Lecture 5
Media audiences – the ‘what’, ‘who’ and ‘why’ of media use

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... and I am...

- Patrick Prax
- PhD Student, Informatics and Media, Media and Communication Science
- Online Game Communities
Still me…

• Teaching Media Analysis (IMCS) and probably Media Development and Image, Identity and New Media

• So this kind of remote lecture is a preeetty good way to impress me with little effort… Just sayin’…
The ‘what is the audience?’ (1)

Looking from historical perspective (Abercrombie&Longhurst 1998)

a) the ‘simple audience’ – face-to-face, direct communication, in public, often highly ritualised (theatre and books before the media age, political meetings)

b) the ‘mass audience’ (H. Blumler 1939) – highly mediated, spatially dispersed, often in private; (newspapers readership, TV audience)

c) the ‘diffused audience’ – strongly dispersed and fragmented, yet embedded in all aspects of daily life; characterized by routine and casual inattention and yet always tuned, always on(-line)

Conclusion:

The qualities of early audiences have begun to leak out from performance events into wider realms of everyday life.
The ‘what is the audience?’ (2)

Audience defined by...

- people
- medium/channel
- content of messages
- time
The ‘what is the audience?’ (4)

The audience as ‘media publics’

1) Three common uses of the term ‘public’ (Mayhew 1997)
   - general public in democratic theory (electorate, bearer of public opinion, the source of legitimate power)
   - the average of individuals’ views in a statistical understanding
   - an active model as the result of people getting together to discuss or act in some way – today, much of this social interaction is mediated

2) The concept of ‘public sphere’ (J. Habermas and others)

3) ‘New public’: a public under the influence of professional communications
The public sphere – a graphic model

(Gillespie, ed. 2005:107)
The ‘what is the audience?’ (5)

**Audience as market**

- members as consumers (or – members as commodities)
- classified according to economic criteria – with no or little recognition of public significance
- unrelated individuals
- media consumption rather than reception
- temporary formation
- measured with numbers and ratings
Media Audience Fragmentation

- Globalization
- Niche Markets
- New types of audiences (new media, interactivity, internet and all that jazz)
4 stages of audience fragmentation

- Unitary model
- Pluralism model (diversity in unity)
- Core-pariphery model (unity in diversity)
- Breakup model (fragmentation)
Towards research goals

Two questions:

- What do media do to audiences (*media effects*)?
  
  Examples: audience reach, trend-setting, effectiveness

- What do audiences do with media (*media uses*)?
  
  Examples: public service, audience motives, interpretations of meaning, the context of media use
Research traditions

Structural
*Key words:* size, reach, social composition & relationships

Behavioural
*Key words:* 1) influence/impact/effect; 2) needs, media use/uses & gratifications – social functions of media

Social-cultural
*Key words:* ‘active audience’/interpretative communities, meaning, context; mediagraphy
Level

Macro
- Social group or public

Micro
- Gratification set

Source
- Society
- Media

- Medium audience
- Channel or content audience
The ‘whys’ of audience formation

1. needs & interests
   - audience-created
     - group & public
     - the gratification set
   - media-created
     - the medium audience
     - channel & content audience
The ‘whys’ of audience formation (2)

a. Behavioural (functional) approach: ‘uses & gratifications’

- rational choices, directed towards specific goals & satisfactions
- audience members are conscious of their media-related needs (e.g. relaxation, information, identity formation)
- personal utility more important than other factors
- all the relevant factors are measurable
The ‘whys’ of audience formation (3)

b. Structural approach

➢ The criteria of social difference:

• *spheres* of society: f.ex. religious/secular, private/public, spheres of values

• *class differences/social stratification* – social hierarchy that stems from the social division of labor; Marxist ‘class’ (based on economic factors) v. *social strata* (income, education, profession, housing etc.)

• *other criteria*: gender, race, age, ethnicity etc.

➢ Mass media structure
The ‘whys’ of audience formation (4)

Social difference and personal choices – related concepts

- **‘Habitus’** (P. Bourdieu):
  a set of hypotheses we have about social reality and about what is possible and impossible for us to do in it (dispositions), guided by social conditions; the habitus influences the choice of social positions and social fields

- **‘Capital’**
  (cultural, economic, social etc.) and its impact on the positions within a social space and lifestyles (also Bourdieu)

- **‘Lifestyle’**:
  the systematic way in which people think and act in everyday life (Gripsrud, Giddens)

- **‘Taste’**
  tendency and ability to acquire, materially or symbolically, a certain class of objects or practices; taste culture (Herbert Gans) – an aggregate of similar content chosen by the same people
The ‘whys’ of audience formation (5)

4 H (dimensions of identity)

- How do we see ourselves?
- How do we see others?
- How do others see us?
- How do we think others see us?

Identity (subjectivity):

- the condition of being a person and the processes by which we become a person
- constituted through descriptions of ourselves with which we identify rather than the entity to be possessed (A. Giddens and a ‘narrative about the self’)
- [The reflexive project of the self (Giddens)]
- socially constructed and shaped through a lifelong relationship to cultural representations and acculturalization
‘Identity’ – a further review (1)

- **Freud:**
  the self is constituted in terms of an ‘ego’ (conscious rational mind), a ‘superego’ (social conscience), ‘id’ (the unconscious, the source and repository of the symbolic workings of the mind)

- **Foucault:**
  the subject is a historically specific construction of discourse and practice; it is a product of power
‘Identity’ – a further review (2)


- the Enlightenment subject: conscious individual subject, with rational capacities that allow it to experience the world and make sense of it

- the sociological subject formed interactively in relation to ‘significant others’ (identity through difference)

- the postmodern subject: shifting and fragmented, sometimes contradictory identities
McQuail’s integrated model of audience choice

Audience side

1 Person

2 Social-cultural location

3 Media-related needs

4 Tastes and preferences

5 Availability

6 Awareness of choice

7 Context

Specific content choice

Media use

Media side

A Media system

B Structure of provision

C Available content options

D Publicity

E Timing/presentation

General content preference set
Part 2: With what effect?

Who? Says what? …
Effects can be...

- cognitive (knowledge, opinion)
- affectual (attitude, feelings)
- Behavioural
- Structural

J. Klapper’s typology (1960):
- conversion
- minor change
- reinforcement

McQuail (pp. 465 – 467)
- short term/planned or unplanned
- long term/planned or unplanned
4 perspectives on media effects (1)

1. ‘Magic Bullet’/’hypodermic needle’ theory – almighty media.

- uniform basic human nature
- nonrational processes of stimulus and reaction (S-R)
- social order as mass society (with psychologically isolated individuals)
- linear communication from sender to receiver
- absolute media power and direct, immediate effects of mass communication (e.g. ‘contagion’ and collective reaction)
4 perspectives on media effects (2)

2. *Theories of selective influence – conditional effects*

- Individual differences
- Social Categories with Subcultures
- Social Relationships
- Intervening variables
  - Selective attention
  - Selective perception
  - Selective recall
  - Selective action
Social relationships – e.g. ‘opinion leaders’ and a two-step flow of communication

- Opinion leaders
- Individuals in social contact with opinion leaders
Minimal effects - key quotes

‘Some kinds of communication on some kinds of issues have brought to the attention of some kinds of people under some kinds of conditions have some kinds of effects’

Bernard Berelson (1948)

‘mass communication does not ordinarily serve as necessary or sufficient cause of audience effects, but rather functions through a nexus of mediating factors’

Joseph Klapper (1960).
4 perspectives on media effects (3)

3. indirect influence - cumulative effects of mass communication

- **Key concept: ‘socialization’**

  a label for a complex, long-term, and multidimensional set of communicative exchanges between individuals and various agents of society that result in the individual’s preparation for life in a sociocultural environment

  (M.L. DeFleur, S. Ball-Rokeach, 1989)

- The media as a secondary agents of socialization
a. modeling theory

- Albert Bandura’s ‘social learning theory’ – behaviour + reward/punishment

- Leonard Berkowitz’s ‘priming effects’ – media violence activates already existing predispositions to aggressive behaviour

- Huesmann’s ‘script theory’ – violence in the media leads to aggression in accordance with aggressive scripts
Possible effects of violence in media

- desensitization
- catharsis
- fear and emotional disturbance
- phobic attitudes and behaviours
b. social expectations theory (Ch. H. Cooley)

mass media portrayals as a major source of patterned social expectations about the social organization (i.e. norms, roles, ranking, sanctions) of specific groups in modern society
c. cultivation hypothesis (G. Gerbner)

- TV's central place in people's lives
- selective & distorted picture of reality
- cumulation of representations over time
Example: Full spectrum Warrior
4 perspectives on media effects (4)

4. Negotiated influence - from imposed ideology to the active reading

- cognitive-transactional model of effects
- socially constructed meanings, frames and schemes
- a shift towards qualitative and ethnographic research
- critical theory and British Cultural Studies: S. Hall’s encoding/decoding model
Seminar on Tuesday

• 8-12, H325, Everybody
• 10-12, H325, Group 2
• 15-17, B105, Group 3

• You need to attend all these
Seminar Task

1. Present a research project plan for an audience-focused research project

2. Research question, Contribution to Society or Business, Aim, Notes on a Theoretical Framework, Plan for Data collection

3. Stress on your use and conceptualization of Audience and Media Effects (use at least 4 scientific concepts from literature)

4. Sell it to a funder (me).
Things to answer for you... write them down!

- What do you want to do?
- Why is it worth doing?
- Why will it work the way you plan it?
- What concept of audience and media effect fits to your aim, data, and circumstances?
Seminar Task (II)

• A power point presentation, 15 minutes, and a 2-4 pages paper to hand in to me (by mail) latest Monday evening.

• Each group member needs to present something.

• There are 4 funds available for your 9 project proposals.
What to do now?

1. Get your team together.
2. Brainstorm for projects ideas, aims for society and fitting research plans and audience and media effect concepts.
3. Read up in the literature
4. Find scientific literature yourselves.
5. Write the proposal and make the presentation.

Good luck and have fun!
News, public opinion and mediatization of politics

- News learning – frames, schemata and differential reception
- News values
- Agenda setting/building and priming effects
- Strategic communication (campaigns, propaganda and public diplomacy)
- Climate of opinion
  - E. Noelle-Neumann (1974) and the ‘spiral of silence’
  - W.P. Davison (1983) and ‘the third party effects’