

The Conscious Practitioner

Week 4 - Media Messages and Audiences

John 2025

What is a message?

- Message:
 - A **verbal**, **written** or **recorded** communication sent to or left for a recipient who cannot be contacted **directly**
 - A significant political, social or moral point that is being conveyed by a film, speech, etc.

What is a message?

- Message:
 - A **verbal**, **written** or **recorded** communication sent to or left for a recipient who cannot be contacted **directly**
 - A significant political, social or moral point that is being conveyed by a film, speech, etc.
 - A message is an indirect communication, it **needs** something **in-between**.

What are media?

- A question for you, firstly.

What are media?

- Media: plural form of medium
- Medium: an agency or means of doing something
- There's a famous saying in media art:
 - **Medium is a bridge; medium is a wall**
- Can you guess what does it mean?

Do you know what is happening

In Ukraine and Gaza



Image from CNN

Do you know what is happening

In Ukraine and Gaza



Image from the Reuters

Do you know what is happening

In Ukraine and Gaza



Image from BBC

Do you know what is happening

In Ukraine and Gaza



Image from The New Yorker

Medium is a bridge

A bridge lead you from one place to another

- We are very far away from Ukraine or Gaza. We can't see or hear anything from these two places **directly**.
- However, we are able to know what is happening in Ukraine and Gaza because we have the media **in-between** us and Ukraine/Gaza.
- The media extends our sight, leading it to Ukraine and Gaza.

Medium is a wall

A wall keeps danger outside

- Why do we have walls/fences in our house?
- Although we can **see and hear** from Ukraine and Gaza via the media, but we are **not there**.
We are safe from all those explosions and bullets.
- Media separate us (the watcher) and them (the event) **physically**.

Medium is a wall

A wall limits your freedom

- Why do we have walls for the prison?
- A wall stops you from going out. You see the pictures of people being slaughtered, you heard them cry, but you can't smell the blood, you can't feel the pain of a bullet in the arm.
- Media **limits** what information we are able to receive.

Media

How we get to see what we see

- What media you usually watch/read/listen to?
- Do you know how the content is produced? Can you guess what steps is in the process before you see/hear those content?

Media

How we get to see what we see

- For example, for you to be able to watch a news on the BBC channel, they need to **produce** it. This includes two different area:
 - The technical side: They need to compile the files (data), have a infrastructure to board cast it (with wired or wireless signal)
 - The non-technical side: They need to **produce** and **pick** the materials (e.g. taking video at the scene, writing the board cast notes, etc.), **arrange** the presentation.
- In production, they **construct** the message

Media

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- In production, they **construct** the message – the encoding process Stuart Hall described

Encoding

- The producer (or source) of the message construct the message with **their**
 - Technical infrastructure
 - Framework of knowledge (for producing and picking materials)
 - Routines of production; professional ideologies; institutional knowledge; definitions; assumptions about audience; ...
 - Relationships of production
- The above three form the **meaning structure** of the producer

Decoding

- When the consumer (or receiver) of the message receive the message, they **read** the message. But for the message to have an **effect** it must be appreciated by the consumer as something meaningful.
- The consumer **decode** (interpret) the message with **their**
 - Technical infrastructure
 - Framework of knowledge
 - ideologies; knowledge/experience on related subjects; definitions; assumptions; cultural value, beliefs ...
 - Relationships of production
 - The above three form the **meaning structure** of the consumer

Misunderstanding

- The meaning structure of the producer and the consumer may not be perfectly symmetrical, which create misunderstanding.
- The degrees of understanding depend on the degrees of the symmetry/asymmetry (i.e. Equivalence) of the two meaning structures, which further depend on how well is the codes transmitted

Little exercise

- Try to analyse what we are doing now with the Encoding/Decoding model.

Mass media

Creation and interpretation

- This week you were tasked to find some specific media examples to analyse with Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding model.
- In your group complete the following exercise:
 - Show to each other media examples you found
 - Analyse them with the Encoding/Decoding model:
 - What is the meaning structure used by the producer to encode the message
 - What is the assume meaning structure the producer have for the receiver?

Mass media

Creation and interpretation

- Now focus on the decoding process
- In your group discuss:
 - For the examples you gather, how might different message receivers (from different culture; have different identity, experience, education...) interpret them differently.
 - Do you think the producers of those examples are aware of different audience? Do you think they did something to address this issue?

Mass media

Creation and interpretation

- Discuss:
 - Compare the creation process (encoding) of a message and the interpreting process (decoding) of a message, which one do you think is more important for a message to **have an influence**?