four possible reasons are offered as follows:
they offer security safety- we are sure where we belong. We know our friends and our enemies. We know what is what and refuse to be impressed by anything strange, unusual, or incomprehensible. We do not need to form our opinion, to collect facts, to think about our own criteria; they are given to us.

- they help to satisfy needs- the need to feel superior and to be part of a group, and the need to be accepted or approved by our group.
- they confirm first impression, collected at an impressionable age.
- they fit a certain character structure.

Myers (1994) described three sources of prejudice: (1) social sources, (2) emotional sources, and (3) cognitive sources.

Reading

Read chapter on The Roots of Prejudice by Myers

The social sources of prejudice include inequality in the social structure and status. As pointed by Myers one of the functions of prejudice is to defend one’s social position. When inequalities exist, it helps justify the economic and social superiority of those who have wealth and power.

We all have social identity, in addition to personal identity. Our social identity is important as it fulfill our psychological needs. As such we closely identify not only with our group, that is our in-group, but also bias toward our in-group. The favoritism toward our in-group is another forces that promote prejudice. In fact, Ruggiero (1990) reported that among the most significant of stereotype and prejudice is “mine is better” thinking. In this case, self-serving bias operate enabling people to achieve a more positive social identities (even when We and They are alike).

Prejudice does not necessarily rooted from personality. Prejudice is also produced as people follow the path of least resistance and conform to the fashion. Here prejudice is motivated by the need to be liked and accepted and not so much out of a need to hate.

In addition to social sources, emotional factors may also cause or promote prejudice. Pain, frustration and aggression are emotional states that feed prejudice. Victimization and competition are possible sources of negative emotional states. Myers has described two theories that explain how prejudice arises, that is the scapegoat theory, and the realistic group conflict theory.

Beside advancing competitive self-interest, prejudice also serve to satisfy psychological needs. Two needs which are closely related to personality may be the possible reasons for prejudice. One is the need for status and feeling of superiority. Myers noted that people with insecure or low-status are more likely to engage in stereotyping and prejudice. The other is the need to control, to have authority. Myers pointed that the emotional needs that contribute to prejudice are dominant in authoritarian personality. In other words, prejudice fit the authoritarian personality, caused by an authoritarian upbringing.
In the cognitive sources explanation, Myers contended that stereotype and prejudice are by-products of cognitive processes. More specifically, they are products of simplified thinking. The concepts of out-group homogeneity effect and distinctiveness attract attention factor are very pertinent in understanding the cognitive origins of stereotype and prejudice. Myers also explained how the concept of just-world phenomenon relates to stereotype and prejudice. Hence, it can be concluded that prejudice are dependent upon cognitive factors and come about by over generalization or faulty and bias attribution.

How can we recognize prejudice? Oomkes and Thomas (1992) offer the following signposts. When one notices oneself or others, that selection processes operate, generalizations abound, authoritarian or remarkably hostile actions are chosen, words like "typical" are being used, then one should be forewarned. One should look for:

- inaccurate statement
- statements that are not based on facts
- statements directed against people who are different
- statements that testify to an inflexible belief or position

What are the effect of stereotyping and prejudice? Stereotyping and prejudice do a great injustice to those who are stereotyped. It denies people their dignity and individuality. It triggers their frustration and anxieties, feeds their fears of conspiracies, and creates a network of suspicion and scapegoating. Equally important is that stereotyping, and accordingly prejudice, cut people from reality and cripples their thinking. How do stereotype and prejudice affect our information processing ability? We tend to see behavior that confirm expectation and ignore disconfirming evidence. Additionally, we remember more favorable information about our-in-group and more unfavorable information about out-group. In short, stereotype and prejudice will corrupt observation, listening, reading, and thinking and therefore block understanding. Stereotype and prejudice curtail or limit people capacity for critical thinking. Inaccurate stereotype may lead to misattribution of other’s behavior and use stereotype of other to explain our difficulties or problem in dealing with them.

The next time we interact with others, remind ourselves often that people and institutions and processes seldom fit into neat categories, and be alert for the feeling that we need not continue because we know what the correct judgement must be. If that feeling occur early in the information-gathering process, we can be reasonably sure it is a sign of stereotyping and should be ignored. Three cognitive strategies in minimizing or avoiding stereotype and prejudice are (1) to question the stereotypes we hold, (2) increase the complexity of stereotypes, and (3) change attitude toward the other.

Summary of Unit

This unit has pointed that stereotype and prejudice have significant consequences to communication processes. The scheme we have of other people and our attitude toward them influence the way we seek, process and present information. It has also been underscored that our misattribution and poor relations with others may be attributed to
unfavorable stereotyping and prejudice. As such, it is important for us to identify with the root of negative stereotyping and prejudice—emotional and cognitive roots—and understand the consequences of this psychological attributes on communication process and effectiveness.

Review Questions

1. What are the differences and similarities between stereotype and prejudice, if any?

2. Have you been a victim of prejudice? How do you feel? What are the possible sources for such prejudice and how do you react to it?

3. How is stereotype and prejudice related to communication?

References


Unit 5.
Interpersonal Attraction and Relationships

Unit Introduction

Why we are attracted to some people and not others? What forces lead to satisfaction in our relationships? What lead to conflict in relationships? These are some of the areas of social relations in which social psychology devoted to. In this unit and the required reading you will explore the notion of impression formation and the factors related to its. The role of attractiveness and likability will be described. You will be introduced to relevant concepts such as halo effect, proximity principle, similarity principle and so forth.

Unit Learning Outcomes

After successful completion of this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the importance of impression in communication
- explain attractiveness and likability and their importance to communication
- identify and describe the determinants of attractiveness and likability

Forming Impression

We always have impression of others when we interact (or prior to our interaction) with them. Similarly, other will have impression about us, whether we like it or not. Our impression of other can be favorable or unfavorable. So does other’s impression of us. Generally, we attribute positive characteristics to people we find attractive, and negative characteristics to people we find unattractive. If we are told that a person has a particular positive characteristics, we tend to attribute them with other favorable characteristics. This is called positive halo effect. On the other hand, if we are told that a person has a particular negative characteristics, we tend to attribute other unfavorable characteristics. This is called negative halo effect.

Our impression of other (what we see in others, and how we perceive them) may be influenced by a host of factors, such as (1) our own cultural, educational, and personal background, (2) our own needs, desire, and emotional states, and (3) the method of self-presentation used by the other person. Forming impression is a complex process. While it
is unrealistic to expect a precise mental roadmap of how person perception works, several theories are useful in understanding the phenomenon of impression formation or interpersonal perception (that is, the process through which we formulate impression of others). These include implicit personality theory, the concept of central traits, stereotyping, and attribution theory. The general idea in implicit personality theory is that in judging someone personality, we used to refer to a set of personality characteristics that seem to go together. A recognition of one of the characteristic of that set, the other characteristics indicative of that set are assumed to also exist. Thus, if eagerness, energetic, and aggressive are thought to go together, and eagerness and energy are observed in a person, we assume that person is also aggressive. The concept of stereotyping and attribution has been discussed in the previous units.

Most of us realize how critical first impression can be. We try to “get off to a good start” when we meet others by presenting ourselves in the best possible light. Labeling people according to our first impression is an inevitable part of perception and communication process. Research and everyday observations confirm the fact that first impression are often lasting ones. According to Knapp (1978), there are at least two reasons why first impression can be so dominant. The first reason is we have the tendency to want to size up another person quickly in order to reduce any uncertainties, and second we have a tendency to avoid admitting we made a mistake. Accordingly we often cling to our first impression rather than revising our opinion according to recent contradictory information. While we usually cling to our first impression, we must not discount the fact that we also do judge other by what they did last. The influence of the most recent event is known as recency effect, while the influence of what came first is known as primacy effect.

One important theme in the impression of others is the judgement of how attractive is the other persons. Attractiveness is an important factor in persuasiveness and interpersonal relationships. What factors influence our judgement of other people as attractive or unattractive? What are the consequences of attractiveness factor to our communication and interpersonal relationships? This theme will be addressed in the next section.

Think About It

What is attractiveness? Why does attractiveness matter?

Attractiveness and Likability factor in Communication

Think About It

Who are your close friends?

Who have greater or much influence on you? Why?

Interacting and establishing relationships with others fulfill our social and psychological needs. Satisfying relationships with family members, friends, superiors, subordinates and romantic partners are the core of our existence. A judgement of attractiveness will surely
affect not only whether we continue communicating with a person but also the degree or strength of relationship we maintain with that person. The judgment of attractiveness also affect how we communicated with them and how much influence that person may have on us. Attractiveness is a positiveness or liking for another person. Interpersonal attraction refers to positive feeling towards others.

What is the relationship between attractiveness and impression formation? Two possible explanations are offered: (1) we ascribe positive characteristic to people we are attracted to, and (2) an attractive person receive more favorable evaluation. In one experiment, Stretch and Figley (1980) gave male and female college students detail descriptions of the personalities and intelligence of a number of potential dating partners. The students were asked to select the candidate they wanted to date. The results showed the candidates the students were eager to date weren't chosen for intelligence, common values, or personality. It was how “good-looking,” “beautiful,” or “handsome” they were that counted. The more highly students rated the attractiveness of a potential date, the more they wanted to go out with that person.

Some people have greater influence on us. What do these people have (that we don't have)? What is our impression of such a people? We listen to people we like, and we are more open to receive their ideas. In communication, receiver is not only concerns with what was said and how it was said, but a receiver is also concern with who said it. In many instances, who said it is more important that what was said. If the persuaders was knowledgeable and objective (or any other attribute that we like), we will be easily persuaded or convinced of his or her ideas. De Vito (1986) noted that one of the principle of persuasion is the attractiveness principle. According to this principle a speaker will be more persuasive if he or she is perceived as attractive and well-liked. The more attractive (physical and in personality) the speaker, the better the chance of being successful in persuasion. Hence, attractiveness factors, such as physical and personality attractiveness are helpful components of persuasion transaction. Schwartz (1987) pointed out that likability is a critical factors as success depend on the support and cooperation of others, and the likability factor is given far more weight than the technical factor.

In sum, attractiveness and likability are some of the major forces that move us and others. They are important factors in persuasiveness and interpersonal relationships development.

Determinants of Attraction and Likability

Activity

What causes you to feel attracted to and like another person?
Are there gender differences in the factors you identified in explaining interpersonal attraction and liking?

Compare note with your friends.
Certain factors are set in motion which cause us to feel attracted to and like another person. Most of us are interpersonally attracted to others on the basis of seven major factors: (1) proximity, (2) attractiveness, (3) similarity of attitude and beliefs, (4) reinforcement, (5) personal rewards derived from the other person, (6) complementary, and (7) they like us, they care for us.

Think About It

What characteristic you find “attractive”? 

Attractiveness. Attractiveness comes in several forms: (1) social attraction (e.g., he fit into my circle), (2) physical attraction (e.g., I think he is handsome), and (3) task attraction (e.g., my confidence in her ability makes me want to work with him).

Proximity. Proximity refers to physical closeness that may facilitate or curtail attraction. Research has shown that proximity is a major determinant of interpersonal relationship. How proximity work and why proximity work? We develop friendship with people we are exposed to frequently. Our frequent contact with such people increase our familiarity with them. We are attracted to and like something that are familiar to us.

Another related fact is that we maintain closer proximity to people we are attracted. We are attracted to people “close” to us because we “know” them. We like people we know because we can predict their behavior and they are not frightening to us. We feel comfortable with them. The principle of familiarity is important in social relations. In short, frequent exposure lead to familiarity and in turn leads us to develop positive feeling for them.

Similarity. Similarity (or dissimilarity) is another source of attraction. We generally like people who are similar to ourselves (similar in socio-cultural background and attitude). By being attracted to people who are like ourselves we are in effect validating ourselves. We are often attracted to mirror image of our selves. In interpersonal relationship development, in the early stage of the relationship, similarity may be based on demographic factors. But as the relationships developed factors such as values and belief may be more crucial. Matching hypothesis and reciprocity hypothesis are two concepts that are related to the idea of why friendship developed. Reciprocity hypothesis says that people tend to like others who like them. Matching hypothesis says that people of approximate equal physical characteristics are more likely to select each other as partner. Similarity principle suggests that people similar in age, race, religion, attitude, intelligence, and belief tends to form intimate relationship.

Reinforcement or rewards. Attraction and liking can also be explained by social exchange perspective. Generally, we tend to like those who reward or reinforce us. This reward may be social, as in the form of compliment or praise, or it may be materials. How can we use this reinforcement principle in interpersonal attraction and liking? We are attracted to those who agree with us and who have positive evaluation toward us. The reason why this work is that it fulfill our psychological, social as well as economic needs.

Complementary. Are we not attracted to people whose needs and personalities complement our own? The notion of opposite attract is also a probable determinant of
interpersonal relationships. Complementarity hypothesis says that people attract those whose needs are different, in ways that compliment their own. In other words, one is attracted to persons who possess qualities lacking in oneself—qualities that complement or complete the self.

The two chapters in Myers's book (1994), Who Likes Whom, and The Ups and Down of Loves, provide good explanations on the psychology of interpersonal attraction and liking in social relations.

**Reading**

Read the article on Who Likes Whom, and The Ups and Down of Loves by Myers.

**Summary of Unit**

Our survival and happiness depend on the support and cooperation of others people. The support and the cooperation that we get from other people depend on how others look at us, and how we look at others. As you have discovered in this module attractiveness and likability are important communication variables that affect our communication and persuasion. Several theories of impression formation, such as implicit personality theory, central trait theory, and halo effect, and the determinants of attractiveness and likability, such as similarity, proximity, have been described and these should be used as conceptual and analytical tools in understanding and predicting the interpersonal attraction and relationships.

**Review Questions**

1. How do we form impression of others and does the impression affect communication process?

2. Why do we like some people and dislike some people. What are the factors that influence interpersonal attraction?

3. What are the effect of this liking or disliking on communication process?

**References**


Unit 7.
Group Influence

Unit Introduction

Although humans consider themselves to be individualists, they seldom act completely independently. Instead they enter into formal or informal group relationships, not merely for social convenience, but because human beings are increasingly dependent upon structured groups and collective action for their economic, political, and cultural sustenance. We are not alone and isolated individual. The presence of others do affect our thinking and behavior. Scholars have studied many aspect of group processes, including how groups form, the role that group members take in their interaction, group cohesiveness, and group norms. This unit will introduce you the psychological concepts that are operative in group interactions: social facilitation, social loafing, polarization, deindividuation, and groupthink. The psychological forces that influence group communication will be also discussed.

Unit Learning Outcomes

After successful completion of this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain what is meant by social facilitation, social loafing, deindividuation, polarization and groupthink.
- Explain the antecedent and consequences of polarization and groupthink.
- Identify and explain the psychological forces that influence group communication.
- Identify the behavioral result of discussion group.

Observer Influence

Think About It

Some people are apprehensive speaking before a group of audience. Stutterers tend to stutter more in front of large audience. Why?

Some people fumble in doing something that they do easily and comfortably when there are other people observing them? Why?
Suppose you slipped on your way to the canteen. You stood up. Do you look around? What would your reaction be if you notice someone saw you slipped?

The presence (or absence) of mere presence of others or many others do affect the way we act (and think). One line of research on group process carried out by social psychologists concern with the issue of do people perform better or other wise in the presence of others. Research has indicated that the presence of others (coactor or group member) may facilitate performance or may hinder performance. Myers (1994) in the chapter on the mere presence of others cited examples and research findings which illustrate the existence of observer influence. Two concepts that are important in discussing the phenomenon of observer influence are the social facilitation and the social loafing.

Social facilitation is the facilitating effect the presence of others has on one's behavior. Social facilitation usually occurs when people work toward individual goals and when their efforts are individually evaluated. In reality, sometimes, the presence of others does not always serve to facilitate behavior, instead it may even have adverse effects. How does the presence of others affect our performance? One explanation is that the presence of others aroused or energized us, and social arousal facilitate or enhance dominant responses. Hence, it should boost performance on easy tasks and hurt performance on difficult tasks.

Myers further explained why we are aroused in the presence of others. He provided three reasons why we are aroused in the presence of others: (1) evaluation apprehension, (2) driven by distraction, and (3) mere presence. People react differently to evaluation. Some people fear and dislike being evaluated and tend to be more self-conscious when being evaluated. The consequence of evaluation apprehension and over self-consciousness is that people tend to fumble or do a lot of mistake on completing a difficult task but not on dominant responses or simple tasks. It is also possible that over self-conscious with own behavior may interfere with behaviors that we perform best automatically. Ones performance might also slack or drop because they get distracted by worrying or wondering how coactors are doing or how an audience is reacting. It is also probable that people are aroused even without evaluation apprehension or distraction.

Read

Read the chapter on The Mere Presence of Others by Myers.

Think About This

In a big group, some people have greater courage to do things that they would not do when they are alone or when in a very small group. Why?

Groups can have both positive and negative effects on productivity. On the positive side, small group of people interacting with each others will usually produce more creative ideas and/or complete a complex task faster than will individuals working alone. On the negative side, when people work in a group they may have a tendency to diminish their
efforts and rely on others to take up the slack—a phenomenon termed social loafing. While a group exert pressure on others in the group, a group also allow diminished responsibility by any individual group member. Social loafing concept suggests that group members may actually be less motivated when performing collective task. According to Oskamp and Schultz (1998), research showed that social loafing is more likely to occur in large group, on tasks that are trivial or only moderately important, and conditions where each person’s contribution cannot be assessed. Myers aptly pointed out that when being lost in a crowd, concerns for evaluation decreases and hence social loafing occurs. On the other hand, when being observed concerns for evaluation increases and hence social facilitation occur.

Deindividuation, Polarization and Groupthink

Think About This

Have you notice that some people are more likely to abandon normal restraints when in group, or they get more undaunted when in group. Can you give examples. Why does this occur?

Another phenomenon that is probable to occur in certain group situations is deindividuation. Deindividuation is the combine effect of arousal, excitement and diffused responsibility. In other words, deindividuation occur when people in a group are aroused and when they lost their sense of individual and social responsibility. As a result they are more likely to abandon or minimize their normal restraints. What situations elect deindividuation? According to Myers (1994) group size and anonymity factor account for the deindividuation. A group has the power not only to arouse its members but also render them unidentifiable. The anonymity factor explain why there is more disintegrated behavior in a large group, and control become more difficult as the group size increase. Another factor that contribute to deindividuation is lost of self-awareness.

Read

Read the chapter on Doing Together What We Would Never Do Alone by Myers.

Another important phenomenon that occur in a group process is polarization. Group polarization is an effect occurring when experimental subjects are asked to make a series of group decisions on topics where they have already recorded individual preferences. It is reliably found that the group discussion will be more extreme, in one direction or the other, than the average of the individual group members’ choices. The polarization effect occurred not only in decision involving risk. There several reasons why polarization effect occur. One is where discussion group members may point out relevant information that others have missed and they may argue persuasively for its importance. Another reason is because group members wish to define their identity more positively and distinctively, in contrast to others. There is a view that group polarization occurs in groups where members have not met before and where no group leader is appointed. Myers provided two explanations for the group polarization, that is informational influence (influence that
results from accepting evidence about reality) and normative influence (influence based on a person’s desire to be accepted or admired by others).

The urge to conform can cripple thought. Another important phenomenon related to group pressure is the groupthink (conformist tendency). It appears that groupthink is the opposite of group polarization. The idea of groupthink was mooted by Irving Janis. Groupthink is defined as the mode of thinking that persons engage in when concurrence seeking becomes so dominant in a cohesive ingroup that it tends to override realistic appraisals of alternative courses of action. As such groupthink refers to a situation in which group morale and uniformity of opinion become more important than the critical analysis of ideas. Groupthink is seen as a deterioration in mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgements as a result of group pressures.

The groupthink phenomenon is closely related to group conformity. Most individuals tend to behave in ways that will gain recognition, admiration, respect and approval. This desire for acceptance and status is especially strong when it concerns group to which we belong. We learn that one way of gaining acceptance is by conforming to the standards and mores of the group. Hence, group opinion often influences belief and behavior more than does expert opinion. The degree of conformity, in turn, determines how free members feel to express their own opinions, and how freely these expressions will be accepted by the group.

Think About It

Have you been a victim of groupthink? How do you know you group suffers from groupthink? Are the reasons and consequences of groupthink to you and you group?

What are the characteristic of groupthink? Limiting discussion of possible alternatives to only a small range, failing to reexamine initial decisions in light of new information and opportunities, and failing to get expert information even from people within the own group are among the significant behavioral characteristic of groupthink. The following symptoms (detects in decision making) should help in recognizing the existence of groupthink in the groups we observe or in which we participate.

- group members think the group and its members are invulnerable to dangers.
- members create rationalizations to avoid dealing directly with warnings or threats.
- group members believe their group is moral.
- those opposed to the group are perceived in simplistic stereotyped ways.
- group pressure is put on any member who expresses doubts or questions the group’s arguments or proposal.
- Group members censor their own doubt.
- Group members believe all members are in unanimous agreement, whether such agreement is stated or not.
- group members emerge whose function is to guard the information that get to other members of the group especially when such information may create diversity of opinion.
Read

Read the chapter on How Groups Intensify Decisions by Myers.

The figure on theoretical analysis of groupthink in the chapter by Myers provides an excellent summary on the factors that instigate groupthink, characteristics of groupthink and the consequences of groupthink. We can help our group avoid groupthink condition by:

- encouraging critical, independent thinking,
- assigning a "devils advocate" role,
- suggesting alternative decision-making strategies,
- inviting someone from outside the group to attend group meetings.

Some Requisites for Successful Group Interaction

Most of our interaction occurs in groups. Effective group interaction requires certain elements. The essential elements of successful group communication can be singled out from the following definition of group communication. Group communication is defined as a planned, but relatively informal, meeting in which those who attend are invited to join in purposeful talk about the topic or problem of common interest, under the guidance of a leader, chairman, or moderator. From this definition there are at least five elements for effective communication in group situations.

Research has suggested that, first, planning in advance seems essential for profitable discussion. Often a designated leader takes the initiative for this planning. However, it is best done when several members of the group share in formulating goals and procedures. Second, organized informality encourage greater participation than does a rigid atmosphere. Hence, the size of the group and the physical arrangement should be controlled to that end. Third, participation to the fullest extent of each member's capacity to contribute is essential ingredient of good discussion. The basic premise of discussion method is that each member may have something valuable to contribute, and this has to be tapped effectively. The cooperative pooling of all available information, evaluation, and judgement is the best way to discover right solutions. Fourth, as group discussions are intended to be learning or problem-solving experiences, purpose is a prerequisite for profitable talk of any kind. Finally, leadership, of some sort, is necessary for successful group discussion. This may be exercised by a prescribe individual or it may be diffused among several members.

Psychological Forces in Discussion Group

What psychological forces must we consider in managing group discussion?
Cohesiveness, goals, and interaction factors have been mentioned as among the most significant factors that influence group discussion situations. Group cohesiveness has been defined to include (1) attraction to the group, including resistance to leaving it, (2) the level
of motivation of the group members to attack their tasks with zeal, and (3) coordination of efforts of members. It has been found that unless members have a psychological sense of identification with each other and are motivated to work enthusiastically together on a common task, group structure tends to disintegrate, resistance to change increases, values come into conflict, and patterns of discussion breakdown. As such some level of cohesiveness must be created and maintained in a group. The leadership of a group can be a vital element to that end. While some level of cohesiveness is required, too cohesive a group is also problematic. A leader should be concerned with the following four functional psychological factors in communication: (1) keeping the attention of the group focused upon its task, (2) creating a common ground of interest among members, (3) channeling the strongest motivation for each member into a desire to achieve the group's goals and its values, and (4) guiding the discussion so that learning will be reinforced.

As for the second factor, group goals, a group must continuously renew or further common interest because it is probable that the achievement of group goal eliminates the main reason for cohesiveness. One of the function of leadership is to aid the process of goal identification, and goal clarification, and then to turn the motivational derives of members toward achieving the goals.

Interaction pattern is one of the differential characteristics of groups. When group processes break down, the first step in understanding why, and in restoring them, may be to make a careful analysis of the structure of the group. A changes in even a single factor in the group's characteristics, such as the development of a sudden desire for close conformity, or the establishment of cliques within the group, altered the communication pattern of the group. In a discussion group the functional psychological factors of attention and perception, interest, motivation, and learning and remembering must be understood and applied.

Power relationships in the group affect members contributions. There are two categories of power in a group. One is attributed power (reported about individual by other members) and the other is manifested power (observations of influential behavior by an individual). Status, prestige, age, experience, information and knowledge, leadership style are some examples of power-producing factors that affect contribution and participation.

How group members react to each other as persons than to any other aspect of communicative behavior in discussion is equally important psychological force. As such maintaining good interpersonal relations are fundamental to healthy interaction. Group size is one of the variables that affect interpersonal relations. As the size of a discussion group increases, conformity tends to lessen and resistance to change increase, more conflicting subgroups are likely to emerge, consensus is harder to achieve, and the opportunity for individual contribution is limited. Moreover, increase size requires more complex and more directive, leadership function. But this may result in less member satisfaction with group process and product.
Behavioral Results of Discussion

What are the behavioral impact of discussion upon individual behavior? The behavioral impact can be examined in terms of change in attitudes, beliefs, and opinions. Noting that there is substantial literature discussing the impact of discussion upon individual behavior, the following are some general conclusions on the behavioral result of discussion.

- It has been found that even relatively short discussion may significantly change the attitudes of as many as forty percent of the participants. It has been demonstrated that discussion can significantly change the overt behavior patterns of group members.
- Members of discussion groups who have arrived at a consensus are more likely to feel personal involvement in the problem and greater responsibility for the decision than members of a co-acting audience.
- Group conclusion reached after discussion are superior to individual conclusion whenever these factor are pertinent: a variety of points of view on a problem, a large number of suggestions for its solution, or a large number of effective criticism of alternate solutions.
- Discussion groups are more likely to accept sound suggestions than to reject them; more likely to reject bad ones than to accept them.

Summary of Unit

When working toward individual goals or group goals, the presence of others affects our thinking, feeling, action and reaction. This unit has covered the theories and concepts that explain what happen to us in the presence of others. Not only the unit looks at how it happened but why it happens. Important concepts that need to be understood in the domain of group influence include conformity, obedience social loafing, social facilitation, deindividuation, and groupthink. The unit has also pointed out some contributive factors and psychological forces of successful discussion in a group. Finally, the unit underscored the roles of discussion groups.

Review Questions

1. What are the differences and similarities between social facilitation and social loafing, if any?
2. What are the roots and consequences of a groupthink?
3. What are the similarities and differences between deindividuation and polarization?
4. What are the requisites of a successful discussion group?
5. What are the impact of discussion upon us as an individual and as a group?
References


Unit 8.
Message Structure and Appeals

Unit Introduction

When we communicate we want our audience to listen, understand, and believe our messages. Accordingly, how we organize and present our ideas is important because it has an effect on persuasive attempts and interpersonal relationships. Getting receiver to believe our messages is the theme of this unit. This unit will discuss how messages should be structured and the types of appeals to be employed. The question of message organization and message appeals are of great relevance to us. We need an effective structure and forceful appeals.

Unit Learning Outcomes

After successful completion of this unit, you should be able to:

- identify and describe the various types of message structure
- explain the various types of appeals and identify the situations when they may be effectively used
- identify the condition under which evidence in persuasive communication works

Organizing Our Messages

Is our mind born with its own patterns of organization? Does our mind learn and reproduce patterns of order that it finds around it? Can our mind create its own structure to fit its own needs?

Activity

What are the orders found in the following?

- a formal speech
- a dictionary
- a library
Communicators have the natural tendency to like some form of organization in the message they received or sent. Accordingly, we naturally expect to find it in our thinking and communication. We use order to help us organize our thinking. Organizing gives clarity to our thoughts; clarity is needed and valued in writing and speaking. It adds to the effectiveness of thinking and of delivering thoughts. A clear structure also adds to the effectiveness of our memory. Communication research has consistently found that message structure has an impact on communication process. Organized messages produce better comprehension, retention, and agreement. Disorganized messages lead to confusion, poor comprehension and retention, not compelling and accordingly smear message and speaker credibility. Bostrom (1983) reported that one of the conclusions of McCroskey and Mehrley’s study is organization may produce greater attitude change through a process that leads receivers to perceive sources as possessing greater credibility because of the message characteristics.

If some organization is preferable to no organization, how should we structure our messages? What patterns of organization are more effective than others? Principle of familiarity is relevant here. Receivers expect source to use certain relatively familiar pattern of organization. Much of the order within our mind seems to be learned from the natural order of the universe. According to Kirby and Goepfster (1995) there are four natural orders that appear to be both in the universe and in our mind: the topical order, analogical order, chronological order, and causal order. In addition to these four orders, there are also mental orders which come largely from our structure. These mental orders include logical order, scientific order, deductive and inductive order, order of importance, and motivational sequence.

The use of topical order is not only logical but practical as most things in this universe have their “natural” place, or their topical order. As we look around we see this topical order: water flows to its lowest level, helium balloons go up, and planets swing in orbits in a particular direction and speed, eat using right hand, and so forth. The topical order fits closely with description. Topical order aids description of an object because objects have dimensions. In describing we refer to dimensions from top to bottom, right to left, north to south, east to west, little to big, big to little, and so forth.

As we look around we see (or seek) similarities: between a ball and a planet, an apple and a cantaloupe, as examples. We use analogies to organize and express our thought. A structure built around an analogy will work for most communication situations. It is often worth our time to find a central analogy that fits the audience. The usefulness and effectiveness of the analogical order is clear. It helps us to understand the similarities and the differences.

In the universe we observe change and this change takes place through time. We see things changing in sequence and we call this order of time chronological. We use the
chronological order when we want to tell what happened. Everything has a beginning, middle, and end. Those basic, chronological parts fit the metastructure of most writings and speeches which have an introduction, body and conclusion.

Our experience has taught us that all changes have reasons. We naturally look for reasons in understanding a change. When we find the reasons we call them causes, and the changes they produce is called effect. Our speech and writing can organized and presented using cause and effect sequence.

In the case of mental order, they can be arbitrary, such an alphabetical order, or logical order, such as a list of shopping items arrange according to priority. As human beings are rational being (albeit sometime act irrationally), logical order fits nicely with human thinking. Organizing our message or idea in terms of 5W’s- who, what, where, when, and why- is one type of logical order. Journalists are trained to answer these five questions in their first paragraph. Another major order is logic, with deductive and inductive reasoning. This order of stating a premise, applying a particular, and then draw a conclusion is basic to much of our thinking. This organization from specific to general is term as inductive order. The organization from general to specific is term as deductive order. This logical order prevalent in the field of leaning and working. Another major order is the scientific order which as multiple applications and is particularly more fitting to processes that work with empirical data. As such some communication messages can be organized in the order of identification and definition, observation, interpretation, and validation, or problem-solution-recommendation order. Another effective logical order is the psychological sequences. A speech can be structured in terms of the following sequence: attention, need, satisfaction, visualization, and action. A pros and cons pattern of organization is another logical way to organize and present information.

Is there an order effect in communication? Remember the primacy and recency effect you have learned in basic communication course. These concepts are related to structure and order. These two concepts illustrate that there is an order effect in communication. A primacy effect occur if the material place first in the message has the greatest effect. It is a recency effect if the material positioned last in the message has the most effect. Other important concepts related to order effect in communication are a climax order (place the most important material last), an anteclimax order (place the most important material first), and a pyramidal order (place the most important materials in the middle of the speech).

Order effects depend on receiver’s prior attitudes toward the topic, and relevancy of the materials to the receiver. Following are some guideline: (1) if the receiver is positive toward the subject, and the subject is relevant then place the main idea first, and (2) if the receiver is negative toward the subject, and the subject lacks relevant then place the main idea last.

Thus far, the unit has described the different patterns of message organizations, and the impact of such patterns on communication. You also realized that organization effect depend on audience’s attributes. Sometimes audiences of our communication are heterogeneous, particularly in term of their psychological positioning. On other situations we have a
homogenous audience. For almost all persuasive communication situations, there are those in opposition as well as those in favor of our ideas. This need to be considered. Should we present one-sided messages—confine our message to those that support our thesis? Or should we present two-sided messages, that is, mention some of the materials from the other side? The following are some guidelines. Two-sided seem to be preferable for (1) audience with higher educational background, (2) initially disagree with the communicator’s position, and (3) when there is a possibility that audience will be exposed to opposing or competing messages. In short, two-sided messages is preferable when we anticipate more resistance, and counter arguments. Refutation of opposing argument rather than simply mentioning of opposing argument is better. On the contrary, one-sided message seem to be more effective when the receiver is already in agreement, provided that the receiver is not likely to be exposed to later opposing messages.

Our communication effectiveness should not be attributed to effective message organization alone. Another equally important element in persuasive communication is the message appeals. What sort of appeal should we use? This is the subject of the subsequent section.

Message Appeals

There are various types of message appeals that can be employed. Communicator can use any or a combination of the following message appeals: rational appeal, emotional appeal, fear appeal, religious appeal, ridicule appeal, appeal to pity, appeal to pride. The types of message appeals that should be employed depend on who the audiences are. In other word, the message appeals must fit with the characteristic of the audience. A brief description of the various types of appeals are in order.

Rational appeal. People ask and give reasons, and we need to appear rational to our audiences. Proof or apparent proof can persuade. But when our proof is not solid or not overwhelming, we can turn to our logic base to construct argument. Statistics, analogies, cause and effect relationships, and inductive as well as deductive reasoning can be used to construct arguments. Reasons that are illogical or contradictory can hardly have persuasive force. Research has found that heterophilious sources were more effective when they use logical appeals. On the other hand, homophilious did better when they used emotional appeals.

Emotional appeal. Logical can convince people, but it may not be sufficient. Some people are moved more by emotional appeals than rational appeals. Emotional appeal is the quality in a message that evokes strong emotion such as pity, sympathy, anger, hate, love, motivation and so forth in the receiver. Recognizing that humans are emotional beings, Aristotle tells us to “distress the emotions of our hearers.” Our emotions are closely connected to our values, needs, biases, and beliefs. These forces drive the emotional tone benefit our conviction, and they drive the emotional “meaning” of rational or rationalizing words, as pointed by Kirby and

A plea to pride or pity is a form of emotional appeal. At times people may appeal to our "great intelligence" or "uncommon wisdom". According to Kirby and Goodpaster (1995), this appeal may work in two ways: (1) it may increase our liking for the other and thereby increase their persuasive power, and (2) it may inhibit us from consulting with others or listening to their sound advice. Just like a plea to pride, appeal to pity can evoke our sympathy and empathy. Sometimes appeal to pity is appropriate to motivate people, for instance a plea for food and shelter for the needy. Appeal to pity is not appropriate in certain situations, for example, plea to pity to modify decision which was based on empirical data.

How can we instill emotion on our audience? Strong affective language and use of nonverbal emotional cues help in instilling emotion on our audience. The characteristics of audience needs to be considered also. When the audience is informed about the topic to be discussed, have a well form frame of reference, the effect of emotional appeal may be less than when the topic is new one, and the audience is reacting with no structured base of prior information.

Fear appeal. Another appeal that is often used in persuasion is the fear appeal. The use of fear are legitimate because the fearful consequences may really happen if we do not heed the message. In some case the degree of danger and the probability of it happening are exaggerated in an attempt to manipulate behavior or attitudes. How much fear should be used in persuasive communication? The use of fear is generally more effective in persuasion than no fear at all, but whether strong or mild fear work better is still questionable. It has been noted that a strong fear message without the instruction to avoid the danger may lead to denial. Bostrom (1983) cited studies that show persons low in self-esteem were more influenced by threatening communication, and high credibility sources were able to utilize fear appeal, whereas low-credibility sources were not.

Reward appeal. Rewards are important in our life. We need rewards. Rewards are used as a motivating device. But people differ in the kind of rewards they look for. The type of reward to be used depend on the audience. The reward to be gained can be immediate or future. The use of messages which appeal to, or offer the receiver some personal gain can be effective. Thus it is important to show how the message will benefit the receiver.

Religious appeal. We can influence people's attitude and behavior by using religious argument and appeal to their religiosity. People are more receptive to religious message as religion is very important to them.

In addition to message appeals, another equally important message characteristic is evidence. This will be discussed in the subsequent section.
Power of Evidence

Evidence is anything that contributes to belief, and anything that would assist the communicator in the persuasive task. Traditionally, evidence has been classified into facts, testimony, and authority. There are many different types of evidence: direct, indirect, negative, eloquent, public, personal, real, or created. The type of evidence available depends on the topic and the source. In using evidence, the worthiness of the evidence must be weighted. Evidence should meet the test of relevance, reliability, and availability. If source credibility alone is enough, then a persuader need not utilize evidence. It has also been suggested that familiarity with the source lends to ease for the writer to evaluate the evidence better.

The following are some observations on the use of evidence in persuasive communication (Bostrom, 1983).

- A message with evidence would be more successful than one without evidence when credibility is low, but the evidence would have no effect when credibility was high.
- Evidence increases immediate attitude change only under condition of good delivery accompanied by initial low credibility.
- Poor delivery can inhibit the effect of evidence on immediate attitude change, but it does not inhibit its effect on credibility.
- Evidence must be new to the audience before it can have an impact on their immediate attitude change. In other words, including good evidence has little, if any, impact on immediate attitude change or source credibility if the audience is familiar with the evidence prior to exposure of the source message.
- Including good evidence may significantly increase immediate audience attitude change and source credibility when the source is initially perceived to be moderate-to-low credible, when the message is well delivered, and when the audience has little or no prior familiarity with the evidence included or similar evidence.
- When receivers felt that the subjects and consequences for them, then the messages with the higher number of arguments produced more change for an unliked source, but not for a liked source.
- Reference to personal experience on an issue or idea may increase persuasiveness of a message.

Summary of Unit

This unit has focused on message characteristics. A good message would produce or at least enhance credibility. The theme of this unit is effective message organization and proper message appeals are requisite of persuasive communication. Communication messages can be structured in many ways such as topical order, chronological order, deductive order, inductive order, causal order, problem-solution order, pros and cons pattern, scientific order, and so forth. It has been pointed that there is order effects in communication. The other message...
characteristic discussed in message appeals and this include logical appeal, factual appeal, emotional appeal, fear appeal, reward appeal, and religious appeal. Finally, the unit underscores the proper use of evidence in communication.

Review Questions

1. Should communication messages be structured? Why?

2. How can communication messages be structured? What factors need to be considered in determining the appropriate message structure to be used?

3. What are the different types of message appeal that can be employed by communicators? Describe them.

4. How should evidence be used in communication?

References


Unit 9.
Psychology and the Media

Unit Introduction

This unit introduces mass communication from a psychological perspective. It explores the various theories related to mass communication such as Uses and Gratification, Social Learning Theory, Cultivation Theory and Agenda Setting. The theories affecting the human behavioral, attitudinal, cognitive and psychological. It dwelt primarily with the effects of heavy media exposure. The media is an interesting object to study, and there are different perspectives of media research methods that are included in discussion. A brief history of the media coupled with the people who have helped founded media research will offer a better understanding of this topic.

Unit Learning Outcomes

After successful completion of this unit, you should be able to:

- Identify some of the effects of mass media.
- Explain the media affects human behavior?
- Understand the related theories and the importance of the theories.

What is Psychology and the Media?

Think About It

You've watched the popular sitcom, "Pi Mai Pi Mai Tang Tu," for years and enjoy the show tremendously. What if you're to come face-to-face with the funny Pak Uda? How would you greet him? What would you call him? Pak Uda or his real name? Do you even know his real name?

Psychology and the media refer to the application of theories of the mind and the human behavior to the study of the mass media. Most often, the focus is on the effects of the mass media. This is perhaps the most common general perspective in studying the media. Such
study is conducted to examine the effects of mass communication exposure. It takes a look at
how media influence and change our behavior. Media was found to have strong effects when
there is massive media exposure to a particularly vulnerable audience. For example, the effects
of violent TV programs on children. A meta-analysis of 217 studies by Paik and Comstock
(1994) concluded that TV violence have an effect on aggressive behavior of children. The
media is often found to have strong indirect effects to audience.

The media has been the objects of considerable study among both commercial interests and
scientific researchers. There are different perspectives used in the study of media. A
description of these perspectives are in order.

Media Research Frameworks.

Media studies have been conducted using one or combination of the following methods:
content analysis, exposure studies and/or effect studies.

Content analysis. This is a careful investigation of the messages communicated through the
media. This approach is used to examine the contents of the media and how it affects viewers.
Content refers to what is being said. What’s the message to the audience? To analyze the
content of an ad, researcher will have to understand what is stated in the script of the ad. What
is the advertiser’s message? What’re they selling to the consumers? Content analysis is a
research method that classifies message content into categories to enable researcher to draw
inferences about the messages, their source or their receivers. Harold D. Lasswell was among
the early scholars to use this method to investigate print messages.

Exposure studies. The focus of this line of thinking is on the amount of exposure and the
nature of devoted attention to the various media. Who reads how many newspapers or watches
how much TV and when? Do they devote their full attention to the medium? Media exposure
can be measured in many ways and it is important that attention be given to what is to be
cognitively processed. In the study of media exposure, it is as important to measure how much
attention viewers are paying to the media.

Effects studies. The major concern of communication research over the past thirty-five
years, since the Shannon linear model of communication has been the investigation of
communication effects. The most common area of the media research is probably the search
for the effects of exposure to the mass communication. Effects are the changes in an
individual’s behavior that occur due to the transmission of a communication message.
The media can have substantial effects; however, they can only occur given a certain
circumstances. This is due to the fact that people has the tendency to be selective in their
media exposure. Thus this explains how people perceive similar message differently. This is
called the model of selective effects.
**Effects of the Media**

**Think About It**

Have you ever had the urge to act violently after watching a violent movie? Have you ever felt so angry at a character in a movie just because he has destroyed your favorite hero? What do you think you'd have done to act out your anger?

Do viewers imitate violent models? There have been various studies performed over the years to examine the cause and effect of violence by the media. A series of experiments carried out by Ross Parke in the United States and Jacques Leyens in Belgium found that exposure to movie violence led to an increase in viewer aggression (Myers, 1994).

In studying the effects of media exposure, it is also important to keep in mind the cumulative exposure. Hence, the frequency of the exposure to the violent episode is an important determinant factor. While it is difficult to simulate such exposure in a laboratory setting and to control in a field study, the amount of times the images are seen or heard becomes a factor to determine the effect of the media exposure. The effects may be measured in terms of behavioral effects, cognitive effects, physiological, and attitudinal effects.

**Behavioral Effect.** This refers to the effect of the media on one's behavior. This occurs when someone does something after seeing it in the media. One informal survey reported in TV Guide, 1977 mentioned that of 208 prison convicts, 9 out of 10 admitted that they learned new criminal tricks by watching crime programs. Of the number, 4 out of 10 said they had attempted specific crimes seen on TV (Myers, 1994). This is the most obvious type of effect. Unfortunately, it is often very difficult to measure effect and hence, it is even harder to attribute a causative role to the media.

**Think About It**

Remember the incident that happened in Colorado, USA where two teenagers went on a shooting rampage at their school? It was reported that to these boys, what they did was a kind of game that they'd very often played in the computer. Unfortunately, the very game that they played had also killed their own friends. So, is the media the cause of this fatal incident?
Cognitive Effects. The effect of the media that changes our thinking process. We may already have a certain set of ideas or knowledge about an issue. However, this idea may be changed after learning new information from the media. For example, you may have already formed an opinion about the current economic situation. Yet, when you watch/listen to the news on TV or radio, you’re constantly told that the economy is recovering. Eventually you’d change your opinion. The cognitive effects will cause us to think about our feelings and attribute causes and interpretations to them.

Activity

Write down some of the topics that we normally depend on the media for discussion? Why are we so dependent on the media for such topics?

Physiological Effects. This refers to physical changes in our bodies as a result of the exposure to the media. For instance, sexual arousal results from viewing pornography. This effect is the least often measured. The arousal affect may cause certain changes in our bodies, such as increased in heart rate, sweating, and change in skin resistance. Physiological effect is part of the emotion that we express as an appreciation of media. Imagine watching a crime movie alone in the middle of the night with news spreading around that the serial killer is on the loose!

Attitudinal Effects. Attitude is beliefs and feelings that may influence our reactions. We may feel dislike and act unfriendly if we believe that someone is threatening. Attitudinal effects refer to the effects of the media that may contribute to our reactions whether positive or otherwise. For example, an ad might make you think more highly of some product; whether you’d buy it or not is another question. Another example: in the movie, “A Few Good Men,” the US army was negatively portrayed and this has caused viewers to form a similar opinion of the army. Perhaps, you may have experienced this similar attitude after watching a certain movie!

So, why do you think we act the way we act? Are these effects or influences of the media? Since we have looked at the different media research frameworks and types of effects measured, let us examine the history of mass communication by looking at the media development. This will offer us a better understanding of the psychology and the media.

Activity

List down as many local movies that you have watched and that has affected your opinion on certain issues, people, etc. Explain why does it happen?
A Brief Review of Mass Communication History

The historical content of mass media is important because knowing what happened many years ago might help us understand what is going on today. Mass media is made up of a multidisciplinary context consisting of psychology, political science, English, mathematics, etc. Hence, it is not surprising that some of the theories in Mass Communication are derived from these disciplines. In fact, the founding fathers of Mass Communication were also from this different background. The following diagram shows the founding fathers of communication science. It explain briefly about the social scientist who had contributed tremendously to the to the studies of communication and the methods that they had used in their research.

With regard to media development, the motion picture was developed in the late nineteenth century. The movie industry was made popular by the 1904, classic Western produced by Edwin S. Porter, “Great Train Robbery,” a fiction movie. By then, the film industry was already attracting viewers with approximately 20 million people going to the movies per week.

Radio was initially used for navigation as early as 1901 when Marconi sends a radio signal across the Atlantic. By 1936 radio can be found in about 80% of homes and listening time was about 5 hours daily. The golden age of radio lasted from about 1930 – 1950. The decade of the 1920s was an important one in radio. KDKA, a radio station went on the air November 20, 1920. It is still on the air as of this day, thus making it the oldest station. Benjamin Palmer started a radio station, WHO in 1924, in Davenport, Iowa. After seven decades, in 1996, WHO was sold to Jacor Communications, a Cincinnati-based company.

Electronic television sets invented during the 1930s. World War II halted the growth of the medium. Philo Farnsworth and Vladimir Zworykin are the two people associated with the early development of the electrical television. Farnsworth diagrammed his idea for a television system in 1922 at the age of 16 and in 1930 obtained the patent for his television system. By 1950 television swept all across America and increased to 80 percent of homes with TV sets in 1958 boasting some 45 million viewers. These figures increase tremendously by 1960s, 95 percent of US homes receiving film, radio and television. As of 1998, some 99 percent of all home in the country had at least one working television set.
The Founding Fathers of Communication Science

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Founder/Discipline</th>
<th>Research Methods Used</th>
<th>Typical Independent Variables/Dependent Variables</th>
<th>Main Books</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harold D Lasswell</td>
<td>Qualitative and Quantitative methods/content analysis</td>
<td>Symbol of identification, image vs reality/effects on public opinion</td>
<td>Propaganda Techniques in World War (1927)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political Science, PhD – University of Illinois, Born: Illinois, 1902</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kurt Levin</td>
<td>Group experiments in quasi-natural settings</td>
<td>Gatekeeping, autocratic vs democratic leadership style, group pressures on individuals/effects on individual behavior of group members</td>
<td>Informal Social Communication (written by Levin’s students): Principles of Topological Psychology (1936)</td>
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<td>Social Psychologist</td>
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<td>PhD – Berlin, Friedrich-Wilhelms University, moved to US – 1933</td>
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<td>Born: Poland, 1890</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carl Hovland</td>
<td>Laboratory Experiment</td>
<td>Source credibility, one-sided vs two-sided messages, fear appeals/effects on persuasion(attitude change)</td>
<td>Experiments in Mass Communication(with others)(1949), Communication and Persuasion(with others)(1953)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Experimental psychology</td>
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<tr>
<td>PhD – Yale</td>
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<td>Born: Illinois, 1912</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paul F. Lazarsfeld</td>
<td>Surveys, Quantitative analysis, personal interviews</td>
<td>Socioeconomic status, mass media exposure, interpersonal influence/effects on individual’s knowledge, attitude and behavior change</td>
<td>The People’s Choice (with others)(1944), Communication Research, 1948, 1949(with Frank Stanton)(1949), Personality Influence (with Katz) (1955)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
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<tr>
<td>PhD – University of Vienna</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moved to U.S. 1935</td>
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Think About It

Have you ever asked yourself: What is it about “Senario,” that have millions of viewers glued to TV3 every Saturday afternoon?

The background on mass communication and its founding fathers offers us a glimpse at some of the famous names in mass media research. It has thus given us a better understanding on the kind of studies explored in this field. These studies have been guided by various theories related to mass communication research. The subsequent section offers descriptions of the exemplary of mass communication theories.

Mass Communication Theories

Think About It

Have you ever asked yourself: What is it about, “Senario,” that have millions of viewers glued to TV3 every Saturday afternoon?

Uses and Gratification Theory: This theory can be traced to Lazarsfeld, Katz, Blumer and Gurevitch. According to the theory, the media that we use is determined by our needs. We seek entertainment for gratification. Media experiences lead to expectations. When we watch a movie, we expect to be entertained. When we watch the news we expect to be informed. This theory emphasized on the active role of the audience in their media choices. The effects of the media depend on the kind of uses that we put on the media and also on the form of reward we received from them. Therefore, when we watch, “Friends,” on Metrovision or “ER,” on TV2, we are exercising our freedom of choice that we feel would be rewarding to us in terms of being entertained. Think about it. Why do you prefer one channel to the others? Or certain media instead of the other?

Social Learning Theory: Albert Bandura argued that people learn new behaviors and attitudes by perceiving the way people around them respond to their own behavior. Hence, people exhibit behavior according to the reward that they received. If people are socially rewarded for their behaviors and attitudes, they will continue to hold them. On the contrary, if they are socially punished for the attitudes and behavior, they will discontinue them. This theory also stresses on the effects of the media. How audience imitates the media and how people learn behavior from TV. This theory encompasses both imitation and identification to explain how people learn through observation of others in their environment. Perhaps, you may have experienced this. What behavior have you learnt from watching TV?
Cultivation Theory. This theory was initially developed by George Gerbner. According to the theory, television viewing distorts our perceptions. Extensive media exposure especially TV will gradually shape our view of the world and social reality. The more bad cop’s movie you watch, the more scared you become of cops. The approach of Cultivation Theory suggested that viewers learn “facts” of life from observing the world of TV. What we watched on TV, is stored in our memory and later uses this stored information to formulate beliefs of the real world. Therefore, our memory is “colored,” by TV. Resonance TV events remind people of real events.

It seems probable that youngsters who are heavy TV viewers should display a pattern of beliefs and perceptions consistent with media portrayals. Researchers have noted a connection between heavy viewing of violence TV programs and favorable attitudes toward the use of violence in real life (Dominick, 1999). Socialization by TV can also have positive effects. Exposure to educational and informative programs can help develop skills and knowledge.

Activity

Can you recall how many crime movies that you’ve watched? How does that affect you? Name the movie and list down its effect on you.

Agenda Setting Theory. Cohen, McCombs & Shaw define agenda setting as the ability of the media to tell us of what to think about. The media’s impact on agenda setting refers to the ability of the media to choose and emphasize certain topics, thereby causing the public to perceive the issues as important. For example, through heavy coverage of the Kosovo massacre, the media inform us of the brutality of the Serbian leader, Slobodan Milosevic. Through such coverage, they are actually stressing the importance of the issues. The editors/ producers choose what to print/ broadcast to shape our opinion. Think of some of the events reported by the media that has helped shaped your opinion on certain issues.

Identification. Identification is a certain form of imitation of the media. Viewer who was emotionally involved in a TV show would try to identify with the character and imagine him/her as real. For instance, calling an actor by his/ her character’s name. According to Baran et al. (1995) identification refers to a particular form of imitation or copying a model, generalized beyond specific acts, springs from wanting to be and trying to be like the model with respect to some broader quality. Remember in the early 1980s when the late Diana, Princess of Wales was introduced to the world. The world was so taken in by her youth and beauty. In fact, some women were even copying her hairstyle.
Reading

Read chapter 2 on Research Theory in Mass Communication by Harris.

Summary of Unit

Whether the media is able to affect us cognitively or emotionally depends on how the information gained from the media is being processed. We'd be able to understand why people behave in a certain way, why do they watch what they watch? Apparently it helps us examine what people think, what they feel or what they do? Similarly, through these theories we'd also be able to learn more about what the media do to people, and under what conditions the media have effects.

Review Questions

1. Why do you think the theory of mass media is an important element in this unit?
2. Explain the terms behavioral effects, attitudinal effects, cognitive effects and physiological effects. What is the importance of understanding these terms?
3. With some example explain what is meant by identification?
4. What are Social Learning Theory, Cultivation Theory and Agenda Setting Theory? How do you relate these theories with the studies of media?

References:


Unit 10: 
Communication Psychology in Advertising

Unit Introduction

This unit offers an interesting view on the psychology of communication and advertising. It deals mainly with the strategies used by advertisers to appeal to its consumers and the effects of advertising. We will examine the different types of advertising such as corporate ad and public service announcements. We will find that through persuasive communication advertising aims at changing our behavior from cognitive, affective to conative.

Unit Learning Outcome

After successful completion of this unit, you should be able to:

- define advertising and identify the reason for its growth
- list the appeals used in the various ads and describe their effectiveness
- describe the effects of ads to consumers

Advertising: What does it means?

Activity

Obtain a copy of the daily newspaper. How many advertisements did you find in the copy? List down the product/service advertised.

In the past, advertising has been evaluated as an aid to marketing and selling of goods yet, today advertising has become a part of the culture that we live and breathe in. Advertising has in fact become one of the most ubiquitous manifestations of modern culture. Read a paper and there you’ll see an ad. Turn on the television or listen to the radio, and you’d also see and hear ad messages.

Activity

Watch a movie on TV. List down what were the advertisements shown? Which advertisement, of all those you have seen on TV do you remember best? Why?
"We live in a sea of advertising," says Harris (1994). This is in fact true because an average person sees over 100 TV commercials per day. If you watched the nightly news or Bulletin Utama over TV3 for an hour, you'd realize how many commercial breaks that you'd have to sit through. Similarly, if you were to watch the movie on TV2, you'd perhaps find as much interruption of commercial breaks that might just cause you to switch channel.

Even the print media is no exception. Moreover, most of this media are dependent on the advertisement for revenue. Newspapers and magazines are virtually 100% dependent on ad revenues for financial support. Thus, it is not at all surprising to see newspapers as well as magazines filled with ad contents. Obviously, it is the advertiser who must be pleased.

Activity

Get a copy each of locally and internationally published magazines. Compare the ad contents of both magazines. What are the similarities and differences of the ad?

Advertising according to the American Marketing Association, is "any paid form of nonpersonal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods or services by an identified sponsor," (Mandell, 1984). On the other hand, Bovee (1992) suggested that advertising is a nonpersonal communication of information, usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature, about products (goods and services) or ideas by identified sponsors through various media. As a nonpersonal form of communication, advertising is directed to groups of people instead of individuals.

Advertising is also known as commercial ads and it is a placement paid for by the advertiser usually in an attempt to sell a product. For example the Perodua Kancil ad that we get to see on TV or the Omega watch worn by the beautiful Cindy Crawford staring at you from the back cover of Time magazine. These are paid advertising to sell a product.

Advertising is a nonpersonal communication of information, often times paid for by identified sponsors through various media and are normally persuasive in nature, about products whether goods and/or services or ideas. Such examples are ads aired either on TV or radio and printed in the newspapers or magazines. These ads may be different yet the aim is still the same that is a form of communication designed to persuade.

You may notice that there are different types of advertising such as corporate ads and public service announcements.

Corporate advertising. The term corporate advertising denotes broad areas of nonproduct advertising aimed specifically at enhancing a company's image and increasing lagging awareness (Bovee, 1992). Corporate advertising is also called advocacy advertising when corporations use it to communicate their views on issues that affect their business. Whatever the issue, the company tailors its stand to protect its position in the market place. It is also a way of influencing public opinion on specific issues. For example some financial institutions in the
country produced their own corporate video that enable them to advertise/ publicize their company to consumers.

Public Service Announcements (PSAs). Non-commercial ads, where placement is free (donated) that is designed to promote the "public good." For instance advertising used by government, non-profit organizations, etc. Thomas Garbett in Sandage (1989), defined public service advertising/ announcement as ads sponsored by the government or association who promotes causes and activities generally accepted as desirable. PSAs is usually noncontroversial. It is either paid for or prescribed by the media without charge. More importantly, it is associated with "good works." Take for example the road safety campaign, the ad intends to create road safety awareness and social responsibility to the general public.

Now that we have understood the meaning and types of advertising, we will venture further into the various strategies advertisers used to persuade consumers.

Think About It

Perhaps you can identify some of the PSAs ads shown on TV. Pick two PSAs ads and list down their strengths and weaknesses.

Advertising Strategies

Media advertising, whether printed in newspapers and magazines, posted on billboards and on sides of buses, broadcast on radio and television, uses a variety of psychological appeals to reach viewers. In one way or another, ads attempt to tie the product or service to our deepest and most basic psychological needs. Persuasion in advertising rests on the psychological appeal to the consumer. An appeal is something that makes the product particularly attractive or interesting to the consumer. Appeals usually pinpoint the anticipated response of the prospect to the product and message. The descriptions of the various types of appeals used by advertisers are in order.

Informational Appeals. Advertiser provides consumers with facts and emphasizes the learning and logic of persuasion about the product/services. Rational-based appeals tend to be informative, and advertisers using them generally to convince consumers that their product or service has a certain attribute(s) or provides a specific benefit that satisfies their needs. The audience upon being exposed to the ad will gather as much information about the product as possible, especially if it is a new product in the market. From the information gathered, the consumer will be able to decide whether to accept or reject the product. Similarly, accepting the product will encourage the consumer to form an attitudinal change. Hence, will cause him to buy the product (behavioral change).

Think About It

The next time you watch an advertisement on TV try to identify what kind of appeals does the advertiser uses? Do you think the appeals used are successful to influence consumers?
Through this appeal, advertiser assumes that knowledge will lead to action. To convince potential buyer, advertiser needs to offer them information. People will “think” about the ads, they will also think about the product. The basis for this appeal is the attitude change and the persuasion theories. For example the Quaker Oats company uses a rational appeal in noting how fiber from oatmeal may help reduce the risk of heart disease.

Emotional Appeals. Persuasion is not only a logical process, it is also concerned with emotions. How someone “feels” about a product, service or brand may be just as important as what that person knows about it. Emotional appeals normally portray a positive mood. People tend to “tune out” to things they disagree. However, should they have a positive reaction to the ad, this reaction will transfer to the product. If you touch someone’s emotions with your message, there is a likelihood of he or she remembering the message. The advantage of this appeal is that people will stay to watch the ad. After all, many of our buying decisions are emotional ones. We buy shoes because we don’t want to go barefoot, but we buy a closefit of shoes for other reasons perhaps different styles for different occasions and different colors for different moods. Advertiser for cheap and frequently purchased products will resort to this kind of appeal.

Activity

Gather as many examples of print ads as possible. Analyze the contents. Can you identify the appeals used by the advertiser? Discuss your answer with your coursemate.

Fear Appeals. Fear is an emotional response to a threat that expresses or implies some sort of danger. Such appeals tend to “scare” the customers. Sometimes ads use fear appeals to evoke this emotional response and arouse individuals to take steps to remove the threat. Through classical conditioning theory, this appeal creates fear such that you’ll be forced to buy a certain product. Advertisers portray the image that you need to do something or things bad will happen. The fear in the ad will transfer to the product or action occurs. For example some insurance ad stressed on this appeal, whereby we were reminded to buy an insurance policy for the good of our love ones.

Humorous Appeals. These are funny ads that poke fun at a situation or even probably the product itself. The aim of such appeal is for the consumer to have positive feelings about the product. This will in turn make them discuss the product with their friends or probably talk to their friends about the ad. Humor appeals are often the best remembered of all advertising messages since humorous messages attract and hold consumers’ attention.

Bandwagon Appeals. Through this appeal, the advertiser creates a fear of isolation that is the product is good and has been used by a huge group of people. These people can’t be wrong. Thus, as a customer, you need to have it too. If you don’t have one, you’re out.

Testimonial Appeals. This appeal is based on the theory that someone with influence tells of how good the product. Spokesperson is used to speak on behalf of a product, usually for a kind of testimonial. Customers identify with the personality. There are three types of
As consumers, we are exposed to a vast number of stimuli from a wide variety of sources everyday, including advertising. As we receive these stimuli, our brain interprets them and gives them meaning. The system dealing with these stimuli by consumers until they are used to make decisions is referred to as information processing. If you can recall from the earlier readings on brain you’d remember that the brain mechanism picks up the stimuli, in the process, the brain filters out and discards a great many.

Thus, studies have shown that although consumers were exposed to a great number of ads each day, they’re conscious of only a very small portion of this ad and remember even fewer. Figure 1 below shows how customers react to an ad.

**Figure 1:** The Communication Process in Advertising.
Source: Bovee et al. (1995): 14

Communication has a specific purpose in advertising: to send a message that will inform and persuade customers to take action such as to buy a product. There are six steps that consumer’s use in processing information. These steps are exposure, attention, comprehension, yielding, memory and behavior. Advertisers attempt to stimulate the various senses of sight and hearing as well as smell, touch and taste through the use of sound, color action, subject matter and other devices. Figure 2 explains these phases.

**Figure 2:** Communication Phases in Advertising.
Some of the stimuli to which consumers are exposed are stored momentarily while they go through the next stage that is attention. The initial attention stage is known as preattentive processing and this is based on physical properties. Hence, the boldface headline in an ad will most likely trigger a response that says look! Further attention processing takes the form of determining the pertinence of the stimuli. This pertinence is related to the needs and values the consumers hold. Take for instance, when you're thirsty and Pepsi was your kind of drink, you would obviously find a Pepsi commercial stimulus pertinent, but if you were not thirsty and soft drink was not your choice, you would undoubtedly reject the stimulus.

To reach to the decision making process in purchasing a product, we go through the six stages as mentioned in figure 2. The next section will discuss the outcomes of advertising. It describes the hierarchy-of-effects that helps us deals with advertising messages.
Advertising Outcomes

To assure the success of the stimulus, it must not only be favorably processed not only at the attention stage, however, it must also be comprehended and certain problems may arise here in terms of misinterpretation of the stimulus. This information processing system will undoubtedly pick up many stimuli and even store some of them for future reference. In the case of ad, however, yielding of the stimuli tends to be low. This is one of the reasons for repetition in ad. Repetition increases likelihood of remembering (memory). If you can remember the ad, purchasing the product will come as easily if you’re in need of the product.

The hierarchy-of-effects help analyze message impact. Take for example if you have problem hair (read dandruff) and Procter & Gamble advertises a new shampoo for people with problem hair, the ad will probably catch your attention. You are aware of the possible desire for the product. Since you buy your own shampoo you may find yourself interested in the idea of this new formulation thus you have comprehended its value. You may want to try it and therefore, goes to the nearest Pharmacy and get yourself a trial size shampoo. You are already spurred to action. Often times we go through the stages described below in our decision making process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1</td>
<td>Identify the need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2</td>
<td>Search for information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3</td>
<td>Evaluate the options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4</td>
<td>Decide which product/service to purchase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 5</td>
<td>Carry out a continuous evaluation following the purchase</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity

Carry out a simple survey of several members of your family and close friends. Use the above simple model of buyer behavior to try to identify the reasons for the purchase of a specific expensive item, which they have purchased recently. Did they follow the above five-stage process?

Advertising perform communications tasks by first accomplishing the lower-level objectives such as creating awareness and knowledge or comprehension. Subsequent task requires customers to get involved. Those who are aware or have knowledge of the product or service will move on to higher levels. The initial steps at the base are normally easier to accomplish than those at the top such as trial and repurchase or regular use. If we refer to the following figure 3 on the effects of advertising on consumers we would be able to understand the decision making process that we go through in buying a certain product.
Figure 3: Effects of Advertising on Consumers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conative</th>
<th>Purchase</th>
<th>Point-of-purchase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The realm of motives.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Retail store ads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ads stimulate or direct desires</td>
<td></td>
<td>Deals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Last-chance”offers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Price appeals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Testimonials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conviction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affective</td>
<td>Preference</td>
<td>Competitive ads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The realm of emotions.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Argumentative copy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ads change attitudes and feelings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liking</td>
<td>“Image” copy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Status, glamour appeals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>Teaser campaigns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The realm of thoughts.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ads provide information and facts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>


As we have examined earlier advertisers uses various appeals to attract consumers to their product and services. Through persuasive communication advertisers are able to influence our decision making process. However, sometimes if we are not careful we may be trapped by deceptive ads.

Deceptive advertising is one of the issues in advertising that remains the greatest concern. Some of the activities identified as deceptive are deceptive pricing, false criticisms of competing products, deceptive guarantees, ambiguous statements and false testimonials (Wells et al, 1995).
Ads may deceive either by making a false claim thus increasing false belief held by a customer. For example, a product claiming that it can cure a certain disease with no scientific research being carried out on the said product. Ads can also deceive the customers by exploiting a true belief in ways designed to sell the product.

Think About It

An ads claiming that with regular brushing of the teeth, you needn’t have to see a dentist? True or False. Why?

There is a distinction between misconception and deceptiveness as suggested by Preston and Richards in Harris (1994). When the meaning conveyed to the hearer is different from the literal content of the message, that is misconception. In such cases, the viewer has wrongly constructed the meaning of the ad. However, if on the other hand, the conveyed meaning is inconsistent with the facts about the product, regardless of the ad states, then that is deceptiveness.

One of the very popular advertising strategies involves endorsement of products by spokesperson. Very often customer relies on these endorsements when purchasing a product. However, when the spokesperson that endorses the product isn’t really using the product than the person endorsing the product may be liable for misrepresentation.

Think About It

Do you think Ogy Ahmad Daud really uses Imeeden-product? By the way, is Elaine Kang a regular Boh Tea drinker?

After examining the specific types of ads that had raise some important as well as controversial psychological issues related to the perception about advertising, the next theme that we will address is essentially the type that we should be really concerned that is advertising to children.

Advertising to Children

Advertising to children is one of the most controversial topics that advertisers must deal with. Television is a medium that advertisers can easily reach children. With children between the ages of 2 to 11 watching an average of 21.5 hours of TV per week and seeing between 22,000 and 25,000 commercials per year (Bleich, 1999), TV becomes an important advertising vehicle to children. This should be a reason enough for concern.

Children particularly the young ones are especially vulnerable to advertising due to their lack of knowledge to understand and evaluate the message critically. Bleich also mentioned that research has shown that preschooler cannot differentiate between an ads and a program. Since they have yet to use their cognitive defenses effectively therefore they lack the ability to understand how advertising works.
Activity

Watch a couple of advertisements for children's products. What are the main features of the ads? What type of approach the advertiser is using?

Targeting children is a multibillion-ringgit business, and companies are constantly looking for new ways to reach kids through advertising. Ads especially for kids advertise products in two categories: toys and junk food such as candy and snacks as well as fast-food restaurants. A study reported that 82% of children's ads were for some kind of food, most often heavily sugared (Harris, 1994).

In the US, according to Wells (1995), the extremely competitive ready-to-eat cereal category includes more than 216 brands, of which roughly one third are consumed by children. Even though most buyers of these products purchase them regularly, yet they seek variety. They are influence by the ads.

Activity

Hang out with some of the kids in your neighborhood (or your niece/nephew/etc). Listen to what they hear, see and learn from the advertisements. List down the items. What can you gather from their understanding?

The effect of TV advertising on children is monumental. Especially on Saturday mornings when children are bombarded by snacks and fast food ads. Similar to that of adult designed advertising, children's advertising encourages youngster to persuade their parents to buy and use certain products.

Parents may display mixed emotions about children's advertising for they may be faced with endless demands for certain products or a specific brand names; however, they can fight back by monitoring their children. A study by Galst in Hiebert (1991) suggested that parents might have the resources to fight back. They can influence their children's preferences by monitoring their children's television viewing.

A report based on a two-year study by the Federal Trade Commission in 1979 concluded that children are highly exposes to TV advertising. Children also regard advertising as just another form of programming and do not distinguish between program. It is considered unfair and deceptive to advertise to children who do not understand the intent of the commercial (Hiebert, 1991).

The practical issues in advertising as well as the psychological process involved in advertising communication described in this unit is further describe in the chapter on Advertising: Do the Messages Go by or Do We Go Buy? By Harris (1994).
Reading

Read the chapter on Advertising: Do the Messages Go By or Do We Go Buy?, Harris.

Summary of Unit

Advertising plays an important role in our live. We learned about positive emotional associations about product with positive experiences in our past. Through information processing we were able to understand the successes and failures of interpreting ads correctly. Failure to process ad information correctly will cause us to either miscomprehend the ad messages or being deceived by the subliminal messages.

Review Questions

1. What is the importance of the psychology of communication in advertising?
2. Discuss the various appeals advertisers used in producing an advertisement. Which appeals is the most influence?
3. Pick one advertisement on television and one advertisement in the newspaper. Explain the appeals used in the two ads. What are the strength and weaknesses of using the appeals?
4. Compare and contrast between an advertisement and a deceptive advertisement
5. Do you think a code of ethics should be imposed on advertising for children? Why?

References


Unit 11.
Politics in Communication Psychology

Unit Introduction

This unit discusses the issues of politics and the media. It takes a look at the relationship between politics and the media, how the media is being used to win elections. How the media can destroy one's political career. We will also examine the Elaboration Likelihood Model, political and negative advertising and understand how it affects voters.

Unit Learning Objectives

After successfully completing this unit, you will be able to:

☐ Explain how the media may be used to gain advantage in politics.
☐ Explain the contribution of media to politicians.
☐ Understand the media power as a source of political news and advertising channels.

Unit Introduction

Some people believe that mass communication is the key to political victory. In fact, some political observers have even suggested that there are candidates who lost the election due to their inability to present a more "telegenic," image over on television (Barker & Barker, 1993). Thus, it is perhaps true to stress that the media plays a role in shaping political perceptions among the public. It seems that while negative political portrayal can destroy opponents, it may also discourage voters from going to the polls.

As noted by McCombs (1981) in Gamson (1983), the media tell us what to think about. The idea of the agenda-setting influence by the mass media is a relational concept specifying a positive causal-relationship between emphasis of mass communication and what members of the audience come to regard as important. The media set the agenda in a particular way so that politics is prominently featured.
Activity

Watch the nightly news on the private channel for one week and the government-owned channel the following week. Make a record of stories featured during the segment before the first commercial break. Identify the types of stories featured. Compare the stories between the two channels.

Ever since its earliest days, politics in the U.S. especially has often been a bristish affair with candidates leveling outrageous accusations against one another. Politics after all was always "nasty" and this can be traced to the Lincoln-Douglas era. The media make it nastier and the public as always is very much interested in the scandal. Thus, what we have are almost always sensationalized stories.

However, too much of the scandal and dirty politics have also turned voters off. As Iorio and Huysman (1996) found out at the beginning of the 1992 presidential campaign, organizers and candidates as well as journalist discovered that voters not only showed a lack of interest in the elections but were frustrated and feisty that lead to their turning off to politics.

Think About It

Do you think it’s unethical to use the news media to reveal opponent’s personal problems? Why? Relate this with the local news media. Take a look at the local news media both print and electronic, how many were used for such stories?

Coverage of Political Campaigns

While certain aspects of political campaigns are excessively covered, there are others that are lightly covered or not given any space at all by the media. Whether a campaign is heavily covered or otherwise depends on how news worthy they are. Major announcements would normally receive press attention for example formal announcements of interest to run for the presidency or even to withdraw from a race. Others that also have high visibility may be strong statements such as a harsh attack on an opponent (Harris, 1994).

Activity

Study the front page of the main local newspapers. List the political news featured. Discuss the aspects that were mostly covered. Do you think these stories deserved the front-page attention? Why? Find out how were these stories makes it to the front page? Who makes the decision?

A study on Malaysia’s General Election 1995 indicated that among the most talked about political issues during the election were the country’s future development (i.e. Vision 2020), racial problems, moral and religion (Syed Arabi Idid & Mazni Buyong, 1995).
Then again, it does seem like any type of major blunder may also receive wide attention. For instance, during the Democratic presidential race in the spring of 1987, the press found out about Gary Hart’s affair with model Donna Rice, and the story received heavy media coverage that led to his withdrawal from the race. Back home in Malaysia, in 1995, the then PAS Deputy Youth leader, Mohammad Sabu was caught and charged of committing "khalwat" but later acquitted by the Syariah Court in Kota Baru. The court case has negatively impacted on the Islamic party.

**Television and Politics**

Television offers images that will enable us to take a closer look at our candidates. Does he (or she) look "Presidential?" (Or as in our case "looks like a Prime Minister?"). As pointed by Myers (1983) television is widely accepted as the medium for entertainment. Television is simpler with abbreviated news and minimized background information. The "video-centric" characteristics of television may cause it to focus on the visually interesting rather than the substantively important.

Apparently our perception of politics may be affected by the television viewing. Gerbner in Harris looked at the correlation of amount of television viewing (and other media use) and political self-designation on a liberal-moderate-conservative dimension. He found that frequent television viewers labeled themselves as politically moderate, while the frequent newspaper readers were conservative and heavy radio listeners labeled themselves liberal.

Fry (1979) predicted that a highly television-dependent group would manifest a smaller knowledge gap due to education. Television-dependent persons would be less likely to want highly detailed information about topics (Myers, 1983). Syed Arabi, 1995 has also found that while the high users of television were from all levels of education yet, the heaviest television viewers were among those who possessed Form One to Form Five level of education. Malaysians were found to be high users of television and newspapers yet low users of radio.

To understand voter’s political decision making it is important that we understand the process of Elaboration Likelihood Model.

**Elaboration Likelihood Model**

As voters, there are a number of situations in which we persuade ourselves to change an attitude, belief or even behavior. It is assumed that people are motivated to hold correct attitudes. They want to buy the right medicine, invest in the right stock, vote for the politician who will do the things the voters want done. To be correct in their attitudes, they should be motivated to attend and elaborate on a vast number of messages. Since it is not possible to be well read and knowledgeable on all topics, therefore they have to be selective in attending to and elaborating on various messages. Hence, they will be willing to engage in high levels of message elaboration.
The term elaboration according to Bettinhaus & Cody (1994) refers to issue-relevant-thinking whereby a receiver upon getting some information would be busy thinking on the topic. There are varying levels of receiver involvement or manner of cognitive elaboration. There are four basic levels at which receivers can become involved with messages as shown from the figure below.

Stages of Cognitive Elaboration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages of Cognitive Elaboration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ELABORATION:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiver elaborates on the message by generating his/her own arguments concerning the message's arguments or conclusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>COMPREHENSION:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunes into the channel and attends to the semantic elements of the message (words &amp; language), of the message.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FOCAL ATTENTION:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiver tunes into the channel &amp; attends to the message, concerned with sensory elements of loud, colorful, moving novel emotionally arousing messages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PREATTENTION:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receivers hear repeated stimuli, music, slogan, may like familiar music and a product with which the music is paired, they do not generate any thought about the music or product.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Activity

Talk to friends, families, etc. and find out what are the sources of their political news? How many times per week do they watch the news on TV, or read the newspapers? Which of the media do they favor the most? Why?

Elaboration Likelihood Model of persuasion was devised by Richard Petty and John Cacioppo to explain the process by which persuasive communications (such as ad) lead to persuasion by influencing attitudes. According to this model, the attitude formation or change process depends on the amount and nature of elaboration or processing of relevant information that occurs in response to persuasive message. High elaboration means the receiver engages in careful consideration, thinking and evaluation of the information or arguments contained in the
message. Low elaboration occurs when the receiver does not engage in active information processing or thinking but rather makes inferences about the position being advocated in the message based on simple positive or negative cues (Belch & Belch, 1998).

The diagram below offers an explanation on the propositions of the elaborated likelihood model.

**Propositions of the Elaborate Likelihood Model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposition</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. People are motivated to hold correct attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Although they want to hold correct attitudes, the amount and nature of issue-relevant elaboration in which they are willing or able to engage for evaluating a message vary with individual and situational factors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Variables can affect the amount and direction of attitude change by a) serving as persuasive arguments b) serving as peripheral cues and/or c) affecting the extent or direction of issue and argument elaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Variables affecting motivation and/or ability to process a message in a relatively objective manner can do so by either enhancing or reducing argument scrutiny.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Variables affecting message processing in a relatively biased manner can produce a positive/negative bias to the issue-relevant thoughts attempted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Motivation and/or ability to process arguments decreased, peripheral cues become relatively important determinants of persuasion. As argument scrutiny is increased, peripheral cues become less important determinant of persuasion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Attitudes changes resulted mostly from processing issue-relevant (central route) arguments will show greater temporal persistence, greater prediction of behavior and greater resistance to counter persuasion than attitude changes that result mostly from peripheral cues.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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**Think About It**

How do Malaysians make up their mind about whom to vote? Discuss with your friends, etc. find out what do they look for in their representatives?
Advertising plays a very important role in politics. Through advertising, political consultants hope to persuade voters in their voting decision. However, this kind of ad if abused would also have a negative impact on voters. Next, the discussion will focus on advertising in politics, which will include negative political advertising.

**Political Advertising**

Politicians have been known to use advertising to influence voters. Making registered voters aware of the candidate’s legislative record, stand on issues and political vision can be achieved through the same advertising media that other organizations use such as print, broadcast, direct mail and outdoor. Some political candidates have also used advertising to discredit their opponents.

In the United States, presidential candidates and other politicians with millions of dollars to spend on advertising typically use television commercials to sway large blocks of voters (Bovee & Arens, 1992). They have also been able to enlist top talent from the ad world to create their memorable advertising campaigns. Initially they may run some positive message ads thus building their credibility with voters; this will then be followed with some mud-slinging ads at their opponents.

Clearly political ad has grown significantly with the expansion of broadcast media in the past decades. Bovee (1992) mentioned that one study revealed that television advertising by both gubernatorial and congressional candidates in the six non-presidential election years between 1970 and 1990 in the USA ballooned from $12 million to $230.5 million.

Television if used effectively can aid in a political campaign. However, candidates need to be more selective in choosing their strategies and media. In order to use the medium most effectively, candidates have to purchase television spots to introduce their ideas (Barker & Barker 1993).

While candidates may be able to get televised news coverage that is free yet buying the more expensive commercials spot seems like a better choice for it has much greater impact. Nevertheless, it is still unknown whether the exposure reinforces and changes viewers voting habits or not. Yet, these advertising spots have a much greater effect than television news coverage in terms of both exposure and information.

According to Bovee (1992) political advertising took center stage during the 1980s primarily due to complex issues such as drugs, crime and the federal deficit are far more difficult to grasp than simplistic 30-second ad focusing on other issues. One major question that all political campaigns must deal with is how harsh and direct should the attack to the opponent be?

Many political consultants believe in using negative advertisements and feel that it will be used more in the future. As political campaigns become nastier placing more emphasis on
negative ads, public outcry has also increased. In fact, critics charge that the negative tone of many political campaigns may actually serve to turn off voter from the poll.

Some studies such as that by Sonner (1998) concluded that negative political advertising can be risky. While negative ads can be effective for shifting voters away from an opponent, this does not always translate into increased support for the sponsoring candidates. An ad that is perceived as mean-spirited can disastrously boomerang against the sponsoring candidate.

The media particularly television has a role in politics. News and advertising have been manipulated to win elections. The chapter on Politics: Using News and Advertising to Win Elections by Harris (1994) provides a good vignette on the role and needs in politics and the relevant psychological processes that are involved.

Reading

Read the topic on Politics: Using News and Advertising to Win Elections in Harris.

Summary of Unit

Our perception of the political world is largely a product of the media. The role of the media especially television is undoubtedly profound and will continue to be debated. While critics may suggest that TV has corrupted the democratic process, the defenders will point out the technical marvels and improved dissemination of information that technology has allowed us to use in this process as argued by Harris (1994).

Media is definitely instrumental in bringing about certain issues to the public’s attention and thus enabling them to make their political decisions. Hence, voting behavior is significantly influenced by what people know about the issues involved. How a person is going to vote is predicted by the information that person has.

Review Questions

1. How is the media important in political campaigns?
2. What is negative advertising and how effective is this kind of ad?
3. How would you describe voting decision based on the Elaboration Likelihood Model.
References:


Unit 12.
Gender Portrayal in the Media

Unit Introduction

This unit deals with the way the media portrays women and the minorities. It takes a look at the negative image paint by the media and how it affects the audience. The focus is greatly on gender portrayals on television since we are highly exposed to this medium and it has helped us create our perception about people and our environment. The discussion on the gender portrayal in the media will include attribution theories and theories of effect.

Unit Learning Outcomes

After successful completion of the unit, you should be able to:

○ Examine the media image of women as a minority group
○ Identify how are women & minorities represented in the media
○ Explain the consequences of such portrayals and be more gender-sensitive
○ Find the answer to what it means to be a man or woman

Gender Portrayals

Activity

List down names of actresses both in the local and international movie industry that have won awards these past five years. How were they portrayed in the movie that won them the awards?
From the activity you might conclude that there is a bias in gender portrayal in movies and on television. Apparently, the issue of negative portrayal of women in the media is not new. Both print and the electronic media do not provide a balanced picture of women’s diverse lives and contributions to society. There is a continued projection of negative and degrading images of women in the media. Research has been conducted to study the issues of the portrayal of women in the media and most of the research shows that very little coverage has been given to women’s work, achievements or needs.

In fact, during the 80’s women are predominantly portrayed in traditional roles of housewives and mothers. Those who are portrayed in non-traditional roles are often ridiculed or distorted (Wang Lay Kim, 1997). According to Harris (1994) content analysis of characters on TV shows in the 1970’s and early 1980’s showed about three times as many men as women in prime-time drama’s and four times as many in Saturday morning children’s shows.

**Activity**

Over the years, there have been several successful all-female shows. List down the shows and name its leading ladies.

**Prime-Time Characters: Role and Gender by Season**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Minor</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Minor</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Character Total</th>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>174</td>
<td>943</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>822</td>
<td>662</td>
<td>334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>66.4</td>
<td>31.6</td>
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<td>1991</td>
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<td>59</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>392</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>62.2</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>62.4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>104</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>810</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>62.7</td>
<td>37.3</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>66.8</td>
<td>33.2</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>66.1</td>
<td>33.9</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


The figures above show the percentage of male and female characters in prime-time television shows. A study conducted by Gerbner (1994) shows the gender imbalance was virtually the same in 1989-90 as in the 1991-92 season (33.5 percent and 33.9 percent respectively). The table above shows that there were only 31.6 percent of women in the lead roles in 1989-90 as compared to 68.4 percent of men. In the 1991-92 season, the percentage of women (37.3) in the major role is still lower than that of the men (64.9).
A general review reported by Wang Lay Kim (1999) suggested that the 1970s and 1980s images constructed of woman in the media generally does not present a progressive view. Media treatment of woman can be described as narrow. Women are rarely portrayed as rational, active or decisive. On the contrary, they are characterized as essentially dependent and romantic, confines to their homes and family.

During the 1960s, 90 percent of women in the media were portrayed as housewives. The type of media treatment of women seems to be consistent throughout the world. Today, as we move towards the end of the 1990s, while there has been some changes in the gender portrayals yet there has not been major changes occurred. In the 1990s, the number of women employed outside the home as portrayed by the media is only 40 percent.

Another concern is that women are too often portrayed as youthful beauties whose duty is to stay young and attractive to please their men (Harriss, 1994). The portrayal of women in the media according to Mustafa K. Anuar (1995) is highly dependent on men. Whether they get in the news or not would very likely depend on the success story of their husband. Men were the newsmaker, while women were shown as the spouse, daughters or mothers.

Activity

Study the news bulletin for a week. List down the number of men and women interviewed/ featured. When, why and how long were they featured?

In the news, women are almost always shown as victims. Take for example in reporting a rape case, most often the media will offer a lengthy coverage about the victims yet little would be said or reported about the assailant/ rapist. Similarly with the reporting of issues concerning the youth problem. For instance the much talked about issues of “Bohsia.” It has been a common practice of the media to highlight on the female as the sex object and yet fail to look at the male who are as guilty.

Now that the media industry has become more sophisticated and more aware to the pressure of women’s groups, blatant portrayals of women as sex objects have somewhat diminished. Previously there were so many images of scantily dressed women in an ad yet today things have changed a little. However, sexist ideologists has manifested itself in more insidious ways. For example, commercial still portrays women as terribly perplexed and even neur-otic about such matters as dirty laundry. Women were told repeatedly that no matter how successful they’re, confining to their homes they’re still regarded as demure, passive and submissive either as mothers or wife. The superwomen myth reinforced by an ad mentioned by Harris (1996) proves the lack of respect to women by the media. A perfume ad says that a woman can “bring home bacon, fry it in a pan, but never let him forget he’s a man!” This is to translate that a woman can work outside the home all day, come home and cook dinner for her husband, and still have enough energy left to be sexy for him that evening!
It can be as frustrating to see how women were being portrayed in the ad. A case in point is the 1995 Bufori as featuring three women walking into a matchmaking agency, each declaring what she wants in a man. The last woman who also happened to be the prettiest boldly says, "I don't care what he is or how he looks like, as long as he drives a Bufori. I'm all his." (Aishah Ali, 1997). Such demeaning to a woman's self respect! The ad has since been taken off the air after being pressured by the public.

Activity

Scan the variety of local women's magazines. Choose four advertisements from the magazine that portray women. Try to identify the kind of image that the women were portrayed.

Remember the Page One girl of the Malay Mail? That is another example of showing politically incorrectness of sexism. The column is now moved to page five. The stereotypes of women in the media continue to plague us, to offend our sensitivities and to cause for alarm! Very often, product leaflets, sales brochures and photo shoots tend to present women like they're a part of a commodity. It is the current practice of the local tabloid and magazines to focus on sensational news with the inclusion of pictures of personality in sexy outfits.

Salma Maoulidi (1997) during her presentation at the International Seminar for Women in the Media, expressed her concern regarding the negative portrayals of women in the media back in her country, Tanzania. One weekly newspaper has gone as far as publishing a Grapevine page that features half-naked girls in various suggestive poses accompanied by saucy gossip and lurid jokes. Such example is yet another proof of how the media represented women. If these are the kinds of portrayal of women in the media, what then is the portrayal of men?

How the media portray male characters?

Think About It
Can you recall the show starring Tony Danza, "Who's the Boss?" Well, he was a housekeeper to a successful corporate lady, Angela. Yet, Tony was no ordinary housekeeper, he was competent, the most stable emotionally, the most responsible. Guess what, he could even be the father to Angela's son, Jonathan. What a hunk for a housekeeper huh? Do you think similar representation would have been given should Tony's character were to trade places with Angela? Think again!
Apparently both daytime and prime time programs favor men more than women. Consequently, more men are cast in major roles. According to Gebner's (1994) studies, women play one out of three roles in prime-time television.

Game shows prove to be the most patriarchal, with all the hosts (ringmasters) are men. On the contrary, over the local scene we do see women acting as host of some serious programs. Perhaps you may have seen them! Gan, Su-lin (1997) in examining Singapore's media representations of women finds that while men get to host the more high-brow content shows, women was however, ask to host the human interests news programs. The following section will explain the psychological theories related to the subjects of gender and group portrayal in the media.

Activity

Take time out and watch some TV. Look out for the number of males in the leading roles as compared to females. Can you name them?

Psychological Theories

Attribution theories. According to attribution theory, when people observe actions of others they make attributions about why people behaved in such a way. People attribute the behavior of others to personal or situational factors. How we respond to a persuasive message depends on our attribution of the speaker's motivation for sending the message. An attribution theory is an assignment of cause (blame/origin). If one think that his stupidity is dues to his having hit his head on a low branch, then he will attribute the stupidity on that event.

Attribution theories look for predictable regularities in the ways we attribute the things that happen around us or to us to certain cause. Although it is relatively new, yet attribution theories have produced a number of what might prove to be very different in the ways in which they successes or fail (Lefrancos, 1989).

Attribution theories explore our attributing someone's behavior either to internal dispositions (enduring traits, motives and attitudes) or to external situations. In external attribution we assign causality to an outside agent or force while internal attribution assigns causality to factors within the person.

Think About It

Are we learning these stereotyped scripts from the media? Or is the media mainly reflecting on society?
Identification. According to Burke (cited Neuliep 1996) identification refers to those things people have in common with other people. Burke argues that people have commonalities with each other. The advertiser who uses a celebrity to endorse a product is explicitly trying to identify that product with an audience.

The process of identification is one of the most important personality developments in early childhood. This consists of the adoption of the characteristics, beliefs, attitudes, value and behaviors of another person by a child. From the perspective of social learning theorists, identification is the consequence of observing and imitating a model. For example, a child’s model may include his/her parent, older siblings or a TV personality. Children usually pick up characteristics from several different models; their choice may be based on how much power a person seems to have and how nurturing or caring the person is (Papalia & Olds, 1986).

Based on the identification, children come to believe that they have similar characteristics as their model. Thus, when they identify with a nurturing and competent model, the children are pleased and proud. When the model is inadequate, the children may feel unhappy and insecure.

The high exposure to the media can be highly effective in shaping our perceptions. The theories of effects will help us uncover the influence of the media on our behavior.

Theories of Effects

Classical conditioning: This theory based on Skinner’s classical and operant conditioning models, focus on the relationship between responses people make to specific persuasion stimuli. It also concentrates on the positive and negative reinforcement their responses foster. The stimuli are referred to the persuasive message whereas attitudinal, affective or behavioral change serves as the responses. For example, we can help shape our children’s behavior by rewarding the actions that are desirable and by punishing or ignoring the undesirable ones. Similarly, the media plays a very important role in shaping our behavior through its contents. Take for instance, alcohol consumption that is regularly associated with positive events portrayed on many TV shows and the print ad. The message to the audience can be concluded as “It’s okay to drink but don’t get drunk!”

Disinhibition: People become desensitized to things that are negative and will gradually accept it as normal. Watch the movies, read the papers or magazines and we will come across such things as premarital sex. Years ago it was a taboo to even talk about it. Yet, today it is not such a big problem. If it still is then why is the media telling us to instead have safe sex?
The reading thus far focused on gender portrayal in the media. The chapter on Portrayal of Groups: Learning About People by Harris (1994) provides a lengthy explanation of portrayal of minorities, in addition to gender portrayal. In another related chapter, a chapter on Values: Right and Wrong in the Media, Harris discussed how the media are involved in teaching and reinforcing values.

Reading

Read the topics of, “Portrayals of groups: Learning about people,” and “Values: Right and wrong in the Media,” in Harris.

Summary of Unit

The media play an important role in defining who we are, what we think and what is our place in society. They help establish how issues affecting women and the minorities are interpreted and evaluated. Their portrayals affect how we see each other and ourselves. As they provide tool for reflecting attitudes, therefore they can also provide the tool for changing those attitudes.

As more women are involved as media practitioners, they are also demanding that media offer more space for more serious and critical issues pertaining to women (Rahmah Hashim & Fuziah Kartini, 1996). Women involvement in the media industry will not only help pave the ways for the development of women but also more importantly change the negative media representation of women.

Thomas (1984) concluded that in both fairy tales and TV drama, male and female roles are sharply demarcated. Male characters outnumber females in both these worlds. Females are more often younger or older than males, who appear most often as settled (middle-aged) adults. Women are also consistently more likely than men to be romantically attached, married and involved with the traditional female concerns of home and family life. Yet fairytale women are proportionally more likely than their male counterparts and more likely than females on TV drama to be portrayed as both bad and unsuccessful in the pursuit of their goals.

Review Questions

1. Explain the theories of effect and how do you relate it with gender stereotyping?
2. Identify the similarities and differences between the psychological theories and the theories of effects

3. What do you understand about gender stereotyped? What is the importance of understanding about gender stereotyped in psychology of communication?

References:


Unit 13.
Violence in the Media

Unit Introduction

This unit examines the issues of violence in the media. What is the psychological impact of the extensive exposure to violence in the media? In order for us to understand the impact of violence we need to also understand the related theories such as, Simulation, Catharsis. This unit will explain the kind of impact of the media violence. Will too much media exposure result in sensitization or desensitization? There have also been various studies conducted to learn of the effects of violence in the media.

Unit Learning Objective

After successful completion of this unit, you should be able to:

☐ analyze what is violence and identify the key factors that cause it.
☐ understand the profound effects of exposure to violence in the media.
☐ relate to some of the social learning theories

What is Violence?

It was suggested that children ages 6-11 spend more time watching television than they do in their classroom. The level of violence in prime time television in American television is said to be about 5 violent acts per hour, while the level of violence in children's Saturday morning programming is about 20 to 25 violent acts per hour. Thus the average American child will see some 8,000 murders before he finishes elementary school! Now, that's scary.

So, do we really know what TV violence really is or what it should include? Should it include the news? Cartoons? We may know what are violent acts when we see it, yet it is very difficult to define. Should we equate Wile E. Coyote (the cartoon) getting smashed by one of his own contraptions or Bruce Willis blowing someone away as violent acts?

Violent behavior is an undesirable act that contradicts the norms of accepted social behavior. Violence is also defined as the overt expression of psychological force against others or self, or the compelling of action against one's will on pain of being hurt or killed (Gamble,
According to Harris (1994), violence is defined as intentional physical harm to another individual.

The sad fact is violence has become an ordinary way to be entertained, settle arguments, or even blow off steam. Violence is a result of many different things put together, and violence in the media is only one of those things.

"Of course it is not contended that television violence is the only cause of aggression and violence in society today. Aggression is a multiply determined behavior. It is the product of a number of interacting factors—genetic, prenatal, physiological, neurological, environmental. It is only when there is a convergence of factors that violent behavior environmental. It is only when there is a convergence of factors that violent behavior occurs." (Eron, 1992)

**Think About It**

Q: What does Bruce Willis and Will Smith have in common?
A: Blockbuster and violence movies. List down some of their blockbuster movies and identify the themes.

Murray (1999) referring to Huston et al. (1992) reported that American children and adolescents are being exposed to increasing amounts of media violence, especially in television, movies, video games and youth-oriented music. By the time they were 18, the average young person will have viewed an estimated 200,000 acts of violence on television alone.

In movies, reported Plagens (1991), action films depict anatomically precise murders, rapes and assaults; with each sequel, the number of deaths increases dramatically. Although media violence is not the only cause of violence in American society, it is the single most easily remediable contributing factor (Strasburger (1993) cited in the American Academy of Pediatrics, 1993).

**The Impact of Televised Violence**

Does TV viewing prompt violent or even causes other antisocial behaviors on the part of the viewer? This is a question that has existed since the earliest days of this medium. While there is no absolute answer to this, yet decades of research has confirmed the harmful effects of media violence on the behavior of children, youth and adults who view such programming (Murray, 1999).

The growing domestic turmoil in America in the 1960s has lead to the then President Lyndon B. Johnson to create the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of violence in America in 1968. The tasks of the commission were to evaluate conditions that had led to the turmoil. The report implied that contributor to the turmoil in the streets was the violent TV content. The report also suggested that the TV schedule was greatly dominated by the portrayals of violence (Heibert, 1991). More than 30 years after the report, things have not
shown much changes. In fact, violence on TV and the movies grew more graphic in the late 1960s and grown for the worst to date.

While people in the entertainment industry maintain that violent programming is harmless since no studies exist that prove that there is connection between violence in the media and aggressive behavior in children and after all young people know that television, movies, and video games are simple fantasy. Unfortunately, they are wrong on both counts.

An American researcher, Gerbner has carried out the most extensive studies on mass media violence over the last two decades and found that American television is saturated with violence (Brown, 1996).

Over 1000 studies including a Surgeon General's special report in 1972 and a National Institute of Mental Health report 10 years later attest to a causal connection between media violence and aggressive behavior in some children (American Academy of Pediatrics, 1995).

Think About it

Think of the local movie industry. Are they similar or different from American movies in their approach to attract audience? Just to give you some idea about our local film industry, get a copy each of the movies, "Lenjan and Jogho." Preview them and list down the violence aspect in the movies.

Studies show that the more "real-life" the violence portrayed, the greater the likelihood that it will be "learned" (Lieber, 1988; Cantor, 1994). The portrayal of violence as being justified is the single most prevalent notion in American media and the most powerfully reinforcing one. Children at young ages cannot uniformly discriminate between "real life" and "fantasy/entertainment."

Strasburger (1993) cited in the American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement, 1995 reported that an average American child views 21 to 23 hours of television per week. By the time today's children reach age 70, they will spend 7 to 10 years of their lives watching television.

Activity

Find out how much time does your kid(s) spent watching TV per week? What kind of programs do they usually watch?

Barker (1992) stresses that an extensive body of literature has been proven to demonstrate that exposure to television violence does indeed contribute to increased levels of aggression among the young. In fact a study on the effects of realistic television violence (as featured in newscasts) versus fictional violence shows that both types of violence are in deed factors contributing to violence.
Interestingly, television violence not only produces aggressive behavior but also affects our reactions to violence in real life. It is sometimes suggested that extensive viewing to very violence scenes make viewers more sensitive to the painful consequences of violent actions. People are turned off and less likely to be aggressive. Sensitization is a sort of reverse modeling effect; viewers react so strongly to seeing some violence and are less likely to imitate the act.

Media violence may not only facilitate aggressive but also antisocial behavior, desensitize viewers to future violence and increase viewers' perceptions that they are living in a mean and dangerous world. This issue may be harder to face. Sometimes we like violence. Admit it! Sometimes we do. Take for instance when the bad guy is a particular show has been terrible and rotten and unfeeling and just evil personified and what do you do? Of course, secretly you'd root for the good guy or your hero to practice a little street-level retribution. Watching evil getting punch-out or shot provides a certain sense of satisfaction that watching some cop putting the handcuffs on the perpetrator just doesn't provide (not always though) (Walsh, 1999).

There seems to be more support for the notion that television violence "desensitizes" its audience to violence in real-life situations. This views states that audience becomes apathetic toward or accepting violent acts in society (Barker, 1993). Repeated viewing is said to lead to increased acceptance. Audience gets accustomed to violence and they tend to watch more and more of it. Physiologically, children who watch a lot of violence show less arousal and were likely to stop a fight when they see one.

**Activity**

Have you ever watched the World Wrestling Federation show? Find out if there are any fans of the show in your home/neighborhood. Why do they watch such show? Are there any female fans in the group?

Content analyses of a one-week of prime-time programming conducted by Gerbner (1971) as mentioned by Biagi (1992) found that in the American television programmimg, eight out of ten prime-time shows contained violence. The study also found that the connection between television violence and aggressive behavior affected only some children who were already classified as aggressive children and only in certain environments.

What are the effects of the extensive exposure of televised violence? What do we know about the influence of television violence from the broad range of correlational, experimental and field studies that have been conducted over the past 40 years?

Correlational studies. The findings from these studies are fairly consistent: viewing and/or preference for violent television is related to aggressive attitudes, values and behaviors. Murray (1999) explained that the correlational studies conducted by Robinson and Bachman (1972) found that there is a relationship between the number of hours of television viewed and adolescent self-reports of involvement in aggressive or antisocial behavior. Using Phillips (1983), Murray further explained that a study was carried out to investigate the effects of the portrayal of suicides in television soap operas on the suicide rate in the United States using...
death records compiled by the National Center for Health Statistics. He found over six-year period, that whenever a major soap opera personality committed suicide on television, within three days there was a significant increase in the number of female’s suicide across the nation.

Experimental Studies. In explaining on experimental studies, Murray (1999) has cited Bandura and his colleagues (1961, 1963) who had conducted the major initial experimental studies of the cause and effect relation between television/film violence and aggressive behavior. They worked with young children, while Berkowitz and his associates (1962, 1963, and 1963) also cited by Murray, studied adolescents. Bandura in his early study presented with a young child with a film, back-projected on a television screen, of a model who kicked and punished an inflated plastic doll. The child was then placed in a playroom setting and the incidence of aggressive behavior was recorded. The results of these early studies indicated that children who had viewed the aggressive film were more aggressive in the playroom than those children who had not observed the aggressive model.

Field Studies. Murray (1999) referred to Stein and Fredrich (1972) who had conducted one early experiment to explain the process of field studies. These investigators presented 97 preschool children with a diet of either ‘antisocial,’ ‘prosocial’ or ‘neutral’ television programs during a four-week viewing period. The antisocial diet consisted of twelve half-hour episodes of Batman and superman cartoons. The prosocial diet was composed of twelve half-hour episodes of Mister Roger’s Neighborhood, which is a program that stresses themes such as sharing possessions and cooperative play. The neutral diet consisted of children’s programming which was neither violent nor prosocial. The children were observed for a nine-week period, which consisted of three weeks of pre-viewing baseline, four weeks of television exposure, and two weeks of post-viewing follow-up.

All observations were conducted in a naturalistic setting while the children were engaged in daily school activities. The observers recorded various forms of behavior that could be regarded as prosocial i.e. helping, sharing, cooperative play or antisocial i.e. pushing, arguing, breaking toys. The overall results indicated that children who were judged to be initially somewhat aggressive became significantly more so as a result of viewing the Batman and Superman cartoon. Moreover, the children who had viewed the prosocial diet of Mister Roger’s Neighborhood were less aggressive, more cooperative and more willing to share with other children (Murray, 1999).

Most research in the area of violence in the media has examined the effects of television violence. Television as a unique form of entertainment can be found in almost every home today. Television has also becomes a large part of everyday life for many people. Therefore, images of violence from this medium could potentially affect a large proportion of the population compared to videos and computer games, which are increasingly popular to a smaller segment of the population.

Videos pose a greater problem than television due to the more explicit, violent material that they contain and the material can be easily accessible. Videos are available 24 hour per day and their content ranges from wholesome “feel-good” stories for the entertainment of the whole family to an “X” rated violent and sexually explicit ones. Many video/computer games contain some level of violence and very often the player is required to fight other characters in some sort of battle, injuring or killing people in order to proceed to the next level of game. There is
an increasing concern that players will become more aggressive as a result of violent games or will become desensitized to violence.

A research by Dominick (1984), related to the issue of video games and aggression in teenagers found that these games stimulated aggressive behavior. The application of stimulation theory in such cases suggest that those who view scenes of violence have increased probability of committing aggressive acts in real life. On the contrary, a competing point of view called catharsis theory holds that viewing violence purges the observer of aggressive tendencies so that the probability of later real-life aggression is decreased. However, many feel this research is not conclusive. The majority has found little support for catharsis more evidence exists to support the claim of stimulation theory.

The chapter on violence: Does All That Mayhem Matter by Harris (1994) provides an excellent description on the psychological effects of violence.

**Reading**

Read the topic of Violence: Does All The Mayhem Matter? in Harris.

**Summary of Unit**

Clearly, there has been a vast research on media violence inside and outside of the laboratory. While there is no single study that should be seen as thoroughly definitive in establishing a deleterious effect of TV violence yet the overall evidence has substantially converge to the conclusion that media violence does have harmful effects on children either to increase aggressive behavior or in changing attitudes and values particularly through the process of desensitization and the cultivation of fear.

**Review Questions**

1. What is your definition of the term violence?

2. What is the important of studying violence in the media?

3. While the effect of violence in the media can be found in both print and electronic media, yet most studies concentrate on the effect of televised violence. What is so important about televised violence?

4. What are the differences between the terms sensitization and desensitization?
5. How does stimulation theory and catharsis theory relate to the study of violence in the media?

References:


RIM 5213 Psychology of Communication

Unit 13. Violence in the Media