Knowledge gaps &
Uses and Gratifications

J201 Introduction to Mass Communication
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#sjmc201
① Short writing assignment # 2 (via turnitin; probably want to wait until Friday before you decide which theory to apply)
Organization of today’s lecture

• From Agendas to Knowledge
• Knowledge gap hypothesis
• Evidence of knowledge gaps
• Uses & gratifications
### Table 2.8  Knowledge of Foreign Affairs in Comparative Perspective
(Percentage Correct)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Italy</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
<th>Spain</th>
<th>United Kingdom</th>
<th>United States</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President of Russia?</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country threatening to</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>withdraw from nonproliferation treaty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who is Boutros Boutros Ghali</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic group that has</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conquered much of Bosnia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name of group with whom</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israelis recently reached</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peace accord</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answered four or five</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>correctly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answered none correctly</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean number correct</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>1.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 3.1 Change in Knowledge Levels: 1940s and 1950s to 1989

1947 1954 1957 1989

- Presidential term is four years
- Can define presidential veto
- Can name the vice president
- Knows which party controls House
- Defines "business recession"
- Knows which party controls Senate
- Knowledge of Fifth Amendment
- First ten amendments is Bill of Rights
- Can name both U.S. senators
Political knowledge

% of people who can name the three branches of government

- Know all three branches: 26%
- Know two branches: 13%
- Know one branch: 27%
- Do not know any branches: 33%
- Refused: 1%

What are the specific rights guaranteed by the First Amendment?

- Freedom of religion: 15%
- Freedom of speech: 48%
- Freedom of the press: 14%
- Right of assembly: 10%
- Right to petition: 3%
- Can't name any/Don't know: 37%

*Open-ended question followed by prompts for additional responses.
Annenberg Public Policy Center
Do we learn political knowledge from news?

WILLIAM P. EVELAND JR. ¹
DHAVAN V. SHAH
NOJIN KWAK

Assessing Causality in the
Cognitive Mediation Model

A Panel Study of Motivations, Information Processing, and Learning During Campaign 2000
Do we learn political knowledge from news?
Conventional wisdom: increasing flow of information on a topic ensures widespread acquisition of knowledge.

But…

“As the infusion of mass media information into a social system increases, segments of the population with higher socioeconomic status tend to acquire this information at a faster rate than the lower status segments, so that the gap in knowledge between these segments tends to increase rather than decrease.”

Tichenor, Donohue, & Olien
Knowledge gap hypothesis – underlying justification

- Communication skills
- Stored Information
- Relevant social contacts
- Selective exposure, acceptance and retention
Figure 1. Percent of respondents in national surveys stating belief that man will reach moon, by education and year.
### Table 2

**Levels of Public Affairs Knowledge for Persons with Different Educational Backgrounds, in a Newspaper Strike Community and a Non-strike Community, 1959**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>High School Education</th>
<th>College Education</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper strike</td>
<td>4.07 ($N = 153$)</td>
<td>4.51 ($N = 142$)</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No newspaper strike</td>
<td>4.38 ($N = 40$)</td>
<td>5.46 ($N = 56$)</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Number of items correct in an 11-item test on current events.

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**The Minneapolis-St. Paul Experiment**
Knowledge gap hypothesis – extending applicability

• Educational television
Evaluation of Magic Johnson’s announcement that he was HIV positive on people’s knowledge about HIV/AIDS.

- Two wave panel conducted before and after the announcement (March – November 1991).

*DID THE “MAGIC” WORK? KNOWLEDGE OF HIV/AIDS AND THE KNOWLEDGE GAP HYPOTHESIS*

By Wayne Wanta and William R. Elliott
Knowledge gap hypothesis – extending applicability

**Table 2**

Mean Score Comparisons for HIV/AIDS Knowledge Measures by Level of Education before and after Magic Johnson’s Announcement on 7 November 1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variables</th>
<th>Before (3/3-8)</th>
<th>After (11/8-14)</th>
<th>T-Test of Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of HIV/AIDS Transmission Less than high school</td>
<td>2.75 (32)</td>
<td>2.50 (10)</td>
<td>- .70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td>2.79 (102)</td>
<td>3.14 (64)</td>
<td>1.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>3.07 (84)</td>
<td>3.51 (121)</td>
<td>4.22***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>3.21 (77)</td>
<td>3.57 (49)</td>
<td>1.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate work</td>
<td>3.15 (62)</td>
<td>3.64 (59)</td>
<td>3.55**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-Ratio (education)</td>
<td>3.18**</td>
<td>4.63***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of HIV Less than high school</td>
<td>.28 (32)</td>
<td>1.30 (10)</td>
<td>4.66***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate</td>
<td>.46 (102)</td>
<td>1.38 (64)</td>
<td>7.12***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college</td>
<td>.67 (84)</td>
<td>1.64 (121)</td>
<td>9.70***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>.94 (77)</td>
<td>1.59 (49)</td>
<td>4.25***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate work</td>
<td>.80 (62)</td>
<td>1.83 (59)</td>
<td>7.90***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F-Ratio (education)</td>
<td>5.94**</td>
<td>4.48**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why Did the “Magic” work?

- Celebrity status.
- Perceived relevance.
- Widespread coverage (versus medium specificity).
- Ceiling effects?
“What people do with media rather than what media does to people.”

(Elihu Katz)
The Uses & Gratifications approach

- Paradigm shift from content to audience.
  - Channel proliferation.
  - Recognition of the importance of individual differences.

- Theoretical assumptions:
  - Individual differences lead to select content.
  - Individual differences influence message interpretation.
① Focus is no longer on the message/sender side of the equation.

② Does not assume direct influence from content.

③ Audience is no longer considered passive.
Can’t explain media effects unless first you understand audience:

- Characteristics
- Motivations
- Content selection
- Involvement with content
Interacting with media content
Assumptions of the U & G approach

① Communication as goal directed (purpose).

② Social and psychological factors filter and mediate media-behavior relationships.

③ Instead of being used by media, people select and use media to satisfy needs.

④ Media compete with other forms (functional alternatives) to satisfy needs (however… dependency can arise from patterns of use).
Individual needs that media can satisfy (Katz, Gurevitch & Haas, 1973)

① Cognitive needs - Acquiring information, knowledge and understanding.

② Affective needs - Emotion, pleasure, feelings.

③ Personal integrative needs - Credibility, stability, status.

④ Social integrative needs - Family and friends.

⑤ Tension release needs - Escape and diversion
• Combine message characteristics and audience psychological orientations.

• Combine direct effects models with individual differences model.

• Gratifications sought and attitude of viewer determine viewer’s attention.

• Effects on viewer depends on degree of involvement and intentions.
① People are different and these differences affect media use, message interpretation and effects.

② Audiences can be active and this impinges their processing of information.

③ Effects are not necessarily uniform, but contingent on predispositions and use.

④ Sometimes we are not as active users…
See you Wednesday.