

GS 434 MASS MEDIA & SOCIETY

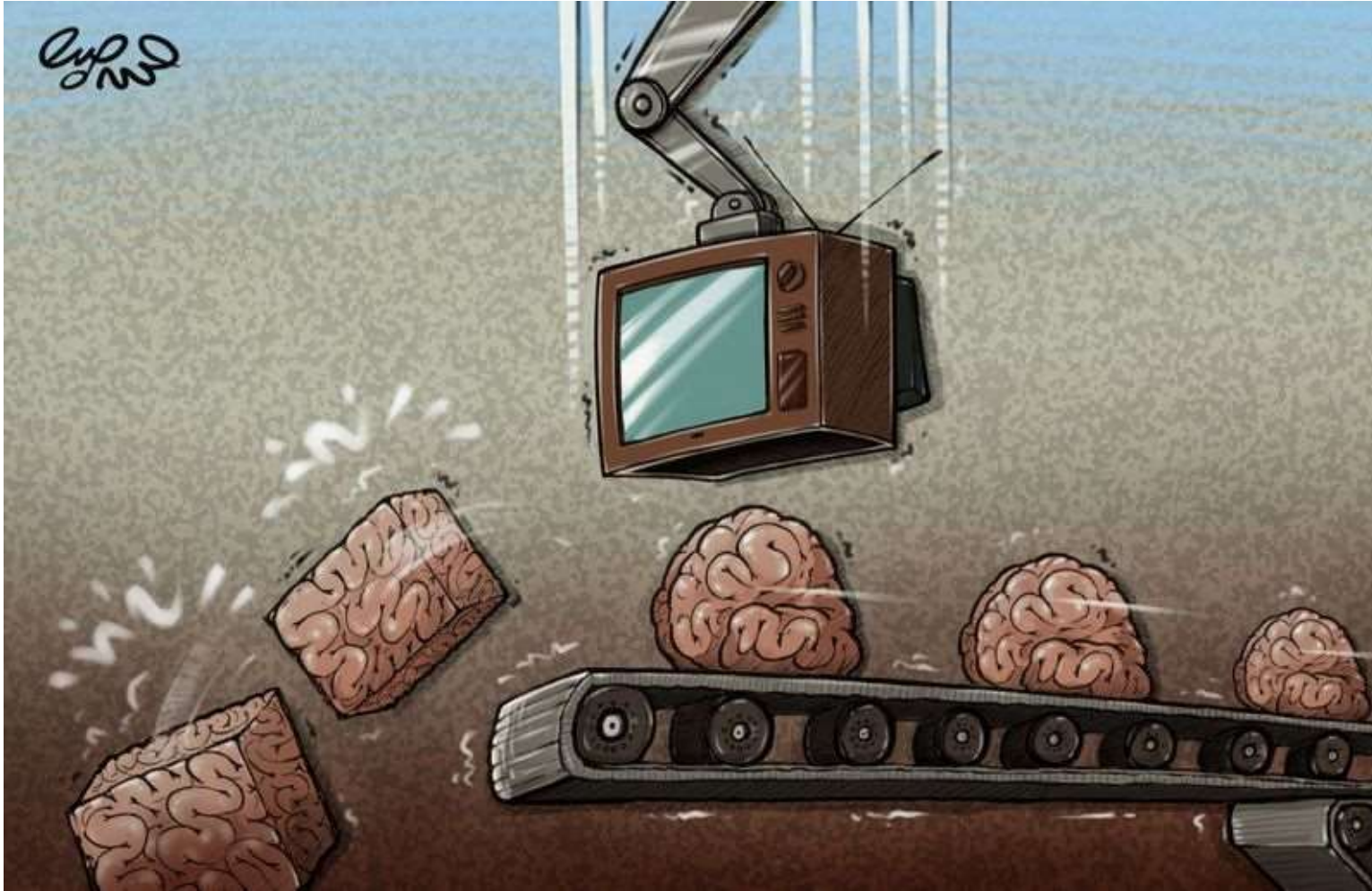


UNIT-05: Media Effects

UNIT OBJECTIVES

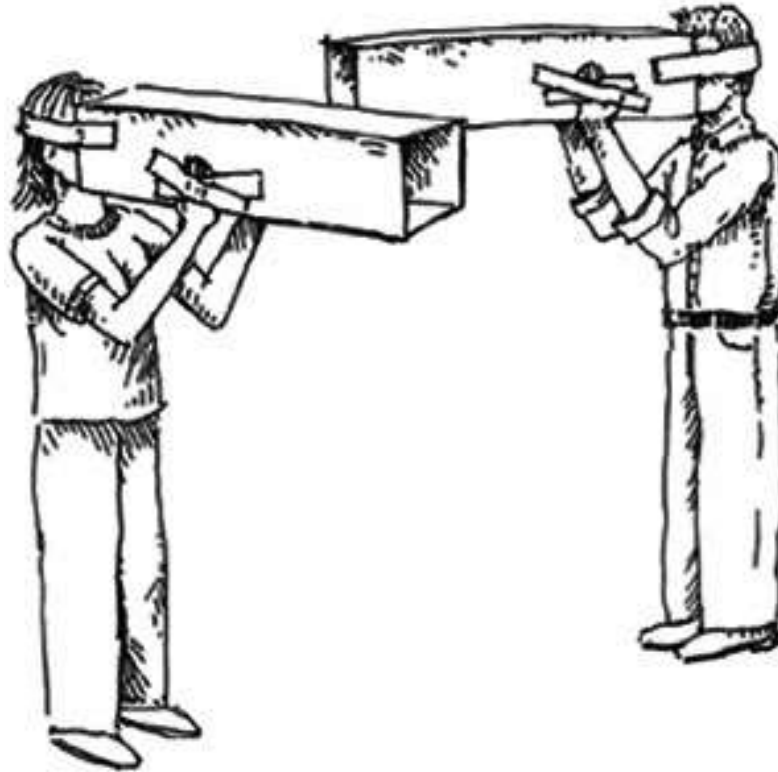
- ❑ Media power, framing of issues, and public opinion
- ❑ Mass media as an agency of socialization
- ❑ Media-depicted violence
- ❑ Media-induced anxiety and apathy
- ❑ Positive and negative effects of social media

MEDIA POWER, FRAMING OF ISSUES, AND PUBLIC OPINION



- Today, scholars understand that the media have different effects on different types of people with differing results (i.e. selective perception).

- ❑ **SELECTIVE PERCEPTION** is the process by which individuals perceive what they want to in media messages while ignoring opposing viewpoints. It is a broad term to identify the behavior all people exhibit to tend to "see things" based on their particular frame of reference.
- Different people process messages because the people at the receiver end come from diverse family backgrounds, past experiences, interests, education, etc.

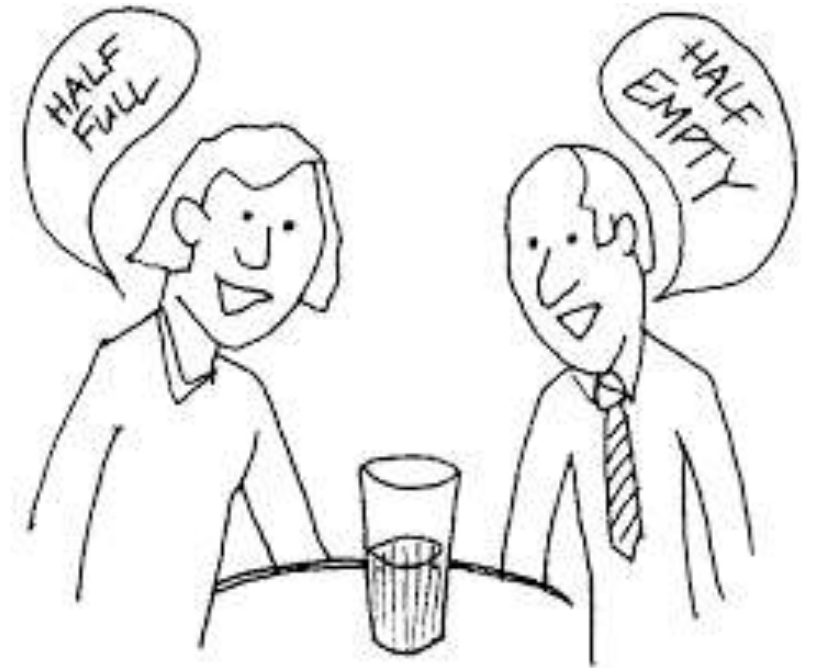


How Does Selective Perception Work?

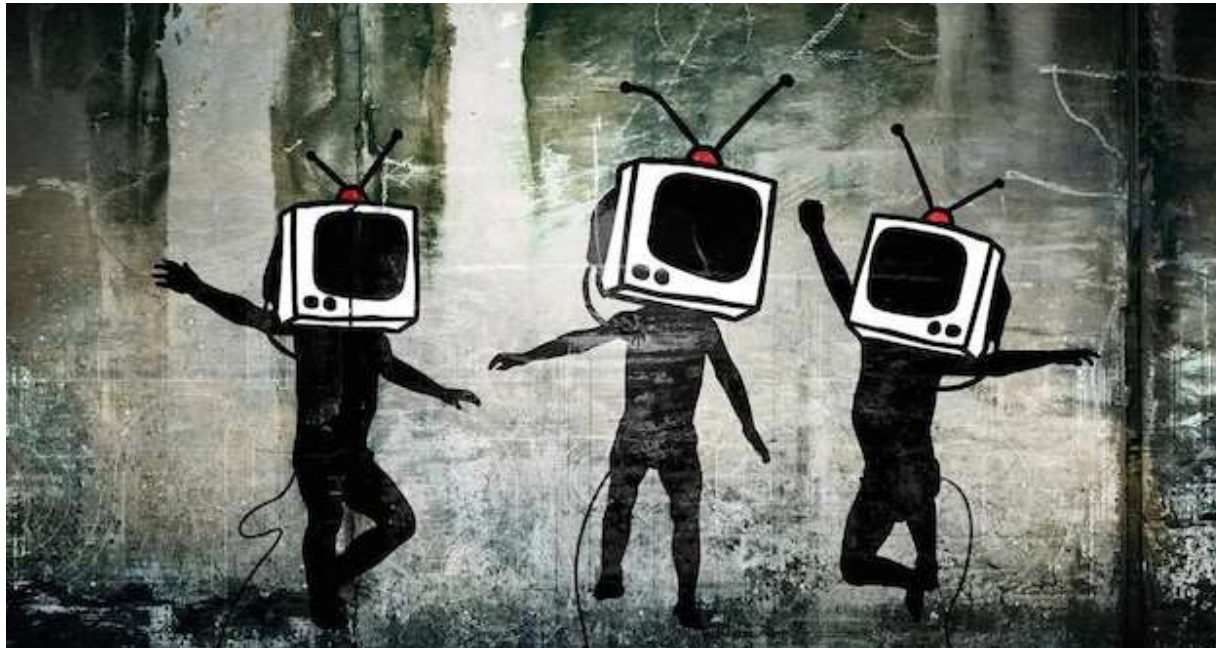
□ Many situations in real life attribute to this concept.

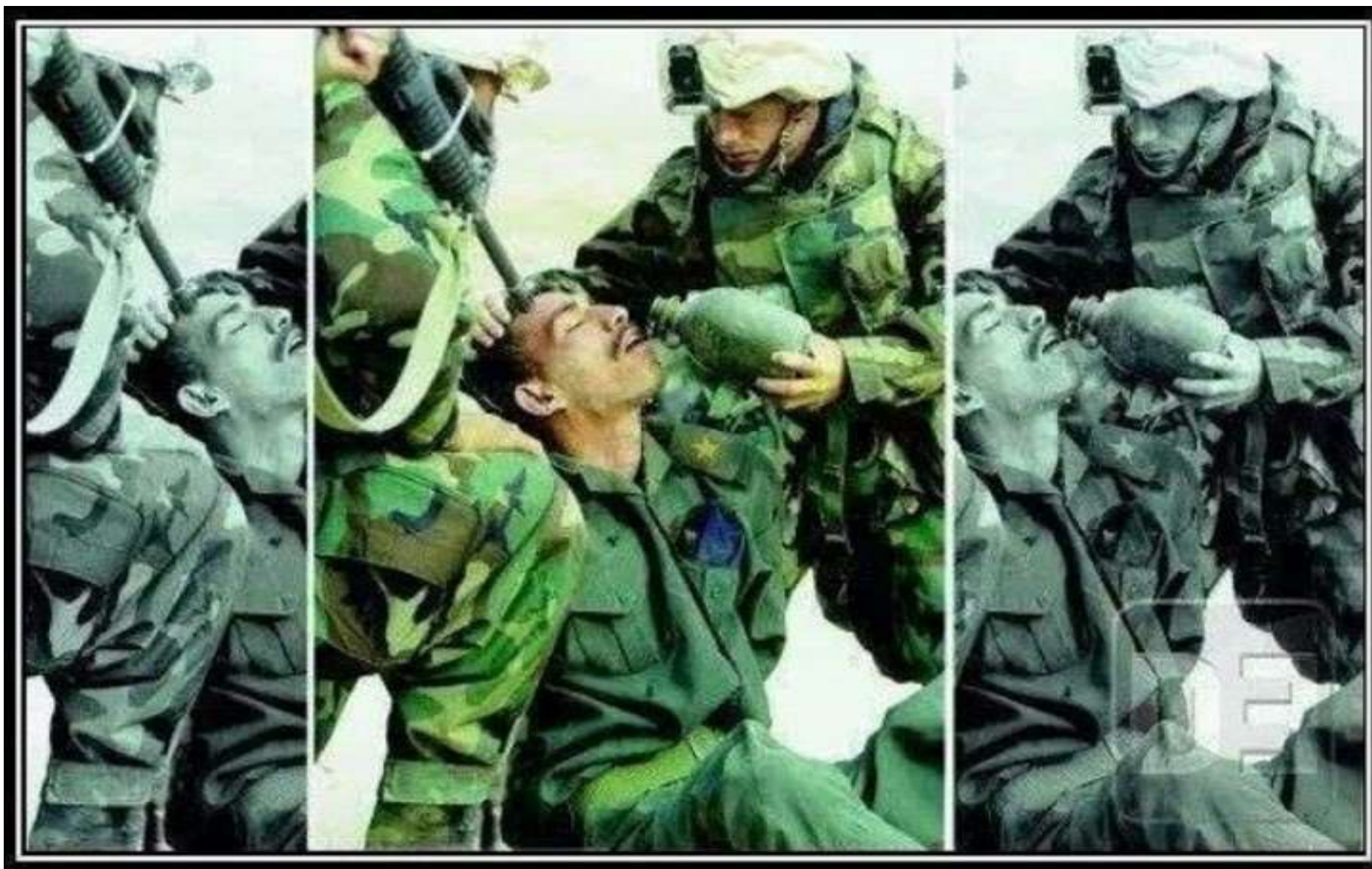
For example:

- Imagine that you go to the supermarket to buy a few fruits, and you always pick up the ones you know taste good, having made this decision without tasting other fruits.
- You are told smoking is a bad habit, and before you even know a person, you label her/him as bad, because s/he smokes.
- You vote for a political party, only because it caters to your beliefs, irrespective of whether it contributes to any valuable changes in society.



- ❑ **Mass media use propaganda and persuasion to propagate messages.**
 - **Propaganda** may simply be defined as the “manipulation of information to influence public opinion.”
 - The use of propaganda has had an enormous influence on the role of persuasion (actively influencing someone) in modern mass media. Propaganda often (but not always) distorts the truth, selectively presents facts, or uses emotional appeals.
 - The comparatively unregulated nature of social media has made, for better or worse, a society in which the tools of public persuasion are available to everyone.



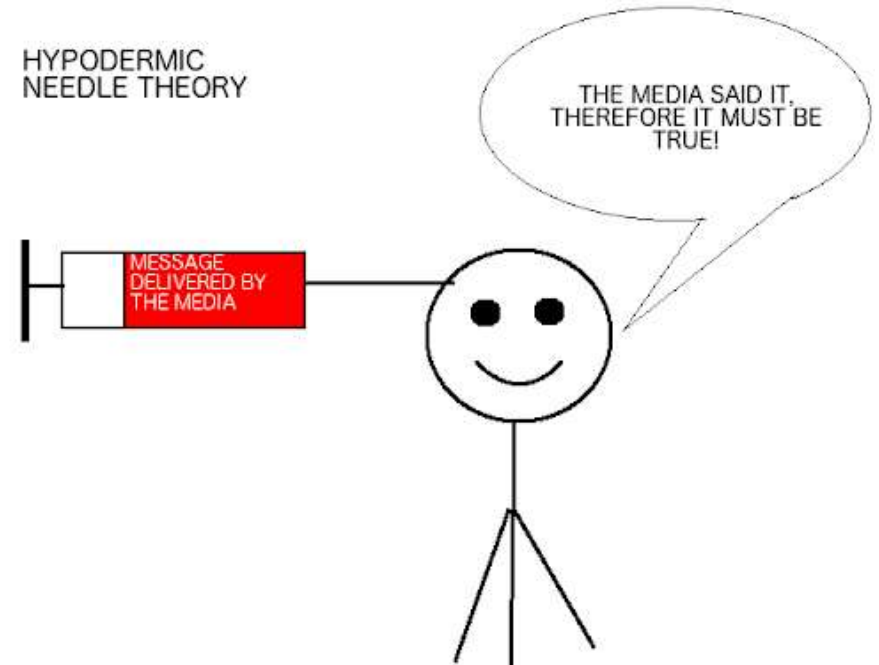


- ❑ Some media research was done before television's use became widespread in the mid-1950s, but TV prompted scholars to take a closer look at media's effects on people's lives:
- **David Potter** articulated the idea that American society is a consumer society driven primarily by advertising and the images advertising promotes.
- **Marshall McLuhan** concluded that the widespread use of television was a landmark in the history of the world, "retribalizing" society and creating a "global village" of people who use media to communicate.



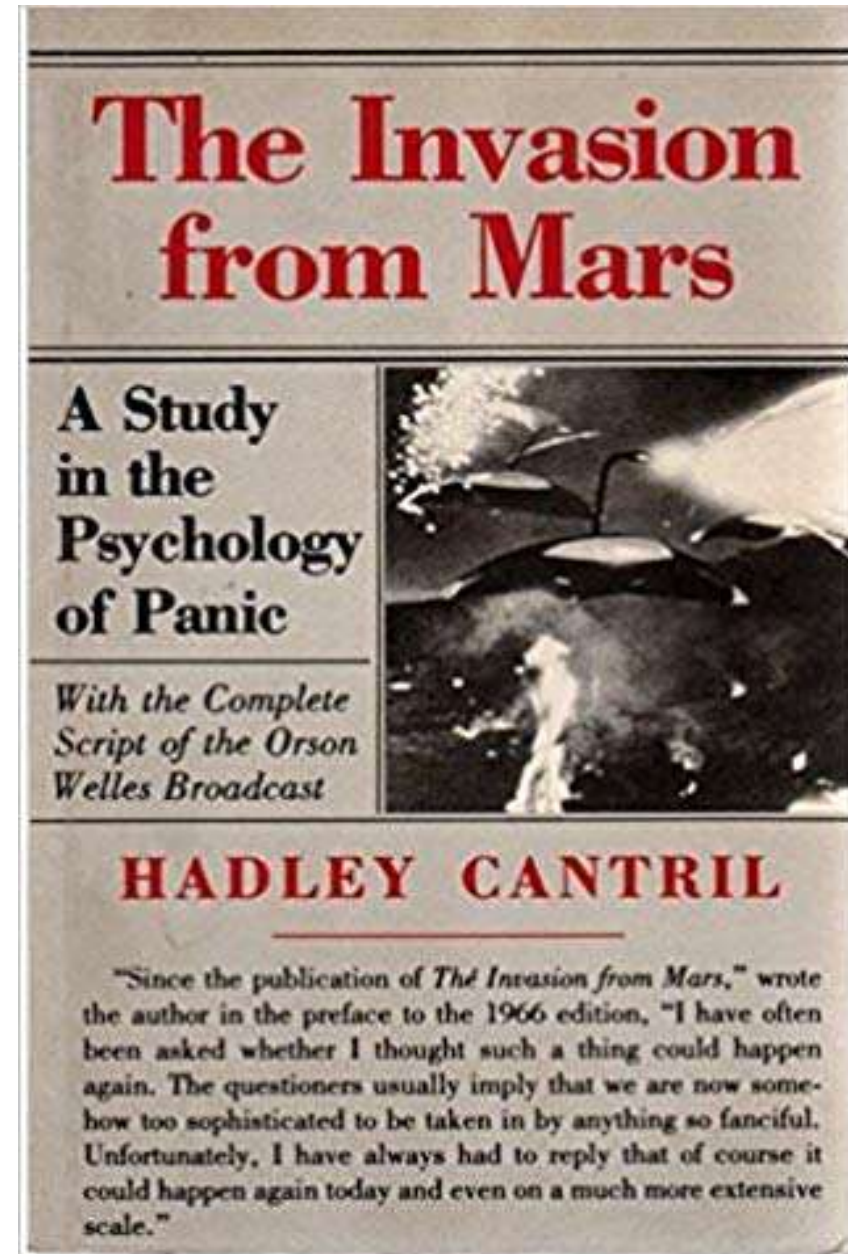
❑ The Payne Fund Studies

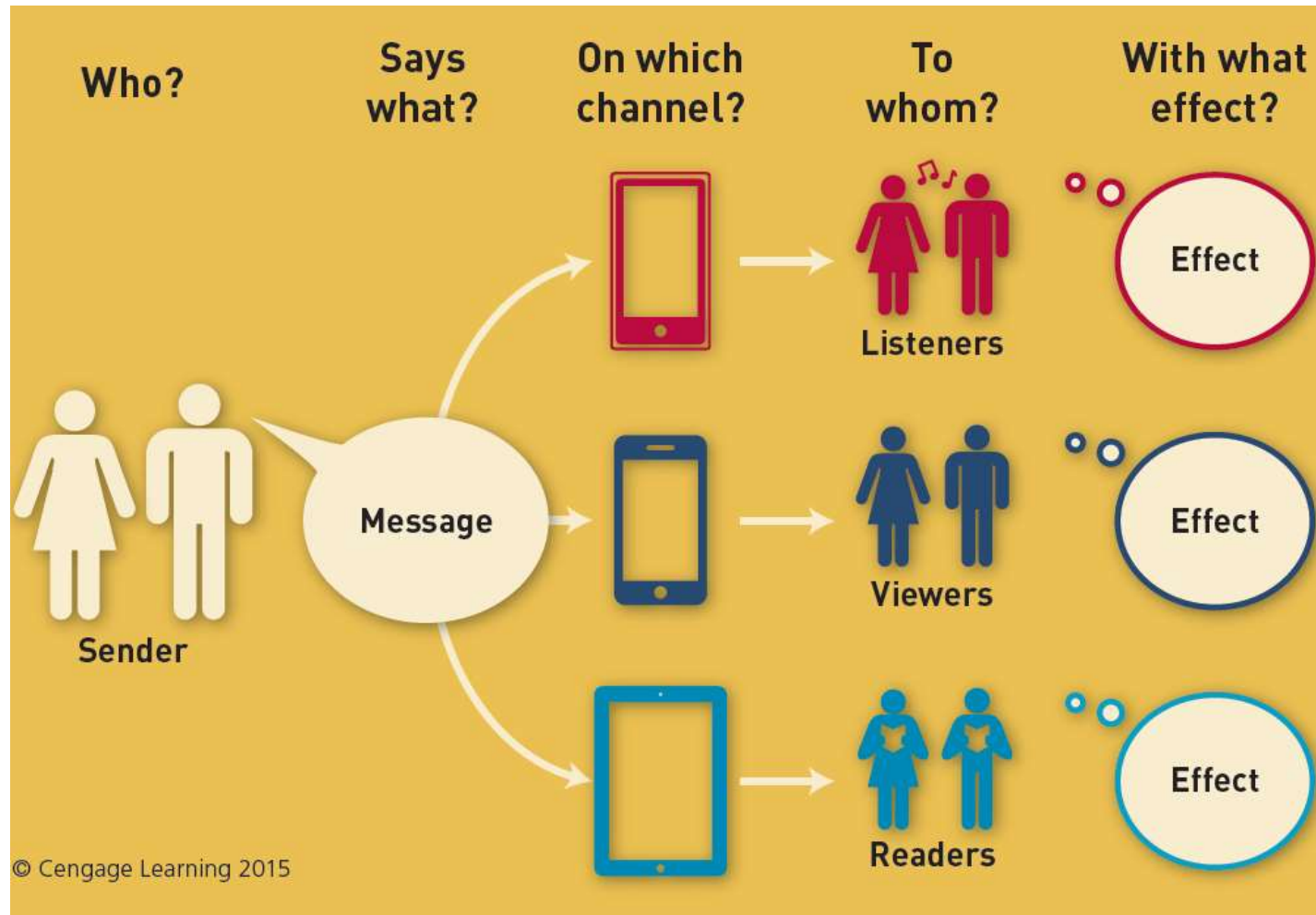
- The Payne Fund sponsored the first major study of media in 1929. It contained 12 reports on media effects. One of these studies concentrated on the effects of movies on children. In his interviews, Herbert Blumer simply asked teenagers what they remembered about the movies they had seen as children.
- **The hypodermic needle theory** (also known as magic bullet theory) was put forwarded in these studies which held that the media could inject ideas into people the way liquids are injected through a needle. This early distrust of the media still pervades many people's thinking today, although the theory has been disproved. Eventually, the beliefs that audiences absorbed media messages uncritically and that all people reacted the same to each message were proven untrue.



❑ The Cantril Study

In late 1930s, after interviewing 135 people, Hadley Cantril at Princeton University concluded that high critical-thinking ability was the key. During the radio science fiction programs, when breaking news about Mars invasion were given, better educated people were much more likely to decide the broadcast was a fake. This finding might seem to be self-evident today, but the importance of the Cantril study is that it differentiated among listeners: People with different personality characteristics interpreted the broadcast differently.





❑ The Lasswell Model of Media Effects

In 1948, political scientist Harold D. Lasswell designed a model to describe the process of communication that is still used today. The Lasswell model analyzes the communication process by asking five questions: Who? Says what? On which channel? To whom? With what effect?

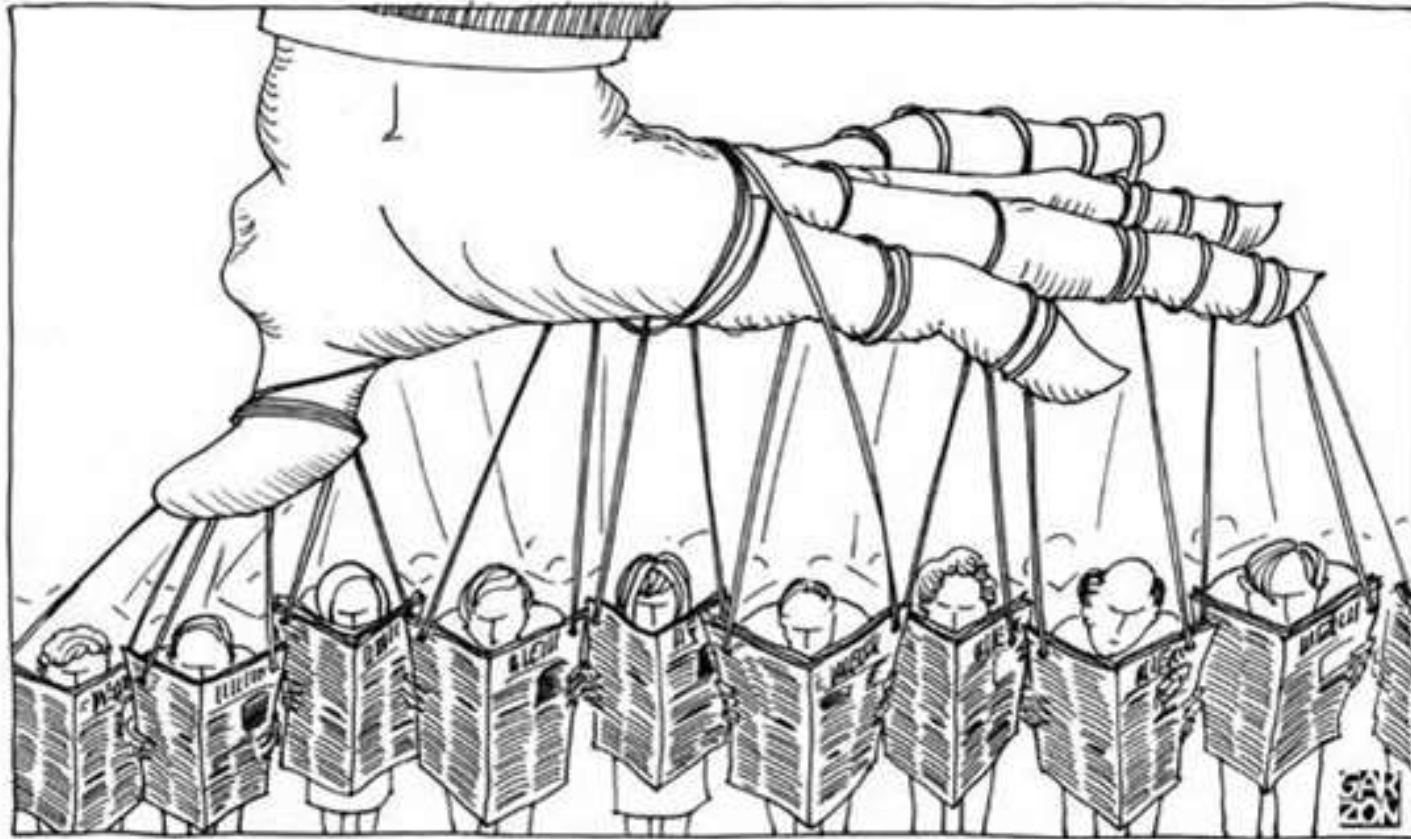
Harold D. Lasswell's Model

FRAMING OF ISSUES

- According to agenda-setting theory, the news media has the ability to influence the importance placed on the topics of the public agenda.
- Under this theory, the issues that receive the most attention from media become the issues that the public discusses, debates, and demands action on. This means that the media is determining what issues and stories the public should think and debate about. Therefore, when the media fails to address a particular issue, it becomes marginalized in the minds of the public.



- ❑ Most people rely on the media for all or most of their information regarding politics.
- ❑ If people are uninformed about the issue then it will not be a priority in the government's lawmaking or decisions.



- ❑ Owners of newspapers, radio and TV channels as well as editors exercise their power by setting-up political agenda.
- ❑ Mass media can create awareness about certain political issues, establish priorities for public, and perpetuate (maintain and extends) certain issues.
- ❑ The media can influence not in terms of “what to think,” but “what to think about”.



Through a variety of antismoking campaigns, the health risks of smoking became a public agenda.

MEDIA AS AN AGENCY OF SOCIALIZATION

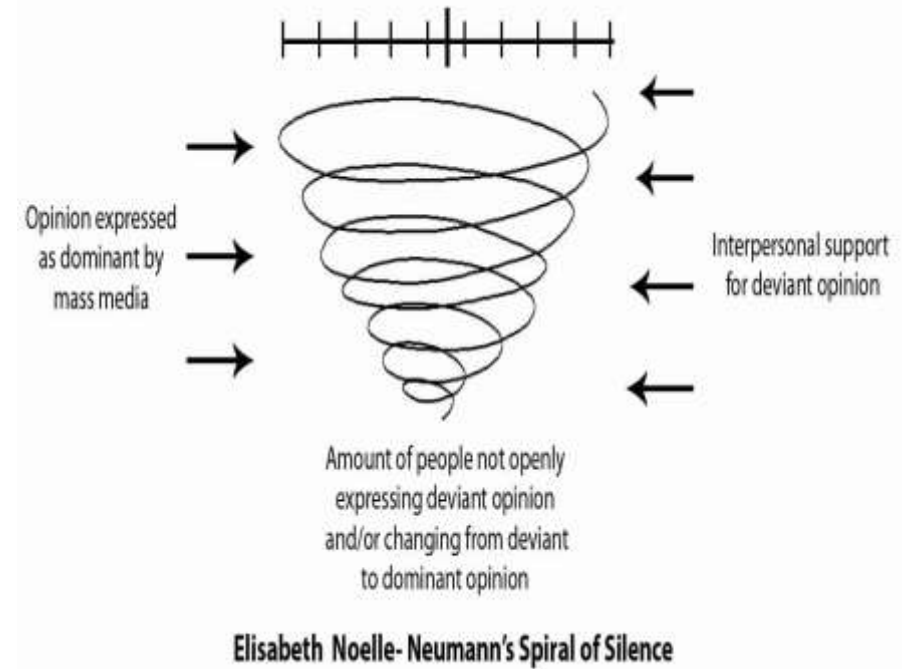
- ❑ **Socialization** is referred to as the process through which we learn the culture of society or group we are born into. The agencies or institutions of socialization include: families, schools, peer groups, religions, workplaces and the mass media.
- ❑ The mass media play an important role in the socialization process. They are powerful sources of information and knowledge about the world. For example, magazines have advice about personal relationships.
- ❑ The mass media socializes us into the on-going social order as it transmits cultural heritage, and basic norms and values such as eating behavior, dress patterns, etc.
- ❑ By communicating both approved and disapproved knowledge contents, media narratives shape the way we see ourselves and the world around us.

- ❑ Through words, pictures, videos, children are introduced to the meaning of manner, love, sympathy, respect, hard work, unity, honesty and so on.
- ❑ National radio and TV programs encourage social integration by exposing the entire society to shared beliefs, values and norms.
- ❑ Here are a few ways how mass media studies try to understand the media's role in socialization process:
 1. Media reflect social values
 2. Media and stereotyping
 3. Media and identity
 4. Media and motivation



1. Media reflects social values

- ❑ Media reflect social values and also induce new values to some extent.
- ❑ Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann (1974) gave the idea of **Spiral of Silence** – The belief that people with divergent views may be reluctant to challenge the consensus of opinion offered by the media.
- Spiral of silence is the term meant to refer to the tendencies of people to remain silent when they feel that their views are in opposition to the majority view on a subject.
- The theory suggests that they remain silent for a few reasons:
 - Fear of isolation when the group or public realizes that the individual has a divergent opinion from the status quo.
 - Fear of reprisal or more extreme isolation, in the sense that voicing said opinion might lead to a negative consequence beyond that of mere isolation (loss of a job, status, etc.)
 - She asserted that due to the “spiral of silence” (i.e. supporting the consensus point of view), the media have more influence because opponents of the consensus tend to remain silent.



2. Media and Stereotyping

- ❑ A **stereotype** is a thought that may be adopted about specific types of individuals, groups or certain ways of doing things, but that belief may or may not accurately reflect reality.
- ❑ Journalists have the tendency to generalize about certain groups of people and create stereotypes. For example, all Africans are shown as living in disease and hunger in Western media.



3. Media and Identity

- ❑ Identity refers to how we see ourselves (our self-identity) and how other people see us. This can include our: gender, age, ethnicity, social class, and religion.
- ❑ Our identity can be influenced by the media: e.g. which clothes and make-up to wear, which leisure activities to take part in, ways of forming friendships (e.g. Facebook), planning our careers, my language and dress, etc.
- ❑ Mass media has influenced the identity-formation process by representing national ideas, national dress, and national language, and making “our” ideas and culture superior to those of “others”.





- ❑ People express their identity in social media through various ways; for example, the way we see ourselves or want others to see us can be made possible by using avatars.
- ❑ Many people remain anonymous on blogs and comments to express their opinions freely.

4. Media and Motivation

- ❑ Media research tries to reach beyond the simple description of who is doing what in which kind of situation; it rather tries to explain why things are done as they are done.
- ❑ The media effects studies try to answer why users turn to media, how they differ with regard to the circumstances under which they want to be entertained or informed, and why it is rewarding for them to be engaged with media content.



- Based on the observations across numerous social networking platforms, researchers have found the following factors why people turn to social media:
- **The Learning Factor:** to get knowledge and info about things they like.
 - **The Connection Factor:** to get connected with people.
 - **The Affinity Factor:** to get networking based on profession, religion, nationality, etc.
 - **The Business Factor:** to advertise or promote themselves or their businesses.
 - **The Creative Factor:** to benefit from new ways of approaching people.
 - **The Expectation Factor:** to invest time with an expectation of some current or future benefits of social or economic nature.



MEDIA-DEPICTED VIOLENCE

- ❑ The search for a possible direct link between violent behavior and violence in the mass media has existed for more than 30 years.
- ❑ The first major study, *Television and Behavior: Ten Years of Scientific Progress and Implications for the Eighties*, published in 1982 by the National Institute for Mental Health (NIMH), USA compiled information from 2,500 individual studies of television. According to NIMH, three findings of these 2,500 studies, taken together, were that:
 1. A direct correlation exists between televised violence and aggressive behavior, yet there is no way to predict who will be affected and why.
 2. Heavy television viewers are more fearful, less trusting and more apprehensive than light viewers.
 3. Children who watch “pro social” programs (programs that are socially constructive, such as Sesame Street and SpongeBob) are more likely to act responsibly.

- ❑ Chris Ferguson, a professor at Texas A&M International, says that recent research about the effects of videogame violence has been “quite inconsistent.” In a 2012 study, Ferguson and his co-authors looked at 165 video game players over three years and reported that they could not directly link young people who played violent video games to youth aggression or dating violence. The researchers said that “depression, antisocial personality traits, exposure to family violence and peer influences” were the best way to predict aggression-related behavior.
- ❑ Other researchers argue that, while it is impossible to directly link gun violence to video games, there could still be some connection.





The relationship between violence portrayed in video games and violent behavior in American society continues to spark debate. On June 15, 2015, Ubisoft Quebec's Creative Director Marc-Alexas Cole announces the release of the company's latest version of Assassin's Creed Syndicate at the annual Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles.

- ❑ George Gerbner explained “**Mean World Syndrome**” – that makes people believe that the world is a bad place to live in than it actually is. The media contributes to this belief because:
 - ✓ The media world is more dangerous than the real world.
 - ✓ The media thinks more violence is necessary to make an impact.
 - ✓ 30,000 murders, 40,000 attempted murders are seen on TV by the age of 18 (i.e. desensitizing people about violence).

MEDIA-INDUCED ANXIETY AND APATHY

- ❑ Mass media can be source of entertainment and pleasure but it can generate anxiety and apathy (unconcerned towards others).
- ❑ Students who spend over 2 hours/day on social media reported higher depression in a study.
- ❑ Work-life-balance may be disturbed by spending too much time on mass media (e.g. lack of sleep). Many studies have shown that mass media can induce passivity.



- ❑ **Cyber-bullying** is an emerging problem. Cyber-bullying or cyber-harassment is a form of bullying or harassment using electronic means. Harmful bullying behavior can include posting rumors, threats, inappropriate remarks or abuse, a victims' personal information, or harsh labels (i.e., hate speech).
- ❑ There is too much information “overload” or “pollution” on mass media. More info is published in one day now than in a 17th century person’s lifetime. This may result in “well informed futility” (i.e. overload with irrelevant info) or polluting our thoughts (e.g. when too much violence is seen on TV).



- ❑ The media sometimes develop a distorted perception of reality either by exaggeration of small things or undermining important things either for agenda-setting or advertising.



- Although mass media can be an agency of socialization, it may result in anti-social behavior if used excessively. For example, we neglect sports, health, or neighborhood and community activities.



POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

□ Positive Effects of Social Media

- **Building relationships and staying connected:** Social media can make it easy to find groups of like-minded people or make new friends. Finding a close-knit community can help us feel valued and accepted. Social media is also an easy way to nurture existing relationships with family and friends who have moved away. Send messages, share photos, call, or host video chats to stay in touch.
- **Finding your voice:** People of all ages can use social media to develop a platform with a larger audience than they would have in any other setting. This can help individuals build confidence, gain new communication skills, and quickly spread positive and important messages.
- **Showing empathy and kindness:** People often share things online that are personal or that they're struggling with. When you relate, you can show empathy by supporting and encouraging others through messages and comments.



- **Spreading news:** News from just about any part of the world can spread like wildfire on social media. While this can be overwhelming at times, it can also keep us in tune with important events. This can be an outstanding benefit if you need to get the word out fast about something.
- **Promoting a business/product:** As a new business that wants to get the word out about your impressive offerings, you can use social media to build an interested audience. Share valuable content and establish a brand voice that resonates with your target consumers. Social media is also an excellent place for more established businesses to grow and sell through marketing and advertising.
- **Enhancing the customer experience:** Social media can also help businesses improve the customer journey. Answer questions quickly and reply to comments so your followers feel valued. Demonstrating excellent customer service across your social media channels will help you get people's attention and build trust. When they need something you offer, they can come straight to you for help.
- **Learning and education:** By students, we don't just mean the high schoolers and college kids. Anyone can be a student. There's no limit to our knowledge with all the online courses, content, and complimentary webinars people offer today. Social media is a great place for students to find mentors and training programs to learn new skills and take steps toward future career goals.



❑ Negative Effects of Social Media

- **Cyberbullying:** Social media has enabled individuals to harass and bully others online. With the anonymity that social media provides, cyberbullies can harass people without facing any consequences. The victims of cyberbullying experience severe emotional stress, low self-esteem, and in some cases, even suicide.
- **Spread of misinformation:** Social media has become a breeding ground for spreading false information. With fake news and rumors easily shared across various social media platforms, people are often misguided, leading to confusion, distrust, and chaos. The spread of misinformation can also harm democratic processes and public trust in institutions.
- **Addiction:** Social media addiction is a real problem that many people are facing. With easy access to social media apps and platforms, people tend to spend a lot of time online, often ignoring their real-life responsibilities. This addiction can lead to a lack of productivity, depression, and anxiety.



- **The decline in face-to-face communication:** With the rise of social media, people are becoming less inclined to interact in person. Social media is convenient, but it can lead to a decline in social skills and emotional intelligence, making it hard for people to develop deep and meaningful relationships.
- **Self-esteem issues:** Social media often portrays an idealized and unrealistic version of people's lives, leading to feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem. People tend to compare their lives with others and become dissatisfied with their own. This can lead to a lack of confidence and poor mental health.
- **Polarization:** Social media algorithms reinforce existing biases, where people only see content that confirms their existing beliefs. This can lead to polarization and a lack of open-mindedness, ultimately leading to an unhealthy society.
- **Decrease in privacy:** Social media platforms collect vast amounts of personal data, which can be sold to third-party companies or used for targeted advertising. This can lead to a decrease in privacy, and people's personal information can be misused by others.
- **Comparison and envy:** Social media often encourages people to compare themselves with others, leading to feelings of envy and dissatisfaction. This can harm mental health and well-being and can lead to depression, anxiety, and other psychological disorders.



Thanks

Any Questions?