Presumed media influence

J201 Introduction to Mass Communication
Sept 25 - 2017

Professor Hernando Rojas
hrojas@wisc.edu  @uatiff
201.journalism.wisc.edu
#sjmc201
① Third person perceptions
② Presumed media influence
③ Third person & presumed media effects
Third person perceptions – Davison (1983) original idea

- Informal evidence:
  - WWII examples
    - Political propaganda in your mailbox
- Initial evidence
  - Influence on the public of a politician failing to make his tax returns public

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More influence on New Yorkers in general</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More influence on self</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same influence on public and on self</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer/no opinion</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Initial evidence

Influence of New Hampshire’s vote

Table 2. Effects of New Hampshire Primary on Personal Voting Intentions and on Political Fortunes of Two Major Candidates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Will Influence Own Intention</th>
<th>Will Influence Reagan’s Fortunes</th>
<th>Will Influence Carter’s Fortunes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quite a lot</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A little</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Third person perceptions

- Extent of the phenomena
- Overestimation versus underestimation
- Contingent conditions
  - Type of content (Negative)
  - Social distance corollary
  - Perceived expertise (college students versus non college students)
Third person perceptions

• Why does it happen?
  - Ego enhancement/biased optimism
  - Differential media effects “theories”

• Consequences
  - Pro media censorship attitudes
From third-person perceptions to third-person effects

Behavioral outcomes grouped in 3 categories:

① Prevention
   - Willingness to censor media

② Corrective actions

③ Accommodation
   - Compliance
   - Withdrawal
Prevention (Doug McLeod SJMC)
Corrective action (Rojas 2010)

Third-person perceptions

Offline
- Attended a political rally
- Participated in a public protest
- Signed a petition
- Tried to persuade others to vote

Online
- Express political views
- Sending campaign information
- Posting comments online
- Commenting on online news
Radio soap opera in Nepal

Health campaign to improve patient treatment

The show becomes popular among the general population.

People report better interactions

Presumed influence (Al Gunther SJMC)

Figure 1. Hypothetical paths illustrating direct campaign effect (dashed line) and the influence of presumed influence (solid lines).
Figure 1 Direct and indirect media effects on adolescent smoking. The indirect path via perceived peer norms illustrates the presumed influence model.
Presumed media influence - main points

1. Media can have effects that are not direct but rather indirect (because we think they are having an effect).

2. Third-person perceptions are ubiquitous and can lead to attitudes and behaviors.

3. Presumed influence of media on others may lead us to change our behaviors.

4. Most of us live in worlds of perception not fact. Thus the importance of perceptions…
See you Wednesday.