Living in a Media World

A PRIMER IN HOW WE COMMUNICATE
A note on content

Information from “Mass Communication: Living in a Media World” by Ralph E. Hanson
Case study: Chris Hadfield

During a five-month stay at the International Space Station (ISS), Canadian astronaut Chris Hadfield used social media to communicate with a new generation of “young people” interested in space exploration.

• Videos of elements inside ISS
• Images of space, life in space
• Viral YouTube videos, including rendition of David Bowie’s 1968 hit “Space Oddity”
Case study: Chris Hadfield
Case study: Chris Hadfield

Hadfield gave the astronaut in the song a happier ending than Bowie.

The video was posted the night before he returned to earth.

By the time he was back on soil, Hadfield had 1.2 million social media followers. He had gone viral before going viral was a thing.

- He was on YouTube, Twitter specifically
Case study: Chris Hadfield

CONSIDER THIS: It was the first non-disaster time since the 1969 moon landing footage was aired, or later when Neil Armstrong was featured in Life magazine that the public was engaging so much with space.

Hadfield bypassed huge social media companies to convey his messages. He didn’t use a public relations machine.
What is communication?

“Social interaction through messages.”

• Or really, “how we interact with our entire world, whether through spoken words, written words, gestures, music, paintings, photographs or dance.”

• It is a process, not a static element

• It is ever-changing (we don’t communicate the same way we did in 2005 as we do in 2017)

• We are constantly changing **HOW** and **WHY** we communicate
How did we get here?

1100-1400 AD: Pre-mass media communication networks
  - Developed by the Roman Catholic Church

1450s: Development of movable type, printing

1814: Steam-powered printing press

1844: First U.S. telegraph line
  - Messages could be sent quickly, instead of sent by carrier
  - First line from Baltimore, Maryland to Washington, D.C.

1866: First Transatlantic telegraph line
  - A two-week journey no longer required to get information (THINK ABOUT THAT)
About that Transatlantic line ...
How did we get here?

1880s: Invention of the gramophone by Emile Berliner, played mass produced discs containing three minutes of music

Late 1800s: Development of radio

1890s: Development of motion pictures

1939: First television broadcasts
  • Black and white televisions evolved across time

1990s: Internet becomes a channel of mass communication
  • A watershed moment in communication

2000s: Rise of social media
  • Leads to questions of ethical communication
Levels of communication

Denis McQuail’s model of communication provides context for how we move through the realm of communication.

While we focus on mass communication, the top of the pyramid, in this class, we need to understand the passing between the levels as well.
Basic definitions

**INTRAPERSONAL COMMUNICATION:** Communication with the self, how we assign messages and meaning to the world around us, also includes how we interpret feedback.

- When is a smile just a smile?
- **What goes into accepting a marriage proposal?**

**INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION:** One-on-one communication. Can be accidental or intentional “through verbal or nonverbal message systems to another human being.”

- What does a hug from your significant other mean?
- What does it mean when some starts a response to a text message, then stops, then starts again?
Basic definitions

**GROUP COMMUNICATION:** Communication structure within a small group of people, usually with a leader. Each individual can respond, but some might not.

- A classroom lecture is small-group communication
- A concert can be considered large-group communication

**MASS COMMUNICATION:** “Society-wide communication process in which an individual or institution uses technology to send messages to a large, mixed audience, most of whose members are not known to the sender.”

- Nationally broadcast speeches
- Media sent with little chance for audience feedback (concepts are changing now with more Internet feedback happening)
Mass communication expanded

- When an individual or institution uses technology to send messages
- Messages sent to large, mixed audience (heterogeneous) not known to the sender
- Traditional methods of mass communication being replaced by social media and online reading and viewing
Mass media definition

The technological tools used to transmit the messages of mass communication.

OLD MODELS

- Broadcast news
- Newspapers
- Radio

NEW MODELS

- All of the above, reinvented
- Internet-based resources
Players in the process

The Sender Message Channel Receiver Model, also known as the transmission model, is the model we’ll be considering most in this course.

- **Sender**: Organization or individual responsible for the message being sent.
- **Message**: Content being transmitted by the sender to the receiver.
- **Channel**: Medium used to transmit the message.
- **Receiver**: Audience for the mass communication message.
Analysis of the receiver

In addition to receiving the message, the receiver must decode it.

**DECODING:** The process of translating a signal from mass medium into a form for the receiver to understand.

- Information meant for masses, you must make it relate to you
- How can a message relate to a heterogeneous audience made up of people who differ by sex, age, income, education, ethnicity, race, religion and other characteristics?
Analysis of the receiver

Only **YOU** can interpret how you’ll accept message sent through media channels aimed at engaging a message audience.

- Will an advertisement about creating a will trigger a reaction if your grandmother just died?
- Will you be more responsive to a McDonald’s commercial if you are hungry?
- Does a Cheerios commercial speak to you more or less if the subjects are minorities?

Frame of reference makes a huge impact on how messages are received.
Case study: Cheerios

In 2013, Cheerios launched a commercial with a mixed-race family. The mother was white, the father was black. The young girl had curly hair and was of medium, mixed skin tone.

The commercial got immediate response, but not in the way Cheerios likely thought it would.

There was an overwhelming “like” for it, but many other people left negative comments.
Case study: Cheerios

POSITIVE

- Praise for Cheerios for being inclusive of all families
- Support for promotion of intact family units
- Praise for awareness to raise topics of heart health
- An “it’s just cereal” mentality, with many saying others were not seeing the real commercial point
- One said this “cemented” her loyalty to Cheerios
Case study: Cheerios

NEGATIVE

• Attack on General Mills for not promoting “family values” and, as one said “encouraging mixing of races”

• Specific vitriol aimed at black men, saying there are types that don’t stay with their families

• A huge number proclaiming the racial issue in this case to be a reason to never eat Cheerios again
Case study: Cheerios
Case study: Cheerios
Case study: ‘I am your father’
Is the message clear?

Or is there noise?

**NOISE:** Interference with the transmission of a message. This can be semantic, mechanical or environmental.

**SEMANTIC:** The receiver doesn’t understand message meaning. Example: The message could be coming in a different language.

**MECHANICAL:** Channel has trouble distributing message.

**ENVIRONMENTAL:** Actions and other sounds, or influences, interfere with the message. Example: A roommate who keeps turning off a presidential speech.
Or is there even a message?
Problem with SMCR

Communication doesn’t exist as a one-way road.

In fact, the basic SMCR model excludes a function for feedback.

That feedback is essential nowadays, as people engage more frequently across channels.
Other models

**RITUAL MODEL:** Media use is an interactive ritual by audience members. Looks at how and why audiences consumer messages

- Consider the interaction on Twitter after Osama bin Laden’s death
- Also consider how often you check your phones

**PUBLICITY MODEL:** How media attention makes a person, concept, or thing important

- Aimed at drawing attention to something instead of conveying a message
- Janet Jackson Super Bowl “wardrobe malfunction” sanctions
Other models

**RECEPTION MODEL:** How audience members derive and create meaning out of media content

- Analyzes of communication using those unique experiences we’ve talked about
- What does the viewer bring to the table?
- How does that change the way we communicate?