LECTURE 3

JOURNALISM & JOURNALISTS

Journalism Traditions: Historical Development & Legacies

- Colonial Period (Founding of the Colonies – Am. Revolution)
- Partisan Period (Am. Revolution – 1830’s)
- Penny Press Period (1830’s – 1890’s)
- Yellow Press Period (Late 1890’s - )

How is the content of news shaped?

Factors Influencing News Content

(i) Personal Values of Journalists

- Ethnocentrism
  - American View
  - This may be partially due to their personal values and partially due to their consideration to the audience’s views and what’s an appropriate view

- Commitment to Democracy & Capitalism
  - The capitalistic economic system is never challenged

- Tendency toward Moderation
  - Middle of the road is considered good --> Scornful of the extremes
  - Again, this may be partially due to their personal values but also partially due to their consideration for audience --> The median voter theorem can be a relevant analogy here --> aiming at the median audience member allows them to appeal to a largest number of audience possible

- Social Order
  - Cover disorders. But, the tone of the coverage is concerned about restoring the order
• Questions of (Liberal) Bias

(ii) Organizational Factors:

• News Hole

• News Flow and News Staffing

• Staffing

• Perceptions about Audience
  - What’s covered and how it is covered is affected by business considerations --> what the audience of the particular outlet looks like

• Availability of Material
  - Sometimes the availability of more (visually) “interesting” video or photographs make a difference whether or not the story will be covered as well as how extensively it will be covered.

• Meeting Deadlines
  - Timely completion of the stories is essential in the news media
  - This works as a constraint to what can be covered or the ways in which the particular topic/story will be covered
  - Ex) Heavily relying on polls or horserace coverage of election campaigns at least partially from this organizational/operational imperative

• Competition
  - Competition creates an environment in which journalists constantly monitor each other and see what other newspapers/stations are covering
  - If “we missed what they covered, we are not as good or losing audience” --> Pack Journalism or “consensible nature of news”
  - This is partially driven by organizational norms as well --> “if they covered it, it must be newsworthy”.
  - In short, competition --> Convergence
(iii) Outside Influence

- Advertiser Influence
  - Do advertisers interests affect what’s covered or the tone of coverage
  - Advertising as an insurance for the companies

- Corporate Policy
  - Corporate managers may interfere with what’s covered and what’s not to be covered as well as the tone of the coverage
  - Sometimes this is a matter of ownership --> ABC is owned by Disney and NBC is partially owned by GE --> What does this mean for fair and balance coverage? --> Can these press org. cover their mother companies wrongdoings or may be will they criticize their mother companies’ competitors?

- Source Pressure
  - Journalists need to maintain a stable relationship with their sources for the future --> often their relationship is not one-time only relationship
  - Then, the question becomes whether or not reporters and journalists could do a “favor” or tone down their coverage at times in order to maintain a stable future relationship with these “sources”

Journalism Trend

- Exploratory Reporting / Interpretative Journalism
  - Event-oriented, factual news --> issue-oriented, analysis news
  - The trend largely began in the 60’s.
  - Much of this the so-called “investigative reporting” modeled after the Watergate scandal coverage
  - Two Questions remain:
    (1) Origin of this trend – is this a best response the news sources’ attempts to manipulate the press or is this mostly driven by the journalists’ own personal aspirations?
    (2) More importantly, is this investigative reporting necessarily good for the public? --> May increase cynicism among the public --> Indeed, the increasing pattern of American public’s political cynicism coincide with this emergence of investigative reporting.
• Soft News
  - Hard news --> More issue-oriented, serious news
  - Soft news --> More consumer-oriented news (e.g. human interest stories, etc.)
AUDIENCE

Mass Communication Models

Why Mass Communication Models?:

Earliest/Simplest Model  S(source) → M(message) → R(receiver)  
(stimulus-response psychology -- Pavlov)

- Media Effects = f(Message or Source)

- Transmission Approach: Early, the linear models fall under the so-called "transmission" approach, in which the message is basically conceptualized as a good.

The concept of Audience in the earliest model: Passive Audience

- **Lasswell Formula:**  
  Who?  
  Says What?  
  In Which Channel?  
  To Whom?  
  With what effect?

- **Shannon and Weaver mathematical model**
Hypodermic needle/bullet theory

- “Mass” audience:
  - Anonymous: The mass doesn’t have an identity and remain anonymous to others
  - Heterogeneous: heterogeneous in the sense that they are so segmented that they can’t interact with one another; they are all “independent” of each other
  - Spatially separated: No Interaction
  - Loose organization: No leadership

- “Passive audience”

Minimal/Limited Effects Paradigm

- Selective Attention Hypothesis: as an explanatory mechanism for minimal Campaign Effects → To explain the patterns, the so-called selective attention hypothesis emerged as an explanatory mechanism.

According to this hypothesis, the audience members “selectively” pay attention to the messages they agree with based on their predispositions

- Underlying Psychological Mechanism:
  Dissonance Reduction Hypothesis / Consistency Hypothesis
  - People have a tendency to selectively expose or pay attention to the messages that are consistent with their pre-existing attitudes and ideologies because counter-attitudinal messages tend to create a psychological tension or the so-called “dissonance” → Consequently, as a way to maintain consonance or as a mechanism to dissolve the cognitive tension, selective attention or exposure becomes the behavioral norm.

- The Notion of Reinforcement vs. Direct Persuasion

- Ex) Uses-and-Gratification Paradigm:
  - a functionalist view: Functionalism is a huge sociological theory from the 50’s → argues that things should be seen as a system of interrelated parts → everything we do serves a function based on our “needs” → so, They Allows us to reach a state of equilibrium
  - Accordingly, this paradigm views that people actively use the media messages to fulfill some of their needs
• Ex) Osgood and Schramm
Conditional Effects Approach

- Individual --> Personal predispositions
- Content --> Message Characteristics
- Environment --> External Environment (e.g. issue environment, etc.)

- 3 Perspectives on (Active) Audience (to Help & Predict Responses/Effects):

  (i)  *Individual Differences*

  \[ S[ource] \rightarrow \text{Psychological Mech.} \rightarrow \text{R[esponse]} \]

  (ii) *Sociological Differences (Categories)*

  \[ S[ource] \rightarrow \text{Social Categories} \rightarrow \text{R[esponse]} \]

  (iii) *Social Relations*

  \[ S[ource] \rightarrow \text{Social Relations} \rightarrow \text{R[esponse]} \]

- In short:

  \[ S[ource] \rightarrow \text{Individual Diff.} \rightarrow \text{R[esponse]} \]

  \[ S[ource] \rightarrow \text{Social Categories} \rightarrow \text{R[esponse]} \]

  \[ S[ource] \rightarrow \text{Social Rel.} \]
Conclusion:

- “Passive Audience → Active Audience → Audience Activities”
- “Powerful/Strong Effects Paradigm → Minimal Effects → Conditional Effects”

These two paradigm shifts go hand in hand.